



Speech by

GEOFF WILSON

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YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING BILL; TRAINING REFORM BILL

Mr WILSON (Ferry Grove—ALP) (12.52 p.m.): It is my great pleasure to speak in support of the Youth Participation in Education and Training Bill and the Training Reform Bill. This legislation arises out of the employment and training reform agenda announced in March 2002. When that announcement was made, it struck me that it would be the major policy initiative of our second term of government, despite all of the other good things that we have done in this term. As the discussion publicly, within the government and now in this chamber has progressed since that time, it has struck me that those here in 40 to 50 years time will look back and see that this was not only the most significant reform in this term of government but the most significant reform in the last 40 to 50 years in Queensland.

The education and training reform agenda has three key elements: the trialling of the preparatory year of schooling, a significant increase in funding for information and communication technology throughout high schools and primary schools, the raising of the leaving age, the compulsory period of schooling, and also for the compulsory period of participation in what is called earning or learning. This legislation is principally directed towards the third limb of those three key elements.

As the previous member indicated, we all come to this place with our own individual experiences of the significance of education and training both to us and to others. When reflecting upon the worth or otherwise of this legislation, we can draw upon our individual experiences, we can draw upon anecdotal experiences that we have had in other workplaces, as well as within the communities in which we work and serve now, and we can draw upon any number of research sources to view this legislation. Measured against all sources of information about the importance of education and training, no-one can deny that this legislation is directed towards the key needs of future generations in Queensland, this society and economy. If we go to any meeting in our community we would find that, apart from the health and safety of their children, what parents want in our communities is good, affordable education and training for their children so that they might secure their long-term future employability.

Without doubt, a primal instinct of parents is their wish for a better life for their children than their own, and that need not necessarily reflect adversely upon their own experience in life. For some reason—I think it comes with the parental genes—we want a better life for our kids and better opportunities than what we had ourselves. With 14 schools, two high schools and 12 primary schools in my electorate, I can tell honourable members that that is a key message that I receive.

A key function of government is to maximise opportunities for young people in education, training and employment. Of all the instruments of government available, there is none more significant than the laws applying to education and training to dispense equity throughout the community, to help people overcome the adversities of their own particular economic and social circumstances, and to provide equal opportunity so far as humanly possible for all in the community. Education is the key instrument by which a government can do that. Education has traditionally been, and will always remain, core business for the Labor government. It is a key instrument in translating equity in real terms across the community for our young people and any future family they might have.

In conclusion—I will not go into any further detail; that has been adequately addressed by other members and certainly set out in the second reading speech—we must see that this package of legislation is connected and is integral to the Smart State vision for Queensland. The Smart State vision for Queensland is trying to acknowledge that we need to develop and foster new industries in this state to create new employment opportunities, to generate jobs in the future that we do not know anything about right now—so great is the speed of change in technology. This legislation is a key element in the Smart State strategy, as I say, and I am delighted to support it.