



2022-23 Budget Estimates

Report No. 23, 57th Parliament

Education, Employment and Training Committee

August 2022

Education, Employment and Training Committee

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Acknowledgements

The committee thanks Hon Grace Grace MP, Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing and Hon Di Farmer MP, Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development, for their assistance in the committee's examination of the budget estimates. The committee also acknowledges the assistance provided by departmental officers during the estimates process.

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Chair's foreword

This report presents a summary of the committee's examination of the budget estimates for the 2022-23 financial year.

Consideration of the budget estimates allows for the public examination of the responsible Ministers and the chief executive officers of agencies within the committee's portfolio areas. This was undertaken through the questions on notice and public hearing process.

The committee has recommended that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the Appropriation Bill 2022 for the committee's areas of responsibility, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

On behalf of the committee, I thank the Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing and the Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development, and their departmental officers for their co-operation in providing information to the committee throughout this process.

I would also like to thank the members of the committee for their contribution to the estimates process, and other members whose participation in the hearing provided additional scrutiny of the estimates.

Finally, I thank the committee's secretariat and other parliamentary Service staff for their assistance throughout the estimates process.



Kim Richards MP
Chair

1 Introduction

1.1 Role of the committee

The Education, Employment and Training Committee (the committee) is a portfolio committee of the Legislative Assembly which commenced on 26 November 2020 under the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001* and the Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly.¹

The committee's primary areas of responsibility are:

- Education, Industrial Relations and Racing
- Employment, Small Business, Training and Skills Development.

Sections 93(1) and 93(3) of the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001* provide that a portfolio committee is responsible for examining each Bill and item of subordinate legislation in its portfolio areas to consider:

- the policy to be given effect by the legislation
- the application of fundamental legislative principles to the legislation
- matters arising under the *Human Rights Act 2019*
- for subordinate legislation – its lawfulness.

1.2 Inquiry process

On 22 June 2022, the Legislative Assembly agreed to a motion moved by the Leader of the House to enable:

- portfolio committees to hold estimates hearings on specified dates and within specified timeframes
- the Leader of the House, after consultation with the Speaker, to set and, if necessary, change the days for estimates hearings
- that where a Minister administers a number of distinct portfolio areas, matters relating to each portfolio area may only be raised during the timeframe specified for that area.²

On 21 June 2022, the Appropriation Bill 2022 was introduced by Hon Cameron Dick MP, Treasurer and Minister for Trade and Investment. On 24 June 2022, the estimates for the committee's area of responsibility were referred to the committee for investigation and report.³

On 28 July 2022, the committee conducted a public hearing and took evidence about the proposed expenditure from Hon Grace Grace MP, Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing and Hon Di Farmer MP, Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development, and other witnesses. A copy of the transcript of the committee's hearing is available from the committee's webpage.⁴

1.3 Aim of this report

This report summarises the estimates referred to the committee and highlights some of the issues the committee examined.

¹ *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001*, s 88 and Standing Order 194.

² Queensland Parliament, Record of Proceedings, 22 June 2022, pp 1629-1638.

³ Standing Order 177 provides for the automatic referral of the annual appropriation bills to portfolio committees once the bills have been read a second time.

⁴ <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/work-of-committees/committees/EETC/inquiries/current-inquiries/Estimates2022>.

The committee considered the estimates referred to it by using information contained in:

- budget papers
- answers to pre-hearing questions on notice
- evidence taken at the hearing.

Prior to the public hearing, the committee provided questions on notice to the Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing and the Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development in relation to the estimates for their portfolios. Responses to all questions were received.

Answers to the committee's pre-hearing questions on notice, documents tabled during the hearing, answers to questions taken on notice and additional information provided by Minister Farmer after the hearing are included in a volume of additional information tabled with this report.

