



Speech By  
**Kim Richards**

**MEMBER FOR REDLANDS**

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Record of Proceedings, 23 February 2021


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

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

#### **Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill**

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

 **Ms RICHARDS** (Redlands—ALP) (3.28 pm): I rise to speak to the Education, Employment and Training Committee's report on the 2020-21 budget estimates process. The committee made one recommendation: that the proposed expenditure be agreed to. I enjoyed chairing my first estimates for the areas of education, employment and training, also taking in the portfolio areas of industrial relations, racing and small business. These are areas central to our Palaszczuk government's focus on jobs now and jobs for the future to ensure all Queenslanders have a bright future ahead while we continue to successfully recover from the economic impacts of COVID-19.

The 2020-21 budget continues our government's investment and fast-tracking in job-generating infrastructure and essential services for our growing state. Today we heard that Queensland really is the place to be, with more Australians moving here than anywhere else in Australia. Queensland created more jobs than our neighbours in Victoria and New South Wales during COVID, with the ABS reporting 224,000 jobs created from May 2020 to January 2021.

The estimates process, for those on this side of the House, was an opportunity to examine our Palaszczuk government's record investment in Queensland for education, industrial relations and racing, with over \$14 billion in appropriations. We continue to invest in more teachers and teacher aides, employing more than 5,000 teachers and 1,600 teacher aides. We are investing in new and innovative programs in our schools, such as homework hubs and wellbeing specialists.

We are investing in our schools, having built 18 new schools and another four to come over the next two years. We are investing in upgrading existing schools. In my patch I have been delighted to see so much great work going on right across all of our state schools, with more work to come down the track. The air-conditioning is well underway. That was a commitment that our government made to deliver by 2022, and we can see that in the budget process. That is in contrast to the LNP's promise of 2028, so we are certainly fast-tracking.

The estimates process also allowed us to examine the appropriation of \$1.3 billion for the department of small business, training and skills development. COVID-19 has been one of the greatest challenges our world has faced, but we have managed the health crisis so well that our Queensland economy has been on the front foot of recovery. The CCIQ in its latest Pulse survey revealed that general business conditions and the 12-month economic outlook for Queensland and Australia more

broadly are rating satisfactorily, so we are definitely on the road to recovery. I want to thank Minister Farmer for all of the work that she has done across the state with the small business roadshows. A lot of valuable feedback and input came out of those which will help inform how we go forward.

We have invested in small business including the QRIDA loans scheme, small business adaptation grants, matched funding with JobTrainer funds and we have commitments such as the Big Plans for Small Business programs that we heard about. I also want to commend the investment in the regional jobs committee process out of Minister Farmer's department. It is an excellent program. The work that is being done by those regional job committees is absolutely fantastic, and Minister Fentiman did a great job in helping us bring that forward for the Redlands, and there is great work being done there with the Redlands Coast Chamber of Commerce leading the way.

We continue to invest in TAFE and in our TAFE buildings. At the Alexandra Hills TAFE there is great work going on with the plumbing centre, the trade centre and new nurses, ensuring that we have the skills and training to create jobs into the future. We are also investing in free TAFE and free apprentices for Queenslanders under the age of 25. We are investing in programs like Skilling Queenslanders for Work. I know that I have spoken a lot about this program in this place, but it really does change lives when you see where they start and where they finish. What that translates to in jobs is an incredible statistic. Similar to TAFE, that program was one of the ones that the LNP took a wrecking ball to when it had the opportunity. Our government is about investing in these vital programs that help create jobs and career pathways.

I want to respond to the LNP's statement of reservation and on their conduct during the estimates process. The behaviour on the day was in part appalling, particularly the performance by a former Speaker of this House and one of our longest serving parliamentarians. It was nothing short of disrespectful to the chair and really quite unbecoming of a member of this place. I note that within the statement of reservation it is some of the same old rhetoric in terms of shielding, not enough time and the fact that the standing orders are too onerous. Non-government members had 62 per cent of the time on that day, so there was plenty of time to have asked the questions that they needed to ask and it is just a pity that they did not think about the questions that they were putting forward on the day.

The statement of reservation also notes that LNP opposition members believe that a complete reinvigoration of the estimates process is essential. We all remember what reinvigoration looked like when the opposition leader sat around the cabinet table. There is one word that comes to mind, and that would be hypocrisy. Our Palaszczuk government is leading the way. We are getting on with the job of delivering for Queensland.