




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MACKAY

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PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Mackay Electorate, Apprenticeships

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (2.45 pm): As it is International Women's Day, I would like to report on some of the trailblazing young women in my electorate and the surrounding region starting their apprenticeships this year. It is important that we keep breaking down barriers in the workforce for both males and females. It is important to have true diversity and have both strong men and women in our workplaces.

Last week, I met the new intake of Ergon apprentices at the Mackay depot. For a number of years females have been included in the yearly intake and they emerge from their training as world-class electricians. This year, in Mackay, Ergon Energy's intake of apprentices has set a new benchmark of diversity. Three of the five successful applicants are female.

For the first time women have outnumbered men in an annual intake at one of Ergon's major regional depots. Three of the five apprentices, including two of the women, identify as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, also marking the first time people of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent made up the majority of an intake at a major depot. Dean Werthenbach, Ergon's area manager, told me that, regardless of gender, these apprentices are the cream of the crop of all the candidates.

The new apprentices, Leah Deveraux, Kristen Predebon, Ashley Maes, Travis Mansfield and Sean Dalton, are beginning their careers knowing that they are the top of their field. Leah told me that in year 10 she decided to become an electrician after Ergon visited to discuss career paths.

Simone Suradi is featured in today's *Daily Mercury*. Simone is breaking new ground as a first-year mechanical fitter with Hastings Deering. At the BMA apprentice intake, I met 41 keen apprentices who were on their first day. The Queensland Resources Council has a Women in Resources Action Plan to increase the proportion of women in the sector to at least 20 per cent in non-traditional roles by 2020. Seven of the 41 BMA apprentices are female. Two of the four apprentices who were working at Hay Point are female. I congratulate Ergon and BMA for the work that they have done in our schools to recruit apprentices and to encourage both males and females to apply.

The Palaszczuk government is supporting apprentices with its payroll deductions and other incentives for employers. In my area, because of the Palaszczuk government's incentives for businesses to take on young people as apprentices and trainees, the unemployment rate has dropped to 4.4 per cent.