



QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENT **COMMITTEES**

2024-25 Budget Estimates – Appropriation Bill 2024



Report No. 9, 57th Parliament
Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee
August 2024

Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee

Chair	Hon Mark Bailey MP, Member for Miller
Deputy Chair	Mr James Lister MP, Member for Southern Downs
Members	Ms Margie Nightingale MP, Member for Inala
	Mr Nick Dametto MP, Member for Hinchinbrook
	Mr Barry O'Rourke MP, Member for Rockhampton
	Mr Darren Zanow MP, Member for Ipswich West

Committee Secretariat

Telephone	+61 7 3553 6657
Email	EETSC@parliament.qld.gov.au
Committee webpage	www.parliament.qld.gov.au/EETSC

Acknowledgements

The committee thanks:

- Minister for Education and Minister for Youth Justice
- Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development

The committee also acknowledges the assistance provided by the departmental officers who contributed to the work of the committee during the estimates process.

Contents

Chair's foreword	ii
1 Introduction	3
1.1 Role of the committee	3
1.2 Aim of this report	4
1.3 Participation by other members	4
2 Recommendation	5
3 Minister for Education and Minister for Youth Justice	5
3.1 Department of Education	5
3.1.1 Budget overview	6
3.1.2 Trends in the Vote	7
3.1.3 Budget highlights	7
3.1.4 Capital program	7
3.1.5 Matters raised during the estimates process	8
3.2 Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority	9
3.2.1 Budget overview	9
3.2.2 Matters raised during the estimates process	10
3.3 Department of Youth Justice	10
3.3.1 Budget overview	10
3.3.2 Trends in the Vote	11
3.3.3 Budget highlights	11
3.3.4 Capital program	12
3.3.5 Matters raised during the estimates process	12
4 Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development	13
4.1 Department of Employment, Small Business and Training	13
4.1.1 Budget overview	13
4.1.2 Trends in the Vote	14
4.1.3 Budget highlights	15
4.1.4 Capital program	15
4.1.5 Matters raised during the estimates process	15
4.2 TAFE Queensland	17
4.2.1 Budget overview	17
4.2.2 Matters raised during the committee's examination of TAFE Queensland	17
5 Statement of Reservation	19

Chair's foreword

This report presents a summary of the committee's examination of the budget estimates for the 2024-25 financial year.

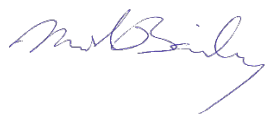
Consideration of the budget estimates allows for the public examination of the responsible Ministers and the chief executive officers of agencies within the committee's portfolio areas. This was undertaken through the questions on notice and public hearing process.

The committee has recommended that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the Appropriation Bill 2024 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 and Minister for Youth Justice 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 hard work and valuable 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.



Hon Mark Bailey MP

Chair

August 2024

1 Introduction

1.1 Role of the committee

The Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee (committee) is a portfolio committee of the Legislative Assembly which commenced on 13 February 2024 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:

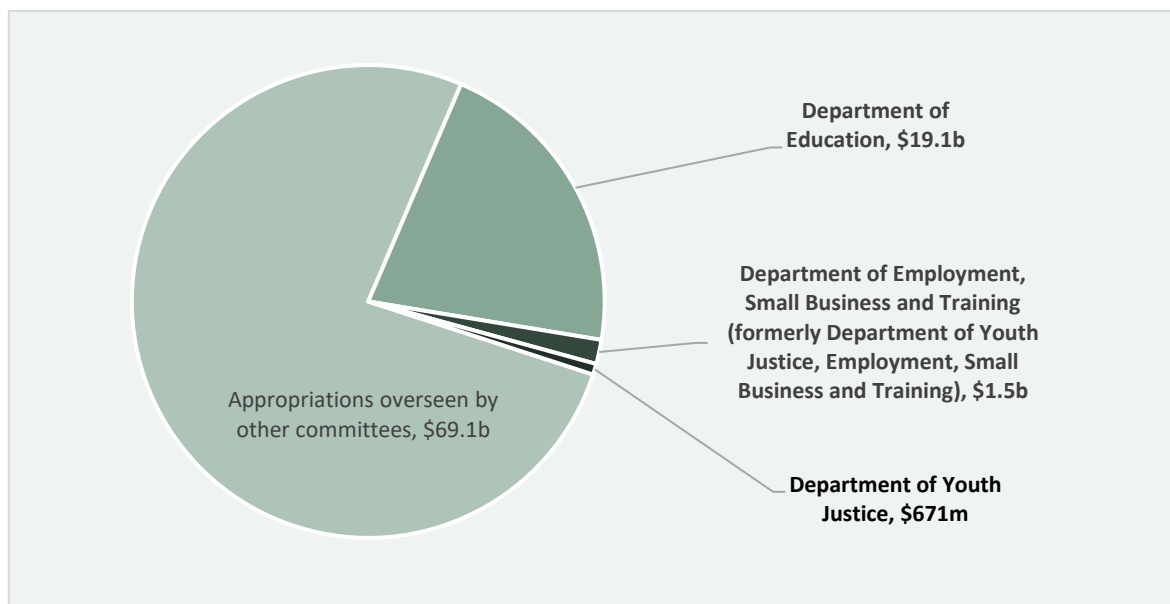
- Education and Youth Justice
- Employment, Small Business, Training and Skills Development.

On 14 June 2024, the Appropriation Bill 2024 and the estimates for the committee's area of responsibility were referred to the committee for investigation and report.²

The estimates process is one of the key mechanisms to examine government expenditure, performance and effectiveness. By examining and reporting on the proposed expenditures contained in the Appropriation Bill the committee assists the Parliament in its scrutiny of the government's proposed expenditure.

