



Speech By  
**James Lister**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS**

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Record of Proceedings, 23 February 2021


**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL**

**APPROPRIATION (2020-2021) BILL**

**Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)**

**Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill**

**Education, Employment and Training Committee, Report**

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (3.32 pm): I rise to speak on the committee report for the Education, Employment and Training Committee. It is fortunate that I am able to speak straight after the chair of the committee because my honourable friend the member for Redlands has a very one-sided view on the question of the committee process. Does anybody really expect us to take advice from the government about how the opposition is supposed to hold it to account? I heard the references to an esteemed former Speaker of this House and so I ask those members, including those members who are of the left and pride themselves on being from the protest movement: do they really expect us to sit down there like good boys and girls and behave ourselves perfectly while the fate of Queensland rests in our hands and while every effort is used by the system to shield ministers from accountability, to prevent witnesses from having to answer the tough questions and to bore us with baffle and nonsense from dorthy dixers, for which the ministers are clearly already prepared?

We have a sovereign role in this parliament of holding this government to account. We must hold this government to account for its stewardship of the government and for its expenditure of public moneys, and there were very many things which this government ought to have been held to account on. Considering the process by which we arrived at this budget where we had the committees given from above the timings for their inquiries, which has not happened in my time so far, and given the fact that there was not a budget introduced in the last parliament and the fact that the government managed to borrow \$28 billion rather than the \$4 billion that it had led us to expect, there were many questions to be answered.

The advent of parliamentary committees was a recommendation of Commissioner Fitzgerald in 1989 and he specifically made reference to the fact that in a unicameral parliament with a modern parliamentary system of party politics it was essential that there be proper mechanisms through which the government will be held to account. There is not a person in this chamber who can look me in the eye and say with a straight face that the process that was used at those estimates and the ones before has been anything other than a cynical exercise to waste time and to prevent the opposition from making inquiries into the activities of the government.

**Ms Richards:** You had 62 per cent of the time.

**Mr LISTER:** I take that interjection from my honourable friend the member for Redlands regarding 62 per cent of the time, but how good was that time if we were constrained by standing orders which prevent us from inquiring properly into the activities of this government?

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr LISTER:** I will not be lectured to by that odious rump over there about the expenditure of public funds. It is our job—our sovereign duty—to inquire into what the government does, and every aspect of the committee process has been refined down by this government to shield it from accountability and to make sure that its dirty little secrets are not aired. I might say that there are quite a few, because we hear about the record expenditure in all sorts of fields, particularly education.

Earlier I heard the honourable member talk about extra teachers and extra teacher aides. Why then has there been a continued decline in key education standards during the time of this government? Why is it that we are spending more and more and getting less and less? It would not matter so much if it was not borrowed money, but when we are borrowing money to keep the lights on and borrowing money to pay the salaries of public servants we ought to expect proper results. We want to see our kids educated and be a success. The purpose of the education system is to educate our children. When that is not happening, it is perfectly in order that the opposition should seek to ask why and should seek to expose the failings of the government, of which there are many.

**Ms McMILLAN:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. With regard to the issue that has been raised by the member for Southern Downs, he is deliberately misleading the House. There is absolutely no failure in results in Queensland. Queensland results—

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mrs Gerber): Member, there is a process for that. Write to the Speaker.

**Ms McMILLAN:** I will be writing to you about this issue.

**Mr LISTER:** When you hit a nerve, the interjections come. Apart from just the expenditure and results, there is also a flagrant disregard for proper process in the education department. We are all aware of the scandalous situation where the former deputy premier had been involved with senior members of the Public Service. We have seen some lovey-dovey text messages between the two talking about the appointment of a senior principal at the Inner City South State Secondary College. It is not to the government's credit that to this day there is a senior public servant on a very fat pay packet suspended on full pay while further investigations go on. If the people in my electorate of Southern Downs who need facilities in their schools or need extra hours for their teacher aides and so forth are not getting what they want, it makes it all the harder to accept when we hear of scandals like this. This government deserves to have been held to account. We were not able to do it as well as we wished given the constraints, but we will continue to do so.