



Speech by

**Mr P. PURCELL**

**MEMBER FOR BULIMBA**

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Hansard 17 November 1998

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

**Mr PURCELL** (Bulimba—ALP) (6.20 p.m.): I second the amendment moved by the Minister. I find it astonishing that the honourable member for Clayfield has the utter temerity to speak of discrimination in the context of traineeships. I ask the House to remember that he was the Minister for Training and Industrial Relations; employment did not even rate a passing mention. It ill becomes him to prattle on about employment creation and support for employers when the coalition's significant contribution to employment consisted of dismantling programs that were proven to be effective. What a magnificent achievement that was!

However, let us not dwell on the past. Unlike our colleagues opposite, the Beattie Labor Government has a clear vision for reducing unemployment and giving real hope to Queenslanders, whether they are new entrants into the work force or those who have been marginalised in the past. The people of Queensland must be asking themselves what the Liberal/National coalition really stands for. They see a group of people driven by economic rationalist ideology who, when presented with incontrovertible proof of abuses of the traineeship system, did too little too late. The coalition then has the hide to accuse this Government of discriminating against employers and blocking employment growth. What arrant nonsense!

**Mr Santoro** interjected.

**Mr PURCELL:** I will tell the member opposite how people in the building industry did their training. It was the greatest joke on earth. They would go out and hire themselves a boat. They would say, "We are training in Moreton Bay this weekend." They would load up the boat with grog and all the foremen. The workers never got a chop at that sort of training; it was for all the project managers and foremen. Out to Moreton Bay they would go. They were taught how to land a fish and open stubbies with their eye sockets, under their arms or with their teeth. That was all the training they got. It was a great day out at public expense.

How does it discriminate against employers or block employment growth when the entire work force in an aged people's home was converted to traineeship status? Not one new job was created in that cynical exercise. How does it discriminate or block employment growth when a university signs up its entire staff as information technology trainees? There was not a single new job created; it was just a way of getting staff trained at public expense. Does it not discriminate against unemployed people and employers who act within the intent of skills development training when a registered training organisation uses the system to urge businesses to sign up existing employees on the basis that "the company will get thousands of dollars of training free"? Just who is being discriminated against here? Just who is being blocked from employment? I put it to honourable members that the discrimination is against unemployed people seeking to enter or re-enter the work force. Queenslanders, particularly new job seekers, parents and businesspeople who support traineeships and apprenticeships will have no problem in laying the blame squarely where it belongs: at the feet of the coalition, which did not even have an Employment portfolio.

I have heard comments that these are not real jobs; that apprentices and trainees are dumped back into the job market upon completion of their contracted training. Frankly, I wonder whether members opposite have even the vaguest idea of what apprenticeships and traineeships are all about.

Firstly, they are an entry point into industry employment, especially for young people. Yes, unemployment is currently unacceptably high; but at the same time there is increasing evidence from industry groups of serious skills shortages. Apprenticeships and traineeships are vital to the future growth of industries, something that even the member for Clayfield would hardly have the temerity to deny. But more than that, they help present and future generations of young people into employment through training that is needed and valued by industry. They are a career pathway.

Overwhelmingly, people who have completed their apprenticeships and traineeships are highly regarded by employers who want to retain their services. That is because they are familiar with the company's work environment, standards, equipment and customers and are better trained and more versatile employees. They are employed for the duration of their training. They have skills that make them marketable to employers. They make the transition to permanent workers. The training gives them confidence and the ability to sell themselves and to go out and start to make a living for themselves. Under this Government's policy, additional training for those already employed will not be made via the use of traineeships. There are many alternative avenues for people to gain additional skills while they are in the work force. If this smacks of discrimination, I for one plead guilty and will be happy to be judged by all right-thinking Queenslanders who want to see unemployed people, particularly our young people, get a fair go.

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