The Appropriation for 2024-25 is \$90,436,181,000.³ The proposed expenditure in the committee's portfolio areas is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Appropriations examined by this committee, relative to total – 2024-25



Source: Data from Appropriation Bill 2024, Schedule 1.

The committee's examination of the Appropriation Bill 2024 is in relation to the:

- Department of Education
- Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority
- Department of Youth Justice

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

² 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.

³ Appropriation Bill 2024, section 2.

- Department of Employment, Small Business and Training
- TAFE Queensland.

On 1 August 2024, the committee conducted a public hearing and took evidence about the proposed expenditure from the Minister for Education and Minister for Youth Justice and the 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 on the committee's webpage.

1.2 Aim of this report

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

The committee considered information contained in:

- budget papers
- answers to pre-hearing questions on notice
- evidence taken at the hearing
- additional information given in relation to answers.

Prior to the public hearing, the committee provided each Minister with its questions on notice in relation to the estimates. The secretariat also provided each Minister questions on notice received from crossbench members, in accordance with the Estimates 2024 motion.⁴ Responses to all the questions were received.

Answers to the committee's and crossbench pre-hearing questions on notice and additional information provided by Ministers after the hearing are included in a volume of additional information tabled with this report.

1.3 Participation by other members

The following members of the crossbench gave notice of their proposed attendance in accordance with the resolution of the House dated 14 June 2024 and participated in the hearing:

- Dr Amy MacMahon MP, Member for South Brisbane
- Mr Michael Berkman MP, Member for Maiwar.⁵

The committee gave leave for other (non-committee) members of the Legislative Assembly to participate in the hearing.

The following non-committee members participated in the public hearing sessions:

- Dr Christian Rowan MP, Member for Moggill
- Ms Fiona Simpson MP, Member for Maroochydore
- Mrs Laura Gerber MP, Member for Currumbin
- Mr Brent Mickelberg MP, Member for Buderim.⁶

⁴ The Estimates 2024 motion 2(e) permits any crossbench member to ask one question of any Minister, if they are not a member of the relevant portfolio committee.

⁵ Mr Stephen Andrew MP, the Member for Mirani, gave notice of his intention to appear at the public hearing.

⁶ Other Opposition Members sought leave to ask questions. See volume of additional information for more information.

2 Recommendation

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

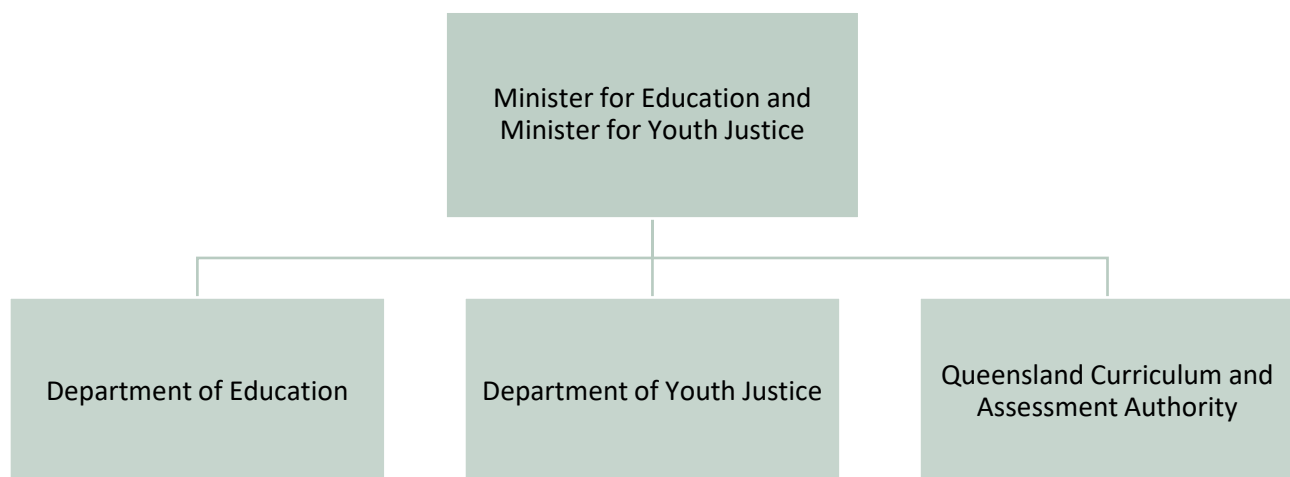
Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the Appropriation Bill 2024 for the committee's areas of responsibility, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

3 Minister for Education and Minister for Youth Justice

The Honourable Di Farmer MP, Minister for Education and Minister for Youth Justice, is responsible for the Department of Education (DoE), the Department of Youth Justice (DoYJ) and the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA).⁷

To assist the committee with its consideration of portfolio estimates, and in keeping with the requirements of Schedule 7 of the Standing Orders, the Chief Executive of the QCAA was present at the hearing on 1 August 2024.⁸



3.1 Department of Education

The DoE's strategic objectives are:

- a strong start for all children
- every student realising their objectives.⁹

Prior to machinery-of-government changes which occurred on 18 December 2023, the DoE included the Office of Industrial Relations and the Office of Racing. These portfolios have been transferred to the Department of State Development and Infrastructure.¹⁰

⁷ Queensland Budget 2024-25, Service Delivery Statements (SDS), DoE, p (iii).

⁸ Schedule 7 of the Standing Orders sets out a list of statutory entities to which direct questioning of chief executives at estimates applies.

⁹ Queensland Budget 2024-25, SDS, DoE, p 1.

