



Speech By  
**Charis Mullen**


**MEMBER FOR JORDAN**

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## **MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

### **Workforce Strategy**

 **Mrs MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (2.31 pm): The focus of the entire nation is on jobs and skills as we face Australia-wide workforce challenges, unless, of course, you are the Queensland opposition. They are very busy talking down our state, painting a false and negative economic narrative, denigrating our public servants and attacking our Premier in an impressively vile and sexist manner. They do not have time to talk about jobs or skills or attend shadow cabinet meetings, it would seem. Perhaps the opposition could do with their own workforce strategy. Action 1: turn up!

Leader of the Opposition, please keep sending out the member for Kawana to attack a woman Premier. Keep doing it because we know just how much that works with women voters, how much they love that. Ask the member for Nanango and her front page of the *Courier-Mail* when she attacked the Premier's clothing.

**An opposition member** interjected.

**Mrs MULLEN:** Oh, hello! Yes, absolutely. I want to congratulate the Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development on the release of today's Workforce Strategy. I was really privileged to attend our workforce summit earlier this year and to be in a room with over 350 industry and economic experts, thought leaders and change makers, as well as all levels of government working together to cooperatively address how we face current and future workforce challenges and plan for the future of working Queensland. That is what good governments do.

We know that from the summit we identified some core guiding principles for the development of the strategy which was released today. One of the most important was that it needed to be community centred, industry-led and government enabled. The Skilling Queenslanders for Work program is a terrific example of what government enabled support looks like. Since it was reinstated by the Palaszczuk government in July 2015, more than 44,600 people across the state have found work, thanks to Skilling Queenslanders for Work. Unlike the member for Broadwater who, as a member of the Newman government, slashed \$288 million from programs like Skilling Queenslanders for Work, the Palaszczuk government has made this program a permanent one with an annual budget of \$80 million to support thousands of people in our state. The success of programs like Skilling Queenslanders for Work is built on the knowledge, connections and support that local organisations can provide.

A month ago, I was honoured to attend the graduation ceremony for a group of young people in Flagstone, Jimboomba and Mount Tamborine region who completed our Get Set for Work program with yourtown, earning a Certificate II in Retail Services with trainers from the National Retail Association, as well as completing responsible service of alcohol and gambling, training and barista skills. What I saw at the graduation ceremony was incredible. I saw a confidence in those young people that I guarantee was not there when they started. I saw young people motivated to pursue career goals and ready to overcome any challenges or setbacks that came their way. Importantly, I saw hope.

Nearly all of the young people graduating had either gained ongoing employment or were pursuing further study. I saw pride and, frankly, relief in their families' faces. I saw pride in the yourtown team who had worked so closely with these young people. That early guidance and encouragement can lead to long-term positive results that will reach beyond the individuals I met that day. Finding a good job and contributing to that work benefits employers and their customers or clients. It builds people's social connections and it provides greater financial security, unlocking greater opportunities. Only our government is committed to working with industry, communities and training and education sectors to develop those effective solutions for local communities.

We recently launched a Growing Workforce Participation Fund pilot in target areas, with funding for programs that allow industry to help employers to hire more diversely. I was fortunate to see one of those programs in my electorate. Energy Skills Queensland have received \$148,000 to run their The Future is Cyber project in Carole Park. That project will support connection and mentoring to young people with anxiety and ASD, and long-term unemployed people with ASD, to provide skills development and employment pathways into the cybersecurity industry.

Yesterday's announcement of extension of free TAFE and free apprenticeships for those aged under 25 has been incredibly well received in all of our electorates. Our free TAFE initiative has seen an incredible increase of 85.5 per cent in new apprenticeships and trainee commencements over the last two financial years. This additional \$21 million is an incredible investment, but it is also part of a record investment that we have put into training and skills in our state budget—\$1.2 billion for Queenslanders—unlike those opposite who slashed funding from TAFE and cut more than 2,100 TAFE jobs. This is pretty personal for me because they actually sacked my husband, who was an engineering lecturer at TAFE at the time, and also sacked me. Every dollar that we invest in skills and training for Queenslanders pays dual dividends: it enriches the lives and employment prospects of students, and it fuels the state's economy through a highly trained workforce. Congratulations, Minister.