



Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

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 LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (4.19 pm): I, too, want to contribute to the debate on the Education, Employment and Training Committee report on estimates this year. I would like to follow on from some of the things that my honourable friend the member for Kawana mentioned before. He made some observations which are very serious indeed and I think were not properly addressed in estimates.

We had a case where he has made a complaint about allegations he has received that industrial inspectors have been colluding with the CFMEU to disadvantage businesses which do not operate a union site. The response that we got from one of the departmental officers at estimates leads us to suspect quite strongly that there have been adverse findings in the report which we have not seen yet. The question is: where is this report? Why is it taking so long for it to be released? Why is it that the minister and the departmental officer who was at the table at the time would not answer the question about when we are going to see this report and what the findings are? It was a discourtesy to the committee, to put it mildly, that those at the table refused repeatedly to answer the question.

I know the member for Kawana tried, without avail, several times to get a straight answer to the question. I reflect on what the member of Stafford had just said in criticising the member for Kawana. I think he misses the point here. It is our job as members of parliament to scrutinise the administration, and officers of departments are bound to offer a straight, reasonable and truthful answer to questions being asked. It gives me no hope that the politicisation of the public service is not continuing under the Palaszczuk government when we see what appeared very much to me to be the refusal by a departmental officer to answer a straight question because they felt that perhaps the straight answer would not be appreciated by the minister.

Ms Grace: He has been updated personally twice.

Mr LISTER: I take the interjection from the minister.

Ms Grace: Yes, take it, thank you. He has been updated personally twice. Take the interjection.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Lui): Order, Minister!

Mr LISTER: It does not change my concerns for the deeper issue. I would like to also raise the question of education. I put a question on notice to the minister today about what protections and what impetus have been given to give teachers and staff at state schools the powers necessary to intervene in the cases of fights and to do something about weapons, unlawful conduct, vaping and so forth.

I know from my conversations with the Queensland Teachers' Union that this is a matter of great concern to staff in state schools. I get it, and I am sure many of us members here get complaints from constituents, either parents or perhaps teachers or those who are friends and relatives of them, that it is difficult to stick your neck out to ensure proper conduct and enforce reasonable standards and discipline at schools. There is a perception there that they will not be necessarily backed if they have to make the decision to intervene. I think that is a disappointing situation. I hope that that is not the case, but since it has come to me through the Queensland Teachers' Union and through constituents—parents and so forth—I fear that it may be.

Lastly, we heard with great gusto the member for Buderim talk about the Tradies in Paradise program and the \$2 million which was expended on a campaign to recruit tradies to Queensland on the promise of a \$1,750 bonus. Obviously we would all commend the intent there, but the honest truth is that that campaign was a dismal failure and it blew away \$2 million. The state of Queensland cannot afford to throw away \$2 million. I wonder how it is that the department or the minister responsible thought through this campaign and researched what might be possible and the best way to do it. Certainly it was a failure.

It occurs to me that the \$2 million which was spent would build 181 kilometres of wild dog exclusion fencing in my electorate to protect the very hardworking graziers from wild dog attacks, it would do a lot for the roads in our electorates, it would help with providing grants to organisations in my electorate that do really good things, and it would also recruit more teachers. It would provide a better standard of service to anybody in Queensland who depends upon the state government.