¹⁰ Queensland Budget 2024-25, SDS, DoE, p 1.

3.1.1 Budget overview

The proposed budget comprises almost \$13.916 billion in departmental expenditure and almost \$10.131 billion in funding to be administered by DoE on behalf of the state.¹¹ This is an increase of \$546.9 million in estimated actual departmental spending from 2023-24.¹²

According to the DoE Service Delivery Statements (SDS), this increase is mainly due to:

- enterprise bargaining wage increases and other outcomes
- higher depreciation expenditure
- additional expenditures associated with a range of school education initiatives
- increased expenditure to support kindergartens
- additional funding for students with disability under the National School Reform Agreement and associated Bilateral Agreement
- additional expenditure to provide 15 hours of free kindergarten from 1 January for all 4-year-old children.¹³

The SDS notes that the increased departmental expenditure is partially offset by the impact of the Office of Industrial Relations and the Office of Racing functions having been transferred to the Department of State Development and Infrastructure following machinery-of-government changes.¹⁴

The proposed \$10.131 billion in administered expenses, is an increase of almost \$210 million on the DoE's estimated actual for 2023-24. The SDS notes that changes relate to increased funding for non-state schools under the National School Reform Agreement and associated Bilateral Agreement. This increase is also partially offset by the machinery-of-government changes.¹⁵

Table 1 illustrates the combined total of the cash appropriations for the DoE for 2024-25, compared with the budgeted and actual cash appropriations for DoE in 2023-24.

Table 1: Department of Education appropriation for 2024-25

Appropriations	Budget 2023-24 \$'000	Est. Actual 2023-24 \$'000	Vote 2024-25 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>			
departmental services	12,151,259	12,697,938	13,298,648
equity adjustment	675,851	(15,306)	163,079
<i>Administered Items</i>	5,482,413	5,613,339	5,687,912
Vote	18,309,523	18,295,971	19,149,639

Source: Appropriation Bill 2024, Schedule 2, p. 10.

¹¹ Queensland Budget, 2024-25, SDS, DoE, p 6.

¹² Queensland Budget, 2024-25, SDS, DoE, p 10.

¹³ Queensland Budget, 2024-25, SDS, DoE, p 10.

¹⁴ Queensland Budget, 2024-25, SDS, DoE, p 10.

¹⁵ Queensland Budget, 2024-25, SDS, DoE, p 10.

As highlighted in Table 1, the total combined appropriation of over \$19.149 billion for 2024-25 represents an increase of \$840.116 million on last year's budgeted appropriations, and an increase of \$853.668 million on the estimated actual total appropriations for the department in 2023-24.

3.1.2 Trends in the Vote

Table 2 shows the amount sought in 2024 for the Vote against spending over the previous 3 years.

Table 2: Trends in appropriation for Department of Education

	2021/22 Estimated Actual \$'000	2022/23 Estimated Actual \$'000	2023/24 Estimated Actual \$'000	2024/25 Estimates Sought \$'000
	15,671,892	16,887,786	18,295,971	19,149,639
% Change	7.76	8.34	4.67	

Source: Appropriation Bill 2024, Schedule 2, p 10; Appropriation Bill 2023, Schedule 2, p 10; Appropriation Bill 2022, Schedule 2, p 9.

As a consequence of the recent machinery-of-government changes, the committee accepts that figures from previous budgets are not directly comparable with those of 2023-24.

3.1.3 Budget highlights

The 2024-25 budget highlights for DoE include:¹⁶

Supporting families experiencing vulnerability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$196.8 million over 4 years as part of the \$502 million <i>Putting Queensland Kids First: Giving our kids the opportunity of a lifetime</i> initiative to give vulnerable families access to early childhood programs, education, health and other support services.
Improving learning environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$500 million over 4 years to prioritize the delivery and planning of high-quality learning environments, including safety and accessibility upgrades.
Teacher accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$45.1 million over 3 years from 2024-25 to meet increased demands and costs for teacher accommodation.
Providing access to General Practitioners in schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$21 million over 4 years from 2024-25 to continue to support 50 Queensland state schools with secondary-aged students with access to a General Practitioner or alternative primary healthcare provider at school 1-day per week.
Food programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$10.7 million in 2024-25 for the delivery of food programs in Queensland state schools, as part of the \$15 million School and Community Food Relief Program.

3.1.4 Capital program

In 2024-25, the DoE's total capital investment is almost \$1.274 billion. This includes \$1.192 billion for the construction and refurbishment of school and educational facilities and childhood education and care services.¹⁷

¹⁶ Queensland Budget, 2024-25, SDS, DoE, p 2.

¹⁷ Queensland Budget, 2024-25, SDS, DoE, p 7.

Capital purchases highlighted in the SDS include:

- \$342.2 million for additional facilities at state schools experiencing faster enrolment growth
- \$273.2 to replace and enhance facilities at existing schools, including \$144.8 million for critical infrastructure upgrades
- \$166.6 million for the Building Future Schools Program
- \$144.2 to acquire land for future new and expanded schools
- \$117 million as part of the School Halls program to boost education infrastructure investment across Queensland.¹⁸

3.1.5 Matters raised during the estimates process

Matters raised during the committee's examination of the Department of Education are summarised below.

