




Speech By
Hon. Leanne Linard

MEMBER FOR NUDGEES

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Workforce, Migrants and Refugees

 **Hon. LM LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (10.51 am): About 23 per cent of Queenslanders were born overseas, and we know that many migrants, refugees and asylum seekers are ready to further contribute to their communities. However, many struggle to enter the labour market at a level equivalent to the skills, experience and qualifications they hold.

In 2018, Multicultural Affairs released a research report commissioned by Deloitte Access Economics that found that, of the skilled migrants and refugees coming to live in Queensland in the previous 10 years, 49 per cent were not fully using their skills and experience in the labour force. The figure is closer to 60 per cent for women. Queensland misses out when our newest community members are not able to contribute fully through the workforce.

I am proud to be part of a government focused on good jobs, better services and supporting a strong workforce through the *Good people good jobs: Queensland Workforce Strategy 2022-2032*, launched this week. As part of the strategy, my department will be able to advocate more strongly and improve workforce outcomes for migrants and refugees through funding of more than \$3 million over four years for a new multicultural affairs settlement team. Funding will also be provided to establish a service to help migrants, refugees and international students find work, and a skilled workforce attraction office will be established to help migrants and refugees settle in Queensland.

Currently, my department, the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, and agencies engage with diverse communities to help them access the significant training, employment, and business support opportunities on offer. Of particular note are Toowoomba and Townsville, where there has been great success in increasing access to programs and job-matching opportunities. Through this on-the-ground collaboration, people who have had difficulty gaining employment have overcome language and system barriers to secure jobs.

My department is also supporting South-West Queensland councils through our partnership with Welcoming Cities to strengthen welcome and inclusion in regional areas, including adopting community-led solutions that support new migrants in jobs and identifying migrants who may wish to relocate to regional areas that are struggling to find skilled workforces. For example, John, who was a civil engineer in China, got a job working as an engineer in a South-West Queensland council. Because he did not have work experience or references in Australia, John initially struggled to find work at the level he was qualified for in his profession. He worked as a labourer in Brisbane and in project management to gain the experience required. These barriers were overcome, and the council has reaped the rewards of supporting John's experience. While John had a lot to learn about outback roads and their construction, he already had a solid foundation. This is just one example of how our diversity helps shape our state and continues to strengthen our economy.

My department is also working closely with DESBT to deliver on the outcomes from the Queensland Workforce Summit, which focused on using the skills of all under-utilised cohorts, including people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. The Albanese federal government is also working with us to address workforce participation. I am pleased to see that the focus of the Albanese government's Jobs and Skills Summit this week will be on expanding opportunities for all Australians, addressing skills shortages and addressing migration issues including pathways to permanency.

Last Thursday we held the pinnacle event for Multicultural Queensland Month, the Multicultural Queensland Awards. This year, the minister's multicultural award went to Kerry McQuillan from Randstad. Randstad and Multicultural Australia have partnered to provide a job mentoring program for migrants and refugees that helps participants prepare for employment while pairing them with a culturally trained mentor from some of Queensland's largest companies. Mentors and mentees then work together on resumes, personal brand building, applying for jobs, performing well at interview and preparing for the first day of their job. More than 60 migrants have participated in this program and many have found work.

We know that when communities harness the diversity of the skills and experience of all members the economy benefits and Queensland is the richer for it.