



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Wednesday, 8 March 2006

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Skills Plan

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.38 am): The *Queensland skills plan* white paper is an extensive package of initiatives which will strengthen our vocational education and training sector to meet the 21st century needs of industry, and it will create important skilled jobs for Queenslanders. I have much pleasure on behalf of the state government in tabling that paper for the information of the House. In essence, it fast-tracks apprenticeships to skill more Queenslanders, it streamlines and strengthens the TAFE system, it will create 14,000 extra training places by 2010, it invests heavily in the statewide network of training providers and it builds partnerships with industry. Because this is so important, I have asked for copies to be distributed to all members of the House.

Last year the Queensland government began the most comprehensive review of the state's vocational education and training system in over 40 years. This was our first step in tackling head-on the challenges presented by skills shortages across the nation coupled with the changing skills needed for Queensland industries now and into the future.

What resulted was the green paper on skills reform, which contained a range of proposals to create a contemporary training system capable of providing those skills to keep Queensland moving forward. More than 1,700 employers, industry and union leaders, teachers, apprentices and other Queenslanders provided responses to the green paper's proposals. Their views were considered in the development of what is a groundbreaking white paper on skills reform. That is what I have tabled for the information of the House. I thank all those people for their valuable contributions. In particular, I thank the minister for employment and training, Tom Barton, for the leadership role he has played.

The input from so many employers and community members reflects the significant contribution that vocational education and training makes to a robust economy. Queensland is the engine room with work already well underway on \$55 billion in projects under our 20-year South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan. What we need is the skills and the workforce to deliver that plan. That is what this white paper is all about. Importantly, the Queensland government is also skilling the workforce for tomorrow and catering for that growth, and providing important jobs and opportunities for Queenslanders.

As I said earlier, today I am pleased to table this government's eagerly awaited white paper, the *Queensland skills plan*, which will bring significant changes to our vocational education and training system. The plan is far reaching—\$1 billion worth of investment in Queensland's future. The reforms to be implemented under the *Queensland skills plan* will ensure we are able to build a training system that gives young Queenslanders entering the workforce the skills that industry needs. It will provide opportunities for existing workers and older workers so they can update their skills and continue to make a valuable and productive contribution to the workforce.

Over the next four years, \$801 million will be provided in recurrent funding with an additional \$303 million in capital funding to be provided over the next six years. This includes \$542 million in new recurrent funding and \$222.7 million in new capital funding. The wide-ranging reforms that result will

improve the way TAFE institutes deliver training and foster stronger partnerships with private training providers, industry, communities and unions.

To help address urgent skills shortages in the traditional trades, apprentices will be able to become fully qualified tradespeople in a shorter time. That is based on Queensland's already established competency based training system. While the apprentices will be able to qualify sooner, we will make certain that their skills and qualities are maintained. This, in essence, is fast-tracking to ensure that we have the skills for today and tomorrow to build the infrastructure we need for today and tomorrow.

From 2007, up to 80 per cent of the state's apprentices in the building and construction industries are expected to fast-track their apprenticeships and reduce the time taken by up to six months. Importantly, safeguards will ensure that there is no compromise in the quality of training.

There are many exciting changes and opportunities in the Queensland Skills Plan that will ensure the Smart State continues to lead the nation with one of the most flexible and innovative education and training systems in Australia. There will be \$159.39 million over four years invested in the apprenticeship system. We are establishing a Trade and Technician Skills Institute to develop training products and deliver them in the key areas of automotive, building and construction, manufacturing and engineering, and electrical and electronics industries. The institute will provide training in the Brisbane metropolitan area from the major campuses at Acacia Ridge on the south side and Eagle Farm on the north side. It will also provide trade training through regional TAFE institutes in Cairns, Bundaberg, Gladstone, the Gold Coast, Ipswich, Mackay, Maryborough, Mount Isa, Rockhampton, the Sunshine Coast, Toowoomba and Townsville-Thuringowa and from other sites throughout Queensland. Prevocational training and some initial elements of trade apprenticeships, where appropriate, will continue to be offered from local sites.

The Queensland government will invest \$19.32 million over four years to develop more robust structures and processes for engaging and partnering with industry to addressing the formation of skills. This will include establishing three new centres of excellence in manufacturing and engineering, building and construction, and energy. In addition, five industry skills alliances will be established in industries that require an ongoing and structured approach to industry engagements and skills formulation. Industry skills alliances are proposed for tourism and hospitality, health and community services, sport and recreation, automotive and the creative industries sector. Twenty-three new skills formation strategies will also be developed across a range of industry and regional areas.

The TAFE system will also be streamlined and strengthened under these sweeping reforms. Southbank TAFE in Brisbane will be renamed the Southbank Institute of Technology and will have responsibility for a range of associate degrees, university pathways and articulation arrangements.

A new Australian Resources and Infrastructure Institute of Technology will be established at Central Queensland TAFE to address skills development for the further growth of Queensland's resources sector—mining, electricity, gas, water and the environment—and also for infrastructure such as roads, rail, ports and other major civil construction sectors.

The six TAFE Queensland institutes in the Brisbane metropolitan area will be reorganised into a South Brisbane Institute of TAFE, comprising the current Yeronga, Moreton and Logan TAFE, and a North Brisbane Institute of TAFE, comprising Brisbane North TAFE and the Open Learning Institute, which will continue to lead distance education throughout Queensland.

There is a new bush works strategy for Queenslanders living in rural and remote communities. This will provide skilling and employment opportunities, and include specific initiatives for young people.

In releasing the *Queensland skills plan* today, the state government is raising the bar higher and, accordingly, investing more than \$1 billion very wisely. Queensland has set the national benchmark for vocational education and training. We are again matching words with action and results.

We have 1,500 additional Queenslanders every week. We have to ensure that they are skilled to not only get the job opportunities but also to build a new Queensland. That is what this is all about—it is about dealing with growth and ensuring that we are building tomorrow's Queensland today.

I encourage all honourable members to take the time to read the *Queensland skills plan* and to help in its implementation so that the next generation can take carriage of the Smart State of the future.