Matters considered by the committee in relation to the estimates for the Department of Education	Public hearing transcript, page no; Question on Notice (QoN)
Asbestos incident Rochedale State School	3-6, 7-9, 16
Cost of living assistance programs available to schools, parents and carers	6-7, 27-8
Asbestos in schools	9, QoN 3
Teacher and teacher aide recruitment and retention	10-11, 17-18, QoN 7, QoN 11, QoN 14, QoN 19
Students with disabilities	11, QoN 6
Construction Forestry and Maritime Employees Union (CFMEU)	11-12
Rork Projects	12, 30
Thursday Island State High School	12-13
J&G Infinity Trust	13-16, 28
Source Global	16-17, 30
Teacher safety and security	14-15
Better and Fairer Schools Agreement (Australian Government funding)	18, 23-24, 26-27
Student engagement	18-19
Queensland Pathways State College	19-20, 29
Vaping	20-22, 30, QoN 13

¹⁸ Queensland Budget, 2024-25, SDS, DoE, p 7.

Racism	22, QoN South Brisbane
Antisemitism	22, 30
Brisbane State High School	22
Indooroopilly State High School	22-23
Proposed schools in Brisbane western suburbs	24
Early childhood education and care services	24-25, 27-28
East Brisbane State School	25-26
Home education	29
NAPLAN results	QoN 1
Teacher housing	QoN 2
Capital budget and expenditure	QoN 4, QoN 12
Student wellbeing package	QoN 5

3.2 Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority

The role of QCAA is to ‘provide high-quality curriculum, assessment and reporting services that enable equity, excellence, public confidence, and lifelong learning’.¹⁹

To achieve its purpose, the QCAA has the following objectives:

- deliver high-quality and future-focused resources and services
- understand and respond to the needs of stakeholders
- act with professionalism and integrity.²⁰

3.2.1 Budget overview

QCAA’s total expenses are estimated to be \$96.3 million in 2024–25, an increase of approximately \$8 million from the 2023–24 budget. The SDS states that the increase in both the 2023-24 estimated actual and the 2024-25 budget is largely due to increased employee expenses, combined with a slight reduction in supplies and services expenditure.²¹

The increase in employee expenses in the 2023-24 estimated actual is largely due to an increase in temporary staff positions related to the implementation of the *Australian Curriculum v9.0* and a Cost-of-Living Adjustment payment made to employees under an Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA).²²

¹⁹ Queensland Budget, 2024-25, SDS, DoE, p 17.

²⁰ Queensland Budget, 2024-25, SDS, DoE, p 17.

²¹ Queensland Budget, 2024-25, SDS, DoE, p 20.

²² Queensland Budget, 2024-25, SDS, DoE, p 20.

The increase in the 2024-25 budget reflects the inclusion of casual loading for assessors and markers employed under the *Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Act 2014*, combined with EBA increases for other employees. A reduction in supplies and services expenditure is associated with the expansion of the QCAA's tenancy at 400 George St, Brisbane which has reduced the need for the hire of large conference venues previously used for quality assurance and marking operations.²³

3.2.2 Matters raised during the estimates process

The committee did not raise any matters about the estimates for the QCAA during its consideration of budget estimates.

3.3 Department of Youth Justice

As part of machinery-of-government changes effective 18 December 2023, the DoYJ was established as a new department. Previously Youth Justice was part of the former Department of Youth Justice, Employment, Small Business and Training.²⁴

The department's purpose is 'to keep the community safe by holding young offenders accountable and reducing the rate and severity of offending'.²⁵

The DoYJ's strategic objectives are to:

- reduce reoffending by holding young people to account for their offending behaviour and ensuring youth justice supervision focuses on improving social, economic, civic participation and cultural connection
- reduce the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in the youth justice system.²⁶

3.3.1 Budget overview

The total proposed budget for DoYJ in 2024-25 is \$481.5 million of which 99.3 per cent is appropriation revenue. Total expenditure in 2024-25 is an increase of \$249.7 million from the 2023-24 estimated actual and is mainly due to the machinery-of-government change to establish a standalone department.²⁷

The majority of expenditure incurred by DoYJ is put towards ensuring youth justice supervision focuses on improving social, economic, civic participation and cultural connection. Employee expenses account for 67.3 per cent of the total 2024-25 budget and supports 2,277 FTEs.²⁸

Table 3 (see next page) shows the proposed appropriations for the DoYJ for 2024-25, compared with the estimated actual for 2023-24.

²³ Queensland Budget, 2024-25, SDS, DoE, p 20.

²⁴ Queensland Budget, 2024-25, SDS, DoYJ, p 1.

²⁵ Queensland Budget, 2024-25, SDS, DoYJ, p 1.

²⁶ Queensland Budget, 2024-25, SDS, DoYJ, p 1.

²⁷ Queensland Budget, 2024-25, SDS, DoYJ, p 7.

²⁸ Queensland Budget, 2024-25, SDS, DoYJ, p 7.

Table 3: Department of Youth Justice appropriation for 2024-25

Appropriations	Budget 2023-24 \$'000	Est. Actual 2023-24 \$'000	Vote 2024-25 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>			
departmental services	..	220,871	478,087
equity adjustment	..	23,102	193,035
<i>Administered Items</i>
Vote	..	243,973	671,122

Source: Appropriation Bill 2024, Schedule 2, p. 15.

3.3.2 Trends in the Vote

As a consequence of several machinery-of-government changes over the previous 3 years, the committee accepts that figures from previous budgets are not directly comparable with those of 2024-25. For this reason a table has not been included.

