




Speech By
Hon. Lance McCallum

MEMBER FOR BUNDAMBA

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

 **Hon. LR McCALLUM** (Bundamba—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (6.04 pm): The Miles Labor government is doing what matters for Queensland. I very much appreciated the three hours of examination of the 2024 budget for my portfolio. I place on record my thanks to the Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee for its consideration of the Appropriation Bill. I thank the chair, the deputy chair and all members who participated in the hearing. I thank the dedicated parliamentary staff who form the committee secretariat and the public servants of my department who worked so hard to get us ready for estimates.

By making multinational mining companies pay their fair share, we are able to provide an historic \$1.5 billion investment in skills and training programs, employment services and small business grants, support students and small businesses, help lower household bills, fight inflation and ease the cost of living by boosting jobs for everyday Queenslanders. We are delivering 70,000 free TAFE places, one million subsidised training places, \$1,000 worth of free tools for first years, free construction apprenticeships for over 25s, \$250 million in support for small businesses through grants and financial counselling, an \$80 million funding commitment for Skilling Queenslanders for Work and near record low unemployment.

During the estimates hearing there were some disappointing contributions. Despite the excellent record of Skilling Queenslanders for Work in helping vulnerable Queenslanders get on track for employment by gaining a qualification—they earn while they learn; it is a wonderful program—disappointingly, it seemed that opposition members were intent on undermining it. I am sure that we all remember the brutal cuts to this particular program, which was axed completely by the Newman government. A lot of the members of that government are still in the chamber today. When Skilling Queenslanders for Work and the jobs of the 144 staff who supported the program were cut, the member for Surfers Paradise and then minister said ‘we need to end this type of needless duplication’.

In their right priorities pamphlet, there is not one mention of Skilling Queenslanders for Work. The LNP members who signed the statement of reservation tried to undermine the success of Skilling Queenslanders for Work. In reality, over 70 per cent of surveyed participants report a positive outcome 12 months after exiting the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program, meaning that they have a job, have taken up more training or both. If the LNP backed this program they would say it, but they will not. That can only mean that they have a plan to cut Skilling Queenslanders for Work again and, by doing so, defund the community organisations that rely on it to provide those very vital services.

In the statement of reservation provided by LNP members of the committee they make reference to the Queensland Small Business Commissioner. That position was cut entirely by the LNP the last time they were in government and it was reinstated and funded properly by Queensland Labor. During his contribution to the committee report debate, the member for Buderim referenced the TAFE workforce. He is a member of the party that, when last in government, sacked 2,100 TAFE workers, closed down campuses, closed down facilities, sold off campuses and had plans to close up to 30 more. In stark contrast, the Miles Labor government will always back our small businesses and Queenslanders who want training.