



Speech by

**DESLEY BOYLE**

**MEMBER FOR CAIRNS**

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### **TRAINING FOR MATURE-AGE WORKERS**

**Ms BOYLE** (Cairns—ALP) (6.30 p.m.): In this debate, it is crucial to point out how out of step with the rest of Australia Queensland has been under the previous Government in recognising the damage occurring within the State's traineeship system. It is only under the current Beattie Government that this damage has been recognised and addressed effectively.

It was interesting to note that the honourable member for Clayfield, in moving his motion, supposedly defended his motion and defended his own Government's lack of action on this issue. Currently, many State and Territory Governments do not even allow existing workers to register as apprentices or trainees. Governments in Victoria, New South Wales, the ACT and Tasmania will neither register nor provide public funding for apprentices and trainees who are existing workers. The Western Australian Government allows existing workers to enter apprenticeships but does not allow existing workers to register as trainees. These States have structured their apprenticeship and traineeship systems to encourage new entrants into employment rather than existing workers.

I am amazed that the honourable member for Burnett should question this Minister's and this Government's motivation in moving so quickly on this issue. That is the key to our motivation: new entrants into employment rather than existing workers. We foresaw the damaging effect that the unfettered entry of existing workers into traineeships would have on job creation and employment opportunities for new entrants to the work force.

Unfortunately, the previous coalition Government did not—at least it was slow to listen and even then, when it did begin to accept that the problem was real, it acted in a shallow and mean-spirited way. Why not fix the problem? Heaven knows! The coalition should answer that. Was it just sheer incompetence? What is worse, when the coalition recognised the damage, all it did was to put in place a weak and ineffectual policy. This policy allows anyone to register as an apprentice or trainee where it is deemed to be above his or her current employment level. The only restriction placed on this entry is where an employee employed for longer than 12 months full time is not funded for a level 1 or 2 traineeship.

The result of this small, mean-spirited action was that Queensland's traineeship system exploded. Over the past three years, traineeship numbers have risen by a massive 800%. According to a recent report by Dr Larry Smith, although Queensland has only 18.3% of the nation's population, it now has 26.8% of Australia's trainees—more than any other State. Oh that it were something of which we could be proud! Instead, it reflects the previous Government's policy of giving jobs to people who already have jobs and of using the public funds that should be devoted to those who need entry to the employment market in order to back up those who are there already.

Sadly, too, the completion rate for trainees in Queensland is abysmal, with only around one third completing. Sadder still, that growth in traineeship numbers appears to have comprised a large proportion of existing workers. Because of that, new entrants to the work force have been unable to access traineeship job opportunities. According to Dr Larry Smith, that may indicate that traineeships have been used as wage subsidies for existing workers. That is yet another example of the publicly funded training system being exploited.

Other States have been able to successfully limit the damage caused by this sort of exploitation. Sometimes I think for some businesses it is a form of desperation. It is the Government's task—the Government's responsibility—to set in place the rules for business, to set the limits to ensure

that the publicly funded traineeships are indeed targeted at the people whom they were intended for and should be intended for, that is, for those who need a chance to get into the work force, a chance to get some skills that they are presently lacking.

It was also interesting to note that the honourable member for Toowoomba South accuses this Government of making policy on the run. You bet it is policy on the run! This is more of the positive kind of action that people know that the Beattie Government is taking—not sitting around scratching our heads, denying, considering and taking our time or making small policy changes; you bet that it is making policy on the run. It is action on the run. It demonstrates further, and reaffirms, the ability of the Beattie Government to respond quickly. This is what leadership and decision by Governments are about. It is through this that we can work towards genuinely creating new jobs.

Time expired.

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