



Speech by

**JO-ANN MILLER**

**MEMBER FOR BUNDAMBA**

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Hansard 8 October 2003

**YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING BILL; TRAINING REFORM BILL**

**Mrs MILLER** (Bundamba—ALP) (2.38 p.m.): In rising to support the Youth Participation in Education and Training Bill 2003, I firstly want to congratulate Minister Bligh and Minister Foley on bringing before this House this historic legislation. Great Labor governments are governments of vision and reform. If during this term the Beattie Labor government does nothing else but enact this legislation, then future students of Queensland history would be persuaded that this is indeed a government of vision and a government of courage.

As Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education, I have been privileged to participate closely in the development of this bill from its conception through to consultation and now to the legislation before the House. In working with the Minister for Education on the Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Act—another fine achievement of this government—it became clear to me that the system of education in Queensland held a bias towards those approximately 30 per cent of students who chose the academic pathway. The system lacked the flexibility to provide adequately for all students and particularly those students who were at risk of not completing 12 years of schooling.

Through the Pitman report and the Gardner report, the workings in which this bill had its genesis; through the green paper, which was announced in March 2002; through the extensive consultation process in which we travelled to towns and cities all over Queensland; and through the white paper released in November 2002, this legislation has evolved. It is not just the vision of the Queensland government. In a very real sense, it has a bit of Ipswich, Chinchilla, Roma, Biloela, Emerald, Gladstone, Mackay and many other communities throughout the state where Minister Bligh and Minister Foley or my parliamentary colleague Neil Roberts and I sat down with the teachers, the students, the mums and dads and other members of the community to discuss and contribute to the process that has delivered this legislation before the House today.

The legislation will require students to remain at school until the end of year 10 or until they turn 16, whichever comes first. The legislation also requires that young people participate in education and training options that will see them further supported for two years beyond year 10 or turning 16, or until they have gained a Senior Certificate, or until they have gained a certificate III, or until they have turned 17, or until the young person may, in fact, be in employment. This is a no-one-size-fits-all approach. There is in-built flexibility that will allow the development of a pathway for all of our students in Queensland.

That flexibility could not be more important than in my electorate of Bundamba, where over the years many young people have become disenchanted and disengaged from the education process. I congratulate the principals and the staff of the high schools in my electorate who have made a positive difference in increasing the retention rates and in many ways pre-empted some of the initiatives of this bill. I would also like to congratulate the Director, Mike Guy, and the staff of Bremer TAFE, including Christine Skippington and her colleagues, who have over a long period established strong links with the schools in my area. That is why I have always been confident that the trial of the second phase of the Smart State reforms package being undertaken in the Ipswich and Corinda districts will be a huge success. Although this legislation requiring young people to be earning or learning will not take effect until 2006, trials such as the one in my area will lay the groundwork to establish best practice models for the rest of Queensland.

As a parent I know that every parent in Queensland wants the best for their children. They want them to be well educated, they want them to participate in training and they want them to be able to get a job and become good citizens of this state. This bill helps parents achieve those objectives. I am very proud that over the past few years the participation of students finishing year 12 in the high schools in my electorate of Bundamba has increased markedly. It is a clear fact that a young person has a better chance of getting a job if they finish year 12. It is also a fact that if a young person has a Senior Certificate and during some part of their life they are out of work, they have a better chance of getting back into the work force if they hold a Senior Certificate or another qualification.

I talk to many parents of primary school students and high school students in Bundamba. I also spend a lot of time talking with students themselves. I might say that they are terrific young people. Many of them know what they want to do in life. Many would like a traineeship or perhaps even an apprenticeship, but they all know that the longer they stay at school or the longer they stay at TAFE or at another training provider, the better chance they will have of a job and a better future life. I talk to primary schoolchildren, even the young ones in years 1 and 2, about the importance of learning and the importance of literacy and numeracy, but, more importantly, about enjoying themselves whilst they are in a learning environment. In fact, I am like a cracked record talking about grasping the opportunities available to them at school or at TAFE and, in fact, reaching for the stars. It is not just talk; I also follow it up with action. When students in schools in my electorate may not have gained a place at university, they may not have gained a place at TAFE or they perhaps could not get into the course that they wanted to get into, I help them, with the professionals, to find a pathway that will one day get them to where they want to be, and I support them with their friends and family whilst they go through that difficult time.

As I said before, I listened to many thousands of people from right across Queensland throughout the preparation of the green paper on the education and training reforms process. It is obvious that children live in a different age, a different culture and a different educational environment from what I knew when I was younger. We need to support our young people so that they can be the best that they want to be in terms of learning or earning.

With the economic growth expectations in my electorate over the next few years, it is important that the schools work closely with not only Bremer TAFE but also the private training providers and local industry. I am pleased to note that Bremer TAFE has a project officer on board looking at the interface of the Springfield campus of Bremer TAFE and Woodcrest College—a state school. I am also pleased that Bremer TAFE, through Mike Guy and Christine Skippington, are working closely with high schools in my electorate on the youth achievement plans and other initiatives that will assist students. Principals such as Barry Hoph of Bundamba State Secondary College and Ian Ferguson of Redbank Plains State High School and their staff are practical principals and staff providing vision and leadership to their teams throughout this time of change. I thank them for their commitment to their school communities, as I do all the principals of our primary and high schools, the teachers, the teacher aides, the parents and also the students themselves who put in the hard yards in their learning environment in my electorate.

In conclusion, I would like to thank ministers Bligh and Foley and also the ministerial staff and officers of the department. I would particularly like to thank my policy adviser, Don Wilson, who travelled the length and breadth of Queensland with me in the green paper process. We listened to many thousands of people and they had great input into this bill. This bill will ensure the delivery of appropriate educational support and a better future for Queensland students, particularly those at risk of disengagement. Of course, this bill heeds the words of the late John F. Kennedy, who said, 'a child miseducated is a child lost.'

I commend the bill to the House.