



## 2020-2021 Budget Estimates

**Report No. 2, 57th Parliament**  
**Education, Employment and Training Committee**  
**February 2021**

## **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 2020-21 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 (2020-2021) Bill 2020 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, 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 those members who contributed valuably to the estimates process and the work of our committee.

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.<sup>1</sup>

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.

On 1 December 2020, the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020 and the estimates for the committee's area of responsibility were referred to the committee for investigation and report.<sup>2</sup>

On 9 December 2020, 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.<sup>3</sup>

## 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 the estimates referred to it by using 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 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.

<sup>1</sup> *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001*, s 88 and Standing Order 194.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/work-of-committees/committees/EETC/inquiries/current-inquiries/Estimates2020>.

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 Ministers after the hearing are included in a volume of additional information tabled with this report.

### **1.3 Participation by other Members**

The committee granted leave for other Members to participate in the hearing in accordance with Standing Order 181(e). The following Members participated in the hearing:

- Steve Andrew MP, Member for Mirani
- Michael Berkman MP, Member for Maiwar
- Jarrod Bleijie MP, Member for Kawana
- Sandy Bolton MP, Member for Noosa
- David Crisafulli MP, Member for Broadwater
- David Janetzki MP, Member for Toowoomba South
- Dr Amy MacMahon MP, Member for South Brisbane
- Tim Mander MP, Member for Everton
- Brent Mickelberg MP, Member for Buderim
- 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 (2020-2021) Bill 2020 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
- Racing Queensland
- Queensland Racing Integrity Commission.

#### 3.1 Department of Education

In 2020-21 the Department of Education will deliver services in the following areas:

- Early Childhood Education and Care - early education and care programs for children that support learning and development and transition to school
- School Education - school education and support for transition to further education, training and work
- Industrial Relations - regulation, advice and information regarding industrial relations, workplace safety, electrical safety at work and at home, and workers' compensation regulation and policy
- Racing - administering the *Racing Act 2002* and programs to support the racing industry in Queensland.

Responsibility for Racing was transferred to the Department of Education from the former Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs as part of machinery-of-government changes effective from 12 November 2020.

##### 3.1.1 Budget overview – Department of Education

The following table compares the appropriation for the Department of Education for 2019-20 and 2020-21.<sup>4</sup>

**Table 1: Department of Education – Appropriations for 2019-20 and 2020-21**

Appropriation	2019-20 \$'000	2020-21 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>		
departmental services	9,325,328	9,621,435
equity adjustment	724, 061	1,109,918
<i>Administered Items</i>	3,807,436	3,994,281
<b>Vote</b>	<b>13,856,825</b>	<b>14,725,634</b>

Source: Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020, Schedule 2, p 10.

The Department of Education budget for controlled items is \$10.29 billion for 2020-21, which is an increase of \$240 million on the 2019-20 actual expenditure.<sup>5</sup> Increases in expenses and revenue for controlled items reflect enrolment growth, additional expenses associated with the National School

<sup>4</sup> Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020, Schedule 2.

<sup>5</sup> Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 2, p 35.



Reform Agreement and Bilateral Agreement, funding for election commitments, and the transfer of the Racing function to the Department of Education.<sup>6</sup>

The Department of Education also administers funds on behalf of the state including grants and other contributions and user charges and fees. Changes to expenses and revenue for administered items in 2020-21 are mainly due to revised timing of Australian Government funding for non-state schools.<sup>7</sup>

### 3.1.2 Capital works program

Total capital purchases for the Department of Education for 2020-21 is forecast at \$1.65 billion, an increase of \$494 million from 2019-20 for actual capital purchases.<sup>8</sup> The 2020-21 capital works budget is primarily for the construction and refurbishment of school educational facilities and early childhood education and care services.<sup>9</sup> The 2020-21 budget also provides for capital grants to the Racing Infrastructure Fund of \$22.53 million<sup>10</sup> and to the Country Racing Program of \$2.60 million.<sup>11</sup>

## 3.2 Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority

The Queensland Curriculum Assessment Authority (QCAA) is established under the *Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Act 2014*. The QCAA delivers syllabuses and guidelines, as well as assessment, testing, reporting and certification services to the Queensland education community.<sup>12</sup>

The QCAA's operating expenditure is estimated to be \$83.05 million in 2020-21, an increase of \$26.63 million on estimated actual expenditure in 2019-20.<sup>13</sup> The QCAA is expected to return an operating surplus of \$6.50 million for the financial year.<sup>14</sup>

## 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 integrity and safety, and maintain public confidence in the Queensland racing industry.<sup>15</sup>

### 3.3.1 Budget overview

The QRIC's operating budget for 2019-20 is \$31.11 million, an increase of \$0.66 million from 2019-20 estimated actual.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 2, pp 34-35.

