




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MACKAY

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Mackay Electorate, Regional Skills Investment Strategy

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (2.50 pm): The Mackay regional unemployment rate is the lowest in the state, thanks to the Queensland Palaszczuk government's great economic development and management. Mackay needs skilled workers. I am very proud of the work of the Minister for Training and Skills Development. She has listened to our needs and has chosen Mackay to announce the state government's \$2.8 million investment in the Regional Skills Investment Strategy. The strategy will develop skills training opportunities in eight areas.

Avril Curtis is working with the Mackay Regional Council and employers who are looking for skilled workers now and into the future. Mackay is one of the first regions to receive this funding. Representatives from target industries such as mining, engineering, agriculture and community health care will determine our skills priorities. The Regional Skills Investment Strategy funding of \$350,000 into the Mackay region will enhance promotion and engagement activities. It will also assist with the implementation of local training solutions that are identified as part of the project through the government's annual VET investment plan.

The Mackay engineering sector is under pressure to find enough tradespeople. Boilermakers, electricians, fitters and turners are all in demand. A lot has been said about the automation of the mining industry, which has scared some young people away from a trades career. When one industry starts to grow, it puts another regional industry under pressure as they compete for the same pool of workers. For our sugar mills, this happens every year when the mining services industry is on the rise. The continued economic development of the Mackay region is dependent on having a supply of skilled workers. Avril will help coordinate local jobseekers, businesses, employers and other stakeholders to ensure that our region has access to quality training opportunities for the industries that need more skilled workers now. She will also help industry to connect with already suitably skilled workers.

Horticulture trainees Britney Cock and Meg Hayes are just two of the workers employed under Avril's program. They are both studying for certificates in horticulture. Britney believes that her horticulture certificate will have a positive impact on her career into the future. Meg is pleased that she is able to upskill in an industry that she believes in. That is important for all workers and they should take advantage of opportunities to stay relevant as demands change, especially as new equipment is developed. As automation and artificial intelligence move into different employment sectors, she is confident that upskilling will move workers into new pathways of employment.

In a few short weeks, we will see the graduation of our senior class of 2018 from high schools across the state. The students will have their first career opportunities waiting for them after their end-of-year celebrations. To ensure our young people have opportunities to continue their education and training, we are offering free TAFE courses. Our local employers are keen to tap into the potential of the pool of skilled workers. Some have already offered placements for apprentices and trainees. The Labor Palaszczuk government is again offering free TAFE for all year 12 graduates for the first calendar

year after graduation. CQUniversity delivers TAFE in Central Queensland. It has courses for apprentices and trainees in a range of traditional trades including carpentry, bricklaying and plumbing, as well as certificate programs in automotive, horticulture, hospitality and community service—all preparing year 12 graduates for jobs of the future. Currently, CQU is running 30 free courses for our 2017 graduates.

At the Mackay Engineering College, I was able to speak to some of our students doing certificates in trade related industries while at school. Pioneer State High School students completing VET courses at the college are ready to take up traineeships and apprenticeships. Jayden Quinn has already secured an apprenticeship in the Navy. Stephanie Honan is looking forward to doing civil engineering. Malakai Togo and Turan Brennan are keen to continue developing the skills they gained in the VET sector while at school, in order to get a trade. Already, 40 per cent of the students attending the Mackay Trade Training Centre have secured apprenticeships for next year.

(Time expired)