



Speech By  
**Barry O'Rourke**

**MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON**

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Record of Proceedings, 22 August 2023


**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL**

**APPROPRIATION BILL**

**Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)**

**Appropriation Bill**

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

 **Mr O'ROURKE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (4.17 pm): On 3 August the Education, Employment and Training Committee examined the Appropriation Bill 2023 and budget estimates for the committee's areas of responsibility. The estimates process allowed members to ask questions of Minister Grace and Minister Farmer. I congratulate the ministers, their staff and the government employees from the various departments. All were very well prepared and I appreciate the large volume of work that takes place behind the scenes.

Minister Grace in her opening statement spoke of delivering yet another record school and early education budget of \$17.8 billion. This includes free kindy for all Queenslanders. I know in my electorate it has been extremely well received, as I am sure it has been in your electorate. Not only will it leave a positive legacy for years to come; it will also provide cost-of-living relief, with families set to save up to \$4,600 per year.

All our teachers, support staff and students deserve to work and learn in world-class facilities, which is why our ambitious investment in education infrastructure continues. There is \$2.1 billion this year alone to build, improve, expand and maintain schools right across the state. In my electorate I have seen an investment of around \$100 million in school infrastructure since the Palaszczuk government was elected.

In the industrial relations portfolio, the Palaszczuk government continues to stand up for and support Queensland workers with our nation-leading reforms. The minister spoke of the important codes that have come into force, giving our workers some of the strongest protection in the country when it comes to psychological wellbeing and silicosis prevention.

In the racing portfolio, the independent IER report found that under the Palaszczuk government the economic contribution of the Queensland racing industry has soared 83 per cent to a record \$2.2 billion. Racing is thriving in this state and our new sustainable funding model is providing not only certainty but also a big boost to our country racing clubs, which are the heart of so many communities in regional and remote areas.

Minister Farmer spoke of her priorities for youth justice and community safety, tackling the complex causes of youth crime and targeting serious repeat offenders. She made the commitment that everything they will do will be based on evidence. In addition to the evaluation of the youth justice programs and services being undertaken by the Auditor-General, her director-general will also be undertaking evaluations.

The minister spoke of her government's investment of more than \$1.2 billion per annum in skills and training. She said that we must ensure that the government's investment is attuned to the jobs that we need now and into the future. Currently, the state government is negotiating a new national skills agreement with the Commonwealth. VET qualifications will support Queenslanders gain employment in eight of the 10 largest growing occupations by 2025-26. Through this review the department will make sure that our systems meet the needs of our current workforce now and into the future. Small businesses are the backbone of our communities, representing 97 per cent of Queensland businesses and nearly 50 per cent of private sector employees. They bring \$145 billion in revenue to Queensland.

Non-government members were given well over 50 per cent of the time to ask questions in comparison to the government members. Finally, I would like to thank the secretariat and parliamentary staff for their assistance throughout the estimates process and the staff involved in the preparation. Well done to all.