<sup>7</sup> Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 2, p 34.

<sup>8</sup> Machinery of government changes effective from 12 November 2020 are not reflected in the actual capital purchases figure for 2019-20.

<sup>9</sup> Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 2, p 33.

<sup>10</sup> Queensland Budget 2020-21, Capital Statement – Budget Paper No 3, p 28.

<sup>11</sup> Queensland Budget 2020-21, Capital Statement – Budget Paper No 3, p 27.

<sup>12</sup> Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 2, p 38.

<sup>13</sup> Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 2, p 22.

<sup>14</sup> Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 2, p 40.

<sup>15</sup> Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 2, p 19.

<sup>16</sup> Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 2, p 22.

### 3.3.2 Capital works program

Property plant and equipment purchases planned for the QRIC in 2020-21, include \$309 million for asset replacements, \$300 million for registration and licensing environment outlays, and \$1.30 million for laboratory technology upgrades for the Racing Science Centre.<sup>17</sup>

### 3.4 Key issues raised during consideration of budget estimates

Issues raised and considered by the committee in relation to the budget estimates for the Department of Education for 2020-21 include:

- implementation of the Cooler Cleaner Schools program, and the Advancing Clean Energy Schools program, including the safe removal of asbestos-containing material
- the number of schools airconditioned in 2019-20 and planned for 2020-21, and funding in 2020-21 for air conditioning for schools and required electrical upgrades
- the projected numbers of teachers and teacher aides in 2023-24 required to meet the Queensland Government's election commitment
- the trial placement of general practitioners in 20 state secondary schools, the cost of the trial and how participating schools will be chosen
- how homework hubs in schools will be rolled out, when the program will commence, and the criteria for selecting schools to participate in the program
- funding provided for the Independent Public Schools program in 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024, and the implementation of recommendations arising from the 2018 evaluation of the Independent Schools model
- mechanisms to deal with COVID-19 outbreaks including providing alternative online programs for continued learning
- enrolment procedures for unvaccinated children under the *Public Health Act 2005*
- outside of school hours care for working families
- fraud and/or misconduct investigations regarding employees being undertaken either by Education Queensland or the Crime and Corruption Commission
- code of conduct compliance, and processes for responding to complaints about staff
- funding to be allocated from the Building Future Schools Fund during 2020-21 to acquire land in the Hinchinbrook electorate to keep up with population growth in Townsville's northern beaches
- the total infrastructure budget for 2020-21 and how this funding will be used to build, maintain, improve and update schools while supporting Queensland jobs
- new state schools to be opened over the next three years, and planning for new schools beyond 2023
- funding for early childhood education providers
- capital funding for Catholic and independent schools
- teacher recruitment and support

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<sup>17</sup> Queensland Budget 2020-21, Capital Statement – Budget Paper No 3, p 33.

- action the Queensland Government is taking to support kindergarten participation and access for Aboriginal children and Torres Strait Islander children and children from vulnerable and disadvantaged communities
- initiatives in the budget to support student well-being and mental health, as well as the projected ratios for psychologists or counsellors to students
- upgrade of training facilities and trade training centres in schools to enable secondary students to access skills development and training
- actions and plans to address silicosis risks in the engineered stone industry and to support workers with occupational lung disease
- developments in relation to the labour hire licensing scheme and any plans to strengthen the department's Labour Hire Licensing Compliance Unit
- compliance actions undertaken by the Labour Hire Licensing Unit in 2019-20
- the Queensland Government's response to the problem of wage theft
- prohibition notices issued under the Tower Crane Code of Practice 2017
- access to workplace sites by unions under right-of-entry provisions
- the work of the Work Health and Safety Prosecutor
- sick leave entitlements for casual workers in the private sector
- pay equity in the public sector
- implementation of the new portable long service scheme for community services workers
- the Country Racing Package and its importance to rural and regional communities throughout Queensland
- infrastructure works undertaken for racing throughout Queensland and how these works are improving animal welfare, benefiting communities and supporting jobs
- key infrastructure projects outside south-east Queensland that will receive funding from the Racing Infrastructure Fund, and how the Queensland Government can better support Queensland country racing
- the engagement of communication and professional consultants by Racing Queensland
- the 2021 Magic Millions event
- Racing Queensland's hospitality expenses
- litigation cases filed with the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal
- the audit of horses that were determined to be in the at-risk category by the Martin inquiry, and the establishment of the Queensland Off The Track program.

