



Speech by

**Hon. T. McGRADY**

**MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA**

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Hansard 22 October 1998

**PRIVILEGE**

**Apprenticeship Training, Mount Isa**

**Hon. T. McGRADY** (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy and Minister Assisting the Deputy Premier on Regional Development) (10.30 a.m.): I rise on a point of privilege. Approximately 10 years ago, I visited an operation in Townsville known as Torgas, which was the local group apprenticeship scheme. At that time I was Mayor of the City of Mount Isa. I was convinced that if Townsville could operate such a scheme, we could do so in the north-west. I got around me a group of union leaders, businesspeople and others, and we eventually secured assistance from the ACTU and the Lend Lease Corporation to do a report into the feasibility of such a group apprenticeship scheme in Mount Isa and the north-west. We eventually succeeded in getting financial assistance from the State and Federal Governments.

In the first year, we put through 130 young kids who otherwise would have been on the unemployment scrap heap. Over the 10 years that I have been chairman of MIGATE, we have put through some 1,200 young people. During those 10 years, I have never received a single solitary cent from MIGATE. I have never attended a conference at its expense or, indeed, been on any trip.

In the early days, the directors of TAFE played a prominent part in my organisation, either as a director of the board or, indeed, helping in many other ways. In recent times Mount Isa Mines—

**Mr Borbidge** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition! The Minister will be allowed to make his point of privilege.

**Mr McGRADY:** In recent times, Mount Isa Mines Limited, which used to take on well in excess of 100 apprentices a year, took a decision that it was no longer interested in that type of training. It made an offer to MIGATE to see if we would be interested in taking up where they left off. Negotiations and discussions were entered into by the general manager of MIGATE and officers of Mount Isa Mines. At no time was I ever involved in those negotiations. I have never at any time had discussions with the Minister or, indeed, the Premier on any financial assistance or otherwise for MIGATE.

It is true to say that, recently, the Premier attended a meeting of the Mount Isa City Council, and amongst other issues which were raised was the problem of training young people in outback Queensland. The Premier requested one of the councillors, who was also at that time the general manager of MIGATE, to put his thoughts in writing, which he did. The general manager of MIGATE asked me would I pass on the suggestions to the Premier, which I did—I understand via Her Majesty's mail. I have received no further information from the Premier on this matter.

Let me assure this House that if Opposition members feel that by this scurrilous attack this morning they are going to prevent me from helping the kids not just in Mount Isa but right throughout the gulf country, then they are sadly mistaken. I would suggest to members opposite that they involve themselves in some of the community organisations which are bringing benefits to young kids.

The relationship between MIGATE and the Mount Isa Institute of TAFE has always been excellent until very recent times. Let me also inform the House that, at the annual general meeting of MIGATE, which occurred a couple of weeks ago, I moved—and it was unanimously carried—that we invite either the director or one of his nominees to be a director of my board. I also suggested that maybe one of my board members could sit on the college council. I understand that this offer has been

accepted. I further inform the House that tomorrow night a barbecue has been arranged between TAFE and MIGATE at which my wife and I, and possibly my son, will be in attendance.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate a couple of points. First of all, I am totally committed, as this Government is, to the success of TAFE. I have assured anybody who has ever asked me about my position in regard to TAFE of that commitment. I am the chairman of a group apprenticeship scheme which is trying to put kids into jobs. I see that role as a very important role in the life of a member of Parliament. My position on MIGATE is in the register of pecuniary interests of members.

The Minister has pointed out that the assistance came not from the Labor Government but, indeed, the coalition Government. And as I have said many times this week, for heaven's sake get out of the gutter and try to assist those people who are trying to do the right thing by the young kids of Queensland. I make no apologies to anybody, either in this House or in this State, for trying to help the kids whom I represent. There are 1,200 kids from Normanton, Mount Isa, Cloncurry, Karumba and right around the gulf who——

**Mr BEANLAND:** I rise to a point of order.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister is just concluding.

**Mr BORBIDGE:** Can I rise on a matter of privilege and have equal time to reply? Mr Speaker, will you give me the indulgence of having equal time to respond on a matter of privilege?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr McGRADY:** In conclusion, I believe that, in the past 10 years, we have got 1,200 kids jobs, trades and apprenticeships thanks to MIGATE and the work of that organisation.

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