



Speech by

## John-Paul Langbroek

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Hansard Wednesday, 7 February 2007

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### VOCATIONAL EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

**Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (5.27 pm): I rise to speak in the debate on the Vocational Education, Training and Employment and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2006. I say at the outset that I certainly agree with many of the sentiments expressed by the member for Aspley about the expectations of kids, what we encourage them to do and the employment and education opportunities they think they should be following up. She has bipartisan support for that.

I am pleased to offer my support for these much-needed changes to the current legislation which for too long have been seen as a significant impediment to the advancement of vocational education and training in this state. Vocational education and technical training prepares students for careers in practical trades which have suffered from a shortage of workers. Many factors have contributed to the undersupply of skilled workers that Queensland is currently experiencing, and certainly inadequate funding and support for training centres and apprentices is a major issue.

This is partly because vocational education and training has not had the same focus as tertiary education. As I have previously stated, I am concerned that there is too much and has been too much focus and importance placed on tertiary education which has had and continues to have an indirect but nonetheless damaging effect on vocational education and training. Part of the solution to resolving Queensland's massive skills shortage is not only supporting these legislative changes, which I am optimistic will improve vocational education and training in this state, but also encouraging initiatives like the Queensland Training Awards, which will bring about a shift in the perception of technical training and skilled workers. The Queensland coalition supports any move by the Minister for Education and Training that will open up vocational education and training to school leavers and indeed encourage them to take on apprenticeships.

Skilled workers are the motor that keeps society running. I am pleased these amendments are being initiated by the government. I know of the good work the federal government is doing to help boost vocational education and training nationally through Australian technical colleges, with two more colleges opening in Queensland later this year. The Queensland coalition will also do whatever we can to support vocational education and training in this state to ensure the skills shortage is addressed.

One point I want to make on this bill is that I am hopeful the new legislation does not compromise the quality of apprenticeships and traineeships in Queensland. Whilst expedited completion should be available to students who achieve a high level of competency earlier than their peers, early completion measures should not adversely affect vocational education and training for students and employers who do not wish to fast-track their apprenticeships. Training and quality standards should not be lowered in an effort to address the growing shortage of skilled workers. I would also hope that the Minister for Education and Training will ensure that TAFE and other training colleges are prioritised when it comes to funding and resources so that Queensland's apprentices are given the best possible training. I have had concerns expressed to me about cancellation of courses, students being encouraged to take courses that do not give them the qualifications they want and increases in course costs.