



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

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YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING BILL; TRAINING REFORM BILL

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (3.47 p.m.): There is no more important responsibility of government than the education of the people and, in particular, our children. They are the future. I am proud indeed on this day to be a member of the Queensland parliament, of the Beattie government, to support the two bills before the House: the Training Reform Bill 2003 and the Youth Participation in Education and Training Bill 2003. These bills are major reforms of our education system. However, I must start by quoting the Minister for Employment, Training and Youth, who began his second reading speech with these words—

... 10,000 young Queenslanders aged 15 to 17 who are out of school, out of work and out of training. That is a scandal. We have to remedy it.

Of course, I endorse his sentiments entirely. At the same time, I will quote to members of the House something that Harry Truman is reported to have once said—

I have found that the best way to give advice to young people is to find out what they want and then advise them to do it.

We are about blending the authority that we have as the government to use the powers before us to make sure that our children at all ages are given an education and take up that opportunity for education with a recognition through the reforms that the more choices there are to suit the abilities, talents and interests of the child the more flexible we are able to be in the delivery of education and the more successful we will be. We are not simply taking up the issues of those who are 15 to 17 and have not succeeded in our education system and, therefore, finding ways to insist that they remain at school or providing them with further choices. Yes, of course, we are doing those two things, but we are reforming the education system from beginning to end.

I am a strong supporter of the preparatory schooling that we are introducing. I have seen it already in its first trial in Cairns at the Whitfield State School. It is progressing wonderfully smoothly with excitement and approval from teachers, parents and those very young students. I have seen the ways we are going about preparing children for school—not through sitting them at desks at these tender ages but through gathering in their interest and their enthusiasm and teaching them in the best ways how to concentrate, how to join in with others and how to prepare for the wonderful things ahead of them in their learning experiences in more formal schooling.

I am pleased, too, that we have had the announcement that Cairns West State School will also be joining in the next round in preparatory schooling. Cairns West has a fine record of having been innovative in the preschool education it has already provided and it has earned, as it were, a place in these early rounds.

I am pleased, too, that, on the advice of many teachers as well as on our own information, we are attending to what is happening in the middle years of schooling. Class size is an important issue. Further support for teachers when students have behaviour problems and the expansion of assistance programs for those students who have behaviour problems are also welcomed.

Of course, we have been paralleling all of this with the continuing roll-out of information technology to all classrooms in primary and high schools right across the state. We have been making sure that the physical learning environment is as good as it can be, both through the upgrades of older schools—some of my schools in Cairns have been particular beneficiaries of the renewal programs—and through the Cooler Schools program.

All of these things are important. What we come to, then, is a smart education system in a Smart State. I totally endorse the excitement of the choices that are now being put before our kids, the validation that there is in these bills of the importance of education, the linkages that will now be affirmed and ensured in future times with TAFE and other training providers, and the permission that there is in these bills in the new systems for teachers to be flexible to suit the needs of the individual in the particular circumstances that might apply around the state. There is no doubt that what we are doing is setting in place a smart education system that will suit our children in the world in which they will eventually be adults.