



Speech By  
**Hon. Shannon Fentiman**

**MEMBER FOR WATERFORD**

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Record of Proceedings, 21 August 2019


## **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL**

### **APPROPRIATION BILL**

#### **Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)**

#### **Appropriation Bill**

#### **Education, Employment and Small Business Committee, Report**

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (3.05 pm): I start my contribution by thanking the members of the committee and, in particular, the chair and member for Nudgee. I was pleased to read in the report that the committee recommended that the expenditure, including almost \$1 billion for skills and training, be agreed to without amendment.

It was very interesting to hear the questions put forward by members opposite in the estimates hearing, but there was not one question from those opposite about skills and training. I am not sure if they have noticed but a national conversation is being led by the Prime Minister, their LNP comrade, about the skills shortage in this country and how desperately we need to reform skills and training. Do these LNP members have one question about skills and training in Queensland? Were there any questions about how we will ensure that young Queenslanders have the skills they need to fill the jobs of the future? There was not one! There was not one question about employment or jobs for Queenslanders.

I am pleased to say that from government and crossbench members of parliament we had a number of great questions about skills and training. The member for Hinchinbrook asked a wonderful question about the quality of training, which is a very important issue that is being discussed at COAG, but on that matter it seems that the Queensland LNP are completely missing in action. It is little wonder because we know their record on skills and training: sack thousands of TAFE teachers and cut \$20 million from the User Choice budget, which is the budget that funds apprentices and trainees. Therefore, we should not have expected anything different from them this time around in terms of examining the training and skills budget. Even the Premier of New South Wales understands that the federal government needs to step up and start properly funding training and skills in this country.

At the committee hearing I was very pleased to talk about one thing that we have to do, which is to make things in this country fairer by giving kids who go to TAFE the same rights as kids who go to university. We want to make a great education at TAFE affordable by allowing kids access to student loans, just like kids who go to university. There was not one question on that subject from the member for Maroochydore, who did not ask one question about skills or employment either.

However, the member for Maroochydore did have something to say about Back to Work. I find the LNP's position on Back to Work very interesting. Almost every month they completely flip-flop, turn around and take a different position on the program. They went to the last election saying they would

scrap Back to Work. That program has put almost 20,000 Queenslanders back into paid work, but according to their election costings they were going to scrap it. Of course, our short-term South-East Queensland program was only available in certain local government areas and we expanded the program—

**Mr Bleijie** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Member for Kawana, you have had your turn.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** We expanded the program to continue it in areas of South-East Queensland experiencing high unemployment and the member for Maroochydore wanted to bring it back for the Sunshine Coast. They were going to cut, then she wanted it back and now it seems that because 0.4 per cent of the program's budget has been affected by fraudulent applications, which we have caught and referred those involved to police and now one person is in jail, she thinks that we should scrap the program again.

I am not sure what the LNP's position is on Back to Work. On this side of the House we love it because we want to see Queenslanders who have struggled to find work gain employment. Everywhere I travel the small businesses I meet absolutely love this program.

Another thing I was pleased to talk about at the estimates committee hearing was our \$885 million payroll tax package. Again, this is something that those opposite promised to do and something that they never delivered. Of course, there were no questions from those opposite or the member for Maroochydore about payroll tax because clearly our record speaks for itself.

I wanted to mention two issues related to the LNP not listening. I note the statement of reservation raised some concerns about the North Stradbroke Island Workers Assistance Scheme. For the benefit of the member for Maroochydore and those opposite I will be very clear. Only a small amount of that scheme has been spent because the majority of workers are still employed on the island by Sibelco.

**Dr Robinson:** Not true.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** 'Not true.' I take that interjection. The local member does not even understand what is happening on Minjerrabah.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms McMillan): Order!

**Dr Robinson** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Oodgeroo. Resume please, Minister.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** We are working closing with Sibelco and that scheme will be continuing to provide assistance to workers.

I also want to quickly mention what is happening at the Cairns TAFE campus. They are clearly clutching at straws to try to say we are not meeting our election promise. That construction will start early next year. I will be there to turn the first sod with the member for Cairns because the record of those opposite when it comes to TAFE speaks for itself.

*(Time expired)*