



Speech by

Hon. PAUL LUCAS MP

MEMBER FOR LYTTON

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Rail, Apprentices and Trainees

Hon. P. T. LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (10.01 a.m.): I wish to inform the House of the important role that Queensland Rail plays in supporting a key government priority—jobs for our young people in the regions. Young Queenslanders are the future of this great state. I am happy to announce today that QR has this year taken on 98 new apprentices and 50 new trainees. This is almost a 30 per cent increase on the number of apprentices QR took on last year and is almost double the number of trainees. It is something this government is very keen on. We realise that ultimately we are a major provider for apprentices and trainees throughout Queensland, in particular regional Queensland. QR is providing the type of training through these programs that is helping Queensland achieve a skilled, flexible work force to meet the challenges of the future.

In November QR advertised state wide for apprentices in trades such as electrical, electronics, mechanical, fabrication, vehicle building, vehicle finishing, plumbing, and painting and decorating. By the end of last month, all 98 new apprentices had been inducted and they come from locations such as Cairns, Townsville, Bowen, Mackay, Sarina, Blackwater, Rockhampton, Gladstone, Maryborough, Brisbane, Ipswich and Toowoomba. QR has also provided 50 traineeships in areas such as business administration, horticulture, warehousing, engineering, telecommunications, cleaning operations and information technology. Among these 50 trainees are 10 school based traineeships. Opportunities like these are helping to build regional Queensland. These trainees are employed for 12 to 24 months while apprenticeships are 48 to 60 months, depending on the qualification being attained. QR is also providing training in leadership and management development, locomotive driver simulation, literacy and numeracy, customer service and hospitality skills enhancement. These latest recruits form part of a group of 280 apprentices and 60 trainees within QR.

Funding for these trainees is from the Beattie government's Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative. I want to thank QR for having such an active apprenticeship and traineeship program. This program is not just important to QR but is providing skilled and experienced workers for the future for other industries. Government trained apprentices and trainees are in very heavy demand in the private sector, and I make no apology for that and I am very proud of that. QR's future viability rests on having a committed and skilled work force. Through the Beattie government's support, QR can provide a professional and efficient service, whether it is passengers on Citytrain or Traveltrain, moving livestock or millions of tonnes of bulk minerals.

QR recent successes include a 6 per cent rise in Citytrain patronage between July to December; QR's subsidiary Interail winning a contract to transport 10 million tonnes of coal per year in the Hunter Valley in New South Wales; last year QR retained a 40 million tonnes per year coal contract with BHP Billiton-Mitsubishi alliance; and QR winning a contract with Xstrata in February for the new Bauhinia mine in central Queensland. The Beattie government will continue to develop a skilled and enthusiastic work force to support the economic growth and development of Queensland.