## 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 2020-21 the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training will deliver services in the following areas:

- Employment – to increase employment opportunities for Queenslanders, in particular disadvantaged cohorts
- Small Business – to ensure small businesses can seamlessly interact with government and are supported to start, grow and employ
- Training and Skills Development – to facilitate access to and participation in vocational education and training pathways, enabling Queenslanders to gain employment in current and future industries.

#### 4.1.1 Budget overview – Department of Employment, Small Business and Training

The following table compares the appropriation for the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training for 2019-20 and 2020-21.<sup>18</sup>

**Table 1: Department of Employment, Small Business and Training – Appropriations for 2019-20 and 2020-21**

Appropriation	2019-20 \$'000	2020-21 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>		
departmental services	1,049,892	1,360,279
equity adjustment	44, 369	(2,504)
<i>Administered Items</i>	-	-
<b>Vote</b>	<b>1,094,261</b>	<b>1,357,775</b>

Source: Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020, Schedule 2, p 10.

The Department of Employment, Small Business and Training's budget for controlled items is \$1.46 billion in 2020-21, which is an increase of \$356 million on the 2019-20 actual expenditure.<sup>19</sup> Increases in revenue for controlled items are mainly a result of the timing of payments for various Workers Assistance Package initiatives. These include Small Business Adaption Grants, matched funding for the Commonwealth JobTrainer Fund, new commitments such as the Big Plans for Small Business program, and new future skilling initiatives, including Equipping TAFE for Our Future, TAFE Priority Skills Fund, Social Enterprise Jobs Fund, First Nations Strategy, and Workforce Transition Support Program.<sup>20</sup>

The increase in expenditure reflects the increase in revenues primarily associated with Workers Assistance Package initiatives, the JobTrainer Fund, and new commitments in the skills and small

<sup>18</sup> Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020, Schedule 2.

<sup>19</sup> Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 3, p 31.

<sup>20</sup> Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 3, pp 27, 30.

business areas.<sup>21</sup> The majority of the estimated expenditure by the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training in 2020-21 is on grants and subsidies (82.9%), mainly for vocational education and training programs.<sup>22</sup>

#### 4.1.2 Capital works program

Total capital purchases for the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training for 2020-21 are estimated to be \$88.83 million, an decrease of \$12.04 million on actual capital purchases in 2019-20.<sup>23</sup>

## 4.2 TAFE Queensland

TAFE Queensland is a statutory body established under the *TAFE Queensland Act 2013* to provide vocational education and training services, providing foundation skills training and entry-level workforce qualifications to higher education.<sup>24</sup>

TAFE Queensland's operating expenditure in 2020-21 is estimated to be \$670.09 million, an increase of \$38.05 million on estimated actual expenditure in 2019-20.<sup>25</sup> The capital works program for TAFE Queensland in 2020-21 includes training asset purchases, training plant and equipment, information and communications technology program of works, product development, and other projects, as well as modernisation of TAFE facilities in a number of locations.

## 4.3 Key issues raised during consideration of budget estimates

Issues raised and considered by the committee in relation to the budget estimates for the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training for 2020-21 included:

- fraud and/or misconduct investigations currently being undertaken regarding employees either by the department, TAFE Queensland, Queensland Police Service, or the Crime and Corruption Commission
- approved projects within departmental portfolio areas, including the budget and scope of each project, the scheduled date of completion, and whether the completion timeframe for individual projects has been extended
- budgeted and actual spending on information technology programs in 2019-20 for the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training and TAFE Queensland
- the pooled redundancy scheme for workers in coal-fired power stations
- the establishment of the Energy Skills Advisory Committee
- the funding, development and implementation of the Jobs Finder portal
- implementation of the Big Plans for Small Business strategy, including working with stakeholders and industry groups, and the role of the Small Business Commissioner
- disbursements of government grants and compliance monitoring
- the rollout of the COVID-19 Small Business Adaption program
- labour market initiatives and funding, including the Back to Work program to address youth unemployment

<sup>21</sup> Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 3, p 30.

