



Speech By
Kim Richards

MEMBER FOR REDLANDS

Record of Proceedings, 31 August 2021


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Education, Employment and Training Committee, Report

 **Ms RICHARDS** (Redlands—ALP) (4.26 pm): I rise to speak to the Education, Employment and Training Committee's report on the 2021-22 budget estimates. The committee made one recommendation—that is, that the proposed expenditure be agreed to. It was a day full of colour and movement done in a very COVID-safe environment, so I take this opportunity to thank the attendants on the day who worked very hard to make sure that we were all kept safe. I also thank our secretariat staff who did a lot of hard work in the background to ensure that the day was a success. These areas continue to be the focus of the Palaszczuk government. It is focusing on jobs now and jobs into the future and the vital funding that ensures that all Queenslanders have a bright future ahead.

In small business and skills and training I thank Minister Farmer and her staff for their comprehensive overview of all of the work that is being done, particularly as we economically recover from the impacts of COVID. COVID continues to disrupt our small businesses and during the estimates process there was discussion around preparedness for future lockdowns. We have since then experienced a lockdown and seen how quick and agile we have been in our response to being able to provide really great packages of support for small businesses right across Queensland. Big Plans for Small Business was also covered in detail—that is, the \$140 million plan. That is some fantastic work again by our Palaszczuk government.

We also heard about the small business roadshows that the minister has conducted right across the country and how informative they have been and how much of a part they have had to play in terms of the design of how the budget is spent. We also heard about our TAFE investment and our Skilling Queenslanders for Work being two very key pieces in our skills and training platforms. In education, IR and racing there is again a record investment—\$15 billion in infrastructure, maintenance and investment in our schools, investment in our children's futures. In the Redlands air conditioning and solar are nearly finalised for all of our schools, and that is fantastic. Local Schools Local Jobs, the halls programs and the maintenance schedule are doing fantastic work. In particular, Capalaba is getting a new hall.

We also have to commend the work that is being done within the budget looking at students' mental health and wellbeing. Implementing GPs in schools and homework hubs are important programs to make sure that we position all of our children for success as they move through their education.

In terms of industrial relations, we are doing work that I am particularly interested in. We have a renewed focus on gender equality and improving women's economic security arising from the Australian Human Rights Commission's landmark Respect@Work report, which was as a result of a national inquiry into sexual harassment in Australian workplaces. Since the release of the Respect@Work report the Palaszczuk government has announced a five-year review of the Queensland Industrial Relations Act 2016 and the Queensland Human Rights Commission is undertaking a review of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991. These are important programs. It was quite interesting to read the LNP's dissenting report. The dissenting report was pretty light on, but the third paragraph states—

Finally, workplaces should be a safe environment devoid of harassment, intimidation and coercion. When reputable media agencies publish articles about workplace intimidation these allegations should be investigated.

I find that extraordinarily ironic on the day when the LNP's very own federal member for Bowman, Mr Laming, wants to have another go at me in the *Courier-Mail* today. I will table that article for the benefit of the House.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Courier-Mail*, dated 30 August 2021, titled 'Laming pushes Redland MP for apology' [1279](#).

Those opposite should look in their own backyard first and tidy that up before they start having a go about harassment in this workplace. This is a workplace too. In the conclusion of the dissenting report it states that the hearings left many questions unanswered. When one looks at the time frames that we had, across the course of the day the non-government side was given over 60 per cent of the time. It was a fair and it was a reasonable amount of time to ask the questions that needed to be answered. The second paragraph of the conclusion states they did not feel there was re-assurance from the departments. Quite frankly, that is certainly not what I heard from all of the officials who attended on the day. They answered the questions. They were happy to provide follow-ups. In fact, we had nothing taken on notice throughout the course of the day because the answers were so comprehensive from the ministers and from the director-general. On behalf of the committee I thank everybody who was involved in the day. I think it was robust and I think we got a really good interrogation of the budget for the portfolio areas.