



Speech By
Dr Christian Rowan

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

Record of Proceedings, 16 August 2022


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Education, Employment and Training Committee, Report

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (3.59 pm): As the Liberal National Party's shadow minister for education, I rise to address the Appropriation Bill 2022-23 and specifically the proposed expenditure of the Palaszczuk state Labor government as examined by the Queensland parliament's Education, Employment and Training Committee during the recent budget estimates hearing. In the 2022-23 state budget the Queensland Labor government has allocated \$16.5 billion for the provision of education and early childhood education in Queensland. This is a significant financial allocation and one that demands absolute diligence, care and oversight to ensure not only the best value for taxpayers' dollars but also that key educational outcomes are met. Unfortunately, this year's budget estimates hearings demonstrated the full extent to which the state Labor government has lost control of education and Labor's ongoing failure to live up to its obligations to Queensland students, parents, teachers and staff and Queensland taxpayers.

Under the Palaszczuk state Labor government a raft of integrity, accountability and transparency issues continue to grow and plague the Department of Education. It was disappointing to learn during the committee hearing that the new director-general, who formally commenced his role in December of last year, had not read the Crime and Corruption Commission's report and investigation into allegations relating to the appointment of a school principal which involved former deputy premier Jackie Trad and former deputy director-general of education Jeff Hunt. When this report was handed down in July 2020 the former chair of the Crime and Corruption Commission, Alan MacSporran, stated—

All Queensland public servants and elected officials should read this report to see how a straightforward recruitment process went off the rails. This type of conduct should never occur again.

The Crime and Corruption Commission also stated—

... it is important for any person interested in these matters to read the entirety of the investigation report and the submissions from relevant parties to understand the basis of the CCC's conclusions following our extensive investigation.

There can be no excuse for the Labor Minister for Education to not have ensured that a new director-general of education had read the report in full and familiarised himself with the full contents, findings and associated recommendations. This failure of the Labor Minister for Education underscores the contempt with which the Labor state government treats serious matters of integrity and

accountability. Such contempt also comes with a financial cost, as it was revealed in these hearings that Queensland taxpayers have had to pay close to \$631,000 in net payments to Mr Hunt during the more than two years of his suspension whilst those matters remained unresolved.

These estimates hearings also revealed the extent to which Queenslanders have been let down by the state Labor government's failure to adequately manage teacher workforce planning. When Labor gave an election commitment in 2020 that it would be hiring more than 6,100 teachers over four years, Queenslanders rightly expected that Labor would be delivering a net increase in teachers. Indeed, Queenslanders have been presented with rubbery figures complete with rubbery explanations and excuses from the Palaszczuk state Labor government. The Palaszczuk state Labor government has not even come close to meeting its targets, and as a consequence student outcomes are suffering. This is despite a \$1 million five-month recruitment campaign to ensure teacher workforce growth meets demand.

Finally, despite testimony provided during these hearings, Queensland parents and teachers remain incredibly concerned about the safety crisis that is engulfing our schools. The figures speak for themselves: WorkCover claims lodged by teachers and staff which have been accepted have skyrocketed by 78 per cent in the last five years. WorkCover claims paid to teachers and staff over the last five years has increased by over 86 per cent. As revealed in a prehearing question on notice, between 2017 and 2021 there were over 23,800 combined drugs and weapons incidents in our Queensland schools. This equates on average to 25 drugs and weapons incidents each and every day in our schools. With a \$39 million security announcement made by Labor recently, parents and teachers are saying to me that this Labor government is placing a more important value on protecting school buildings from attack than protecting our teachers, students and staff.

After years of failed priorities and failed education service delivery, the Palaszczuk state Labor government must finally regain control of our education system in order to improve student outcomes, enhance teacher safety and deliver a world-class education system. This is something that all Queensland students, parents, teachers and staff deserve. There is no doubt that Queenslanders deserve better than what has been provided by this Labor government with respect to education here in Queensland.