1.4 Participation by other Members

On 27 July, the Leader of the Opposition appointed the following Members to attend the committee's meeting and estimates public hearing on 28 July 2022, in accordance with SO 202, due to the inability of Mark Boothman NP, Member for Theodore, to attend:

- Dr Christian Rowan MP, Member for Moggill (from 8.30am to 12.30pm)
- Jarrod Bleijie MP, Member for Kawana (from 12.30pm to 2.00pm)
- Brent Mickelberg MP, Member for Buderim (from 2.00pm to 5.15pm).

The committee granted leave for non-committee Members to participate in the hearing in accordance with Standing Order 181(e):

- Michael Berkman MP, Member for Maiwar
- Jarrod Bleijie MP, Member for Kawana
- David Crisafulli MP, Member for Broadwater
- Jon Krause MP, Member for Scenic Rim
- Dr Amy MacMahon MP, Member for South Brisbane
- Tim Mander MP, Member for Everton
- Brent Mickelberg MP, Member for Buderim
- Andrew Powell MP, Member for Glasshouse
- Dr Christian Rowan MP, Member for Moggill
- Fiona Simpson MP, Member for Maroochydore.

2 Recommendation

Pursuant to Standing Order 187(1), the committee must state whether the proposed expenditures referred to it are agreed to.

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the Appropriation Bill 2022 for the committee's areas of responsibility, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

3 Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing

The Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing, Hon Grace Grace MP, has responsibility for the Department of Education and the following statutory entities:

- Queensland Curriculum Assessment Authority (QCAA)
- Queensland Racing Integrity Commission (QRIC).

3.1 Department of Education

In 2022-23 the Department of Education will deliver services in the following areas:

- **early childhood education and care** – early years programs for children that support learning and development and transition to school
- **schools** - school education and transitioning to further education, training and work
- **industrial relations** – policy, advice and regulation regarding industrial relations, work health and safety, electrical safety, and workers' compensation
- **racing** – administering the *Racing Act 2002* and managing programs to support the racing industry in Queensland.

3.1.1 Budget overview

The Appropriation Bill 2022 provides a vote for 2022-23 for the Department of Education of \$16.907 billion, an increase of \$1.235 billion on estimated actual expenditure in 2021-22.⁵

Table 1 compares the appropriations for the Department of Education for 2021-22 and 2022-23.⁶

Table 1: Department of Education – Appropriations for 2021-22 and 2022-23

Appropriation	Budget 2021-22 \$'000	Est. Actual 2021-22 \$'000	Budget 2022-23 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>			
departmental services	10,365,369	10,324,090	11,131,218
equity adjustment	850,752	495,879	753,059
<i>Administered Items</i>	4,620,329	4,851,923	5,022,901
Vote	15,836,450	15,671,892	16,907,178

Source: Appropriation Bill 2022, Schedule 2, p 9.

3.1.2 Capital works program

Total capital purchases for the Department of Education in 2022-23 are estimated to be \$1.457 billion, an increase of \$193.95 million from estimated actual expenditure on capital works in 2021-22,⁷ and include \$1.37 billion for the construction and refurbishment of school educational facilities and early childhood education and care services.⁸

⁵ Appropriation Bill 2022, Schedule 2, p 9.

⁶ Appropriation Bill 2022, Schedule 2, p 9.

⁷ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Department of Education, p 11.

⁸ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Capital Statement – Budget Paper No 3, p 38.

3.2 Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority

The QCAA is a statutory body established under the *Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Act 2014*. The QCAA delivers curriculum, assessment and certification services to support the Queensland education system.

The QCAA's budget in 2022-23 is \$78.469 million, a decrease of \$0.2 million on estimated actual expenditure in 2021-22.⁹ Employee expenses (67.4%) and supplies and services (28.7%) make up the majority of the QCAA's operating expenditure in 2022-23.¹⁰

3.3 Queensland Racing Integrity Commission

The Queensland Racing Integrity Commission (QRIC) is an independent statutory body that oversees the integrity and welfare standards of racing animals and participants in Queensland. The QRIC's purpose is to work with the racing industry and community to protect racing animals, ensure high standards of racing integrity and safety, and enhance public confidence in the Queensland racing industry.¹¹

The QRIC's operating budget for 2022-23 is \$34.341 million, an increase of \$989,000 from 2021-22 estimated actual expenditure.¹² Most of the QRIC's estimated expenditure in 2022-23 will be on employee expenses (64.6%) and supplies and services (26.1%).

