



Speech by

**SHAUN NELSON**

**MEMBER FOR TABLELANDS**

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### **TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT BILL**

**Mr NELSON** (Tablelands—IND) (5.11 p.m.): I also rise to support the Training and Employment Bill. I will not rehash everything that has been said by other members; suffice it to say that education via apprenticeships is one of the most important tools we have in breaking the unemployment cycle and getting young people back into the work force in meaningful employment and not just part-time casual labour. Many young friends and associates of mine undertaking apprenticeships have a lot of difficulty in completing their apprenticeships. That may have something to do with the terms of reference they are employed under. However, there are also some unscrupulous employers who treat apprenticeships as a means of getting a cheap employee for quite some time and who then let them go just before they finish their trade papers. I know quite a few people who have been put in circumstances where their apprenticeships have been held up because they got dumped just before their papers were ready to be signed because their employer did not want a fully qualified employee but an apprentice. I look forward to this Bill being implemented. Hopefully it will give firmer guidance on those issues.

Meaningful employment is one of the biggest problems we face in our society. More and more people are being employed in casual labour and not in jobs such as those that existed in the old days, that is, jobs in which they could be employed for quite some time. There is also the concept of education before one can be employed in some jobs today. I will give an example. When my father joined the Police Service, he did not even have a Year 10 education, yet to join the Police Service now one has to complete a degree of some sort. Another example is military employment. When I joined the Army, I needed only a Year 10 qualification. Nowadays one needs a Year 12 qualification to join the Army. Higher education levels are needed to get into jobs that may be considered by some to be of an ordinary nature, such as a soldier. As those levels increase, the support we have to provide to people when moving from high school into TAFE or tertiary education also needs to increase at the same time.

We need to recognise that having permanent employment enables a person to build a life around that employment. That is the difference between a person who is employed casually at Coles and a person who is employed in a stable career as a police officer, for example. One has a career path from which they can build a life, plan for the future, get a loan, get married and move on. The other has a job that is there one week yet might not be there the week after. We certainly need to address the permanent employment issue. I believe that this Bill is a step in the direction of addressing those issues. The Bill makes it more possible in realistic terms for people to get a tertiary or TAFE education in order to move into that level of employment. Another example is an apprentice chef. They obtain their qualification and trade papers through an apprenticeship. They can then move into a service industry, an industry which is growing quite rapidly and in which demand is high.

A couple of months ago in Cairns a severe shortage of chefs and cooking professionals received quite a lot of press coverage. It made the papers. Employers were going to start looking overseas in the South Pacific and New Zealand for people to come to Australia to work. That to me is a shocking indictment on the levels of training we provide for young people in our society.

**Ms Boyle:** What about the Olympics?

**Mr NELSON:** Exactly. There is a massive demand. In Cairns, the tablelands and areas in far-north Queensland there is a growing demand for skilled labour. The James Cook University, much to its

credit, is trying to address that as best it can. I recently attended the opening of a new library at that university. The facilities at JCU are certainly expanding to meet the needs of far-north Queensland, as is the Cairns TAFE and TAFE colleges throughout the region, be that at Innisfail or Mareeba. Now that the facilities are in place in those regions, we need the people there as well. We need the positions. We need the teaching staff. We need to create all the opportunities we possibly can to enable the people of far-north Queensland to fill those positions.

Cairns has an incredible tourist base judging by the number of visitors coming into the area. We need people in that region to cater for and look after those tourists, especially with the advent of the Olympics. A lot of people will see the Olympics as an opportunity to come to Australia for a holiday. They may go from Sydney to Cairns and spend a couple of days in paradise before they head back to the drudgery of Washington, New York or whatever hellhole they came from.

**Ms Boyle** interjected.

**Mr NELSON:** Melbourne. The simple fact is that education and training are issues that need to be addressed not only at this level but also at a Federal level. A point made blindingly clear by protesters at the opening of the library was that JCU is not being treated fairly by the Federal Government. The southern universities based in Melbourne and Sydney get a much greater advantage with access to student numbers than JCU does, because it is a regional university. This issue certainly needs addressing as far as equity and funding levels from the Federal Government are concerned. I do not wish to deprecate the fact that it helped fund a \$12.5m library and is helping to fund medical facilities at Townsville. However, in a modern society moving very rapidly into IT, we need to give people training. We need to give people a leg up. We need to have move-on powers, if one can call them that, from high school onwards so that people can gain meaningful employment and build lives.

Ultimately, one of the biggest issues in our society is the breakdown of the family unit and the breakdown of what a lot of us in this Chamber grew up with, that is, where either mum, dad or both had full-time employment they could count on to get a housing loan and to get a car loan. Those days are gone. About 80% of the people I went to high school with have not been able to gain full-time employment. That is a very tough statistic to come to terms with. Yes, they might be partially employed or may have a retainer from a law firm, but they have not gained that full-time employment that their parent's generation were able to gain and build a life around. That is going to start hitting home within the next 10 or 15 years. We are already seeing ramifications like a massively debt-ridden society. I support the Bill. I certainly hopes that it achieves the results it sets out to achieve.

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