



Speech by

Mr M. ROWELL

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

Hansard 1 June 2000

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT BILL

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (5.23 p.m.): It is with great pleasure that I join this debate, because it relates to a very important issue for my electorate. Certainly, the town of Ingham recognises that TAFE training is extremely important. Back in 1989, I was very much involved in putting together a concept for a TAFE in the Ingham district. As I said, there was a great deal of support for it because the people in that district felt that it was important for the students at the schools to have the opportunity to attend a TAFE facility and for people involved in industry to have the opportunity to undertake advanced TAFE training.

At that time, the closest facility that was available for those people was located at Townsville, which is some 113 kilometres to 114 kilometres away. Of course, for those people who lived in the farther outlying areas of the district, such as Abergowrie, it could take them quite a long time to travel to the TAFE at Townsville, and would be difficult to do on a daily basis. In fact, for those many young people who did not have drivers' licences or a vehicle and who were dependent upon the family car for their transport, it was very difficult for them to receive any TAFE training. So the concept of a TAFE for the Ingham district was developed. A steering committee was formed, and as a result of that committee there was a very strong push for the Minister at the time, Vince Lester, to do something about providing TAFE training at Ingham.

Certainly, the National Party Government of the day came to the fore and many options were considered. After having a look at some of the buildings in the district that might be suitable in the short term to develop this TAFE concept, it was decided that the old Catholic church had a good atmosphere for developing a TAFE. Coral Butcher, who at the time was involved with TAFE in Townsville, came up to Ingham and we discussed how we would go about improving the old church. I have to say that the efforts of Father Felazzo, Tony Gibbeto and the other members of the Catholic community were of great assistance in renovating that old church and bringing it up to a good standard.

For some time that facility was used for TAFE in Ingham. I have to say that Terrie Paterson, who was the principal of that TAFE from its inception, was really well received in the Ingham district. She came from elsewhere, but she has now settled in Ingham and she lives at one of the beach areas. She did an enormous amount in not only developing the concept but also getting the goodwill of the community, which in those early days was critical.

The courses were quite popular and over the following few years the TAFE reached the point at which further refurbishing and restructuring of the church had to occur. That took place. We had to use an old house that was falling into disrepair. That old house was developed into the TAFE offices. There was very strong support from the community and the council for this further development of the Ingham TAFE. Councillor Vi Groundwater, over the time that TAFE has been in Ingham and up to the present, has been one of the strongest stalwarts of the development of the Ingham TAFE. Mark Tack was also very much to the fore in developing the whole Ingham TAFE concept.

Back about 1990, the Ingham TAFE was going to advance from the old church into a new concept. Unfortunately, an election got in the way and the plans for that development dropped off the map through lack of funds. It is strange how things in this business happen. However, the concept of building a new TAFE facility at Ingham no longer existed and we just had to carry on with what we had.

A lot of planning was done. It was proposed that a big shed could be used for training on heavy machinery. In Ingham there are a lot of cane harvesters and other pieces of heavy machinery. The Minister for Emergency Services has been to the area and he would have seen the cane harvesters and other machinery. It was essential to continue with this concept so that heavy equipment training could be conducted through courses developed with TAFE. When that did not go ahead and it was decided not to purchase the site that we had looked at, we took another look around the district and some buildings were identified. Unfortunately, under the workplace health and safety requirements they were deemed unsuitable for the types of courses proposed. We received a lot of support from the Colonial Sugar Refinery—CSR—and the mills to carry out some of the prevocational training for young people interested in developing their skills and going on to trades. They were of immense help.

The interest in training in the area, particularly TAFE training, was growing and it was essential to find an appropriate facility. Fortune favoured us, and at the 1996 election the coalition got into Government. I congratulate Mr Santoro, the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations in the then coalition Government, on recognising this great need in the Herbert River district and beyond, down to Townsville, Cardwell and so on. He recognised the need for young people to be able to undertake TAFE training in Ingham. The council also contributed very heavily. It was decided that a library would be incorporated into the concept. Quite a deal of planning took place. I am pleased to see Phil Clarke in the advisers lobby. During that planning stage, we walked the streets of Ingham and noted the location of cafes, child-minding centres and so on. It was felt that any TAFE facility should not be developed without auxiliary services nearby.

An old ambulance centre pretty much in the centre of town was decided upon. A lot of people in the district were not pleased about the TAFE being located in an urban-type environment. However, the administration side of TAFE can be located in one area, with the training being conducted in other areas. The community acceded to the building of the facility on this old ambulance site in the centre of town, with other activities occurring elsewhere.