Capital purchases planned for the QRIC in 2022-23 are:

- \$2 million for upgrades to laboratory equipment to support drug testing services
- \$625,000 for software upgrades to the licensing and laboratory information management system.¹³

3.4 Key issues raised during consideration of budget estimates

Issues raised and considered by the committee in relation to the budget estimates for 2022-23 for the portfolio areas of Education, Industrial Relations and Racing include:

- support for homework centres
- the Queensland Government's Student Wellbeing Package
- teacher numbers employed across Queensland
- drug and weapons-related incidents in state schools
- funding for the Independent Schools Program
- processing of right to information requests by the Department of Education
- Workplace Health and Safety Queensland inspectors
- spending on consultancies by Racing Queensland and QRIC
- spending on country racing infrastructure upgrades
- the Building Future Schools Fund
- investments in renewing Queensland state schools

⁹ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Department of Education, p 25.

¹⁰ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Department of Education, p 25.

¹¹ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, p 25.

¹² Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, p 29.

¹³ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Capital Statement – Budget Paper No 3, p 27.

- support provided to students through the Youth Engagement Strategy
- support for female students through the Share the Dignity in Queensland Schools initiative
- support provided under Queensland workers' compensation scheme for first responders suffering from Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
- sexual harassment from a work health and safety perspective
- the Queensland racing industry's contribution to the state's economy and communities
- teacher recruitment targets
- implementation of recommendations from the report by the Crime and Corruption Commission entitled An investigation into allegations relating to the appointment of a school principal
- funding for the removal of asbestos from schools and school grounds
- findings and recommendations from the Coaldrake report into the culture and accountability in the Queensland public sector
- the provision of solar panels and upgraded energy efficiency measures as part of the Advancing Clean Energy Schools program
- support provided to students with disability
- outcomes of the Great Teacher Great Future program
- programs and incentives in the 2022-23 budget to address the gender imbalance between female and male teachers in Queensland education
- support for student mental health and wellbeing
- new and updated sporting infrastructure provided through the Go for Gold program
- education research
- impact of the proposed Gabba redevelopment on the East Brisbane State School
- asbestos exposure incidents linked to the Cooler Cleaner Schools program
- completion of air-conditioning installation in all Queensland schools
- Eat Right Play Right Learn Well program
- delivery of playground and tuckshop upgrades through the Eat Right Play Right Learn Well program
- the impacts of the introduction of homework centres in Queensland
- renewal and upgrade of specialist learning spaces across 36 schools
- air ventilation audits conducted in Queensland schools
- the provision of COVID-19 rapid antigen test kits to schools
- costs of managing COVID-19 risks in schools
- the engagement of relief staff to cover staff absences due to suspensions linked to the COVID-19 vaccination mandates
- investments to boost bandwidth at all Queensland state schools
- the purpose and operation of Early Years Places in locations across the state
- WorkCover claims linked to teacher and staff assaults
- the Department of Education's *Occupational Violence and Aggression Prevention Strategy 2021-2023*
- collection of student gender data in state schools
- settlement of a lawsuit raised by Tabcorp against Racing Queensland

- meetings of ministerial staff with staff of the lobbying firm, Anacta
- racing point of consumption tax
- the Greyhound Adoption Program
- initiatives to reduce jockey shortages and attract young people, particularly girls, to pursue a career in racing
- the investigation of alleged CFMEU collaboration with Office of Industrial Relations officers
- support provided by the Fair Work Ombudsman and the Fair Work Commissioner for workers affected by bullying or harassment
- labour hire licensing regulation in Queensland
- actions to protect the health and safety of workers in the engineered stone industry
- Queensland's participation in the national workforce relations system
- the Minister's meetings with building union officials
- fraudulent workers' compensation claims
- initiatives to address mental health in the workplace
- the new portable long service leave scheme for community service workers
- electrical safety awareness activities
- quad bike and farm safety in Queensland workplaces.

