




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 5 February 2020

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

TAFE

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (10.05 am): As we start a new year I want to welcome the thousands of new TAFE students and apprentices picking up the tools of their trade for the first time across Queensland. From agriculture to automotive and from mining to manufacturing, over 16,500 young Queenslanders have taken up the opportunity to access free courses and apprenticeships and gain a valuable qualification for free.

The Palaszczuk government has opened the doors of opportunity wide for all young Queenslanders, particularly for those who may not have been able to afford to study. The practical courses they are undertaking will equip them with the skills for the jobs that are in demand and predicted to grow over the next decade. That includes jobs in the construction, electrical and automotive industries—three of the most popular free TAFE courses so far this year for school leavers. High-growth sectors like hospitality, child care and community services have also attracted lots of interest.

For 18-year-old Jessica Clarke from Bundaberg, free TAFE meant she could follow in her sister's footsteps and study a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care. Jessica, who graduated from Bundaberg State High School in 2018, enrolled at the local TAFE Queensland campus and completed her early childhood qualification last year. Federal government data shows a projected employment growth of six per cent in education and training in the Wide Bay region over the next five years. Thanks to free TAFE, Jessica has been able to kickstart her career as an early childhood educator at no cost, with the qualification providing her with the knowledge and skills she needs to secure meaningful employment.

From Thursday Island to Coolangatta and from Mount Isa to Warwick, the Palaszczuk government is providing plenty of opportunities for students like Jessica throughout Queensland. With more than \$770,000 in VET funding annually, we have supported more than 200,000 Queensland students in the last financial year alone. Free TAFE and free apprenticeships are integral in providing the training and qualifications to cater for more jobs in more industries. The Palaszczuk government continues to show its commitment in addressing skill shortages in key industries while helping put young Queenslanders on the path to meaningful and rewarding careers.