<sup>22</sup> Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 3, pp 30-31.

<sup>23</sup> Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 3, p 29.

<sup>24</sup> Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 3, p 33.

<sup>25</sup> Queensland Budget 2020-21, Service Delivery Statements, Volume 3, p 35.

- training delivered by registered training organisations, including funding matters
- details of breaches of contractual arrangement by contracted non-government service providers of subsidised training programs (Certificate 3 Guarantee, User Choice, Skilling Queenslanders for Work, Higher Level Skills, and Free TAFE) that have been investigated since the program's establishment
- the number of registered training organisations that have received state government funding to train Queensland students and which are currently under investigation or have previously been investigated for failing to provide the required training outcomes
- total expenditure by the department and TAFE Queensland on external consultants in 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20, and budgeted expenditure in the 2020-21 financial year
- support available to small business owners needing assistance to apply for Small Business grants provided for in the 2020/21 budget
- funding to ensure trainees and apprentices do not have to travel to undertake theory or practical modules through the TAFE Queensland Ingham Campus
- the benefits of the Back to Work Program and actions the Queensland Government is taking to ensure the appropriate use of this funding
- current apprenticeship and trainee numbers and factors impacting on commencements and completions
- the introduction and operation of the On-time Payment Policy
- number of businesses assisted by the Queensland Government's COVID-19 stimulus package for small business since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic
- progress of the Advancing Our Training Infrastructure investment
- satisfaction rates for training in Queensland
- how the North Stradbroke Island Workers Assistance Scheme has supported workers impacted by the cessation of sand mining on Minjerribah
- progress of employment and training programs including Skilling Queenslanders
- the number of, and expenses associated with, contractors and labour hire staff in the department and TAFE Queensland, and numbers of staff seconded to the department and TAFE Queensland from any other state government entity, in 2019-20 and budgeted in 2020-21 the rollout of regional jobs committees
- the Queensland Government's economic recovery plan
- service standards for apprenticeships and traineeships
- funding for Skills Assure suppliers
- initiatives to encourage young Queenslanders to take up a trade
- funding for training for the agriculture, aquaculture and aviation industries in regional Queensland
- the maintenance and security cost of disused former TAFE sites
- reporting by the Better Regulation Taskforce in the past 2 years
- publication of the artisanal producers regulation review.

## Statement of Reservation

## **STATEMENT OF RESERVATIONS BY LNP OPPOSITION MEMBERS – EETC** **REPORT ON BUDGET ESTIMATES**

We submit our views on the 2020 budget Estimates.

As Queenslanders deal with the impacts of COVID-19, the 2020/21 Budget was the time for the Palaszczuk Government to respond.

Instead, the third-term Labor Government claimed businesses are back on their feet and all jobs lost because of COVID-19 have been regained – claims woefully out of touch with reality.

The more than 200,000 Queenslanders who are currently out of work were relying on the Labor Government to get this Budget right. But for them it's simply pages of broken promises and dreams.

All Labor has delivered Queensland in this budget is \$28 billion in new debt to simply keep the lights on, and an infrastructure spend that is both billions less than southern states and but is also being delivered years into the never-never.

In its third term all the Labor Government can manage as an economic plan is a 41-page glossy brochure and an unemployment rate 13 percent higher than Victoria and nearly 25 percent higher than New South Wales.

### **COMMITTEE OPERATION**

As is prudent, the Opposition agrees with passing the budget. However, there are some reservations that should be noted.

As mentioned above, this budget outlines unemployment figures into the forwards confirming Queensland will have the worst unemployment figures in the country. Despite this, the government has not communicated any plans to fast-track projects to stimulate the economy and create jobs for Queenslanders.

By holding off the budget until after the election, the Government had a responsibility to be completely transparent about debt levels. Instead they outlined \$4 billion worth of debt before the election only to reveal the actual increase in debt would be seven times that amount at \$28 billion. While the opposition understands the need to borrow funds to build the roads, dams and other job creating projects; we are extremely concerned about the revelations in the budget



which show the massive increase in debt has yielded only a tiny increase in the State's net worth. This is in stark contrast to results in other states who have used increased borrowings to fund large infrastructure building programs.