4 Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development

The Minister for Employment and Small Business, Minister for Training and Skills Development, Hon Di Farmer MP, has responsibility for the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training and TAFE Queensland.

4.1 Department of Employment, Small Business and Training

In 2022-23 the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training will deliver services in the following areas:

- **connecting and supporting Queenslanders with employment programs and services** – to increase employment opportunities for Queenslanders, in particular disadvantaged cohorts
- **connecting Queensland small businesses to grants and support programs** – to ensure small businesses can seamlessly interact with government and are supported to start, grow and thrive
- **connecting Queenslanders to training and skills programs and initiatives** – to regulate Queensland apprenticeships and traineeships, and facilitate access to, and participation in, vocational education and training pathways, enabling Queenslanders to gain employment in current and future industries.¹⁴

4.1.1 Budget overview

The Appropriation Bill 2022 provides a vote for 2022-23 for the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training of \$1.304 billion, a decrease of \$79.1 million on estimated actual expenditure in 2021-22.¹⁵

The following table compares the appropriations for the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training for 2021-22 and 2022-23.

Table 2: Department of Employment, Small Business and Training – Appropriations for 2021-22 and 2022-23

Appropriation	Budget 2021-22 \$'000	Est.Actual 2021-22 \$'000	Budget 2022-23 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>			
departmental services	1,245,822	1,418,410	1,277,405
equity adjustment	(1,283)	(35,647)	26,210
<i>Administered Items</i>	-	-	-
Vote	1,244,539	1,382,763	1,303,615

Source: Appropriation Bill 2022, Schedule 2, p 9.

4.1.2 Capital works program

The 2022-23 capital program for the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training of \$84.5 million includes \$34.8 million of capital purchases and \$8.4 million of capital grants for the

¹⁴ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, p 1.

¹⁵ Appropriation Bill 2022, Schedule 1, p 6.

continued delivery of the Equipping TAFE for Our Future program.¹⁶ Projects to be funded from the \$34.8 million of capital purchases include:

- the Eagle Farm Robotics and Advanced Manufacturing Centre
- Bundamba Metal Trades, Manufacturing and Robotics Centre
- Bohle Advanced Manufacturing Skills Laboratory
- Bundaberg Agriculture and Horticulture Centre
- Bundaberg Maker Space
- Cairns Advanced Manufacturing Hub and Cairns Cyber Security Training Operations Centre
- the commencement of the Bohle Renewable Energy Centre.¹⁷

The budget also provides:

- \$40.7 million for the Annual Training Infrastructure Program. This program includes building and fire compliance works and asset lifecycle condition upgrades for various TAFE locations across Queensland¹⁸
- \$0.5 million for the finalisation of projects delivered in partnership with the Australian Government's Revitalising TAFE Campuses Across Australia initiative.

4.2 TAFE Queensland

TAFE Queensland was established by the *TAFE Queensland Act 2013* as a statutory body under the *Financial Accountability Act 2009* and the *Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982* on 1 July 2014. TAFE Queensland's primary role is to provide vocational education and training services in a way that is efficient, effective and responsive to the needs of industry, students and the general community.¹⁹

TAFE Queensland's operating expenditure in 2022-23 is estimated to be \$769.366 million, an increase of \$64.809 million on estimated actual expenditure in 2021-22.²⁰ The majority of the TAFE Queensland's 2022-23 budget is allocated to employee expenses (66.0%) and supplies and services (29.4%). An operating deficit of \$41.493 million is forecast for the financial year.²¹

The 2022-23 budget for TAFE Queensland provides \$27.593 million for capital purchases for TAFE Queensland.²²

4.3 Key issues raised during consideration of budget estimates

Issues raised and considered by the committee in relation to the budget estimates for 2022-23 for the portfolio areas of Employment, Small Business, Training and Skills Development included:

- the Big Plans for Small Business initiative

¹⁶ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Capital Statement – Budget Paper No 3, p 50.

