



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

Education, Employment and Small Business Committee, Report

 **Mrs STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (6.55 pm): The opposition statement of reservation states that the 2018-19 budget is a budget of taxes, debt and unemployment. After 3½ years, Labor's legacy for Queensland is no less than five new taxes, an \$83 billion debt bomb and the worst unemployment in Australia at the time the budget was handed down. Labor's only plan is for more taxes and more debt. These five new taxes will rip \$2.2 billion out of our economy and hit households and businesses in every corner of this state. Despite serving 3½ years in office, Labor have no record to defend, merely a promise of more debt. What should be of major concern to taxpayers is that they seem to be proud of it.

Disappointingly, the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee hearing lacked openness and transparency, with Labor resorting to their tried and true protection racket to shield ministers—ministers beholden to their union chiefs. It was determined that questions would be asked in approximately 20-minute blocks with non-government members having the first block for each portfolio. This sounds fair in principle but is far from it in reality, and the time to review the estimates process is well overdue.

I have always believed that MPs should be able to attend estimates committees and ask questions. However, this must somehow be better monitored and managed. With an increase in the number of minor parties and Independents, the official opposition had their time for the direct questioning of ministers cut significantly. Crossbench MPs just wandered in and out of the hearings when it suited them with no courtesy given to me as deputy chair, who is obliged to accommodate them from our time blocks. During one session they took up 29 minutes in what should have been a 20-minute block. It also seems unfair that the honourable member for Maiwar, who regularly votes with the Labor government, is able to consume time from the LNP when he should be taking time from Labor.

It has been mentioned many times over the years that government questions could be stopped altogether as they are merely window dressing—prepared sugary statements praising the government that the ministers read out. I am not for a moment discrediting the extensive and valiant efforts of parliamentary and departmental staff plus our hardworking secretariat who are all caught up in this circus. I would like to place on record my respect and appreciation for all that they do. I would also like to acknowledge my fellow committee members.

Apart from the obvious Dorothy Dixers asked by government members, the topics included funding for air conditioning, review of the classification structure of promotional positions and increases to principals' wages, QCU's Young Workers Hub proposal to run programs in schools, statewide evaluation of NAPLAN tests and funding initiatives for numerous school programs. The Industrial Relations section looked at staffing complaints of bullying and intimidation by union officials, training for health and safety representatives at Queensland workplaces and issues with WorkCover. The Employment, Small Business and Training section discussed the impact of the five new government

taxes on small business. There were numerous questions to TAFE Queensland about hospitality and travel expenses, ticket allocation for the 2018 Commonwealth Games, cost of student placements, operating loss for the 2018-19 budget, vocational training and provision of certificate III.

The Minister for Education displayed her usual pretentious behaviour and played politics. I had legitimate questions to ask regarding issues that have been brought to my attention—issues that are associated with the state budget—but, true to form, she chose to mock my efforts. When students cannot get into their school of choice because hundreds of places are being taken by students from interstate, their parents complain to me. However, the Minister for Education does not care about Queensland kids. She referred to the Australian Constitution, saying schools cannot deny requests, even if they live over the border. This is the first time I have heard that reason. Queensland parents are being told that, if students live outside catchments or boundaries—even if they live closer to one school—the only way they could attend is if they had once been enrolled in the area or were part of the sports excellence program. I believe every child deserves a sound education, but 217 interstate students attending our local high schools at a cost of \$3,139,339 to Queensland—that is over \$3 million—somehow does not seem fair when local kids cannot attend.

Parents are not happy when I show them Minister Grace's reply to my question which I asked on their behalf, especially as they were told something entirely different by both local high school principals. Both ministers were intent on avoiding taking questions on notice, which is a further example of attempting to thwart the exchange of information. This deliberate obfuscation and avoiding direct answers is not the hallmark of a good government; rather, it resembles one that is not transparent and has plenty to hide. Unlike Labor, the LNP has an economic plan to get our state moving again.