



Speech by
Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

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SKILLING QUEENSLANDERS FOR WORK

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (10.16 pm): The Newman government's cuts to the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program will have more wide ranging social and economic ramifications for Far North Queensland and the rest of the state than the government acknowledges. In the *Courier-Mail*, the Minister for Education, Training and Employment said cuts to Skilling Queenslanders for Work would total \$19 million with 144 jobs lost, but this turned into a \$53.8 million cut with more than 27,000 job seekers impacted. The Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative ran successful programs helping disadvantaged people currently unemployed, those looking at re-entering the workforce, teenagers at risk of losing contact with education or training, Indigenous jobseekers and people with low literacy skills such as those helped by FNQ Volunteer Tutors' now defunded Community Literacy Program. From Tully to Kurumba, for 18 years this group has worked with a number of other organisations who cannot access other training in their own communities. Program coordinator Melinda Stockwell said outcomes included 94 per cent of participants going on to further education and training and more than 60 per cent finding employment. Letters of support from 15 individuals and organisations urging the funding for FNQ Volunteer Tutors to continue have been provided from organisations like Babinda Task Force, ITEC Employment, Job Find, Kuranda State College, Douglas Shire Community Services and the Ngoonbi Cooperative Society; and people like Shane McQuillan from Mossman who says he has a medical condition and he is trying to retrain himself and to lose this opportunity would be a great disadvantage. For the benefit of the minister, I table these letters.

Tabled paper: Correspondence from various parties in relation to Far North Queensland Volunteer Tutors Inc [\[794\]](#).

Then there are benevolent organisations like Choice Australia, which used Breaking the Employment Cycle in 2006 and Skilling Queenslanders for Work in 2011 to deliver two of the largest government funded employment programs ever after cyclones Larry and Yasi respectively. Between these two large scale projects, 700 displaced, unemployed and disadvantaged people were able to undertake accredited training following these natural disasters. In 2006 the team cleared over 1,000 hectares of fallen debris; repaired damage to over approximately 45 schools, community groups, sporting and recreational clubs; and restored damaged walking tracks and pathways for cassowaries and other wildlife. I have long been a supporter of Choice Australia and I am happy to declare that CEO Todd Hartley, a former Cairns Regional Council Citizen of the Year, supported me during the last election because we share a belief in investing in people for our future. The LNP fails to understand how important jobs programs are and how much it means to regional economies to have more people skilled and ready for work.

The slashing of this program by the Newman government will also affect the future of the community groups running these programs. Every government worker sacked and every group whose program has been axed is paying for the LNP's election promises, not paying down debt. It is that simple. The axing of Skilling Queenslanders for Work is particularly short sighted, considering that a report prepared by Deloitte Access Economics found the \$53.8 million program would have generated \$1.2 billion in state tax receipts in the years to 2020. In that same period, the contribution to the wider Queensland economy would have totalled \$6.5 billion. It is further evidence that the ideologically driven LNP government sees only numbers and not people.