



Speech by

ELISA ROBERTS

MEMBER FOR GYMPIE

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YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING BILL; TRAINING REFORM BILL

Miss ELISA ROBERTS (Gympie—Ind) (12.16 p.m.): I rise this afternoon to speak in support of the Youth Participation in Education and Training Bill and the Training Reform Bill. It is my belief that a good education is one of the greatest gifts we can offer our children, and it is an area which should not only be a priority of government but also be regarded by all as an integral and vital part of every child's growth and upbringing.

I do not believe that one could ever overemphasise the importance of education in the lives of our children. In saying that, I am proud to say that we in Australia have possibly the best education system in the world, with governments of all persuasions dedicated to ensuring that all Australian children have the right and access to an education. With this in mind, it is disappointing to see the number of young people who are not actively engaged in any type of training, education, apprenticeship or work. It seems as though some of our youth have very little regard for education, have a lack of appreciation as to the benefits of an education and do not appreciate the benefits which come with knowledge. It is a sad reality today that not only is education not a huge priority amongst some people within society but also the notion of the work ethic seems to be not as frequently adhered to as it has been in years gone by.

As part of my job I come into contact with people who are unemployable in that they left school early and did not carry out any type of work related training and then found themselves in the almost hopeless situation of becoming long-term unemployed with little real prospect of changing their status. Whilst I commend the Minister for Education for implementing a system aimed at encouraging young people to take on training via a more flexible system, I feel that it is still the primary responsibility of parents to encourage their children to continue at school, participate in training or enter the work force.

I can understand the difficulty in some instances in trying to impress upon young people, particularly those who may not be high achievers in the academic side of study, that there are so many options that are available for them to undertake which will specifically meet their ability and interests. From a personal perspective, even though I loved school and was happy to complete year 12, I was not initially interested in going on to tertiary study so I went on to do a hospitality management traineeship, which combined TAFE study with on-the-job training. Following this I decided I wanted to do something else so I joined the Army, and then at 23 decided I wanted to go to university. The point is that I knew there were various choices and options. It is very rare for a teenager to really know what they want to do for the rest of their life as a career.

I know some people now who are illiterate and would give anything to have stayed on at school. Hindsight is a wonderful thing, but when it comes to something as essential as education we all have a responsibility to ensure that our youth are provided with opportunities which are designed around their particular needs and interests so that they have the chance of a bright future as a result of the knowledge, self-respect, confidence and character building which goes hand in hand with learning. I am happy to commend these bills to the House.