



Speech by

JULIE ATTWOOD

MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY

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Report

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (4.54 p.m.): Estimates Committee C was my first involvement with an Estimates committee hearing. It impressed upon me the absolute accountability in Government within the Budget process and the Public Service. It serves its purpose in relation to opening up the process to scrutiny. Members will be aware that this Government's chief priority is the creation of jobs, with a target of 5% unemployment by 2003. It is not impossible. Along with that pledge goes a determination to increase job security and to strongly increase traineeships and apprenticeships, particularly for young people, the long-term unemployed and the disadvantaged. Those young people and long-term unemployed deserve and need some hope.

The Department of Public Works and the Department of Housing will be driving significant elements of that program. Today I will take this opportunity to focus briefly on a number of elements of those employment-creating activities that are planned or under way. During the Estimates committee hearings, I sought information on the efforts Q-Build was making to extend training in the building trades to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. I was very pleased to learn that the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing, Robert Schwarten, has thrown his support behind a scheme at Woorabinda that will initially see nine Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people offered apprenticeships in trades, such as carpentry, bricklaying and painting. They will be involved in the \$4m Woorabinda hospital project and in work on other community buildings as well as housing.

Today I would like to appeal for support right across the political and bureaucratic spectrum for that pioneering project, which is intended to later be spread to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to create additional training and employment opportunities. To succeed, such projects will need the support of many Queensland Government departments and agencies as well as those of the Federal Government. I am happy to acknowledge that the members of the previous State Government supported similar projects in ATSI communities, although not of the scale that is now planned. I appeal to them to continue bipartisan support for that vital work.

If the project is to succeed to the ideal point at which those communities become self-sufficient in the development and maintenance of their own infrastructure, long-term strategies are required. Long-term plans and thinking are needed to cater for our skills needs in the future. Our education system is a basis and starting point for careers. People must be prepared through the education system for entry into apprenticeships. They must be employed for long enough terms to fully qualify. What is the point of providing training if there are no opportunities to practise one's skills? If morale is to be maintained and the unemployment cycle is to be broken, there must be job prospects at the end of the training period. I believe that that program has the potential to develop role models in ATSI communities and to give members of the communities a greater sense of ownership of their own buildings to which they have much contributed. I commend the program and appeal for it to be given the widest possible support.

Youth unemployment is a major issue in my electorate of Mount Ommaney. We need to change the job culture, and then the attitudes of our young people will change. By providing opportunities for their future, we are changing the culture and the choices available for our children. I

was pleased to learn during the Estimates committee hearings of the substantial increases in apprenticeships that will arise from the Beattie Government's \$4.8 billion Capital Works Program. That will serve to satisfy some of our skill shortages in years to come. I was also encouraged to discover that the Department of Public Works takes active steps to encourage women and disabled people to apply for employment and training opportunities. Both those groups are still disadvantaged as we move into the next millennium, but this Government is continuing to address that issue of equity. The department is involved in the National Association of Women in Construction and also participates in a program called Tradeswomen on the Move. Job opportunities in the trades sector for men only will become a thing of the past. I take this opportunity to let women know that I will continue to encourage this Government to maintain its commitment to providing training opportunities for women in the Capital Works Program.

Overall, I believe that the Estimates committee examination of Public Works and Housing achieved its objectives in regard to extracting explanations from the Minister and the department about where Government money is being spent and how the Government will achieve its aims, particularly in relation to increasing employment opportunities.
