



Speech by

Desley Scott

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

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VOCATIONAL EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs SCOTT (Woodridge—ALP) (12.00 pm): The Vocational Education, Training and Employment and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2007 will lead to the establishment of our institutes of TAFE as statutory authorities thus enabling the new entities to operate on a more commercial basis and to be more flexible and more responsive to the needs of industry and business in the area in which they operate. Under the Queensland Skills Plan the new arrangements are focused on responding to the huge increase in demand for skilled workers. The Metropolitan South Institute of TAFE, under the leadership of Linda Brown, is focused and ready to take on these new challenges. The Logan campus services a growing industrial commercial sector with many employers finding it difficult to satisfy their needs for skilled staff. On the other hand, in the Woodridge and Kingston areas, unemployment, while reducing, is still at a totally unacceptable level of 17.7 per cent. Many of these unemployed are young people and many have the ability to complete a course in vocational education. Overcoming what is known as generational unemployment is sometimes a difficult task, yet these young people, when motivated, can turn their lives around and become useful participating citizens. The only thing standing in the way of many young people obtaining work is training and skills.

A further enhancement of these new arrangements is the access to FEE-HELP which has been introduced by the Commonwealth and will assist many young people who may have a limited ability to pay. Last week I attended our Logan YMCA youth facility, The Shed, where 15 young people graduated from a 16-week course under the U-turn program. All of these young men were referred by police or the courts and had either charges or convictions for car theft. They come with attitude and in 16 weeks have completed an automotive course; obtained a certificate 1 in training; have, under supervision, reconditioned two vehicles written off by RACQ Insurance; and then presented them to two victims of car theft—great restorative justice. For some of these young men this has been the first time they have felt valued and experienced a feeling of real accomplishment. Most of them, by the end of their course, have obtained jobs in the automotive industry, a traineeship or apprenticeship.

I relate this example to the House simply to illustrate that we should never give up on young people. Most of them, if given an opportunity and the right people supporting them, can be re-engaged and go on to training and employment. I was very pleased to be able to tour the SkillsTech facility at Acacia Ridge. Steve Ghost has shared the vision for this facility right from its inception and it is a magnificent concept. Many of the trades training now undertaken at the Logan campus will transfer to Acacia Ridge.

The partnerships now being developed between training organisations, business and industry and also with the Logan campus of Griffith University will assist with a responsive, effective system of training. While Southbank Institute of TAFE and the Gold Coast institute will be the forerunners in the establishment of statutory authorities, thus allowing students throughout the state to operate under their auspice, I have no doubt that other institutes will follow rapidly. With new commercial arrangements in place, our institutes will be well placed to offer their services to a wider market, including the overseas markets. I welcome these measures and believe that Queensland is leading the way and will continue to do so for many years to come. I thank the minister for his leadership and applaud the introduction of this bill.