



Speech by

**Hon. P. BRADDY**

**MEMBER FOR KEDRON**

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Hansard 17 November 1998

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

**Hon. P. J. BRADDY** (Kedron—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (6.15 p.m.): I rise to answer a motion moved by the shadow Minister. I move the following amendment—

"Omit all words after 'That this House' and insert—

'supports the Government's initiatives to assist young Queenslanders, mature aged and other disadvantaged job seekers to access vocational skills and enter the workforce.'."

The motion of the member for Clayfield is one of the most disingenuous motions to come before the House for some time—disingenuous because, just a month ago, Mr Santoro told the Estimates committee that he realised there was a problem in the very area which the Smith report criticises and which I have been talking about. What we are about tonight is an attempt at an easy headline for the coalition as it prepares for its campaign for the Mulgrave by-election.

How can it be said that mature-age workers are discriminated against? Over 80% of the training dollar is available to workers of any age. What we are talking about is ensuring that traineeship funding is used specifically for what it was intended: to go to those making the transition from school to work; to go to those making the transition from unemployment to work; and to go to those returning to work—women and, dare I say it, the mature-age worker. All this Government has done is eliminate the exploitation in the system and set sensible priorities—something Mr Santoro failed to do in his two and a half years as a Minister. Let me quote the member for Clayfield's statement to the Estimates committee on 7 October. He said—

"I agree with you that abuses were occurring under previous guidelines and, if you read and understand the brief that I signed, you will note that I authorised the rapid overhaul of that system when I was the Minister."

The member for Clayfield did not do enough. He merely restricted access to those whose employment was for less than 12 months. All this Government has done is to do what the member for Clayfield did not do, that is, stop the abuses. Dr Larry Smith of the department painted the true picture. His report finds clear evidence that 15 to 20-year-olds are missing out on the benefits of traineeships, with 70% of trainees being over 21 years of age. In comparison with the rest of the nation, there are poor completion rates in Queensland for traineeships—in fact, less than a third are completed. We need to sensibly approach traineeships on an industry-by-industry basis, not the laissez faire shambles of the previous Government. There are problems with the data regarding traineeships that we need to address.

At 30 June, when I had just taken over, the true situation as to traineeships was a public disgrace. In the public sector, under Mr Santoro's stewardship, 80% of the trainees employed in the State Government were existing State Government workers converted to trainees. One of the first things that occurred after I became Minister was that the department rejected a proposal for 100 staff—current staff; those already in the work force—at the Princess Alexandra Hospital to be retrained in clerical work. Under the Beattie Government, 6,000 traineeships will be created in the public sector.

The member for Clayfield knows all about trying to put pressure on the Government over this matter. I table a document from one of Mr Santoro's cronies. It is a memo from Dr David McSwan of the Rural Education Research and Development Centre at the James Cook University. The memo talks

of meetings with the National Party. The party's Mulgrave by-election campaign is mentioned. The memo states—

"It is apparent that the Minister and the department have the single priority of making a rapid and dramatic impact on the unemployment statistic."

I plead guilty to that. He got that right!

Interestingly enough, Dr McSwan gives his memo some semi-official status by putting it on James Cook University letterhead. In addition to his academic mortarboard, Dr McSwan also wears the hat of being a registered training provider and is therefore able to benefit from the inequities in the traineeship system. Dr McSwan has sold training and qualifications to the Department of Defence. One of his trainees contacted the department in November requesting that his traineeship be changed from certificate 4 in information technology to certificate 3 in business. The addendum shows that his occupation was an operations officer. The effect of that training was that an Army officer was to be trained at Government expense in how to run an office, which he was already employed to do in the Army. In another case, a computer company touted to its clients "office skills training for current staff at no cost to you". Its flier read—

"Effective immediately, cash incentives of \$1250 and \$4000 per employee will be available to employers whose existing employees undertake traineeships."

The Beattie Labor Government has done what the member for Clayfield has failed to do and what he told this House he wanted to do last month.

Time expired.

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