3.3.3 Budget highlights

The 2024-25 budget highlights for DoYJ include:²⁹

Supporting new and existing detention centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$ 224.2 million over 4 years to support the establishment and operation of the Woodford Youth Detention Centre, \$17.7 million over 2 years to continue to support young people in watch-houses and to support the build of the Woodford and Cairns youth detention centres, and \$94 million over 3 years to operate the Wacol Youth Remand Centre.
Expanding and enhancing services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$11.2 million over 2 years to extend and expand the Youth Co-Responder Teams, \$2.4 million in 2024–25 to expand the Intensive Bail Initiative, and \$3.5 million over 2 years to expand Intensive Case Management.
Increasing after hours services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$6 million over 2 years to enhance after hours services in high needs communities experiencing increases in youth offending.
Supporting justice services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$5 million over 2 years to continue and expand restorative justice services to ensure victims are supported and experience timely management of their cases, and \$1.2 million in 2025–26 to support the continuation of the Townsville Youth Court.
New and expanded programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$8.8 million over 4 years to establish a trial of a program response to serious violent youth offending, and \$3.3 million over 4 years to extend the cultural family partnership service.

²⁹ Queensland Budget, 2024-25, SDS, DoYJ, p 2.

3.3.4 Capital program

The capital works programs of the DoYJ has been valued at \$221.1 million in 2024-25. This includes:

- \$185.1 million for the continued construction of the Woodford Youth Detention Centre
- \$36.1 million for ongoing upgrades and minor works to Youth Detention centres and Youth Justice services centres.³⁰

3.3.5 Matters raised during the estimates process

Matters raised during the committee's examination of the Department of Youth Justice are summarised below.

Matters considered by the committee in relation to the estimates for the Department of Youth Justice	Public hearing transcript, page no; Question on Notice (QoN)
Reoffending	30-31, 34-35, 36, 40-42, 42-43, QoN 10
Program procurement, contracting and reviews	31-33, 33-34, 36, QoN 16
On Country programs	35-36, 38-39, 43, QoN 15, QoN 20
Sentencing	37-38
Kirwan Street University	39
Community Safety Plan	39-40
Youth justice peak body	42
Fast Track Sentencing Pilot	43-44
Youth detention centres	43-47, QoN Maiwar
Staffing at youth detention centres	QoN 8
Watch-houses	37, 46
Intensive case management	46-47
Youth Justice Reform Select Committee	QoN 9, QoN Noosa
72-hour plans	41-43, QoN 17
Funding	QoN 18

³⁰ Queensland Budget, 2024-25, SDS, DoYJ, p 6.

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

The Honourable Lance McCallum MP, Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development, is responsible for the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT) and TAFE Queensland.³¹



To assist the committee with its consideration of portfolio estimates, and in keeping with the requirements of Schedule 7 of the Standing Orders, the Chief Executive of TAFE Queensland was present at the hearing on 1 August 2024.³²

4.1 Department of Employment, Small Business and Training

The DESBT's strategic objectives are:

- preparing Queensland's workforce for the demands of current and future industries
- helping small businesses to start, grow and thrive
- connecting people to quality training and skills.³³

Prior to machinery-of-government changes effective 18 December 2023, DESBT was known as the Department of Youth Justice, Employment, Small Business and Training and administered youth justice.

4.1.1 Budget overview

The DESBT's proposed total budget for 2024-5 is \$1.567 billion of which 98.2 per cent is appropriation revenue. Grants and subsidies account for 77.5 per cent of DESBT's expenditure budget and mainly relate to vocational education and training programs. Employee expenses account for 5.4 per cent of the total budget with DESBT supporting 624 full-time equivalent (FTE) posts. Other expenses include support and maintenance of facilities, departmental support costs, and costs associated with the Southbank Education Training Precinct Public Private Partnership.³⁴

³¹ Queensland Budget 2024-25, SDS, DoE, p (iii).

³² Schedule 7 of the Standing Orders sets out a list of statutory entities to which direct questioning of chief executives at estimates applies.

³³ Queensland Budget, 2024-25, SDS, DESBT, p 1.

³⁴ Queensland Budget, 2024-25, SDS, DESBT, p 11.

The proposed \$1.567 billion in departmental expenses represents a decrease of over \$191 million on the 2023-24 estimated actual.³⁵ This is due to the recent machinery-of-government changes as well as changes to the Australian Government's Job Trainer Fund.³⁶

Table 4 illustrates the combined total of the cash appropriations for DESBT for 2024-25, compared with the budgeted and actual cash appropriations for 2023-24.

Table 4: Department of Employment, Small Business and Training appropriation for 2024-25

Appropriations	Budget 2023-24 \$'000	Est. Actual 2023-24 \$'000	Vote 2024-25 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>			
departmental services	1,716,109	1,712,593	1,531,233
equity adjustment	15,861	(56,494)	(31,965)
<i>Administered Items</i>
Vote	1,731,970	1,656,099	1,499,268

Source: Appropriation Bill 2024, Schedule 2, p. 10.

As highlighted in the table, the total combined 2024-25 appropriation of just over \$1.499 billion represents a decrease of just over \$232.7 million on last year's budgeted appropriations, and a decrease of just over \$156.8 million on the estimated actual total appropriations for the department in 2023-24.

4.1.2 Trends in the Vote

Table 5 shows the amount sought in 2024 for the Vote against spending over the previous 3 years.

Table 5: Trends in appropriation for Department of Employment, Small Business and Training

	2021/22 Estimated Actual \$'000	2022/23 Estimated Actual \$'000	2023/24 Estimated Actual \$'000	2024/25 Estimates Sought \$'000
	1,382,763	1,297,450	1,656,099	1,499,268
% Change	(6.16)	27.64	(9.47)	

Source: Appropriation Bill 2024, Schedule 2, p 10; Appropriation Bill 2023, Schedule 2, p 14; Appropriation Bill 2022, Schedule 2, p 9.

As a consequence of the recent machinery-of-government changes, the committee accepts that figures from previous budgets are not directly comparable with those of 2024-25.