The Gilroy Santa Maria Catholic College is located on a large site. It was willing to provide some of its area for the new concept. However, because there were no auxiliary services nearby, it was not given the green light as a location for the Ingham TAFE. To its great disappointment, the TAFE was built on the old ambulance centre site. A lot of the prevocational training—small-boat welding and so on—is now being carried out at the high school. And I note that it is good to see the Minister back in the Chamber. I will mention his role with respect to the Ingham TAFE in a moment. The high school was willing to participate in the future development of the TAFE. It made its facilities available. Many young students are now able to do their secondary education and go on to further training, which will be of immense benefit to them in their future occupations. They might not necessarily move into the occupation for which they trained. Nevertheless, that training will stand them in good stead for whatever they do in the future.

The concept was commenced in 1998 and was completed in 1999. Then came the change of Government. It was disappointing to Mr Santoro, who had put so much effort into developing the concept, that he was not able to open it. But Governments come and go. It was extremely important that the Minister was on hand to open that facility. Along with some of the people on his committee, Minister Braddy came to Ingham to open the building. It was good to see that, putting political differences aside, Mr Santoro also came up to be part of the opening ceremony.

About \$4.2m in total was expended on the facility, of which the Hinchinbrook Shire Council supplied about \$800,000 for the library. We ended up with an excellent facility. It accommodates activities other than TAFE. It has now become a community centre. For example, travelling exhibitions also use the TAFE facility.

The Ingham TAFE is going from strength to strength. When I required the assistance of a secretary, I was able to call on Leisa Menegon for some temporary work. I was fortunate that Leisa was able to do that work when my electorate secretary went on maternity leave. She is now sharing that position with a former secretary of mine with some 23 years' work experience, nine of which were spent assisting me. Both of them are doing an excellent job at the moment. The training that Leisa received at TAFE was extremely valuable. She fitted in with the office procedures very well. It was a great credit to Mr Santoro that he recognised that money could be spent in the Ingham district to train these people for their future occupations, which can only be of benefit to the Ingham district. The TAFE conducts a number of course, including JP (Qualified) courses and so on. They are probably too numerous to mention. Further opportunities are always being sought by the college in Ingham. But it is not the only one in the electorate—

Mr Purcell: Wrap it up.

Mr ROWELL: I am sorry, I did not hear the member. I hope that the member for Bulimba is interjecting from his correct seat.

Mr Purcell interjected.

Mr ROWELL: Okay. I will accede to the member's wishes. It is very important.

I also recognise the Johnstone College of TAFE, which is at Innisfail. It was also built by a National Party Government. I think it is an excellent facility. There is little question about that. It was built on quite a reasonable site. A range of courses is being conducted there, such as hairdressing, business, agricultural, courses for people in the banana industry, courses for haul-out drivers and, of course, there is a course for justices of the peace which Aboriginal people have been patronising extremely well over a long period. It is good to see that the Johnstone TAFE is doing extremely well.

The facility, as I said, is excellent. There is no question about that. It has a large sporting ground area around it, which is being used by the cricket club. I assisted them in getting some toilet blocks built. There was a bit of controversy about the building of them and so on, but they did get them through a sports grant. That is one of the very important facilities for cricket in the Innisfail district. If I had some more time, I would certainly tell honourable members more about the Johnstone TAFE. It is another very important facet as far as TAFE is concerned. The shadow Minister has been there, and I am sure that the Minister has been there, too. They would be fully aware of all the attributes of that great organisation.

I would just like to go on to a few other very important matters if time will permit. I am running out of time; I have only a few minutes left, but I have to mention these sorts of things. I will now mention an issue of concern to me. I received a representation from a person in Innisfail whose son had been put off work. A tool allowance had been allocated to the son. When I viewed the details of the tool allowance, I was quite amazed at what was provided as far as the employer was concerned. That tool allowance included a broom head, which cost \$46.60, and a handle, which cost \$6.70. It is probably not a tool that a person would use to any great extent in the carpentry trade. Then there was a big plastic bucket and a lid. The cost of the bucket was \$11.25 and the lid was \$3.15. Then this apprentice carpenter was also provided with a left-handed bricklayer's trowel. I think the member for Bulimba would be quite interested in this. Why would a carpenter be issued with a left-handed bricklayer's trowel when he is a right-handed person?

Mr Purcell interjected.

Mr ROWELL: I do not want to take the interjection, otherwise I will run out of time.

Mr Mickel: No, no. We will give you an extension.

Mr ROWELL: The member will?

Mr Mickel: Yes, absolutely.

Mr ROWELL: All right. He is on.

This carpenter received a left-handed bricklayer's trowel that was valued at \$98.95. It is certainly an unusual piece of equipment for a carpenter. Then he also had a bent level, which was valued at \$75. He was also provided with 57 hard leaded pencils. These are the sorts of things—

Time expired.
