



Speech by

Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

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VOCATIONAL EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

Mr HINCHLIFFE (Stafford—ALP) (5.01 pm): I want to add my voice to the support given to this Vocational Education, Training and Employment and Other Acts Amendment Bill. In particular, I wish to acknowledge the opening of the new Skilling Solutions Queensland centre at Westfield Chermside in the electorate of Stafford. This centre is designed to provide advice to Queenslanders about obtaining skills and job qualifications. For many, it will take the complication and guesswork out of looking for a new career or choosing training. As my honourable colleagues have mentioned already, these new centres are part of this Labor government's commitment under the \$1 billion Queensland Skills Plan, which this bill will facilitate. I support this initiative.

The centres, of which Chermside was the first to open in 2007, will have consultants on hand to provide face-to-face advice on how Queenslanders of all ages can obtain skills and qualifications to help them improve their job prospects. It is particularly important that these centres open in places like the Westfields of the world; it is important that they are located in the new town centres and city centres in our growing communities, particularly in south-east Queensland. These centres will open the door to trades to many people who have not necessarily considered them before. This will be a new place for people to see the opportunities offered in the trades. This includes people of all ages—as a number of colleagues who have spoken to the bill so far have mentioned—and people from different cultural backgrounds to whom the traditional avenues into apprenticeships and so on have been alienating in the past. That is particularly important when we consider that this new centre has opened at Chermside in the centre of the north side.

It is also important that these skilling centres will play a big part in addressing the needs in our economy for skilled workers, as has been mentioned by all the speakers preceding me. While there will be centres up and down Queensland's coast, it is important that there is one in Chermside. As Chermside is a key regional centre for Brisbane's north side, it was a sound decision by the minister and his predecessor to establish a Skilling Solutions Queensland centre at Chermside. As the minister would know, business is humming on the north side and we need every avenue to assist workers to improve their skills and meet the needs of our economy. The north side has plenty of workers willing to play a role in this dynamic city and its strong economy.

Skilling Solutions Queensland and the Queensland Skills Plan provide support and a service to both employers and employees, and they will be very important in addressing concerns about the skills shortage in our community. They will play a dynamic role, as I said, in building the economy and the nature of the booming areas of south-east Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.