



Speech By  
**Barry O'Rourke**

**MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON**

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Record of Proceedings, 16 August 2022


**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL**

**APPROPRIATION BILL**

**Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)**

**Appropriation Bill**

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

 **Mr O'ROURKE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (3.55 pm): The estimates hearing process allowed questions to be asked of Minister Grace Grace and Minister Di Farmer. I congratulate the ministers, their staff and the government employees from the various departments. They were all very well prepared. I appreciate the large amount of work that takes place in preparation. Being an ex-public servant I know how much work goes on behind the scenes.

Minister Grace gave an opening statement regarding her portfolio areas. Throughout the year we all read about different investment in education but when the highlights are included in one opening statement we know that it is a good Labor government that invests in education outcomes, and this estimates hearing demonstrated just that.

Some of the highlights include the following: \$2 billion this year alone supporting 420 jobs to maintain, renew and build new schools and facilities; nearly \$220 million over two years for additional classrooms to existing schools to address growth; and \$650 million over the next five years for school halls, playgrounds, tuckshops, performing art centres and major specialist classroom renovations. Since the Palaszczuk government was elected, we have seen 6,000 new teachers employed, as well as 1,600 teacher aides; \$80.6 million to transition schools to the disability support resourcing model; \$15.5 million for Respectful Relationships; \$34.5 million for Share the Dignity; and we are investing more than a billion dollars in our kindergartens over the next five years.

In the industrial relations area, Minister Grace spoke about the nation-leading reforms supporting Queensland workers and the area of her responsibility that I enjoy the most—the racing portfolio. It is great to see investment particularly in the country racing circuit.

Minister Farmer spoke of the importance of the employment and small business and training and skills development portfolio areas as they are at the heart of the current and future success of our state's economy and, in turn, the opportunities and wellbeing of each and every Queenslanders. In Queensland we are investing in almost half a million small businesses, and this will always be front and centre of our \$15.2 billion economic recovery plan. There is an almost \$250 million commitment to small businesses in this year's budget as we value and understand the importance of our small businesses. We have increased the ceiling for payroll tax deductions to \$10.4 million, creating a saving of up to \$26,000 a year for around 12,000 small businesses.

We have a full suite of grants in place permanently, with \$31.9 million committed over the next four years. This includes the just recently announced 262 regional businesses receiving a \$5,000 Business Basics grant. Twenty-one of those businesses were in my local area. There will also be a \$2.5 million Business Boost grant program, which will open on 12 August.

Our government's commitment to skills and training is evidenced in our record investment of \$1.2 billion in this year's budget. Initiatives such as Free TAFE for under 25s and the shared commitment to JobTrainer have meant that we have seen a 64.6 per cent increase in apprenticeship and traineeship commencements. It is especially pleasing to see this in Central Queensland.

Skilling Queenslanders for Work continues to have some of the best outcomes for the lives of disadvantaged jobseekers around the state, with more than 76 per cent of former participants in employment or training, or both, a year after finishing the program. I truly enjoy going to the graduation events and hearing about how these changes have improved these people's lives.

Overall, the estimates hearing was well managed. I congratulate the member for Redlands. It should be noted that throughout the day 61 per cent of the time allowed went to questions from non-government members in comparison to 39 per cent to government members. Finally, I thank the committee, the secretariat and all the staff involved. Congratulations and well done to all involved.