³⁵ Queensland Budget 2024-25, SDS, DESBT, p 6

³⁶ Queensland Budget 2024-25, SDS, DESBT, p 11.

4.1.3 Budget highlights

The 2024-25 budget highlights for DESBT include:³⁷

Funding free and subsidised training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional funding of \$203.1 million over 2 years, as part of a total investment of \$370 million in the <i>Good Jobs, Great Training: Queensland Skills Strategy 2024-2028</i> to fund free and subsidised training in, among others, the health, social services, clean energy, and construction sectors.
Supporting small business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional funding of \$19.7 million to support the <i>Queensland Small Business Strategy 2024-2027</i> as part of a total budget of \$250 million over 3 years that will provide, among others: investment in cybersecurity support, post-disaster assistance, small business grants, free TAFE training, and mentoring for Indigenous businesses.
Free Nursing places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional funding of \$81.2 million as part of a total funding package of \$162.6 million over 3 years to provide free training places at TAFE for those studying a Diploma in Nursing in 2024 and 2025.
Maintaining TAFE facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional funding of \$101.7 million over 4 years and \$26.4 million per annum ongoing for the TAFE Big Build, to continue to maintain state-owned TAFE Queensland facilities.
Supporting the construction industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$11 million over 3 years allocated from the <i>Homes for Queenslanders</i> plan to support the construction industry workforce to position for the future.

4.1.4 Capital program

The capital program for DESBT is \$80.4 million in 2024-25. Capital purchases highlighted in the SDS include:

- \$11.9 million for the continued delivery of Equipping TAFE for Our Future Eagle Farm Robotics and Advanced Manufacturing Centre project
- \$14.8 million for the commencement and delivery of the Great Barrier Reef International Marine College expansion project
- \$9.8 million for the continued delivery of TAFE Technology Fund projects delivered in partnership with the Australian Government, including Loganlea clinical skills laboratory, Pimlico visual arts precinct and Thursday Island health hub
- \$2.5 million for the continued delivery of Equipping TAFE for Our Future Central Queensland University Rockhampton Campus Consolidation and Training Centre
- \$41.4 million for the Annual Training Infrastructure Program to renew and revitalise training infrastructure across the state, to improve accessibility to the necessary skills and training required to boost labour market productivity.³⁸

4.1.5 Matters raised during the estimates process

Matters raised during the committee's examination of the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training are summarised on the next page.

³⁷ Queensland Budget, 2024-25, SDS, DESBT, p 2.

³⁸ Queensland Budget, 2024-25, SDS, DESBT, p 7.

Matters considered by the committee in relation to the estimates for the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training	Public hearing transcript, page no; Question on Notice (QoN)
Construction trades workers and apprentices	QoN 4, QoN 6, QoN Maiwar, QoN 20, QoN South Brisbane
Small Business Commissioner	57-58, 63-4, QoN Noosa
Queensland Workforce Strategy	59-60
VET workforce	QoN 3
Regional Jobs Committee	QoN 5
Small business workforce	QoN 7
Disaster recovery support	QoN 8
Small business grants and programs	53-54, 61-63, 65, QoN 9, QoN 11, QoN 14, QoN 19
Regulatory burden, impact of	60
Skilling Queenslanders for Work	55-57, QoN 13
Queensland Skills Strategy	QoN 1, QoN 15
Queensland Small Business Strategy	64-65, QoN 16
Impact of crime on small business	51-53
Support for regional small businesses	61
Delivery of VET in regional Queensland	72-73
Electricity, support for small businesses	61
Apprenticeships	QoN 17
Dementia Support Skills Set	QoN 18
Cost-of-living support	54-55
Small Business Financial Counselling Service	64-65, 79
Machinery-of-Government changes	67-69
Queensland College of Wine Tourism	72
Repair and maintenance of land and buildings	75

4.2 TAFE Queensland

The purpose of TAFE Queensland is to ‘deliver contemporary, globally relevant skills, needed now and into the future, along with the opportunity for everyone, everywhere to transform their lives’.³⁹

According to the SDS, TAFE Queensland’s strategic objectives are as follows:

- TAFE Queensland is a highly recognised and trusted brand with long established, deep industry connections offering employers confidence in the skills, knowledge and quality of its students.
- TAFE Queensland delivers responsive, contemporary training to its students to ensure a workforce with the skills and capability that industry needs now and into the future.
- TAFE Queensland works collaboratively with government, industry and its communities to deliver training to support economic growth and community prosperity.⁴⁰

4.2.1 Budget overview

TAFE Queensland’s 2024-25 budget total income is \$891.3 million which is an increase of \$56.5 million or 6.8 per cent compared to 2023-24 estimated actual. The SDS states that this is largely due to an increase in grants and other contributions.⁴¹ User charges and fees are also budgeted to increase by \$11.2 million or 4.7 per cent in 2024-25, due to growing domestic student fee income and the growing number of migrant and refugee intake programs for English language study.⁴²

Total expenses in 2024-25 are budgeted at \$881.7 million, 68.2 per cent of which relate to employee expenses, a slightly lower proportion than the 2023-24 estimated actual. All other expenses are budgeted at \$280.5 million in 2024-25 which includes a \$9 million or 3.9 per cent increase in supplies and services. The SDS notes this ‘largely reflects expected inflationary increases across various categories of expenditure’.⁴³

4.2.2 Matters raised during the committee’s examination of TAFE Queensland

Matters considered by the committee in relation to the estimates for TAFE Queensland	Public hearing transcript, page no; Question on Notice (QoN)
Advertising and sponsorships	71-72
Capital investment	65-66, 77-79
Course completion rates	76-77
Employee numbers	75-76
External providers	74-75, 79-80
Fee Free TAFE	74-75, QoN 10
Ingham TAFE campus	73

³⁹ Queensland Budget, 2024-25, SDS, DESBT, p 12.

