




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 16 July 2020

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Coronavirus, Training and Skills

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (9.51 am): Queensland is a leader in skills and training. COVID-19 has hit every economy. No-one has been immune, including Queensland, and we know how vital it is to have the skilled workforce needed to help our state recover. Our apprentices and trainees in particular will play a valuable role in this economic recovery. Finally, today we have seen the federal government put some money on the table. We have been waiting some time for this money. The Palaszczuk government has proudly—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Ms FENTIMAN: The Palaszczuk government has proudly been doing the heavy lifting here in Queensland, leading the nation when it comes to skills and training and apprentices. Who can forget the record of members opposite? We have been doing the heavy lifting here in Queensland. We lead the nation when it comes to apprentices. One in four apprentices start their apprenticeship here in Queensland. We have more than half the nation's school based apprentices and trainees. How much work have we in Queensland had to do without money from the federal government and cleaning up the mess of those opposite?

Just yesterday, the Premier announced \$10 million to extend our successful Skilling Queenslanders for Work program, the program that members opposite cut twice. It is a wonderful program. Yesterday, the Premier and I met some of the Skilling Queenslanders for Work trainees. There is Jacqueline Rogers, who came in yesterday to Parliament House for the first time, a construction trainee who was assisted by Skilling Queenslanders for Work after she found herself unemployed after COVID.

The Premier also announced a new boost for businesses to take on apprentices and trainees through our successful Back to Work program. A \$70 million expansion will see employers assisted with up to \$20,000 if they hire an apprentice or trainee. This is in addition to our very popular, free TAFE for year 12 and free apprenticeships and traineeships for under-21s. Already more than 21,000 young Queenslanders are being supported to gain a valuable qualification for free thanks to this government.

Like many of my colleagues, I visited the TAFE coffee trailer this morning and met a couple of apprentices. One of them, Brendan, a fourth-year electrical apprentice, told me, 'Free apprenticeships is the best.' After years of calling for additional skills funding, we welcome today's announcement by the federal government. We lead the way and we have been doing the heavy lifting because we know investing in skills leads to jobs.