



Speech by

Peter Lawlor

MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

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MIGRANT AND REFUGEE EMPLOYMENT PROJECT

Mr LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (9.55 pm): On 15 March I represented the minister for employment and training, Tom Barton, at the launch of the Acces Services' Migrant and Employment Community Jobs Plan and Employment Assistance Program. The Department of Employment and Training funded a grant of \$70,000 from Breaking the Unemployment Cycle to make the new employment assistance project possible. It will assist 50 local migrants and refugees. Breaking the Unemployment Cycle was established in 1998 and has helped to create over 99,000 jobs so far. It is through organisations such as Acces Services Inc. that the government is able to direct funds to communities where training is most needed.

The Migrant and Refugee Employment Project is the first time such a program has been offered to migrants and refugees on the Gold Coast, which has 73 different ethnic community groups. It is also the first time Acces Services has worked with the Multicultural Communities Council on the Gold Coast to deliver employment and training activities.

These organisations have agreed with the Migrant Centre to have a project worker available for participants one day a week at the Gold Coast TAFE Southport. This arrangement will help new residents overcome transport problems, such as not owning a car, not knowing how to drive a car and difficulty reading timetables, all of which pose a major barrier to employment and training. Both organisations involved in this project have a proven record in providing services to people from non-English speaking backgrounds on the Gold Coast. Many of the people on this project are currently on waiting lists to access other community support programs. Through the state funded Migrant and Refugee Employment Project, these people are being given immediate opportunities to learn about the Australian workplace, improve their job search skills and meet local employees. These strategies will help increase their skills and enhance their opportunities for finding work.

Participants will also be encouraged to build their own local support networks and to be closely involved in decisions that affect them. They will have help in adjusting to a new culture and in understanding information they need to access training and further education, with additional language support as required.

My thanks go to the program participants who attended the launch, together with Adel Mutsaers representing Acces Services; Agnes Nemeth representing the Multicultural Communities Council; Rhonda Wilson, the manager of Multicultural Communities Gold Coast; Roxanne Scott, senior adviser with the Department of Employment and Training; Anna Zubac, assistant manager of the Migrant Centre; and Vicki Valentine, project worker for the Migrant and Refugee Employment Program.