



Speech By
Hon. Di Farmer

MEMBER FOR BULIMBA

Record of Proceedings, 22 August 2023


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Education, Employment and Training Committee, Report

 **Hon. DE FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business, Minister for Training and Skills Development and Minister for Youth Justice) (4.06 pm): I want to thank the Education, Employment and Training Committee for its consideration of matters in relation to my portfolio. I thank the very excellent chair, the deputy chair—whom I do have a bit of a soft spot for—all members who participated in the hearing, the committee secretariat and the public servants of my department who work so hard to get us ready for estimates.

After listening to those opposite, what a mob of whingers. They are such a mob of whingers. When those opposite were in government the opposition had seven members and they truncated estimates down to two days to make it impossible for any accountability or transparency, yet they come to our estimates and whinge, whinge, whinge. They got 69 per cent of the questions in our hearing, and they just ask the same questions every year. The member for Buderim literally asks the same questions every year. The member for Clayfield just asked the same question over and over, and I do not even know why the member for Currumbin was there because she did not even seem to be listening. What an insult to the members of the committee like the wonderful member for Southern Downs that she was brought in over the top of them.

The estimates hearing did give me an opportunity to talk about some of the really fantastic things we are doing in skills and training such as our \$1.4 billion investment in skills and training and Fee-Free TAFE, and we have seen a 134 per cent increase in commencements. We are leading the nation in completions and we are leading the nation in VET in schools. We have a big VET review underway. In employment I could talk about our Queensland Workforce Strategy and the fact that we have put more than 45,000 people into jobs just in the last year alone. In small business we have the results of the Big Plans for Small Business Strategy and we have a new strategy coming up, our 30 per cent procurement policy and the big Olympics procurement strategy. We have our mental health package and our Small Business Commissioner. In youth justice we have the strongest laws in the country. We are building two new youth therapeutic detention centres. We have invested almost half a billion dollars in early intervention and prevention programs and we are starting to see some great results.

It was a great chance to talk about some of those wonderful initiatives. I was amazed to read the statement of reservation. I am surprised they managed to do even a page's worth because there is no content in anything they say. Let me speak to a few issues they raised. Those opposite complained about critical workforce shortages and that we are not addressing those. I do not actually recall one single time I have ever been asked in this House by those opposite about workforce shortages. If any of us go to any of our employers in our electorates around the state the No. 1 issue is workforce shortages. Not once have those opposite ever asked about it, but they stuck it in their statement of reservation.

The member for Buderim likes to ask about completions. I will tell the member how you guarantee completions: for a start, you do not sack TAFE teachers; you do not close TAFE campuses; you do not annihilate the public providers so people in rural and remote Queensland do not have access to campuses; and you do not open it up to private sector cowboys so they can double or triple the fees from one semester to the next or cancel courses. That is how you avoid people not completing their courses.

In relation to youth justice, those opposite make it sound like they go around Queensland and talk about youth justice as if it is their No. 1 priority. The opposition leader and the deputy opposition leader left it to the B team to come and ask about youth justice. They could not be bothered. Their—I cannot call it a policy; it is not a policy. It is 13 words long. It is three slogans. I asked them earlier today to give us another 13, another 10 maybe. We thought maybe we could get a bit more information. We asked ChatGPT if it could do a haiku about the LNP's youth justice policy. We actually got 13 words! Do members know what it comes up with? ChatGPT is so clever; they should use it. It says—

LNP's empty words
youth justice policies missed
hollow promises.

Just ask ChatGPT. Those opposite cannot come up with anything.