




Speech By
Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Record of Proceedings, 16 August 2016

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (4.03 pm): I rise to speak on the Finance and Administration Committee's estimates report. The estimates process is an important accountability mechanism. Anyone who seeks to diminish estimates is simply trying to avoid scrutiny. Queenslanders know it when they see it. This year provided a great opportunity for me to speak as Premier on a range of issues but also particularly on the responsibilities of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and Arts Queensland.

It also gave me an opportunity to speak about my government's second budget. It was a budget framed in difficult times but with an eye on the future. Slumping commodity prices and a crippling drought mean economic conditions in regional Queensland are vastly different to those in the south-east. That is why my government has been steadfastly focused on jobs.

Our jobs programs have offered opportunity and confidence in the face of really tough economic conditions. A key budget policy is our \$100 million Back to Work program, which will create 8,000 jobs in the regions. I have already travelled to Townsville, Bundaberg and Cairns to urge employers to make the most of this support and the response has been overwhelming. I am advised that in Townsville 20 people have been placed this week as part of the Back to Work program. Congratulations, Minister; a job well done. There is already significant interest in the program and I expect that to grow.

I also took the opportunity to announce changes to our payroll tax system to encourage employers to hire more young people. We have now doubled the payroll tax rebate for apprentices and trainees from 25 per cent to 50 per cent. This means that a business will receive \$500 to \$1,000 a year for each apprentice and trainee hired, up from \$250 to \$500 under the 25 per cent rebate.

I also took the opportunity to announce that my government would be delivering on our commitment to implement the real-time disclosure of political donations. An implementation plan is currently being considered. It will mean that, instead of waiting months to see who is donating to a political party, people will be able to see who is donating and how much they are donating before an election takes place. This is an important next step in my government's push for greater openness and accountability following our legislative change that saw the political donation threshold dropped from \$12,800 to \$1,000. That was an election commitment which I am proud my government has actually endorsed.

We are determined to ensure the government plays its part in stimulating regional economies through our \$40 billion Capital Works Program which will create 31,000 jobs. It includes our \$2 billion State Infrastructure Fund for urgent priority projects across Queensland and a \$175 million boost to our Building our Regions program. The first State Infrastructure Plan in more than three years has been delivered and now in this budget we are starting to reverse the decline in infrastructure investment.

I discussed my government's commitment to restore confidence in our front-line services which were savagely cut by the LNP under the Newman-Nicholls government. The reality is that over 90 per cent of full-time-equivalent Queensland government workers are employed in front-line or front-line support positions. As I said on the day, if anyone wants to pretend that more front-line service personnel are a waste of money they should say which teachers, which health workers, which doctors, which police officers they would sack and from which regions. In contrast, I will stand up for and my government will fight for front-line workers every single day of the week.

Finally, I would like to thank the committee for their focus on the government's initiative in the arts sector. Queensland has a thriving arts community which we should all be proud of. We are attracting more and more blockbuster movie productions to our shores, GoMA goes from strength to strength and such is the demand for major art exhibitions that my government is investing in a major new Cairns Performing Arts Centre with the council, which will be one of the foremost arts precincts in regional Australia.

I also place on record my sincere thanks to all of the public servants who have worked night and day to ensure the estimates process ran smoothly. I think on both sides of the House people would appreciate that when you are the Premier or a minister of the Crown we have hardworking public servants who work really hard on the briefs and preparation. They work night and day and over weekends because they want to deliver the best they possibly can to ensure that the estimates process works well and they are contributing to that process.

Once again, I pay tribute to all of our hardworking public servants. I thank each and every one of them for their hard work. I thank my director-general, Dave Stewart, all of the directors-general and all of the staff under him for their commitment, their dedication and their sheer determination to make sure that they provide the best possible advice to their ministers. I again thank the committee, the secretariat, my department and my personal staff for all of their hard work in preparing for the estimates committee hearings. I commend the report to the House.