



Speech by

LINDA LAVARCH

STATE MEMBER FOR KURWONGBAH

Hansard 18 November 1998

PINE RIVERS INDUSTRY/SCHOOL LINKS SCHEME

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (11.43 p.m.): This morning the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, the Honourable Paul Braddy, confirmed the Beattie Labor Government's commitment to jobs by announcing the extension of the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle campaign. In reporting on the current campaign's success—and I found it very heartening to learning that 85% of the calls to the 1800 number have originated from employers—the Minister made the very valid point that the Government alone cannot create the jobs necessary to reach the 5% unemployment target. The input, ideas and enthusiasm of local community members is also required.

Tonight I want to bring to the attention of the House some of the great work being done in the Pine Rivers area concerning vocational education for high school students and assistance for school leavers, and attempts to break the unemployment cycle. Dakabin State High School, Pine Rivers State High School, Bray Park State High School and Albany Creek State High School have all joined forces and linked with businesses and industries in the Pine Rivers Shire to form the Pine Rivers Industry/School Links Scheme. This committee has been operating for about a year and brings together businesses, industry and schools to work together for school students.

The industries and businesses have been a little slower than anticipated to embrace the scheme and join the committee, but the potential is great and the committee is active in engaging local employers. The opportunities are enormous both for school students and employers. Regrettably, my parliamentary schedule has not allowed me to attend as many meetings as I would have hoped this year, but I maintain a keen interest.

These schools, working together as a cluster, have also achieved great success in being funded to conduct the Jobs Pathway Program. This program is federally funded and is a service offered to school leavers to assist them in making the transition from school to work. The combination of this program and the Pine Rivers Industry/School Links Scheme can only operate to benefit the young people of Pine Rivers. It also offers the opportunity for business and industry to have a well-trained work force and a future work force job ready.

It has long been recognised that there needs to be an integration of vocational education into the secondary curriculum. Initiatives resulting in good programs flowed from the 1994 Federal Government Working Nation report. Working Nation was premised on Australia's future depending upon the ideas, skills and knowledge of our work force. It was identified that there was a need to link our education and training programs more closely with the current needs of the labour market and with future employment opportunities. For young Australians and young Queenslanders, we know that education and training do make a difference. Young people who do not finish their schooling face longer periods and much higher rates of unemployment.

It has long been identified that young people who leave school early are much more likely to have come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, have a disability, be an Aboriginal or a Torres Strait Islander or be homeless. By acting now we can stop a cycle of disadvantage continuing and building; in other words, increase life's chances for those who have missed out for far too long.

One of the problems is that if school is seen to be a waste of time or meaningless to those who do not want to go on to higher studies, there is no incentive to remain at school. However, I must note that the Howard Government's Common Youth Allowance is trying to force young people to stay at school by giving them no other alternative, with no other measures being put in place. This will see

many other young people being forced to stay on to Year 12 when they do not want to. It is recognised that this has the potential to cause enormous problems for our education system. Encouragement, not enforcement, to stay at school should be the only focus. Of course, this means that there needs to be a range of choices for Year 11 and 12 students, not just an academic-oriented curriculum.

Over a number of years, schools have embraced this approach and have provided flexible school/industry vocational programs. I commend the schools in my area for the range of choices that they offer their students. All the high schools in Pine Rivers are to be commended for working together and for promoting and encouraging meaningful vocational education. I commend also Leah Richards of Dakabin State High School, who has been the driving force behind the success of the Pines Rivers Industry/School Links Scheme and attaining the Jobs Pathway Program for the schools in our area. I congratulate Leah on her hard work and commitment.
