



Speech By  
**Dr Christian Rowan**

**MEMBER FOR MOGGILL**

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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**

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (4.00 pm): As the Liberal National Party's shadow minister for education, I rise to address the Appropriation Bill for 2023-24 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 budget estimates hearing on 3 August 2023. Throughout the estimates hearing the Labor Minister for Education continued to backtrack on the ironclad election commitment that Labor made to Queenslanders at the 2020 state election when Labor said that it would hire 6,190 new teachers and 1,139 new teacher aides.

**Ms Grace** interjected.

**Dr ROWAN:** I know the Labor Minister for Education does not like to hear this, but no amount of rubbery figures or tricky semantics from the minister could mask the fact that this state government will barely be able to replace the teachers that it is losing through attrition, let alone recruit the teacher numbers that it promised at the 2020 state election during this term of parliament. Even the latest Queensland public sector workforce profile showed that it had only recruited 587. What is more, and as revealed through pre-estimates question on notice No. 17, 5,700 teachers and teacher aides have quit the Department of Education over the last 18 months. The director-general of the Department of Education, when questioned, confirmed that there are no specific measures or processes in place to comprehensively understand why so many Queensland teachers are leaving the Department of Education.

Also during the hearing important transparency and accountability measures were raised in relation to the interactions with Labor aligned lobbying firms and sustained lobbying activity with not only the Minister for Education's office but also senior executives of the Department of Education. Important questions were also asked regarding Anacta Strategies meeting with the then chief of staff of the Minister for Education on behalf of Aspen Medical just a week and a half before a Cabinet Budget Review Committee meeting was attended by the minister prior to the awarding of a \$40 million contract with Aspen Medical.

**Ms Grace** interjected.

**Dr ROWAN:** I know the Labor government does not like to hear about Aspen Medical, but what we know is that Aspen Medical—

**Mr STEVENS:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The Minister for Education has been interjecting time and time again, and not from her own seat. She knows the rules well and if she wants to—

**Ms Grace:** Leader of the House.

**Mr STEVENS:** No, you are not the Leader of the House.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Bush): Order, members! I will hear the point of order in silence. Member, there is no point of order. I am listening. The member is in her allocated seat at the moment and there is no point of order.

**Dr ROWAN:** We know that this government does not like to hear about Anacta, but what we do know is that during the last election Anacta was there at 1 William Street and has been lobbying on behalf of various Labor mates. I know the minister does not like to hear about that, but there are important questions about that. On the subject of the Cabinet Budget Review Committee, the minister was also specifically asked—

... given you sit on CBRC: when did you find out about the \$2.4 billion cost blowout for train manufacturing?

The minister refused to provide a date, and we now know why, and she wants Queenslanders to move on, but Queenslanders will not move on from that scandal—the cover-up—that has been engulfing this government. Queenslanders are absolutely seeing what has been happening.

**Ms GRACE:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order in terms of relevance in relation to the portfolio we are discussing at the moment. This is under the transport portfolio and completely irrelevant—not even close.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member, I will give you some caution to come back to the report.

**Dr ROWAN:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, but the point was that that was asked of the minister during the estimates hearings.

**Ms Grace:** Yes, and was completely irrelevant then and it is completely irrelevant now.

**Dr ROWAN:** The minister continues to interject. She did not like hearing the questions and does not like hearing the truth when it comes to this government and the lack of openness and transparency, but I will return to what we are talking about here in relation to the education estimates hearing. The estimates hearing also uncovered the extensive use of external consultancies by the Department of Education, and there were certainly significant questions about outsourcing and not utilising the expert skills of our internal public servants. There are also matters raised in relation to the awarding of contracts to Deloitte, specifically given the awarding of contracts following the 2022 federal election, given a senior director of Deloitte also ran as the federal Labor candidate for Brisbane and campaigned alongside the Premier and the Minister for Education, so there are serious questions about this.

Importantly, we also found out that not a single educational target in reading, writing and numeracy for years 3, 5, 7 and 9 has been met, and Indigenous outcomes are even worse in Queensland. The Minister for Education does not like to hear that, but the fact is students in Queensland are being failed and it is even worse in our Indigenous communities, particularly when we also look at declining attendance rates. Not only is there a teacher workforce crisis in Queensland but educational outcomes are declining and targets are not being met across years 3, 5, 7 and 9, and again it is even worse in Indigenous communities. This government might like to talk about closing the gap in Queensland, but the gap is widening and it is widening under educational outcomes when it comes to Indigenous communities in Queensland. This Labor government obviously needs to look at this particularly and do more. It needs to get kids to school so they can be learning in those schools and the government needs to address the teacher workforce crisis in Queensland.

I also note that the director-general of education raised the forthcoming new proficiency levels for NAPLAN. In advance of the release of NAPLAN results this year, the Minister for Education must explicitly outline how these results will be interpreted and importantly be read and interpreted against previous years' results. We also know that the behavioural management framework is broken in Queensland and that drug use and suspensions are up by 190 per cent under this Labor government since it was elected in 2015. There are many more matters that we will continue to prosecute. There was not enough time at estimates and there are many matters that this government must address when it comes to the portfolio of education.