Finally, the structure of the whole budget process is fundamentally broken. With a greatly truncated budget process, the Government had a responsibility to ensure it was completely transparent in estimates. Given the circumstances, it was more important than ever that a full and frank examination of Minister and their portfolios occurred. Instead, we believe that the opposition's role of inquiring into government activities and expenditures is systematically frustrated by the Labor Government through its control of parliament and the budget's legislative and committee processes. Specifically we believe that:

- Government witnesses are effectively shielded from accountability through the excessive formality of the estimates hearing process and the use of points of order to frustrate the flow and effectiveness of opposition questioning;
- Time limitations are imposed by the government which leave the opposition unable to comprehensively examine the government. It should be noted that in this most recent budget process, the government used its control of the parliament as a whole to avoid scrutiny and impose estimates schedules without even the pretence of committee involvement; and
- The parliamentary process available to the opposition for holding this government to account is subject to unfettered control by this government. We are unaware of any genuine sphere of accountability where such a conflict of interest is allowed.

The LNP opposition members believe that a complete reinvigoration of the Estimates process is essential, starting with the appointment of non-Government Chairs during estimates – an initiative that is LNP opposition policy.

## EDUCATION

Just as the Statement of Reservation on the 2019-20 Budget commenced with a review of the activities of the then Deputy Premier and Treasurer so does this Statement. The interaction between the then Deputy Premier and senior departmental staff is a matter of continuing concern and demonstrates an absence of regard for proper processes.

Matters of departmental staffing do not fall within the remit of ministers or local members. Questions relating to staffing at the Inner City South State Secondary College remain unresolved though evidence now indicates that at least one other government member, beyond the then Deputy Premier, was seeking to advocate for another candidate for principal.

This entire affair reveals an unhealthy relationship between members of parliament and public servants and reveals a seeming inability to distinguish between appropriate levels of responsibility. The blurring of lines between where a member's authority ends and a public servant's begins is a matter of growing concern. The reluctance of the government to provide information on this and associated matters appears contrary to their constant proclamations in favour of transparency and accountability.

At the same time testimony was given that staff continue to be paid while under investigation for a range of transgressions as well as the department having to meet salary entitlements of those filling temporary vacancies. Concerns have also been raised by the Queensland Association of State School Principals in relation to the way various allegations are handled by the Department of Education. Just as the issue of the air conditioning of schools was raised in relation to the 2019-20 Budget the issue is still current. While the process of installing air conditioning is proceeding, there are cases where significant electrical upgrades are required.

This program, and the Advancing Clean Energy Schools program (involving the installation of solar or other energy efficient devices), has uncovered asbestos in certain schools which the Director General has assured the Committee is being handled in accordance with approved procedures. \$14 million has been provided for the auditing and removal of asbestos with this amount to be met by the department, not individual schools or P&C bodies.

When questioned on the future of the Independent Public Schools programme the Minister was unable to give a commitment that it would continue or what level of financial support it would receive.

The invites doubts about the future of the program in the minds of those benefiting from the program.

## RACING

Racing Queensland has seen significant increases in expenditure on communications and consultants.

Mr Parnell's evidence that the increase in consultant costs was caused by insourcing consultants to reduce consultant costs doesn't adequately explain or justify the considerable increase in expenditure. Despite this, no information or assurance was given about the budget for professional consultants in the coming financial year.

The Minister's dogged refusal to take reasonable questions on notice to provide fulsome answers highlights in our view a culture of poor accountability and poor transparency in the Labor Government.

## INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Prior to the election and during caretaker mode, issues were raised in the media by the crane industry about action taken by the regulator about the crane code of practice that shutdown over 50 cranes across the State without any real notice.

When pushed about specific information and safety data in relation to cranes and the operation of the code of practice in Queensland, the Government were unable to provide any sufficient justification. Concerns have been raised by industry that the regulator's action was prompted by the CFMMEU and were part of an industrial campaign.

When asked about that, the Department would not specifically say which organisation or stakeholder bought it to their attention. A Public Interest Disclosure (PID) was tabled for the Committee, received by the LNP from departmental workplace health and safety inspectors. Over a number of years, there has been a constant stream of complaints received by the LNP from inspectors within the Department who claim to have been bullied by union officials from the CFMEU. The PID also contains emails from officials of the Together Union who also raise concerns about bullying and intimidation of departmental inspectors.