¹⁷ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Capital Statement – Budget Paper No 3, p 50.

¹⁸ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Capital Statement – Budget Paper No 3, p 50.

¹⁹ TAFE Queensland, *Annual Report 2020-21*, September 2021, p 3.

²⁰ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, p 16.

²¹ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, p 16.

²² Queensland Budget 2022-23, Capital Statement – Budget Paper No 3, p 52.

- TAFE assets or facilities that do not directly support the delivery of TAFE training
- the unbudgeted increase in non-current interest bearing liabilities and derivatives for TAFE Queensland for 2021-22
- training delivered by TAFE Queensland staff in locations other than population centres where TAFE Queensland facilities are located
- the calculation of 'Administrative cost per \$1,000 for program support' listed as Efficiency Measures in the service delivery statement
- marketing costs and training provided by Aviation Australia
- the Small Business Support and Wellness package
- support for youths in detention to complete vocational education and training to help transition to meaningful employment
- assistance provided to small businesses by the Queensland Small Business Commissioner
- actions to reduce red tape and regulatory burdens on small businesses
- the Government's investment in TAFE and training infrastructure
- the Back to Work program
- outcomes of the North Stradbroke Island Workers Assistance Scheme
- costs and outcomes of the Tradies in Paradise initiative
- funding in the 2022-23 budget for trade skills or traineeships or upskilling at-risk youth after they have left the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre
- the Growing Workforce Participation Fund
- support for apprentices, trainees and other students to complete their training
- apprenticeship completion targets
- programs to address the chronic shortage of tradespeople across the state
- Skills Assure suppliers for training, and loadings paid to suppliers in rural and remote areas
- programs to encourage young people to train to join the mining industry
- improving training infrastructure investment across Queensland
- providing access to subsidised TAFE courses for bridging visa holders
- VET Skills Assure supplier agreements
- funding for the Mentoring for Growth program
- auditing of the Business Basic grants program
- support for small businesses to rebuild and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic
- fraudulent claims for COVID-19 adaptation grants
- support provided to small businesses in their interactions with other State Government departments
- the Works with Small Business good practice guide
- meetings of the Small Business Advisory Council, and members' pecuniary interests
- initiatives to bring down the cost of running a small business in Queensland
- initiatives to help small businesses and their staff protect their mental health
- assistance provided to small businesses affected by flooding and natural disasters.

5 Statement of Reservation

Statement of Reservation – LNP Opposition Members

Introduction

Opposition members of the Committee agree with the passing of the 2022/23 Budget.

However, the Budget is characterised by numerous shortcomings which fail the expectations of Queenslanders. Many of these shortcomings became increasingly evident during the Estimates process.

The Budget was an opportunity for the government to show Queenslanders they have listened to them. It was a chance to open the books and show Queenslanders they have been heard. It was a chance to reveal the true state of affairs and what will be done to make their lives just a little easier.

Estimates revealed a host of band aid solutions that will do little to improve conditions throughout Queensland, and showed patterns of waste and poor spending priorities which must diminish the government's performance in the portfolios overseen by this committee. We note that an astonishing \$220 million of taxpayers' money was spent on the Wellcamp quarantine accommodation project, which, amazingly, will revert to the private ownership of interests associated with the Wagner family after having only accommodated a handful of people. These funds would have been far better spent in recruiting teachers and on maintaining and improving school infrastructure, or in providing relief to small businesses who were impacted by COVID.

Education

Of significant concern was the Palaszczuk government's failure to reach teacher recruitment targets.

