



Speech By
Dr Christian Rowan

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

Record of Proceedings, 23 February 2021


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL

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Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill

Education, Employment and Training Committee, Report

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (3.43 pm): As the Liberal National Party's shadow minister for education, I rise to address the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill and the budget estimates hearings that were conducted during December of 2020. I heard the contribution from the member for McConnel about school infrastructure. As I go around Queensland, students, staff, parents and teachers all talk to me about this government's delayed infrastructure plans and the lack of consultation. When it comes to the new Brisbane inner western suburbs primary school, where already a decision has seemingly been taken with respect to a site at Indooroopilly State High School, I bring to the attention of the House the Stop School 5 campaign that has been launched and the lack of consultation that those residents are clearly highlighting and the concerns they have in relation to transport planning and congestion. There has been a lack of consultation and delayed infrastructure planning.

Now in its third parliamentary term, and after six years of being responsible for the provision of state school education and infrastructure for Queensland's students, parents, teachers and staff, all Queenslanders rightfully expect from the Palaszczuk state Labor government a system of public education that is world class. Unfortunately they are not getting that from this state Labor government here in Queensland.

With a budget allocation of \$14.2 billion for the 2020-21 financial year, such an expectation can rightly be expected by all Queensland taxpayers. The 2020-21 Queensland state budget and subsequent estimates hearings have only further highlighted a system of public education in our state that has been poorly let down by a lack of governmental leadership, accountability and transparency, coupled with a raft of departmental cultural issues. Nowhere is this perhaps more evident than the ongoing saga involving the recruitment selection process for a principal at the Brisbane South State Secondary College and the further revelations concerning interactions between the state government and the Department of Education.

The Crime and Corruption Commission made clear, in its report titled *An investigation into allegations relating to the appointment of a school principal*, that the former member for South Brisbane met a potential applicant for the school principal position as a favour to a fellow member of the Palaszczuk state Labor government. I acknowledge the member for Kawana, the now shadow minister for industrial relations and shadow minister for finance, for the work he did as shadow minister for education in bringing this to the attention of the public because these are important matters of integrity and accountability within government.

On this most basic yet fundamental question—who was the member of the Palaszczuk Labor government for whom the former member for South Brisbane did this favour?—the Labor Minister for Education did not deny she knew who the MP was and, rather than answer a simple question, the minister chose to obfuscate and avoid the question. In fact, the minister stated that to query such an important question of process and accountability was ‘ridiculous’ and ‘laughable’. Sadly, that is exactly how the Palaszczuk state Labor government chooses to view its responsibilities to the people of Queensland when it comes to accountability, integrity and transparency.

It was further revealed during the estimates hearing that Queenslanders are having to pay, literally, for the ongoing governmental and departmental issues and transgressions afflicting Education Queensland, with a number of staff continuing to receive pay and entitlements whilst under sustained and lengthy investigation for a range of serious matters. This is before we get to the botched implementation of air conditioning in Queensland through the rollout of the Cooler, Cleaner Schools program which late last year saw a number of air-conditioning units installed in schools which were unable to be switched on due to power network issues. This goes fundamentally to this government’s capacity to formulate programs, implement them and ensure that all of the necessary elements are in place for them to be turned on. This has been an absolute debacle and there are many examples that we could go through, but unfortunately time will not permit all of those.

There is infrastructure spending that is needed right across the western suburbs of Brisbane. Sadly, when it comes to school infrastructure there are still many schools in the western suburbs of Brisbane that are awaiting investment by this Labor state government. In my own electorate of Moggill, Kenmore State High School is still waiting for the state Labor government to deliver a new library and student services administration hub and other modern, dedicated, purpose-built environments, including a sports centre, performing arts auditorium and a new school hall facility. Certainly this state Labor government needs to do a lot better when it comes to educational outcomes not only in Brisbane but across all of Queensland. These concerns are evident from the parents, staff and teachers that I talk to.