



Speech by

Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

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VOCATIONAL EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT AND OTHER AMENDMENT BILL

Mr HINCHLIFFE (Stafford—ALP) (8.53 pm): I rise to add my name to those supporting the Vocational Education, Training and Employment and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Among a number of outcomes this bill implements this Labor government's commitment to action 2 of the Queensland Skills Plan. I share the minister's analysis in describing this bill as another key step in the reform of the vocational education and training sector and, in particular, the revitalisation of TAFE to continue to meet the current and future skilling needs of our state.

Dynamic and robust arrangements for TAFE, alongside other providers in the public and private sectors, are vital to ensure a responsive range of providers that are in touch with industry and community needs. Those needs are being met by the reforms undertaken within the framework of the Queensland Skills Plan. This \$1 billion blueprint for Queensland's vocational education and training system is an outstanding blueprint for success. This plan was the Queensland government's response to the challenges of a tight labour market—of a skills shortage and of the lowest levels of unemployment since before I started school and, indeed, before a number of my colleagues were born. This issue has wide ramifications for our whole economy and society. That is why it is important for governments to respond to it with clear, forward-thinking policy.

In the context of the current federal election campaign, there is a contest of policy initiatives on vocational education. For the information of the House, I will table a comparison of the competing policies. Federal Labor's trades in schools plan will help tens of thousands of young people and give them a real start.

Tabled paper: Document titled 'Labor's Trades in Schools Plan vs The Coalition's'.

On the other hand, the Howard government's scheme will apply to fewer than 50 technical colleges over the next three years. Kevin Rudd and Labor's \$2.5 billion trades training centres plan is aimed at one million students in years 9 to 12 in Australia's 2,650 secondary schools. Labor's plan provides secondary schools with between \$500,000 and \$1.5 million to build or upgrade trades and training facilities. It will also invest \$84 million to ensure that all trades training students get one day a week on-the-job training for 20 weeks a year. In relation to those funds being made available to secondary schools, I know that Wavell State High School in my electorate will look forward to that opportunity to upgrade its technology block. Federal Labor's plan will be available to schools sooner and will invest more over the next three years—some \$729 million compared with the coalition's \$270 million.

The federal coalition government's Australian technical colleges are an inadequate response to our nation's current and future skills challenge. The existing 28 colleges will not produce a single skilled worker until 2010. The Howard government's own figures show that Australia will need an additional 20,000 skilled workers over the next five years. As the federal government's own policy documents identified—

Around Australia there are many schools that would like to provide a high-quality technical education if only they had the facilities. However, the Liberal-National plan falls short on this very measure. Only federal Labor has a comprehensive plan for the trades training needs of Australian secondary schools.

In the context of this progressive policy, I welcome the measures contained in this bill to extend the flexibility of vocational education and training, especially the establishment of TAFE institutes as statutory bodies—not corporations—and thereby not exposing their staff to the inequities of WorkChoices. I commend the minister for his commitment to vocational education, to the implementation of the Queensland Skills Plan, and I encourage him to continue to work with a fresh approach at the federal level. I commend the bill to the House.