



Speech by

**KAREN STRUTHERS**

**MEMBER FOR ARCHERFIELD**

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Hansard 17 November 1998

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

**Ms STRUTHERS** (Archerfield—ALP) (6.49 p.m.): I support the amended motion because the previous system was full of rorts. I want to tell the House about some of the rorts that have occurred as a result of the policies that Mr Santoro put in place. However, firstly, I wish to remind Mr Santoro that traineeships were originally intended as a vehicle by which new entrants to an industry could gain skills and experience.

It is clear that taxpayer-funded traineeship funds have been used in the past to issue paper qualifications to existing workers who had already gained skills from industry experience. When used in this way, public funds are not contributing to skills development, productivity or the Queensland economy. In other instances, traineeship funds have served only to substitute the employer's training effort or have been used for training that is not central to the occupation of the trainee.

The Queensland Government will not stand by while existing workers take taxpayer-funded traineeships at the expense of young people and new entrants to the work force. The young people and unemployed people in my electorate, and in all electorates of honourable members, deserve every opportunity. These past practices have robbed them of opportunities.

Let me remind the House about some of these rorts. What about the doctor in rural Queensland who registered himself as an information technology trainee?

**Mr Seeney:** We have heard about that.

**Ms STRUTHERS:** Let me remind the honourable member of the aged people's home that converted its entire work force into trainees. I remind the honourable member of the trainees signed up by a regional sporting club who never received training. What about the regional hospital that signed up its kitchen hands as office trainees? As the Minister said, one training organisation sent flyers to its clients which urged employers to take up cash incentives of between \$1,250 and \$4,000. The flyer went on to say that the training will be paid in full by the Government, so it is an ideal time for "your company" to purchase a brand-new computer "using the \$4,000 provided by the Government". What a bonanza courtesy of Mr Santoro! How can the former Minister defend this system?

The Beattie Labor Government is seeking to introduce a tighter system in 1999. I would have thought the Opposition would have supported that. But no, perhaps the Opposition wants further evidence of the failings of its system. On 24 August this year, one training organisation sent a message to account managers to stitch up as many traineeships for existing workers as possible before there were changes. The memo states—

"Until that time we must take advantage of every opportunity presented before us, as anything signed up now will be honoured by the Government. Consequently for the next three weeks, I want Account Managers focusing on existing employees. An excellent opportunity for this is the office administration programs.

Over the next three weeks, I want all account managers to choose areas which have concentrated office areas ... If they procrastinate in their decision, tell them that when the budget is handed down we cannot guarantee the free program. Get them signed up now and there will be no problems."

That situation is totally disgraceful. These are the same trainee numbers that Mr Santoro crowed about during his taxpayer-funded Year of Training campaign. These practices are entirely unacceptable not only to the Government but also to the taxpayers, who fund the use of the traineeship system.

Our Government is not denying existing workers, including mature-age workers, access to training. Rather, the Government is saying that we already provide significant opportunities elsewhere whereby existing workers can access publicly supported training. Our Government is targeting training where it is most needed, not squandering it like the previous Government did.

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