Following the state government's election promise to hire more than 6000 teachers over 4 years from 2020, it was revealed that teacher recruitment numbers have not increased sufficiently. With current teacher shortages statewide it was disappointing that a \$1 million recruitment campaign didn't produce results. The lack of progress in teacher recruitment is of great concern to Queensland parents and students.

The Director General revealed he had not read the recent CCC report, *An investigation into allegations relating to the appointment of a school principal*. The report made numerous recommendations and had implications for both the department and the wider public service. Integrity was at the heart of the report and it was disappointing to find the DG not taking the time to read it considering the department is currently working on a new integrity plan.

It was confirmed that taxpayers have footed the bill for Mr Jeff Hunt, former deputy director general, to the amount of \$630,704.70. Mr Hunt was suspended with pay from May 2020 until he resigned from his position in July this year. For over two years Mr Hunt's position and circumstances remained unresolved, the matter remained unresolved right up until his resignation. For over two years Mr Hunt continued to be employed and remunerated by the Department of Education.

Almost \$7 million of contract variations during the building of the new Brisbane South State Secondary College were not approved by an authorised departmental delegate. Huge amounts of money, such as \$727,000 and \$442,000 were approved yet there was a delegated limit of \$10,000 for approval. The explanation provided was unsatisfactory, stating they have met legislative and regulatory requirements but not explaining how this happened and what actions were taken.

While there were concerns around asbestos in schools, the DG assured the committee the reporting and management processes were in accordance with relevant workplace health and safety legislation.

Also raised was the air conditioning and air ventilation in Queensland Schools. Only new schools have ducted air conditioning, leaving the majority of schools with split system air conditioners. The use of air conditioning to minimise the transmission of Covid-19 is only effective if the air is drawn from outside and not recirculated indoor air as it would be from split systems. The Minister was unable to assure the committee that all air conditioning units that have been installed in Queensland schools have the ability to draw air from outside.

Further shortcomings with regards to safety in Queensland schools have been highlighted with an increase of over 78% in the number of Workcover claims accepted for teacher and staff assaults. In 2020-21 there were 470 claims. The Minister agreed that one assault on a teacher or staff member is one assault too many. Teachers and staff deserve to be safe in their workplace.

Racing

During the limited time of questioning available, the introduction of a five percent levy on the point of consumption tax on betting agency competitors of Tabcorp was investigated. This deal provided significant financial benefits for Tabcorp.

There are many questions that remain. What we do know is that the Labor aligned lobbyist engaged by Tabcorp had 22 interactions with the Minister's office prior to the announcement. Queenslanders don't know what those discussions involved.

We do know that competitors to Tabcorp, who will be impacted by these changes, were not consulted.

Industrial Relations

The influence of the CFMEU over this government should concern every Queenslander.

The department was questioned about an investigation into allegations that the CFMEU was acting in collaboration with the Office of Industrial Relations against a business. The outcome of this investigation has been with the department for seven months.

We believe that an answer to a question during estimates by a departmental officer stating that "I am dealing with Public Service Act requirements and procedural fairness and natural justice" strongly suggests that adverse findings have been made. During estimates, opposition MPs attempted several times, unsuccessfully, to get a straight answer as to the whereabouts of this report and reasons for the extraordinary delay in its actioning and release. We believe that the failure to answer these questions is an affront to Parliament and to the people of Queensland. The Department's failure to quickly act on this report, and the dogged determination to keep the report secret is symptomatic of the wider integrity crisis which we believe to be gripping this government.

We believe that the failure to act on CFMEU bullying is having an adverse impact upon the staff of the Office of Industrial Relations, with a considerable number of inspectors resigning. The department confirmed that over a quarter of all occupational violence or bullying allegations involve the CFMEU.

Despite this, their access to the Minister's office remains intact. The Minister has failed to identify meetings she has had with representatives of the CFMEU, with entries in her official ministerial diary merely referring to meetings with 'builders trade unions'. Under questioning the minister conceded that representatives of the CFMEU attended these meetings, but did not offer a satisfactory explanation for why the CFMEU wasn't identified by name.

