



Speech by

Hon. R. WELFORD

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Youth Conservation Corps

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (10.11 a.m.), by leave: Since coming to office, the Beattie Government's priority has been jobs, jobs, jobs. Whilst the Opposition has taken every opportunity to knock the Government's achievements, we have been creating a positive future for all Queenslanders. This includes our young people. What better demonstration of this Government's intentions could there be than the Youth Conservation Corps?

In recent weeks, 10 Youth Conservation Corps projects were completed across central and southern Queensland. 129 unemployed young people aged between 15 and 24 years took part in these projects and gained real skill, real training and real jobs. The Youth Conservation Corps achieves positive outcomes for the environment, for local communities and for young people. Sixty-six of the young people who took part have now found full-time employment as a result of the training and motivation gained from the program. Let us remember that these young people were unemployed before becoming involved in the Youth Conservation Corps. What a fantastic result this is for Queensland.

But the good news does not stop there. Another 24—18%—of these young people have now developed the confidence to go on to further training or education, giving themselves further opportunities to get into the work force. It is important that we recognise these young people for the valuable contribution they have made to their local communities. They have worked in an effort to improve their environment and have demonstrated a commitment towards getting a job. It must be remembered that these young people receive no money for taking part in the Youth Conservation Corps. This demonstrates the real commitment of Queensland's young people to finding jobs and securing this State's future.

It is a commitment illustrated by a statement from one of the young people at the Boyne Island Youth Conservation Corps open day at Gladstone in which I recently took part. In his address on behalf of the group, Chris Offord said, "Just because we are working for no money doesn't mean we are working for nothing."

I recently attended three of the Youth Conservation Corps project open days—at Boyne Island, Bundaberg and Caboolture—to thank the young people for their work and officially open the projects they had completed. Many of these young people came to the Youth Conservation Corps with no direction, no basic skills, no concept of working in a real job and no self-confidence. They leave with accredited training at certificate two level, good working habits, job seeking skills and rebuilt enthusiasm and confidence.

Training gives these young people skills that will get them jobs across a variety of industries. They have obtained training in the use of hand and power tools, communications, leadership, teamwork, problem solving, workplace health and safety, senior first aid, environmental skills and many others. During the 26-week program, young people worked full-time for local employers without remuneration in order to contribute back to local communities, to develop their work skills and to build up networks that serve to get them jobs in the future.

Significant environmental outcomes were achieved in these projects through the construction of walking tracks, weed eradication, gates and fencing in conservation areas, revegetation, construction of visitor facilities including barbecues, tables and seating, as well as boardwalks and signage. Of the 45 young people participating in the Boyne Island, Bundaberg and Caboolture projects, 28 already have jobs and six are pursuing further training or education. A number of others have moved interstate with their families.

I invite all members of the House to join the Government in acknowledging the desire and commitment of these wonderful young people towards obtaining long-term, real jobs.
