



Speech By  
**Mark Boothman**

**MEMBER FOR THEODORE**

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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 BOOTHMAN** (Theodore—LNP) (4.39 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate of the report on budget estimates by the Education, Employment and Training Committee. Unfortunately, I was not able to be present on the hearing day due to the flu, but I looked on with great interest at what transpired during the day. I appreciated the questioning by the shadow ministers drilling down into the budget estimates. It was far better than sitting there listening to the continual Dorothy Dixers from government members!

I want to highlight one of the comments the Minister for Education made in relation to hiring 6,000 teachers over four years. We have a statewide teacher shortage, and I note that the minister recently met with other ministers to discuss this issue. While we talk about hiring additional teachers, one issue that concerns my schools and P&Cs is that, due to the number of teachers who are away due to flu and COVID, a lot of schools are forced to hire temporary teachers to fill the gaps. This is an expense borne by the school.

A recent Auditor-General's report found that school internet speeds were sadly lacking. The government has gone out of its way to fix this, but I am concerned about the cost to my local schools of upgrading their internal networks. Along with the additional cost of the hiring temporary teachers whilst still paying current teachers, this is a major financial burden for schools that needs to be addressed.

The minister did speak about the future schools program. I highlight the fact that I have one of the oldest schools on the Gold Coast in Coomera State School, which next year celebrates 150 years. It desperately needs funding for some tender loving care for its school facilities. Down the road, new schools are being built. A lot of families want to send their children to the new school, because it looks brand new and flashy. That bleeds population from the existing schools. This is an issue that I have raised in this chamber many times and that the department and the minister need to address. We need to give money to older schools to ensure they are able to compete with newer schools.

I refer again to teacher numbers. An ABC article, dated 24 June 2022, titled 'Sharp increase in Queensland teacher vacancies as non-teaching staff front classes to stay open' states—

More than 300 ... state schools are plugging critical teacher vacancies with non-classroom-based educators to keep schools operating ...

In May this year there were 1,050 vacancies in Queensland schools. Last year at around the same time that number was 760, so the number has increased. Therefore, what the department is doing is not working.

I want to be brutally honest about what some of my teachers are saying about their work environment. They are dealing with high-needs students in classrooms and they desperately need support. They are using a lot of their time to deal with high-needs students and, therefore, other students are missing out on education outcomes. The department desperately needs to address this.

There is also fighting in schools, putting teachers in harm's way. The department needs to address this issue. This is why teachers are leaving the occupation after three to four years. Nothing in the estimates process does anything to address that. The government needs to get off its backside and do something about it, because our teachers are fantastic and they deserve a better working environment.