




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Federal Budget, Apprentices and Trainees

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (10.11 am): Queensland apprentices and trainees who were looking for their fair share of support from Canberra were bitterly disappointed in last night's budget. After Abbott and Turnbull racked up more than \$3 billion in cuts to TAFE and training, Scott Morrison followed through with his own cuts in the budget last night.

Last night's budget saw the Skilling Australians Fund decrease by \$649 million. That is a reduction of more than 50 per cent. That fund is now officially a failed experiment. While the budget delivered a \$649 million cut with one hand, it only provided an additional \$525 million with the other. Scott Morrison's so-called skills package was actually a cuts package of more than \$120 million for the nation's training budget.

With Scott Morrison as treasurer and now Prime Minister, Australia's training budget has been cut and then cut again. Queensland refused to sign up to the federal LNP's funding deal—not only because of the onerous conditions it would have placed on Queensland but also because it provided no funding certainty. Last night's budget proved Queensland and Victoria right. The other states that signed up to this agreement received a pretty rude shock last night to see not only more cuts coming down the line but also their agreements devalued by a combined total of \$83.9 million. Apprentices need funding certainty—not just for this year but for the duration of their apprenticeship. Scott Morrison's aptly named cuts to skills is 'delivering skills for today and tomorrow'—but obviously not the day after.

Last night we saw the federal government finally realise that we have a demand problem for apprentices and trainees, so it announced a modest increase to its own employer incentive of \$8,000. This is a weak imitation of Queensland's Back to Work program, which provides up to \$20,000 for a business to put on an apprentice or trainee. The federal government has a long way to go to catch up to Queensland on this issue. This is after we have seen a decline of 140,000 apprentices under its watch and its heartless cutting of the tools for trade program.

With no help from Canberra, the Palaszczuk Labor government continues to invest in a range of programs that support access to training and skills through our \$777 million VET Investment Plan. We are getting the results here in Queensland, with no help from the federal government. In the last year Queensland had the second highest result of all jurisdictions, with 21,600 apprenticeship and traineeship completions, representing a quarter of all completions in the country. Imagine the results we would get for young Queenslanders—young apprentices and trainees—if we had a federal government willing to invest in training and skills.