




Speech By
Peter Russo

MEMBER FOR SUNNYBANK

Record of Proceedings, 16 August 2016

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Mr RUSSO** (Sunnybank—ALP) (3.17 pm): I rise as chair of the Finance and Administration Committee to speak on the 2016-17 appropriation for the portfolio areas of the Premier and Cabinet; Treasury; Employment and Industrial Relations; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships; Arts; Sport; Racing; and Multicultural Affairs. The committee's recommendation is that the proposed expenditure for the committee's areas of responsibility, as detailed in the Appropriation Bill 2016, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment. On behalf of the committee I thank the Premier, the Treasurer and the Minister for Employment, as well as their staff, for their attendance and for providing details and answering questions of the committee during the estimates hearing.

The budget is a responsible move by the government to boost Queensland's employment figures and to support economic growth in our regions. The committee identified three central themes: job creation, infrastructure investment and the restoration of front-line services. As the Minister for Employment noted in her statement to the committee, the 2016-17 budget strives to build on the 36,000 new jobs that have already been created since the 2015 state election. The budget commits \$100 million to create 8,000 jobs across regional Queensland as part of the Back to Work initiative. At the time of the hearing the Back to Work initiative had already proven popular among employers in Queensland's regions, with high rates of engagement being recorded through the website.

The committee also noted the proposed doubling of the payroll tax rebate for apprentices and trainees from 25 per cent to 50 per cent. This rebate will act as a further incentive for business to take on new employees who are just starting out in their chosen field.

The committee heard that support for the regions was a key priority for this budget in response to the suffering caused by slumping commodity prices and a crippling drought in our regions. To this end the Premier pointed to a number of initiatives targeted to improve the lives of those doing it tough in regional Queensland. As explained by the Premier in her statement to the committee, this year's budget begins to reverse the long decline of state investment in infrastructure. It provides \$40 billion for capital works across the state which are projected to create around 31,000 new jobs. The infrastructure plan includes \$2 billion in state infrastructure to fund priority jobs that are urgent or overdue. Queensland is rapidly growing in population and this government is showing its commitment to ensuring we have the resources and the infrastructure to cope and move into the future.

The third theme of this budget is the restoration of front-line services. I thank the Premier for drawing the attention of the committee to the report from the Public Service Commission for the March quarter. This report shows an additional 4,058 full-time-equivalent positions created over this quarter of which 90 per cent were front-line staff for Health, Education and TAFE. Queensland is still playing catch-up with regard to our front-line staff from the cuts of the previous government, but this report demonstrates real action in increasing employment in the fields of teaching, health, law enforcement and emergency services. In his report to the hearing, the Treasurer emphasised the government's

commitment to fiscal responsibility. The committee notes that there is a projected surplus of \$867 million which is the largest in a decade. This surplus is forecast to grow to \$1.2 billion by the 2017-18 budget. This has been achieved through the government delivering on election commitments and without the need to sell off public assets. I offer my—

(Time expired)