



Speech by

KAREN STRUTHERS

MEMBER FOR ARCHERFIELD

Hansard 28 October 1999

**APPROPRIATION BILL
Estimates Committee F
Report**

Ms STRUTHERS (Archerfield—ALP) (2.47 p.m.): I feel a great deal of pride in supporting the expenditure outlined in the report of Estimates Committee F. It is in these two portfolio areas of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations and the Department of Education that our Government's unrelenting commitment to jobs and skilling our community is being driven. We are witnessing growth in apprenticeships, traineeships and jobs generally—State Government facilitated growth that has been unprecedented in the past decade.

In 1999-2000 \$42m has been provided to create 2,400 public sector traineeships and to continue funding for 508 apprenticeships created in 1999. The \$2,000 cash bonus incentive for private sector employers to take on additional apprentices or trainees in areas of skills shortage has also created new job opportunities for young people. This is the bread and butter stuff of the Labor Party. There is no doubt that the futures of our young people cannot be left to unfettered market forces.

The State Government has an economic and a moral imperative to facilitate the take-up of apprenticeship and other job opportunities in Queensland. The Howard Government is letting the team down badly with its savage cuts to labour market programs and its highly competitive job services market. Although our Opposition colleagues did not see fit to have a designated employment portfolio when they had a stint playing with the levers of Government, our Government is firmly committed to our designated Employment portfolio and innovative public policies and programs, such as Breaking the Unemployment Cycle.

Two and a half years ago, the Howard Government took \$8 billion out of labour market programs. As a State Government, we have great difficulty filling the gaps left by that great hole. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, and this Government's Breaking the Unemployment Cycle program has been an outstanding success. In my own electorate, high-need areas such as Acacia Ridge and the Inala/Forest Lake corridor have benefited from State Government supported projects that give skills, confidence and job placement to long-term unemployed people, including a group about which I am particularly concerned, and that is the mature-aged workers in my area— people in their 40s and 50s—who have been retrenched.

In terms of expenditure in the Education portfolio, we are also seeing proof of this Government's commitment to improving the literacy and numeracy skills of young children and the information technology skills of students through the Schooling 2001 initiative. The commitment to a ratio of one to seven computers per student and then soon after one computer per five students has been well received by schools in my electorate. This year, capital allocations have increased and, again, this is good news for the Archerfield electorate with new State high schools under way for the rapidly growing communities of Calamvale and Forest Lake.

I am also pleased that 1,600 students in Queensland are pursuing a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship. Schools such as the Nyanda High School in my area have been seeking school-based vocational education and Job Pathways opportunities. Nyanda is well positioned, given that the school backs on to the Building Industry Group Training Association—BIGA—and the

Construction Training Centre at Salisbury. It is also adjacent to industrial areas. However, the withdrawal of Commonwealth Government Job Pathways funds to Nyanda has put a heavy burden back on the State Government to assist such schools with these initiatives. We have simply been unable to fulfil the demand despite increases in this budget.

Queensland is a Smart State but we will be even smarter when the Budget initiatives in these two portfolio areas bear even more fruit.
