




Speech By
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Record of Proceedings, 23 August 2018

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

Education, Employment and Small Business Committee, Report

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (11.47 am): What a pleasure it was to listen to my learned colleague and hear his analysis of the day we had. It was a very entertaining day. I do not want to waste too much time and I am aware that we have young children present and how we conduct ourselves is very important, so I simply say that I was impressed—immensely—with the pathetic line of questioning that dominated a percentage of our time. In this process of analysis, the people of Queensland would expect hard questioning. Unfortunately, there was very little. I note that the majority of time went to the opposition.

I first acknowledge the cooperation of both the Minister for Education and the Minister for Employment and Small Business and their respective departments in providing information to the hearings. Both ministers and their departments were more than cooperative. I also acknowledge and thank my fellow committee members: the chair, the member for Nudgee; the deputy chair, the member for Currumbin; and the members for Maryborough, Hinchinbrook and Pumicestone.

Certainly some very positive news came out of the hearings, which is what I would like to concentrate on. I turn first to the Education portfolio. The 2020 Ready program will deliver additional classrooms to secondary schools around the state to help us prepare for a new era in education in Queensland. In 2020, for the first time, our high schools will have the full complement of students across years 7 to 12. I am particularly pleased that both Cairns State High School and Trinity Bay State High School, both in my electorate, received funding to build new facilities that are absolutely essential to those growing institutions.

High-quality education and care is one of the best things we can do for our children's future. The national system that Queensland has signed up to—the National Partnership Agreement on the Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care—shows that Queensland has met all targets. Some 95 per cent of Queensland services have been assessed and rated and 81 per cent of those are meeting or exceeding the national quality standard compared to 78 per cent nationally. I am sure everybody in this chamber, regardless of their views, would find that to be an excellent result. The minister and the department need to be commended for this.

One of the ways we have ensured all children have access to quality kindergarten programs, regardless of the financial situation of the family, is through the government's Kindergarten Funding Scheme. This is a targeted state subsidy paid to services for eligible families to help reduce out-of-pocket expenses. I cannot register strongly enough how important this is for families that are doing it tough. This can be up to \$1,283 per eligible child annually and supports more than 13,500 families who have children in day care and community kindy. This is absolutely vital.

I was also pleased to see we are investing over \$29 million in funding for Closing the Gap initiatives to help support Indigenous students in the 2018-19 financial year. Queensland has the best results in the nation for year 12 QCE completions for students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. There is less than a percentage difference between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and other year 12s obtaining a QCE. Last year, 97.2 per cent of Indigenous state school students in Queensland achieved either a Queensland Certificate of Education or a Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement compared to 98.1 per cent of non-Indigenous students. In 2013 this figure was 75 per cent. These are extremely positive results.

I want to deal with some of the other areas that our estimates hearing focused on and some of the initiatives out in the marketplace. I speak of initiatives like Skilling Queenslanders for Work. TAFE is one of our premiere providers of vocational education and training. There is a \$15 million boost to TAFE Queensland. Our Back to Work program is producing fantastic results. We are investing \$900,000 in the Sticking Together pilot project. I commend the minister who is doing a fantastic job travelling around the state and selling this project. I thank her for her time in Cairns recently.

The Regional Skills Adjustment Strategy is a \$10 million two-year initiative by the Palaszczuk government which provides a regional response for workers who are retrenched following significant company closures. These are all very positive initiatives. They amongst other things were highlighted during the hearing. It was a pleasure to be part of a successful program.