




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 20 May 2020

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Coronavirus, Apprentices and Trainees

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (9.53 am): The Palaszczuk government is laser focused on supporting Queenslanders on our road to recovery. In addition to the extensive support we are giving small businesses, we are also taking action to make sure we are supporting our apprentices and trainees during this crisis. Early in the crisis we sent texts to around 60,000 apprentices and trainees encouraging them to contact the department for advice on what support is available to them. The risk of mass contract cancellations was significant and we moved quickly to minimise this. I am pleased to report that so far cancellations of apprentices have been lower this year compared to the same period last year. Where contracts have been cancelled apprentices and trainees will still receive funded training allowing them to continue while looking for a new host employer. Critically the support has been extended to our school based apprentices and trainees who were previously ineligible.

Through our strong advocacy work we have also been able to secure from the federal government further wage subsidies for apprentices in group training organisations. I have also convened a small advisory group of key training and employment stakeholders to help guide our COVID-19 response to support apprentices through the recovery. The announcement yesterday of the \$20 million centre of excellence in Beenleigh will also provide a unique opportunity for apprentices. The project will be built by apprentices for apprentices.

We have always recognised training as a pathway for many Queenslanders to get into a rewarding job. With COVID-19, training has become even more critical in ensuring Queensland workers can keep working or access emerging job opportunities. Our \$500 million workers assistance package is helping to connect every impacted Queenslanders to free online training to help them upskill or reskill. From health support and community care, food service and customer engagement to digital literacy and data security, Queenslanders are all learning whilst at home. So far nearly 13,500 Queenslanders have enrolled in one of the 15 short online courses on offer from TAFE and CQU. Free apprenticeships for under-21s and free TAFE for year 12 graduates is still ongoing and continuing to provide a pathway for many young Queenslanders. We know the path to recovery will be long, but Queenslanders can be sure that the Palaszczuk government has their back all the way.