Training and Skills Development

Estimates examination of the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Employment and Small Business, and Minister for Skills and Training revealed consistent failures in the delivery of key government programs such as grants rollouts, vocational training and employment attraction programs. These failures appear to be consistently repeated and lessons that should have been learned have not been.

It was revealed that the 'Tradies in Paradise Program' delivered only two tradies when the target was for 1,000 tradies. The Palaszczuk Government spent almost \$2 million dollars to lure tradies to Queensland and the result was only two qualified tradespeople. Measures of success for the program were not able to be outlined, with no justification of the \$2 million dollars spent on the failed program.

When questioned the Minister suggested that the program was a success because it promoted Queensland in other states, but regardless, the program failed to meet even the most rudimentary assessment of success delivering only two tradies, and is the latest example of waste and poor management by the Palaszczuk Labor Government.

Another failure revealed was the lack of apprenticeship completions. The Labor Government had a target of 11,500 apprenticeship completions for 2021-2022 but only delivered 10,300 at a time when Queensland is in the middle of a skilled worker crisis. Not only did the Government fail this year's target completions, but over the last 7 years the Palaszczuk Government has failed to meet their own apprenticeship completion targets by 14,400. That means right now, Queensland is missing more than 14,400 qualified tradespeople.

The importance of private RTOs and Group Training organisations was highlighted when it was revealed that 259 Skills Assure Suppliers delivered training in country or remote communities, while TAFE Queensland was focused on major population centres.

Aviation Australia, the State Government owned Aviation training facility in Brisbane, is the only State Government funding provided for aviation training in Queensland. It was revealed in QON 8 that 1,351 students completed qualifications in 2021-2022, 69 of these were apprentices and 26 trainees. During the year 2021-2022 \$374,763 was spent on advertising for Aviation Australia.

Employment and Small Business

Like early grant rounds, small businesses were left disappointed after Round 3 of the Business Basics grants failed to launch and on the second attempt many businesses found funds had been exhausted before they even had a chance to apply. There was a queuing system that wasn't advertised and regrettably there was no resolution or explanation for this.

We believe that the Minister sought to shift the blame to SmartyGrants who administered the platform for the program, however, the consistent issues with grants programs administered by the Department of Employments, Small Business and Training demonstrates that that this Government keeps making the same mistakes over and again at the cost of Queenslanders.

The Queensland Audit Office reported potential overpayments or fraudulent claims of approximately \$4 million, by more than 400 recipients in relation to the Government's COVID grants and support programs. The Department has chosen not to investigate if these claims were fraudulent and is instead ignoring the problem.

We believe that the government's failings and waste in this regard fails Queenslanders. Queenslanders and the many small businesses who missed out on COVID Adaptation Grant funding are rightly dismayed at the Government's failure to ensure applicants adhered to the rules and ensure consequences for those who fraudulently received funding they were not entitled to.

Red Tape and Regulation have again not been adequately prioritised by this government. The Business Launch Pad and the Queensland Small Business Commissioner were identified as initiatives; however, no deliverables were able to be identified.

Conclusion

Overall the Opposition members of this committee don't believe that the Budget has presented a sustainable solution to the significant problems facing the Queensland economy and Queenslanders. Funds wasted in the portfolios overseen by this committee could have been better applied to fixing major ambulance and hospital delays, building overdue infrastructure, and to doing more to protect Queenslanders from rising youth crime.

The 2022/23 Budget was a lost opportunity to fix problems and govern effectively, and this failure will make the lives of Queenslanders even more difficult in the coming years. The squandering of millions of dollars demonstrates the government has turned its back on the needs of Queenslanders and has lost control of the levers of public administration.



James Lister MP

Member for Southern Downs

10 August 2022



Mark Boothman MP

Member for Theodore

10 August 2022