



Speech by

Mr D. BRISKEY

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

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YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT; VOICES OF YOUTH FORUM

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (7.24 p.m.): Over the next month, 37,928 of Queensland school leavers will be facing their future head-on as they go on from completing their secondary studies to facing the tough call of: what next? It is our generation who educates, creates jobs, offers apprenticeships, provides training options and builds communities. And it was our generation who brought up this generation of young people whom our coalition partners seem so ready to be ashamed of and demonise in their election advertising.

So much of what is important to young people has been lost in a haze. The haze or, more to the point, the pollution to which I refer is the ongoing vilification of our young people by the conservative side of politics and some individuals in the media. The Federal Howard Government constantly reminds the community of young people's mutual responsibility for the financial support that they receive while looking for employment. What about our mutual responsibility to strive to achieve full employment and making jobs available for all those who want one?

This Government is committed to meeting this responsibility. We are committed to fulfilling our obligation to young people by creating jobs, building industry and making all regions of Queensland good places in which young people can create a future. That is why we set a target to reduce unemployment—a challenge that the coalition is still not willing to accept. This is why we have engaged in a campaign to encourage and support Queensland businesses to take on more apprentices. This is why we, as employers, are creating more job opportunities for young people. And as educators, we are giving TAFE back its muscle as a vocational trainer. This is why we have reinstated the \$8m desperately needed by the Bayside campus of the Moreton Institute of TAFE, which serves young people in my electorate.

As the member for Cleveland, I have been working to ensure that our community is able to improve on its record of employing more young people locally. Along with the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, local businesses and the Redland Shire Council, I will be working to increase employment opportunities for young people in my electorate. I believe that young people should not be treated just as media grabs. They should not be labelled dole bludgers, criminal gang members, young women exploiting welfare by having children, lazy, good for nothing and ungrateful. All those titles are too convenient when one does not have the answer for reducing youth unemployment. I believe that it is very important that we start listening to young people and including them in this debate

rather than marginalising them. So instead of condemning them for the ills that we identify with the young, I would like to present to the House another outlook.

The Voices of Youth Forum included high school students from across the State—many of them included in the class of 1998. Rebecca Machon is the present school captain at the Cleveland State High School and one of the 37,000 students in Year 12 who have just finished high school. Although Rebecca is not old enough to vote, I believe that the recommendations that she has presented to me from the conference deserve our attention. Rebecca has prepared some points for our consideration about a wide range of topics, including regional development, reasons for limited employment opportunities, training and schooling options and the reasons why young people are struggling to exist in our communities these days. In the short time

available to me, I would like to put on record some of the recommendations from the youth forum.

On regional development and employment prospects for young people, young people from country areas are experiencing difficulties due to limited opportunities available to them, resulting in young people being forced to move away from their families to pursue a career. It can be noted that the lack of opportunities in regional areas can lead to disturbing degrees of crime, youth depression and suicide. Racial and gender discrimination were seen to be more prevalent in country areas, as females believe that many opportunities that exist are solely for young men.

On vocational education and employers' needs, the forum believes that schools could accommodate students' needs for employment by involving major employers and industry groups in curriculum planning. They also believe in strengthening the link between education and employment by implementing practical learning and generating opportunities for school-based apprenticeships. The inclusion of a greater range of vocational and work-related electives should be offered in a greater number of secondary institutions.

Time expired.
