



Speech by

Annastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

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VOCATIONAL EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT AND OTHER AMENDMENT BILL

Ms PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (8.16 pm): I rise to support the Vocational Education, Training and Employment and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2007. The minister in his second reading speech outlined that the primary objective of the bill is to create a legislative framework for the establishment and operation of TAFE institutes as statutory authorities and the need to revitalise TAFE to continue to meet the current and future skilling needs of Queensland.

I would like to comment here in particular on opportunities that we face in my electorate of Inala. The minister stated that our government must ensure that the training and employment needs of a quarter of a million Queenslanders are being met, that our workforce matches the needs of industry and our training remains world class. This is where I see that we have a unique opportunity. Tonight I am proposing a bold plan to reduce the high rate of youth unemployment in my local region. I have discussed the proposal at length with my local community and I make a commitment to ensure that the groundwork is done with local industry to match the skills they need with a workforce grown locally.

With a statewide unemployment level of 4.5 per cent I believe that it is not only desirable but it is, in fact, necessary to reduce the high rate of youth unemployment in my local area. I am not under any illusion that this will happen over weeks or months but will need the cooperation of several government departments and the business community in my area. I believe that through the minister's Tomorrow's Schools program we have a unique opportunity to link education with training and with industry. The \$49 million offered locally to Inala schools through the department of education to transform our schools will mean that we can create a new Glenala High School to become a skills based centre of excellence and a partnership of sectors to bring about a fundamental change in the lives of young people who live in my local community. The suburbs of Carole Park, Richlands and Wacol are home to large companies that employ many people. With the growth that is being seen in the region, already there has been the announcement that Metroplex is set to establish itself in this growth corridor and has the capacity to employ over 6,000 people in the future. This is local jobs that I want local people to fill.

We have a unique opportunity here. What we need to ascertain from this industry group is what skills they need over the next 10 to 20 years to meet the production demands of their companies. We need to map out what skills they will need to serve them well into the future. We then need to offer these courses at the local state high school and network with TAFE Queensland so that every child who attends that high school, whether it be through a skills based apprenticeship or the like, has the opportunity to be employed locally.

I have already spoken to several local business groups including Metroplex, the Minister for Education and Training, the minister for employment, and the parliamentary secretary to the Premier, Phil Reeves, about my proposal. We need to make the opportunities happen and we need to make them happen locally.

Young people in my community find it very difficult to obtain transport to travel up to Bremer or to the Southbank TAFE. I am convinced that what I am proposing is not out of line with what the minister is

stating not only in this bill but as part of the \$1 billion Queensland Skills Plan. In his second reading speech the minister said—

The Queensland Skills Plan acknowledged that the rapidly changing training market posed real challenges for the responsiveness of the current TAFE delivery model.

It outlined the need to revitalise the TAFE system to enable more flexibility and greater responsiveness to industry and business needs.

In addition, I have a local Inala TAFE college that could offer more flexible courses, especially after hours, to adults who have already left school and who now want to return to study and return to the workforce. We are also lucky enough to have located adjacent to the Inala TAFE college a child-care centre which will mean that women will be able to re-enter TAFE and hence re-enter the workforce.

It is good to see that the opposition is supporting this bill. I would like to refer to comments made by the member for Cunningham in acknowledging the fact that we do have a skills shortage in Australia. He added that we need to focus responsively on what is happening everywhere at large. I thoroughly support his comment that not everyone needs or wants university education and that trades provide incredibly worthwhile careers. I thank the minister for his initiative in this area and for bringing this bill into the House. I commend the bill to the House.