



Speech By
Brent Mickelberg

MEMBER FOR BUDERIM

Record of Proceedings, 31 August 2021


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Education, Employment and Training Committee, Report

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (4.37 pm): I rise to address the Education, Employment and Training Committee's report into the budget estimates process. This is the latest budget that fails small business and it fails our communities. Small and family businesses are the engine room of the Queensland economy. Small and family businesses are the backbone of communities right across Queensland. The Treasurer has acknowledged that Queensland small businesses 'bore the brunt of the COVID-19 downturn'. Despite this acknowledgement, Labor again decided to ignore them in this budget. In fact, the budget courageously ignored the impact of COVID-19 and was built on an assumption that there will be no significant lockdowns across Queensland.

It is ironic that much of Queensland was, in fact, in lockdown on 1 July when this budget came into effect. In fact, since 1 July we have seen further lockdowns across much of Queensland, which just highlights that the budget was built on a very thin foundation indeed.

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr MICKELBERG: I hear the chirping from the Minister for Education who likes alternative facts and is not prepared to address the truth when she comes in here.

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr MICKELBERG: She likes to repeat alternative facts and falsehoods because she cannot get her facts straight.

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr MICKELBERG: The minister can chirp away. As demonstrated during the estimates process it is clear that, despite the obvious looming threats from COVID-19 and the potential for future lockdowns, this state Labor government had completed no planning or preparation at all. The impact of recent lockdowns on small and family businesses has been writ large over recent weeks as businesses in the seat of McConnel go under while many others fight to keep the doors open. Businesses down the road in the seat of McConnel are going under but the Minister for Education and member for McConnel does not care.

Ms GRACE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

Mr Mickelberg: Glass jaw.

Ms GRACE: I have two points of order. On my first point of order I take offence and ask that the statement be withdrawn. The second point of order relates to the 'glass jaw' comment. I take offence and ask for that to be withdrawn as well.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): The minister has taken personal offence and asked for a withdrawal. I ask you to withdraw.

Mr MICKELBERG: I withdraw twice. The state government's failure to plan for such a scenario is appalling. During estimates I asked if any modelling had been undertaken in relation to the impact that lockdowns were having on small and family businesses. The answer: none! That is not good enough. The minister for small business either does not care about the impact on small businesses or is incapable of winning the argument around the cabinet table to get support for small business. Which is it? She should come in here today and she should tell the 450,000 small business owners and their employees which it is. Is it that she does not care or is it that she is ineffectual? If the minister did care and did have influence, we would have seen a small business support package in place before Queensland went into lockdown. As it is, applications for the \$1,000 grants for sole traders only opened today, nearly a month after the government announced their already woefully inadequate and late package.

When the Treasurer announced the COVID-19 Business Support Grants he said—

... we need to set up the process for the applications to be considered and dealt with by government. We're looking to set up the processing administrative process for this within two weeks.

He went on to say—

We have looked at that very carefully inside government and we aim to get the application process going within two weeks.

After standing up in front of the people of Queensland and telling them that he would get applications started within two weeks, what happened? He failed! The Treasurer failed. He failed to deliver yet again. It is the latest in a long line of failures by this government. And that is just for applications to start. How many small and family businesses have received funds in their bank accounts yet? The answer: not many!

Small and family businesses across Queensland deserve to know what support the state government will provide when we go into the next lockdown in the seat of McConnel—or the one after that. Which is it? How much money is going to be on the table for small and family businesses in the next lockdown? The member for McConnel sits at the cabinet table and should speak up. Now is the time for that information, not after the next lockdown when businesses are dealing with the uncertainty that comes with a lockdown. Businesses need certainty and this government is failing them on that count.

In the short time I have left I would like to address the government's Social Enterprise Jobs Fund, which was announced in last year's budget with \$8 million, but it is stuck in neutral. Of the \$3 million in grants in that fund, exactly zero dollars had been distributed to social enterprises at the time of the estimates hearing. In relation to the remaining \$5 million in the fund, the committee was advised that it would be spent 'developing the sustainability of this emerging sector'. No details were disclosed on what that means, how the money would be spent or any measurable outcomes for the social enterprise sector. Like so many Labor policy proposals, the state government's Social Enterprise Jobs Fund is heavy on photo-op but light on follow-up. This state government is failing small and family businesses and Queensland small businesses deserve better.

(Time expired)