We believe that the document provides ample evidence to enable the Minister to take action to protect these employees, but to date it appears that nothing has happened. We believe that this situation indicates that the Labor government serves entrenched union interests above the interests of workers.

## EMPLOYMENT AND SMALL BUSINESS, TRAINING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Small business is the engine room of the Queensland economy and they are the backbone of our communities right across Queensland. The Treasurer stated in his budget speech that Queensland small businesses 'bore the brunt of the COVID-19 downturn' and yet rather than providing any new support to small and medium businesses across the state, Labor has, in our opinion, decided to ignore them.

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland (CCIQ) is on public record stating that the state budget "fails to deliver the immediate measures needed to protect business ahead of the looming economic cliff". Much of the information contained in the Queensland government's Budget Highlights under the heading 'Backing business' reads, in our opinion, like a history book. Struggling small businesses do not want to read about funding that has previously been expended. They need real support now and they need real investment now.

Despite the clear calls from CCIQ and businesses across the state, the Treasurer and the Minister for Small Business appear to have both been silent on their requests for a waiver of the payroll tax deferred under their COVID-19 provisions. The situation whereby accrued payroll tax liabilities will come due at the same time as payroll tax recommences and the JobKeeper stimulus is due to wind down, is hardly a recipe for business confidence or creating more jobs.

We believe that the Treasurer has not made efforts to realise necessary structural reforms to the Queensland economy nor to tackle the big issues that hold back businesses from employing more Queenslanders.

During the budget contributions Labor members frequently trumpeted the \$1 billion that this Government has budgeted on training. Unfortunately, the Labor State Government's record on training is less than stellar. When it comes to training and vocational education, Labor appears to be all talk and no action. Labor's glossy brochures do not mention their failings. We believe that apprenticeship and traineeship commencements and completions have fallen off a cliff on the Labor government's watch. Course completions between December 2014 and March 2020 have declined by 32.7 per cent. This training failure is surely a contributing factor to Queensland's high unemployment rate under the Palaszczuk government.

The Government's expansion of the existing free apprenticeships for under-21s program to Queenslanders under 25 is a positive step forward. However we believe that it falls short of the training opportunities that Queenslanders need to

improve their employment prospects, and that Labor's record on training makes it is reasonable to be sceptical about their ability to deliver.

In our view, this budget, and the Minister for Employment, Small Business and Training's performance during the Budget Estimates process, indicate that improving employment outcomes, small business viability and addressing shortfalls in training are not appropriately prioritised by the Labor Government.

During the budget estimates hearings the Minister and her staff were unable to answer many of the questions asked of them. The Minister for Employment stated that Queensland's 15% youth unemployment record constitutes a "strong track record in creating jobs". We believe that it was disappointing that the Minister for Employment didn't know which regions in Queensland have the highest unemployment in Queensland. We believe that regions like Toowoomba are denied adequate Government support to improve youth unemployment outcomes and that under such circumstances, the Minister's failure to answer this most basic of questions is unacceptable.

We believe that Queenslanders deserve a government that will face up to issues like failing small businesses and chronic unemployment. They deserve a government that will take real action to make their lives better. Queenslanders deserve real action to create jobs and get Queensland businesses hiring more staff.

### Conclusion


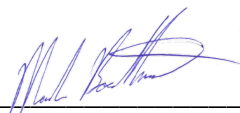
In the opinion of the LNP opposition members of the committee, Queensland needs a new approach to get the economy going and Queenslanders back to work. We the LNP opposition members call for infrastructure spending to be brought forward and rolled out now to help Queenslanders re-enter the workforce.

The LNP opposition members support unleashing economic growth by:

- Encouraging those with entrepreneurial spirit to invest their own money in job creating ventures;
- Valuing the Public Service by empowering them to make decisions to eliminate barriers to growth;
- Unshackling the mining and tourism industry through world's best practice environmental protections, which both preserve our natural environment and leverage upon it to create jobs;

- Placing significant investment in agriculture research and development with output increased through world's best practice education, training and support for our producers; and
- Building the water infrastructure Queensland needs.

The LNP opposition members of the committee support an approach which will return Queensland to its rightful position as the nation's economic powerhouse, and to create a better Queensland for us, our children, and generations to come.

 9 Feb 2021 <b>Mr James Lister MP</b> Deputy Chair Member for Southern Downs	 9 Feb 2021 <b>Mr Mark Boothman MP</b> Member for Theodore
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