




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Women and Girls

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (10.05 am): Yesterday marked International Women's Day which is part of Queensland Women's Week because, here in Queensland, our incredible women and girls deserve more than just one day. This year's theme for Queensland Women's Week is 'Celebrate our present. Own our Future', and there is a lot to celebrate. Queensland women have served on the front line of our COVID response, from our nurses, cleaners and aged-care workers to our teachers. However, women dominated industries have also been some of the hardest hit economically such as retail, accommodation and hospitality. A greater proportion of Queensland women withdrew superannuation during the pandemic and we know that women are already behind on their super balances, so as we own our future we need to keep fighting to remove barriers that prevent women's full economic participation, and that includes creating safe workplaces where women are free from violence and harassment.

Last week I joined Minister de Brenni to attend a Try a Trade Day where schoolgirls were able to visit a work site and meet with the incredible women tradies who are currently forging careers in construction. I am a big believer that you cannot be what you cannot see, so it is crucial that women see themselves in these industries. Currently women make up only five per cent of the building industry, but through days like Try a Trade we will encourage more women into the industry, and at the Cannon Hill site women make up 30 per cent of the on-site construction workforce. Encouraging women and girls to pursue careers in these male dominated industries where pay levels are higher and jobs are more secure will also help close the gender pay gap. We need to create and protect secure jobs for women and to support the skills and training needs of women to grow the skills for jobs of the future.

Our pre apprenticeship support and other initiatives to support women and girls to engage and succeed in male-dominated industries such as STEM and engineering are getting great results. I am pleased to say that there has been a 32 per cent increase in women commencing an apprenticeship through our initiatives. A report released by Australia's Chief Scientist indicates that the pandemic is expected to disproportionately hinder the careers of women in STEM. The report shows that hard-won gains by women in this industry—a minority of STEM professionals—are at risk, and that is why I am pleased the Palaszczuk government is continuing to support groups like Women in Technology to help build their careers. Everyone benefits when women are in a better position to build economic independence and self-sufficiency and contribute to our Queensland community.