




Speech By
Charis Mullen

MEMBER FOR JORDAN

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Jobs, Skills and Training

 **Mrs MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (2.28 pm): Last week I had the great pleasure of helping to officially open the multicultural jobs forum in Greater Springfield, an initiative of our Springfield Regional Jobs Committee and Multicultural Australia. This forum was all about bringing together local and regional businesses and industry, looking for workers with willing jobseekers who are at times underrepresented in our workforce, those from our multicultural communities.

Jobs, skills and training for our culturally and linguistically diverse communities is an area that is very close to my heart. It could stem from seeing my own father's experience—someone highly skilled and regarded in his field but who could never fully advance as a result of language barriers. I also know that this is an often shared and frustrating experience when you would get into a taxi and start a conversation with the driver only to discover that they had been an engineer or teacher or doctor in their home country, but their skills were not being recognised here in Australia. However, this was before a global pandemic, the pause in international migration and the unprecedented workforce demand that we are now seeing.

Right now we have a problem. Thanks to our very strong economy in Queensland we are seeing more jobs created than there are people to fill them. Our unemployment rate is sitting at 3.8 per cent, which continues to be historically low. At last year's Queensland Workforce Summit we came together to look at a range of strategies needed to tackle the current workforce shortages and to plan for future industry needs in our state. I was asked to chair one of the key sessions of the summit which focused on how we increase the participation of Queenslanders currently underrepresented in our workforce, and we know who they are: First Nations people, people with a disability, women returning to the workforce as well as our migrants and refugees.

The Diverse Queensland Workforce program was introduced in 2021 with \$8.5 million available to assist around 2,500 migrants, refugees and international students under 10 different projects. This program targets work-ready migrants or refugees, including temporary visa holders with the necessary work permits, and international students aged 18 years or over who are unemployed or underemployed. Since launching that program, 83 per cent of participants have gone on to secure ongoing employment. As of 3 March this year more than 700 people have been helped across Queensland. We have also established a multicultural affairs settlement team to support migrants and refugees living in communities across Queensland to enter the local labour market. Only recently, the Queensland government, in partnership with Engineers Australia and Consult Australia launched the *Attracting and retaining engineers from migrant backgrounds: a guide for employers*. Maybe we can get those highly skilled engineers who are driving taxis actually working in their field of expertise and where they are most needed.

This is just a short snapshot of some of the strategies our Palaszczuk government is using to get more people from CALD communities employed. I was so pleased to hear fantastic feedback from the Multicultural Jobs Forum, with jobseekers and employers reporting that official interviews were being locked in. It was great to see the connections being made; the experiences, skills and knowledge being shared; and the amazing opportunities for employment in our region.