




Speech By
Barry O'Rourke

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Record of Proceedings, 23 February 2022

ADJOURNMENT

Rockhampton Electorate, Apprenticeships

 **Mr O'ROURKE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (7.03 pm): I had the pleasure of welcoming 12 new apprentices undertaking their training at the Ergon depot in Rockhampton. Across Queensland there are 500 apprentices at Ergon and Energex currently doing their training. Energy workers support communities across Queensland during natural disasters including storms and cyclones, restoring power in dangerous conditions, showing their dedication and exceptional standard of training. Energy apprentices are also the forefront of Queensland's transformation to a renewable energy superpower. Queensland's publicly owned energy companies have a 9,500-strong workforce which is at the heart of the economic activity and prosperity of the state. The Palaszczuk government is keeping Ergon and Energex publicly owned to continue investment in skills and training and regional jobs. The Queensland government continues to invest heavily in training to equip more Queenslanders with the skills they need for the jobs of both emerging and traditional industries. We have invested \$320 million over four years to continue the Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative and \$80 million a year beyond that.

Under Stronger Choices, the LNP tried to privatise our publicly owned electricity companies. Privatisation will only result in higher prices, fewer jobs in the regions and worse safety outcomes. This is backed up by the royal commission into Victoria's devastating Black Saturday bushfires which found that its private network had not taken on one single additional new apprentice in 10 years and, as a result, a lack of skills and a lack of investment led to tragedy.

It was not only the energy sector that the LNP wanted to destroy. It also shut down the QBuild depots. A lot of good people lost their jobs. The Palaszczuk government has rebuilt QBuild to create secure employment and develop trade skills for Queensland's future. The Rockhampton depot was reopened in 2020 and QBuild has restored the existing depots across the state, providing facilities for a growing number of field staff. Since then, QBuild has hired 40 new apprentices and 150 trade qualified staff. In December QBuild launched its latest recruitment campaign for an additional 90 tradies and 20 apprenticeship positions to be filled in 2022. Interviews are now underway, with successful applicants to start in March.