



Speech By
Michael Healy

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Education, Employment and Small Business Committee, Report

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (3.26 pm): I must say, what an entertaining time it has been listening to some members in the chamber this morning and this afternoon. The Premier getting advice from backbench first-termers was pretty impressive!

I rise to speak on the budget estimates report of the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee. There are a lot of positive things happening in the ministers' portfolios. Before I acknowledge some of the outstanding ones, I want to pay my respects to those involved in the estimates process. Both ministers continue to do an outstanding job in this area, even though it has only been recognised by some members in the House. It is recognised by the majority of people in my electorate though. I also think it is important to recognise the directors-general who turned up and were exposed to some highly entertaining questions which were obviously not part of the process.

This morning the member for Bundamba took the liberty of giving us a run-down on where the estimates process has come from and what the estimates process is about. It is an opportunity to inquire as to how the government is spending its money, but we saw very little evidence of that. This being my second estimates, I was once again impressively disappointed to hear the line of questioning from the opposition. I would have thought that some politicians would have worked out by now that Queenslanders would far more prefer a calculated and genuinely critical analysis as opposed to childish and attention-seeking behaviour. Obviously that is not the case. I also add that at no stage was any alternative policy suggested or discussed. There was absolutely nothing but childish criticism.

Being a government totally focused on jobs whilst improving the quality of life for all Queenslanders, there were some very positive education policy additions. We recognise the importance of education in Queensland. We certainly do in my seat in Cairns. There are some important and positive changes worth noting that did not draw one single question.

In relation to the early childhood education and care service area, we are investing an additional \$30.4 million to support universal access to kindergarten. Anybody with half a brain would be able to acknowledge that statistically speaking kids who go to kindergarten are more likely to complete year 12. This is a long-term objective that continues to be well funded. We had not one simple question on this. We had not one single question—it could have been a simple one. I think that would have been appreciated.

We are investing \$25.6 million to support the operation of Early Years Places. We are investing an additional \$26.5 million for regulation of the early childhood sector. As this sector expands, we need these essential guidelines. This is what a government that plans does. This is what a government that has goals and objectives for expanding the education sector does.

We are investing \$7.5 million over two years to deliver Remote Kindergarten in 67 Queensland state schools. Up in our part of the world—Cairns—we do not have to go far to see isolated communities and to recognise how important these contributions are. How some people on the other side could stand up and say this budget is not good absolutely leaves me dumbfounded and, I suspect, a lot of the other electorates. We are investing \$136 million over five years to implement the Teaching Queensland's Future strategy. We are talking about 1,000 teachers in the next 12 months and 3,700 teachers up until 2022. Hello? Isn't this about jobs? I see that everyone has gone quiet on the other side, but these are pretty impressive details.

We will continue to invest up to \$235 million over four years from 2018-19 to modernise educational infrastructure under the Renewing Our Schools program. There was not one question from the opposition in relation to these key areas. We are completing the investment of \$250 million for additional facilities which are primarily in secondary schools. Most importantly, we are implementing the Digital Technologies curriculum, including coding and robotics. There are a huge number of positive things happening.

I have spent my entire working life in the private sector, and I can say that the initiatives coming out of the employment, small business and training sector are vital to growing businesses. I have been told that by many of the small businesses in my electorate, and 92 per cent of those businesses acknowledge its importance. There are 112 businesses in Cairns that will impacted by the payroll tax initiative, including the changed threshold and discount for businesses outside the south-east. We also have grants to small business, including the Small Business Digital Grants Program, the Business Growth Fund and Small Business Disaster Recovery grants. All of these are initiatives which are helping people out there. One would expect that, if there was any decency on the other side, you would question those and there would be some form of engagement. There was gone. The government continues to do an outstanding job for the people of Queensland—

(Time expired)