



Speech by

Hon. ANNA BLIGH

MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

Hansard 5 December 2001

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Vocational Education and Training

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education) (9.50 a.m.), by leave: Less than a third of Queensland year 12 school leavers proceed directly from school to university. For many of the remainder, the rigour of year 12 assessment and certification is not engaging our students and leaves them struggling to complete year 12. For others they are increasingly choosing other pathways, such as school-based apprenticeships. Today's students are following different pathways in diverse learning environments, often juggling work, school and family commitments. For example, Queensland is leading the nation in school-based vocational training, with 60 per cent of year 11 and 12 students participating in one or more nationally recognised vocational education training courses. In addition, 50 per cent of all Australian school-based apprenticeships are happening right here in Queensland.

What this demands is flexibility. If we want our young people to complete their education and complete 12 years of schooling or equivalent, then we need to ensure that our system matches that flexibility. That is why, together with my colleague the Minister for Employment, Training and Youth and Minister for the Arts, I have sponsored an external review of the education and training options available to young people in Queensland. This review of Pathways through post-compulsory years of schooling and post-school years to further education, training and jobs will be chaired by Professor Margaret Gardner of the University of Queensland.

Professor Gardner chaired the Industrial Relations Task Force in 1998 and is currently a member of the Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority. Her broad academic and professional experience makes Professor Gardner an excellent choice to chair the review. The review will provide advice to government on ways of establishing more effective articulation between courses, credentials, experiences and settings offered to young people by schools, TAFE institutes, private education providers, universities and industry in Queensland. It will report by next June. Part of the draft terms of reference will be to examine current best practice nationally and internationally.

Our young people must have every opportunity to participate and contribute to the future of the Smart State. I am committed to reducing the number of young people who are disaffected with school and who leave without completing 12 years of education. Our government wants real pathways that lead to jobs for Queensland students—not dead ends.

Complementary to the Pathways review is a research project titled 'The senior certificate—a new deal'. I informed the House in a ministerial statement on 5 April this year that I had appointed Mr John Pittman to lead that project. The senior certificate project is investigating options for a more flexible and relevant certification process that reflects today's diverse educational pathways and the demands on students and parents. Mr Pittman, also due to report back mid next year, will consult with Professor Gardner.

The new Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Bill, which is soon to be considered by the parliament, will create a single statutory body to streamline curriculum and assessment, providing a smoother transition through the various stages of schooling and for life after school. Professor Gardner's project will be the next step in that process. These three projects will increase retention rates to year 12 and, we hope, will make Queensland the Smart State.