Speech By

Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

First Start

Hon. YM D'ATH (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills) (9.56 am): I am very pleased to inform the House that the Palaszczuk government recently released the allocation of trainees to local government authorities under the First Start initiative. The First Start program provides support for up to 300 trainee placements in council areas right across the state, with funding of up to $12,500 available to place people into traineeships for 12 months. We hope that a large number of these trainees will go on to complete their traineeships and apprenticeships with these councils. Importantly, priority is given to areas of high youth unemployment, with the trainees being placed in 62 councils right across the state. This shows that the Palaszczuk government is committed to training and skills right across this state and particularly in regional Queensland.

Last year this program had a very high level of demand across the state. As a result, the Palaszczuk government made the decision to increase the number of places available from 250 to 300. It is very pleasing to inform the House that, even with the increase in places, there is still a very strong demand for places and all 300 have been filled. Importantly, First Start encourages local jobseekers, who in many cases are young people, to remain in their local communities while providing councils with a valuable source of labour for council activities and delivery of important community services.

First Start provides a $12,500 wage subsidy to local councils to employ an additional trainee while studying to gain a nationally recognised qualification. This funding can also be utilised to support a first-year apprenticeship position. Importantly, these individuals come directly out of the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program.

The Department of Education and Training works very closely with the Local Government Association of Queensland, which manages the First Start allocation process, to ensure that traineeship places go to councils with the greatest need. One of the 14 Indigenous councils receiving a boost this year is Aurukun Shire Council. The council has been awarded $100,000 for eight traineeship positions. This means that eight new positions are being created that will provide 12 months of stable employment, skills development and a qualification for eight local people in the community.

Throughout 2015-16 across Queensland council areas more than 87 per cent of First Start trainees and apprentices are young people between the ages of 15 and 24 years, 20 per cent are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and male and female groups are equally represented across the total recruitments.

Qualifications are being undertaken across 15 different industry areas including business, primary industry and construction. Some of the councils that have allocations of trainees under the First Start program include Ipswich City Council with 23 trainees, Townsville City Council with 20, Mackay Regional Council with 18 and the list goes on, with councils from Logan to the cape taking part. It has

been very rewarding to hear the successes of First Start, which has been brought back as part of the Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative, and how it is allowing local councils to grow their own talent locally and build career pathways.