⁴⁰ Queensland Budget, 2024-25, SDS, DESBT, p 12.

⁴¹ Queensland Budget, 2024-25, SDS, DESBT, p 15.

⁴² Queensland Budget, 2024-25, SDS, DESBT, p 15.

⁴³ Queensland Budget, 2024-25, SDS, DESBT, p 15.

Misconduct	QoN 12
Payroll tax	70-71, 79
Support for TAFE in regional Queensland	QoN 2
Thursday Island TAFE campus	73-74

5 Statement of Reservation

Statement of Reservation – Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee

Introduction

Opposition members of the Committee agree with the passing of the 2024/25 Budget but acknowledge its clear limitations. It is a matter of regret that the Estimates process has, once again, been characterised by obfuscation, concealment rather than transparency and the triumph of the opaque over the crystal clear.

At the conclusion of nearly a decade in office, and at the end of the first four-year parliamentary term, the government has failed to provide reassurance that its policies are meeting the significant challenges that face the state – the cost of living crisis, the health crisis, the crime crisis and the housing crisis.

The band aid solutions outlined in the Budget fail to address the underlying causes behind these challenges. Simply directing scarce government funds at problems – many of which are the direct result of government action or inaction – will not provide the long-term solutions that are required.

The Budget provided a chance for the government to chart a new direction, to discard the errors of the past and reassure Queenslanders that problems will be met head on. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that this is occurring.

Unless the government faces the economic challenges that confront the state there is little prospect other underlying problems will be overcome. The Estimates process has revealed just how unprepared the government is to meet its responsibilities to help Queenslanders.

Education

Asbestos management in Queensland schools remains of serious concern to teachers, parents and students.

Specifically, a serious asbestos incident occurred at Rochedale State School in March of this year. The way that this incident was managed by the Queensland Government, has been of great concern to parents and staff of this school community.

It was established that many students and families have left Rochedale State School following this asbestos incident and the subsequent handling of it. When asked if follow up had been done with each of the families, and whether the Director-General would commit to following up with parents to get their feedback, the Director-General committed to following-up and determining what further communications will be undertaken. A timeframe was not confirmed. The Minister has not met with parents and has not committed to meeting with parents impacted by this asbestos incident.

Questions were asked in relation to reimbursement costs of stationery packs and student items that were discarded due to asbestos contamination, and the fact that only \$150.00 was offered to replace stationery packs that actually cost \$250.00. The onus appeared to be on parents to talk to the school principal if they were having financial difficulty in replacing the \$250.00 Stationery pack.

Similarly, when the matter of the Rochedale State School P&C donating \$12,000 to assist with reimbursement costs was raised, again the onus was placed back on parents and the P&C to engage with the school principal in recovering these costs. Also, concerns were raised that on the 19th of March 2024, when an important meeting was being held between Department of Education representatives and parents about the asbestos incident, that the Minister for Education and

Director-General, were prioritising entertainment over education by attending the Pink Concert at Suncorp Stadium.

Questions were also raised around the Indigenous-themed refurbishment of Corporate Office Conference facilities at Education House for \$564,000, whilst school infrastructure in First Nations schools and communities continue to deteriorate. The Committee heard that direct correspondence was provided to the Minister for Education, from a Grade 8 student of Tagai State College on Thursday Island, detailing significantly sub-standard facilities.

It was disappointing that the students and school community on Thursday Island were not prioritised over Corporate Office refurbishments.

There were also a range of matters related to due process, integrity, and probity regarding the awarding of Department of Education Contracts, as well as other issues pertaining to Teacher Workforce recruitment and retention, student vaping, the Queensland Pathways State College, and increasing instances of antisemitism and discrimination.

Youth Justice

The Government's approach to fixing Youth Crime is to stop measuring it. The Hearings revealed after failing their previous Youth Justice Strategy's only KPI, to reduce reoffending by 5% (instead reoffending increased over the period of the Youth Justice Strategy by 5%) the Government has now dropped the target to reduce youth reoffending.

The 72-hour transition plans, as meagre as they are, have also only been rolled out to less than half of young people leaving detention. The government admitted they have failed to provide the plans to all serious repeat offenders and of those with a plan, 72% reoffend within 30 days. It's a shocking failure of this Government to intervene and provide the support and supervision so these young people don't continue the cycle of offending. Serious repeat offenders have increased 62% since 2018-19, a shocking figure given how many times the Government has said they are targeting this group.

The Government continues to keep residents in the dark on the location for the new Cairns Youth Detention Centre, and they failed to back the LNP's Adult Crime Adult Time policy, despite clear examples where penalties are not meeting the community's expectations.

We won't make the community safer by continuing the same approach we have seen from this Government for the last 10 years that has seen the number of serious repeat offenders soar and victim numbers reach the highest in the nation; it's time for change and this Government isn't willing to make it.

Employment and Small Business

Despite the impact of crime being a major concern for many Queensland small businesses, the Minister was unaware of the number of small businesses that have been affected by crime, information that is available from the Queensland Government QPS website. The Minister suggested that the availability of \$5,000 Business Basics Grants could be used to fund upgrades to CCTV, however it is the view of Opposition Members of the Committee that such grants are a woefully inadequate response to the significant crime impacts being experienced by small businesses across Queensland.

After questioning from Government Members about the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program it was identified that program participants only need to be employed for a single day in a 12-month period following conclusion of the program and that a person who is self-employed for a single day is considered to be employed for the purposes of assessing the success or otherwise of the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program.

