



Speech by

## Karen Struthers

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

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### ACACIA RIDGE, SKILLSTECH

**Ms STRUTHERS** (Algester—ALP) (10.07 pm): Last week I turned the sod on the new foundry at the new trade and technical skills institute, SkillsTech—the main campus being in my electorate at Acacia Ridge. SkillsTech Australia is a world class trade training centre and is also well positioned to become the lead centre for foundry training in the Asia-Pacific region. The new foundry and pattern-making facility is expected to open around April or May 2008.

When the foundry closed at Yeronga in 2002 there were 22 apprentices. Now there are approximately 120 apprentices and it is expected that this number will grow by about 15 to 20 per cent per year over the next five years. Although we currently only service apprentices from Queensland, the facility has the potential to service apprentices from all over the country as well as New Zealand and the Pacific region.

I was pleased to meet the quality staff and members of the board of SkillsTech last week. A standout staff member was Les Johnson. Les commenced as an apprentice engineering pattern maker in Brisbane in 1966. He has had over 41 years as a pattern maker, business owner, trade instructor and TAFE teacher. He was the first apprentice at the then new training facility at Yeronga in 1967.

A great TAFE reform in Queensland in recent years is the extensive industry involvement in TAFE. Les chairs the local advisory working group, meeting with industry monthly to develop best practice in teaching and to develop resources. The SkillsTech centre is part of the Bligh government's plan to address skill shortage trade training areas including in engineering, building and construction, automotive, plastics, air conditioning and refrigeration, foundry, transport and logistics and paraprofessional and other post trade training areas.

Our billion-dollar Queensland Skills Plan is working. Figures released in June 2007 show that 57,500 Queenslanders started their apprenticeships or traineeships in the 12 months to December 2006. That represented a nine per cent increase in Queensland compared to national growth of 1.7 per cent. Queensland has the highest number of school based apprentices and trainees, 40 per cent of the national share. We are committed to doubling this over the next few years. I encourage all young people and their parents to value a trade career and try a trade at SkillsTech at Acacia Ridge. I am very confident that they will be amazed at what is on offer at SkillsTech.