



Speech by

**JULIE ATTWOOD**

**MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY**

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**BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY (PORTABLE LONG SERVICE LEAVE) AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mrs ATTWOOD** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (4.58 p.m.): The Bill before the House today is part of an overall reform framework whereby the Beattie Government delivers the reform so sadly lacking in the previous administration. It sets up a training, safety and employment framework for this industry, which provides employers and employees with a sound basis for moving forward into a future where competitive local and export performance will spell growth and prosperity for their industry. This security is based on strong skills, enhanced commitment from the Government through increased capital works, and greater employment opportunities for young people. Our youth need to know that there is a job for them when they leave school—jobs that are secure.

The Beattie Government has already achieved major reforms which will benefit the building and construction industry. These include the reinvigoration of the 10% policy, which will provide more jobs for young people—900 more jobs over three years; the expansion of the Housing Industry Trade Training Program—another additional 600 jobs for apprenticeships; the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle program, which will provide subsidies to employers to employ more apprentices and trainees—estimated to be at least 90 apprentices in the building and construction industry in the public sector and many more in the private sector; and an additional 15 workplace health and safety inspectors for this industry to improve safety in the workplace.

The legislation being considered today is a key element in the Government's plan for the industry. By providing for increased training expenditure and enhanced long service leave benefits to employees, the Government is providing a more stable, productive work force. I will deal with the elements of the Bill in order. Firstly, the Bill deals with long service leave. It expands the definition of "worker" to include prescribed payment system—PPS—subcontractors who supply their labour and supervisors. This provision has been requested by industry for a long time and provides a far more equitable application of long service leave to the industry. The proposed amendments also reduce the qualifying period for long service leave from 15 years to 10 years and make it easier for workers to accrue leave after 10 years' service from five yearly accrual to daily accrual.

Members should note that no additional long service leave benefit is being proposed, just easier and earlier access by workers to their entitlements. Those changes allow Queensland construction workers to have comparable benefits to their peers in other States—a very reasonable and appropriate provision. Why should Queensland workers be discriminated against?

The Bill provides for the establishment of the building and construction industry training fund. The proposal is for a modest fund equivalent to 0.05% of leviable building and construction activity annually. Based on a full-year building and construction activity level of \$10.8 billion in 1998-99, that would equate to \$5.4m of training funds. The actual funds that should flow from this legislation will be about \$3.6m based on eight months' activity in the remaining 1998-99 financial year.

As this Government is working with the building and construction industry, the fund will lead to more jobs for young Queenslanders. Over the full three years of operation of the fund, we fully expect an additional 2,500 to 3,000 apprenticeships and traineeships in the private sector. That will virtually double the number of apprentices in training in that industry and reverse the slide in apprenticeships

evident under the previous Government. Unemployed young people in Mount Ommaney have told me that they are looking forward to having the chance to learn a trade under this scheme. Our opponents cry that we are raiding the Portable Long Service Leave Fund to pay for training. Clearly that is untrue and a blatant scare tactic on the Opposition's part. The Minister has already stated in this House and elsewhere that independent actuarial advice has been received that the long service leave fund will not need to review its position for at least 12 years if all the improvements are made. I might add that, during that 12-year period, the fund will have at least five reviews of its position as required under the existing Act. At the same time, the impost on industry will be reduced by \$2.3m per year and the industry will have a far simpler system. This is really some raid: improved services and entitlements, less cost and easier administration.

The members of the previous Government should admit that they are embarrassed by their lack of action in this industry and acknowledge the Beattie Government's action as one that will place Queensland industry at the forefront in Australia. Opponents of this legislation have also tried to suggest that the industry does not support the proposals. Again, that is clearly untrue. Industry has continued to call for the establishment of an industry-based training levy—now a fund—for at least five years. Recent meetings around the State by officers of the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, Construction Training Queensland and the Portable Long Service Leave Authority received virtual unanimous support from industry for the fund and other changes. That support was particularly strong in regional centres. Industry knows and acknowledges that those changes are to its benefit and have continued to work on planning for the training fund over the past few months in anticipation of its availability. I support the Bill.

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