There appears to be limited support available to small businesses, like Nambour business Walter's Artisan Bread, when they experience issues with service delivery from Government Departments and GOC's, like Energex. The Minister suggested that the Queensland Small Business Commissioner could advocate on such issues, despite the State Government choosing to not empower the role with powers to intervene in disputes between Queensland small businesses and State Government entities.

Through the Estimates process the amount of funding allocated to administering grants and support programs was highlighted, with \$176 in every \$1,000 allocated being spent of administration. The Director-General admitted costs had increased and spoke about program variations. When asked if this meant that Queensland businesses were able to access fewer grants, the Director General did not give a clear answer.

The workload of the Queensland Small Business Commissioner was discussed, and the Director-General was asked if the Department had received requests for additional funding. The Director-General indicated that he had discussed the Commission's budget with the Small Business Commissioner. The Director-General also suggested there was appetite within the commission 'to do more'. Despite this, any expansion of resources for the Queensland Small Business Commission was absent from this budget.

Training and Skills Development

It was revealed that TAFE delivered training to 144,000 students in 2023-24, about 14 percent up on the previous year. Despite this significant increase in enrolment numbers, TAFE teacher and tutor numbers only increased by 146, a rate of increase that is well below the increase in student numbers in percentage terms. The CEO agreed there was additional demand and overtime was being used to meet that demand. Class sizes have also increased in some classes to meet the demand. When asked about the impact on the TAFE teacher workforce, no meaningful detail was provided as to strategies employed to ensure the welfare of the TAFE teacher workforce. Significantly it is noted that the budget papers show no budgeted increase in TAFE teacher numbers for financial year FY 2024/25, despite the acknowledged pressure currently being felt by the existing TAFE workforce.

As has been highlighted in previous years, it is evident that significant gaps exist in relation to performance data for TAFE Queensland. An example is the fact that the State Government are unable to advise the number of Fee Free TAFE students who have completed their qualifications, and when questioned the State Government cite enrolments as a measure of success. Opposition Members of the Committee are of the view that the focus on commencements, while ignoring the number of students who complete their training is to the detriment of students, employers, and the broader community, who are all dealing with significant worker shortages in key trades.

When questioned why there were 606 commencements in Cert III Accounts Administration and only 36 completions, the TAFE CEO spoke about some students taking longer but did not provide

data around time frames. Such generalities do not assist the Committee or the Queensland public to assess the effectiveness of Government expenditure.

It was identified that TAFE used 95 external, third-party providers to deliver training as at the 30th of June 2024. Such enrolments are considered to be TAFE enrolments, despite the training being delivered by external providers.

When questioned as to how the Department had arrived at the \$41,417,000 allocation for the TAFE campus capital program, it was identified that the allocation was to fund projects across 40 different campuses across the State, but it was stated that the Department was not in a position to provide a breakdown as to the allocation of the funding on a project or campus basis. The Shadow Minister observed that the State Government did not seem to have enough confidence to share the information with the Committee because it was not at a stage of sufficient readiness, which Opposition Members believe indicates a lack of rigour has been applied when arriving at budget allocations. That the State Government could not or would not provide a breakdown of the aggregated funding amounts demonstrates a lack of transparency, which Opposition Members believe Queensland taxpayers rightly expect to be provided.

Through the Estimates process it was identified that the amount of funding allocated for the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training was cut by \$191m for FY 2024/25, when compared to the prior financial year. In response, the Minister carefully chose to answer that the budget was a “record budget”, however the point was made that it was indeed a cut compared to actual expenditure in the last financial year.

When questioned by the Member for Ipswich West, it was identified that TAFE Queensland spent \$6.99m on sponsorship and advertising in the last financial year alone, the purpose of which was advised as being to “reposition” TAFE as being “innovative, progressive and authentic”.

Embarrassingly, it appears that Controlled Income Statement on page 9 of the SDS contains an error with employee expenses listed as being only 42.83% of the prior year figure. Despite the contention from the Director General that this difference was attributable to changes to machinery of government arrangements, it is clear that the Controlled Income Statement is expressed on a post-machinery of government basis, and the State Government either intend to cut funding allocated to employee expenses this financial year, or the amount is included as an error. If this item is an error, it is incumbent on the Government to correct the record.

In relation to the Queensland Skills Strategy 2024-2028, it was identified that meaningful funding for the strategy is only allocated up to 30 June 2026, with very limited funds allocated for the 2026/27 financial year, and no funding allocated for the 2027/28 financial year.

It was also identified that, while additional public funding for TAFE has been allocated for FY 2024/25 and FY 2025/26, there is no additional funding for TAFE allocated post 30 June 2026. Additionally, it was advised that despite \$88.98m in additional TAFE public funding being allocated for this financial year, TAFE are required to pay the State Government payroll tax, which in the most recent financial year amounted to \$29.48m. This approach was characterised as “the State Government giving with one hand and taking with the other”.

Conclusion

These hearings have revealed many shortcomings in the government's policies and little evidence that the government knows how to overcome these.

Effective service delivery comes a distant second in competing with political objectives and Queenslanders continue to be let down. There was little evidence provided over the course of Estimates that the government has a clear, coherent plan to overcome the significant problems facing the state.

Of equal concern was the government's failure to deliver public projects on budget and on time.

No evidence emerged during these hearings that the government has any capacity to overcome the continuing state of chaos and crisis that has characterised so much of the past decade.

This Budget is a wasted opportunity and Queenslanders have been ignored by the government.



James Lister MP
Deputy Chair
Member for Southern Downs
8 August 2024



Darren Zanow MP
Member for Ipswich West
8 August 2024