



Speech by

Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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APPROPRIATION BILLS [ESTIMATES COMMITTEE F]

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (3.36 p.m.): Today I will address issues relating to training and industrial relations, particularly the unemployment figures in Queensland, as well as some issues relating to schools. As has been acknowledged already by my colleague the member for Beaudesert, it is very concerning when we have so many traineeships and apprenticeships falling over and failing to be completed. There really is a need for a summit. I support his call for a summit.

When half of the 10,500 traineeships and a significant number of apprenticeships fall over, it becomes apparent that there is a desperate need to make sure that apprenticeships and traineeships are not just about the government paying lip-service to training and not fixing the problems that see those programs fail to bear the fruit they really should bear. It is acknowledged that there may be many factors to that problem, but it is nothing for the minister to be proud of. I think it is of grave concern. During the estimates process mention was made of the training ombudsman. Certainly I will be interested to see the work that the training ombudsman produces. Issues have been raised. I hope that ombudsman will also apply himself or herself to those who are trained within the government sector.

I remember talking to one young person who had finished an apprenticeship with the government. The government ended up accelerating the apprenticeship. He actually did very well in the TAFE components of his course. He was near the top of his class. But when he went out into the work force—of course, apprentices are not guaranteed employment with the government once they have finished their apprenticeships—he found that he could not keep a job because he had failed to receive the appropriate training. That is very disappointing. I hope this young person and others like him will find justice in the future. I hope the training ombudsman will ensure that government apprenticeships deliver the appropriate range of skills that are needed to ensure that young people can get jobs.

I refer to the industrial relations record of this government. Queensland leads Australia in the number of working days lost through industrial strife. This is of concern. We know that there has recently been a circumstance relating to the Nambour Hospital upgrade. I mentioned that during consideration of the estimates of the Health portfolio.

Unions are a good servant and a bad master. We expect unions to look after the safety and conditions of their workers. However, I do not accept some of the representatives actually threatening people if they go to cross picket lines, threatening the safety of their families and threatening to damage their equipment. That is unacceptable. I believe that sort of harassment reflects badly on other very genuine people in the union movement and it needs to be stamped out. At the end of the day, we want to see a fair go for everybody. It is not about having the safety of people and their families threatened if they dare to try to cross a picket line.

I want to mention the Maroochydore State High School and acknowledge that its applications for renewal funds are obviously very worth while. They are something that the school is seeking because it is now getting on in age and there is a desperate need for new facilities. I want to put on record my support for that. I also want to acknowledge the school's training programs and the school-based traineeship and vocational training which has been particularly successful in catering and has been going for a number of years. I know that federal funds were involved in that program to get it up and running, and it has been a great success. Something I strongly endorse is looking at other pathways, particularly in the health sector—pathways through vocational training, even at the school

level—to give young people a pathway into those occupations and to look for appropriate training at that stage in their lives at high school.

These are also the estimates for youth, and I would like the minister to note that on the Sunshine Coast we are very keen to get some youth space and some youth facilities, particularly around the Maroochydore-Mooloolaba area. A lot of kids are good kids; they just have nowhere to go. Some of them are also very vulnerable to some of the hangers-on who are out to take advantage of them. Unfortunately, there have been some not very nice people taking advantage of the young people who are hanging around the streets. They do need their own space where they can hang out and take part in activities. In some of the fast-growing areas on the Sunshine Coast, particularly in Maroochydore-Mooloolaba, they have been left behind. I am concerned for their safety. I am concerned about opportunistic prostitution, which has also occurred on the streets. It may be only a small number of people who have been affected in this regard, but there are vulnerable young people. I want to acknowledge that most kids are good kids, but we need to keep them busy and give them opportunities through good activities, as well.

Time expired.
