



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 29 April 2004

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Shafston International College

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.33 a.m.): In light of recent media reports, the directors of Shafston college are reviewing their operations. Cameron and Bradley Lloyd, Directors, Shafston House College Ltd, said—

We will take whatever steps are necessary to ensure the integrity of our educational institution is upheld.

Accordingly, we have commenced discussions today with international business consultancy firm, Deloitte, with a view to engaging an independent consultancy team to assist with Shafston's day to day management.

Our family has been deeply distressed by this week's allegations. However, our primary concern is the welfare of our students and staff and the provision of a safe and supportive learning environment.

Officers of the departments of Education and Employment and Training met yesterday with the governing council of the Shafston Institute of Technology to discuss the implications of this week's revelations. The council confirmed the following: acceptance of the former president's resignation from all positions held with the institute and its associated entities; his ban from entering the campus grounds and his residence on the site and communication with the college community, staff and students; and the offer of independent counselling services to assist them with any distress or problems connected with the revelations. Government officers are satisfied that the immediate action taken by the council has been appropriate. They have found the council open and cooperative. There are about 1,500 students enrolled in all of the college's programs, with a small number of students in the 14 to 18 years age group.

The government is undertaking a coordinated response to this matter from the two departments; namely, undertaking an audit of the institution's compliance with the Australian Quality Training Framework and Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 2000 and, in parallel with this audit, reviewing the institution's policies, procedures and practices as they relate to the pastoral care and welfare of their students under section 12(3) of the Higher Education (General Provisions) Act 1993.

The government's actions in this matter are driven by a number of concerns, the most of which is the safety and welfare of students. We are also concerned to minimise any reputational damage caused to the reputation of the institute and other universities and colleges involved in the export of educational services. As everyone in this chamber knows, my government is strongly committed to exporting educational services. It is important that everybody understands that we are not prepared to allow any institution, educational or otherwise, to damage this state's international reputation in attracting students. Everyone is now clearly put on notice that we expect the highest possible standards of every educational institution. If anyone else is engaged in any similar activity or allegations, we will take similar action.