



Speech by

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DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—LP) (11 p.m.): In previous contributions I have drawn the attention of the House to the way in which the Minister for Training and his Government have become absolute masters of the art of peddling half-truths designed to captivate the media and mislead the public. Minister Braddy has found that devoting departmental resources to a range of research projects and consultancies will provide him with an almost endless source of material that can be more readily presented as if it is authentic or factual, simply because it is based on research. Unfortunately, much of this research is seriously flawed, as I will soon demonstrate.

Where this massive expenditure on research and consultancies turns up politically unpalatable findings or reports, these are surreptitiously hidden from view and ignored. Previously I have drawn the attention of the House to the way in which Bannikoff, the Bannikoff task force and the Bannikoff report all strenuously ignored the findings of a \$30,000 consultancy that Bannikoff himself commissioned on behalf of the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations. In many instances these findings set out in the report by Workplace Consulting Queensland were completely contrary to the political agenda that the Minister and his senior departmental officers are intent on pursuing. Such research findings that do not support that predetermined agenda are simply hidden from view.

Therefore, it should not surprise members to learn that the following findings of a departmental researcher never saw the light of day because they give the lie to claims that young people are being locked out of training by older apprentices and trainees as a consequence of coalition policies. The report states—

"In the most significant occupation groups (in gross numeric terms), growth in

'younger' apprentices has very closely matched that of older apprentices (aged 21 or over at commencement) when comparing the first three months of 1998 to a similar period in '97. In Business Administration and Factory Labourers, growth in younger trainees actually exceeds that of older trainees. In other groups, such as elementary sales, growth is fairly evenly matched. Growth in older trainees outstrips the younger applicants in Science and Engineering related traineeships, intermediate clerical activity and 'miscellaneous' traineeships."

It should not be surprising that in three of the four areas where there is some bias towards older entrants to the work force—science, engineering and intermediate clerical—the nature of the learning to be undertaken requires of applicants a high level of academic skill and thus a longer period of prior education and training. It is the requirement for higher initial skills that excludes younger people from such training programs, not some policies of the previous coalition Government.

This furphy that any bias in favour of older apprentices and trainees is the fault of the coalition is demolished conclusively by the figures that show that the major swing to older applicants actually occurred during the last two years of the Goss Labor Government. To overcome such factual impediments, the Minister prefers research based on anecdotal evidence. However, one departmental report indicates—

"Anecdotal evidence suggests that cancellation rates have been skyrocketing. Figures quoted here for 1995 through to 1997 do not necessarily support this."

The Minister in this House and in his media releases has quoted the unsubstantiated anecdotal evidence rather than burden his

audience with the facts and figures, which are at variance with his preferred anecdotes. Perhaps one of the reasons that the Minister prefers to avoid the figures quoted in the departmental research is that he has noticed that those that should not vary often do. For example, two research reports, both using the same set of questionnaires and the responses to those questionnaires as their primary data source and both written after the deadline for mail-outs, vary in relation to the number of questionnaires they indicate were sent out. They also vary in relation to the number returned. Although in some instances the variation is not statistically significant, for example, the number of employer questionnaires sent out was 1,744 in one research report and 1,714 in another—in relation to other examples, the difference is highly significant. For example, in relation to industry questionnaires sent out, according to one document there were 33 and, according to another, there were 48—a 45% variation. The variation in the number of employers who returned questionnaires is 47—554 in one document and 507 in another. Clearly, the Minister is quoting selectively from various research.

Another promise that was made by the Labor Opposition was that it would, in fact, reduce the administrative overburden on the TAFE system. This is another promise that the Beattie Labor Government has failed to keep. It is yet another example of how this Government of self-proclaimed experts is incapable of matching its performance with its rhetoric. From 1 July 1998 to 1 April 1999, Labor appointed 60 full-time teachers or tutors to TAFE. They were outnumbered three to one by non-delivery support and administrative staff appointed to full-time positions over the same period. So much for Labor's promises in relation to assisting TAFE in terms of getting more teachers as opposed to administrative staff! Clearly, in Opposition it preaches one thing; in Government it delivers something else.

The people in TAFE and right across the Public Service are, in fact, waking up to the fact that Labor is clearly incapable of running a Public Service, which is increasingly becoming dispirited and disenchanted with an autocratic system of administration and with a view of governance that bears absolutely no relationship to the promises that the Labor Party made when it was in Opposition.
