




Speech By
Dr Christian Rowan

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

Record of Proceedings, 21 August 2024

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL
APPROPRIATION BILL
Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)
Appropriation Bill

Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee, Report

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (4.04 pm): As the Liberal National Party's shadow minister for education, I rise to address the Appropriation Bill for 2024-25 and specifically the proposed expenditure of the state Labor government as examined by the Queensland parliament's Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee. The hearing began on the subject of student and teacher safety and wellbeing and the extent of the problematic handling of the serious asbestos exposure incident at Rochedale State School under this Labor state government. In addition to revelations that important information was incorrectly provided by the office of the Minister for Education to concerned parents, it was also shown that Rochedale State School P&C had to provide \$12,000 in emergency funding to assist parents with contaminated materials which were discarded. Parents also had to launch their own GoFundMe fundraising page in order to provide financial support for teaching resources.

It was also confirmed that 37 students have since left Rochedale State School, with parents advising the Liberal National Party opposition that the overwhelming majority of school departures was attributed to the poor handling of this serious asbestos issue under the Labor state government. Through repeated questioning it was incredibly disappointing to discover that not only had the Minister for Education not met with any of the concerned parents but the minister would not commit to meeting with those parents into the future.

Whilst parents and the school community have expressed their significant outrage, stress and concern regarding the management and communication of this asbestos exposure incident, parents have been left to only feel further outrage and despair after the Liberal National Party revealed that on the same afternoon that parents and teachers met for the important asbestos meeting with various departmental representatives, the Minister for Education and the director-general along with a host of others attended the Pink concert at Suncorp Stadium that evening. At over \$658 per ticket, Queenslanders deserve to know who paid the \$11,853 for this Pink concert for all who attended, given the minister's insistence that her attendance at the Pink concert was important in order to network with stakeholders as the new Minister for Education. The Minister for Education should know that the most important stakeholders are always Queensland students, parents and teachers. It is clear that under this third-term Labor state government the priority of Labor is entertainment over education.

Important matters of accountability and integrity were also raised with respect to the Queensland Pathways State College. The Liberal National Party received correspondence from an anonymous concerned public servant which detailed serious allegations pertaining to nepotism, political interference, conflicts of interest and maladministration with respect to the Queensland Pathways State

College and the associated allocation of additional state government funding. These allegations reached the highest levels of the Labor state government. Accordingly, I provided the whistleblower correspondence to both the Crime and Corruption Commission and the Queensland Audit Office as these matters deserve to be fully assessed and investigated.

At the 2020 state election Labor made a commitment to Queenslanders that they would deliver an additional 7,329 new teachers and teacher aides. This is a broken Labor promise. Since 2020 the Labor state government has only recruited a net increase of 1,054 teachers and teacher aides, according to the latest public sector workforce profile. As revealed during these estimates, 13,426 teachers and teacher aides have in fact left the employment of Education Queensland during that same time based on responses to questions on notice and pre-estimates questions on notice.

Finally, I clearly state that our public state school education system is critically important for all. As the state member for Moggill, I want local parents, residents and families to be able to access our public state schools, whether they be primary or secondary, and have that access and availability locally and on a continual basis both now and into the future. There is no doubt there are significant concerns about existing local state school infrastructure in the western suburbs of Brisbane. The Labor state government has not delivered a new Brisbane inner west primary school and this is still needed. Also at estimates the Labor state government confirmed that they have no plans to deliver a new high school for the electorate of Moggill. It is only the Liberal National Party that is committed to an additional high school in the electorate of Moggill as well as further investment in infrastructure at Kenmore State High School. The delivery of a new high school for the electorate of Moggill is critically needed.

It also has to be noted that if we are truly to achieve the outcome of fully funding all of our Queensland public state schools then the federal Albanese Labor government must step up and provide the required funding to our state jurisdiction of Queensland.

In conclusion, I acknowledge the chair, the deputy chair and all members of the committee for the work they did on the day. The chair was certainly fair and balanced and I know that the deputy chair performed his role admirably as well. I want to acknowledge the secretariat, because the work they provide not only on the day but also in compiling reports is very important. The committee process is very important for our democracy here in Queensland. I again acknowledge all of those who attended on the day as part of the hearing.