



Speech by

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MANOORA SKILLS AUDIT AND TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (12 p.m.): Today I wish to speak generally about the Manoora community renewal program and in particular about the Manoora skills audit and training needs analysis, which was conducted recently under the Manoora community renewal program by the Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE. Some honourable members might question why this skills audit deserves the attention of this House. However, the results of this well-conducted program are of such interest that they warrant examination by all honourable members, and certainly those concerned about community renewal programs and areas with concentrations of unemployed people and those with limited skills and, therefore, limited career prospects.

The skills audit has significance in five respects. Firstly, it has led the way in that it went beyond the standard format for conducting surveys. Normally, surveys are conducted through the mail, by telephone or by other means, and the results are then accepted, for example, as the basis for the provision of future training programs. Instead, the wise people involved in this audit considered the cultural variations amongst the population in the Manoora area and how the questions that needed to be asked could be adjusted to suit those cultural differences so that information of the highest quality could be obtained through the audit. In that way, the audit was innovative. Because the audit was so well received by those surveyed, ancillary information was also derived about other aspects of the community's needs.

Secondly, the results of the audit challenged the perception—and I fear this is a perception that is widely held around Queensland—that poor people and people who are benefits dependent are unmotivated and uninterested in receiving training, developing skills and joining the mainstream job market. The audit demonstrated that, although there is a lack of confidence and dreadfully low self-esteem in areas of low skilling, the people of Manoora are hungry to develop skills and to have the same prospects as every other Queenslanders when it comes to obtaining a job and the benefits that flow from that.

A third important outcome of the audit is that it highlighted a new dimension with respect to community renewal programs. I am proud that the Beattie Government and the Minister, Robert Swarten, have widened the definition of "community renewal" to take account of community needs well beyond simply the needs of housing. The audit showed that that is a proper direction; that it is essential to skill and educate the community for community renewal programs to be effective and for employment to be generated.

The fourth point that I wish to make is that this audit leads the way for other areas with concentrations of unemployed people and those who lack skills. Following the example set by this audit, other communities would be able to review their position, highlight areas where training would be of most benefit to them and the means for delivering that training in the most effective manner.

Fifthly, the audit also highlights directions for all of us in Government and across portfolios to consider in both the medium and long terms. The audit in itself is important. However, it now also points the way in terms of the training that must be conducted. Therefore, we need to monitor the effectiveness of the training provided in meeting the needs identified. In the longer term we need to follow through with that monitoring of the true effectiveness of the audit and the ensuing training programs in generating employment for Manoora residents.

I have no doubt that there are already other beneficial flow-ons that are harder to measure, such as the tremendous interest in the Manoora community in participating in this audit. Those who were not surveyed have expressed their disappointment and have requested that they be able to participate in a second stage. The audit has prompted amongst the people of Manoora a call for more innovative training delivery within the community and it has also led to an increased motivation to seek the means to employment. I predict that, as time passes, the audit and the training that flows from it will contribute to a growing confidence in the community that will produce benefits for the Manoora community.

I turn to the details of the project itself. We recognised that no information was available in respect of a number of important areas, including the skills already in existence within the community, the actual numbers of people requiring skills development, the types of training programs that would best meet the community's needs, the most appropriate location for the delivery of training programs and identifying skilled local residents who may be employed in the delivery of such programs. At the outset, it was recognised that it was essential to conduct the audit in a culturally appropriate way and that this would involve not a single approach but a diverse number of approaches, because the community has a diverse cultural make-up. For example, of those surveyed 31% were of Torres Strait Islander background, 23% were from an Aboriginal background, 13% were Papua New Guinean, 12% were Cook Islanders, another 15% were other Australians and there were small percentages from other migrant groups. Therefore, it was imperative to adjust the survey techniques to take account of these diverse cultural backgrounds.

I turn now to the results of the project. Firstly, I wish to highlight the existing skills of members of the community—skills that they have not recognised or perhaps promoted even among their own groups. These include skills in cultural arts and activities, child care, budgeting, working with people, communication, craft, cooking, and sports and recreation. These were the most commonly identified skill areas. However, it is important to note also that there were many other people with skills in areas such as engineering, automotive, carpentry and plumbing, although in fewer numbers. Having identified these skills, we are now able to look for leadership amongst the locals who already have these skills and perhaps provide ways for local community members to be part of conducting the training.

It is significant that the skills identified as being most needed—at the very top of the list—related to computers. There is a clear recognition by the people of the Manoora community that they, too, need to join the information technology revolution. Operating computer programs is their top priority. That is followed by first aid, child care, hospitality, sport and recreation, office administration and working with people. Some ancillary findings are of relevance. For example, many single mothers expressed a desire for further training, but they have no child-care facilities. They expressed that this would be most effective if they were able to have their children babysat where they studied. People considered it best to deliver training into the community on weekday mornings at a local community centre.

I congratulate all of those involved with this, in particular those from the Tropical North Queensland of TAFE who conducted the audit—Leanne Kruger and Denise Wellington. I congratulate also the Manoora community renewal development program team—Terry Callaghan, John Adams, Walter Benedito and Mareja Bin Juda—on their participation. I congratulate all of the people of the Manoora community, who will not let their public housing status hold them back from joining the full mainstream Australian community with respect to their aspirations for careers, employment and healthy family lives.
