



Speech by

**GEOFF WILSON**

**MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE**

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Hansard 17 November 1998

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

**Mr WILSON** (Ferry Grove—ALP) (6.40 p.m.): I rise to support this amendment. Queensland's most important goals are reducing unemployment and improving the skills of its work force. This Government is doing something positive about it, unlike the Government that we succeeded. We intend to get it right from the very start, as young people begin the transition from school to work. The Government's Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative is interwoven with the need to improve training and upgrade the skills of Queensland workers. The previous Government believed that all Government needed to do was to provide training dollars, but it did not discriminate between who received that funding. That is when it moved to its philosophical base of abandoning workers to the marketplace. As a result, young unemployed Queenslanders were missing out.

Unemployment, particularly long-term unemployment, worsened dramatically under the previous Government. According to Australian Bureau of Statistics figures, in July 1996 there were 35,821 long-term unemployed persons, accounting for 24.1% of the total unemployed. This figure grew to 39,919 by July 1997, or 26.6%. In July 1998, the figure had swelled to 45,411, or 30% of the total unemployed.

The Borbidge Government not only presided over this situation but also contributed to it by abolishing a range of employment programs that were targeted at assisting the unemployed and long-term unemployed, particularly youth. In fact, job forums that have been conducted around the State show dramatically how much the local community is missing out on the employment programs that were initiated by the Federal Labor Government and the Goss Government. In 1996-97, employment programs totalling \$16.8m were abolished by the Borbidge Government. That is why the main target groups of the four-year, \$283m package of Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiatives include the long-term unemployed and young Queenslanders.

The Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiatives will lead to an additional 6,000 trainees and 500 apprentices being employed in State Government departments and agencies, and local government. As a major employer, the Government has a responsibility to give young people the opportunity to gain work experience skills and on-the-job training. As part of these initiatives, the Government is also providing more incentives to the private sector, which will lead to an additional 7,500 apprentices and trainees being employed in industries that require skills that are in demand and that are crucial to the Queensland economy. A \$2,000 subsidy will be paid to employers for each additional apprentice employed and \$1,000 for each trainee. Queensland is suffering a skills shortage, particularly of tradespeople, in a number of industries and regions. The initiative will address these shortages while, at the same time, encouraging young people to seek careers in those trades and encouraging employers to create more jobs.

The Government is providing incentives for employers to look for opportunities for jobs where they are most needed. The identified areas of most need are information technology, building and construction, tourism and engineering. An additional 900 apprentices in the building and construction industry will be employed as a result of the enforcement of the 10% training rule on Government public works projects. Six hundred new building and construction industry apprentices will be employed in the expansion of the Housing Industry Trade Training Program. The program provides for the training of apprentices who are engaged in the construction of public housing. Nine thousand places will be created for the long-term unemployed on essential public works, community and environmental

projects, helping those people to gain valuable work skills. This will help fill the gap left by the previous Government. On top of the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiatives, an industry training fund for the building and construction industry will be established, resulting in \$5.4m being made available to assist apprentices in the year 1998-99. Between 800 and 1,000 additional apprentices a year are expected to be employed.

This Government is proud of these initiatives. Obviously, young people are not only the ones who are hurting. Unemployment cuts across all age groups and all sectors of society. Nobody has been forgotten. If one's children are teenagers or young adults who are full of hopes, dreams and energy, one knows how important it is to give them some answers before they start to lose heart. This Government intends to work hard to help its main target groups. We are proud that Premier Beattie and the Labor Government is making a deliberate choice in the crusade to break the unemployment cycle and is encouraging job creation and job security.

Time expired.

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