




Speech By
Hon. Di Farmer

MEMBER FOR BULIMBA

Record of Proceedings, 23 February 2023

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Workforce Strategy

 **Hon. DE FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (10.11 am): Queensland's economy is going absolutely gangbusters. In January, CoMSEQ named Queensland as the top performer. Our unemployment levels remain low at 3.7 per cent. There are now 224,000 more Queenslanders in work than there were before the pandemic. Projections from Jobs Queensland show we will have created an additional 280,000 jobs by 2025. Queensland is absolutely the place to be.

We are, in fact, so successful that we will have created more jobs than we have people to fill them, which is exactly why almost six months ago now we launched our Good people. Good jobs: Queensland Workforce Strategy 2022-2032, kicking it off with a \$70 million three-year action plan. We are very pleased with the progress that is being made. Just before Christmas last year, we announced joint funding with the federal government of 37,000 Fee Free TAFE places for this year alone, with priority allocated to those courses where we know there is greatest workforce demand, like early childhood education, nursing, construction and IT. Already 11,000 of those places have been taken, and enrolments continue to flow in.

As a result of our significant investment in skills and training in Queensland, we have seen an 86 per cent increase in apprenticeship commencements in the last two years. However, across the nation, there has been an over 35 per cent decline in completions over the last 10 years. We need every single one of our apprentices to complete, and our new train and retain strategy will help to address that, starting with establishing contact with every single apprentice in Queensland so we can gauge the problems. So far, we have made over 90,000 direct contacts, including our staff personally visiting over 1,900 workplaces.

There are around 180,000 people in Queensland who face barriers to employment. Our initiatives aim to link those people with the employers who so desperately need them. For example, we have added three new regional locations to our Diverse Queensland Workforce program and 82 per cent of the participants, all from multicultural backgrounds, have already gained employment. Yesterday I opened the first round of our \$4 million Indigenous Workforce and Skills Development Grant program which will support Indigenous organisations to link training for First Nations people to real jobs in their communities.

Schools play a vital role in determining the career choices our students make. I acknowledge the great support of the Minister for Education in developing our school industry partnerships. We do well in Queensland, with over 55 per cent of all Australian students doing apprenticeships and traineeships in school doing so in our state. However, we have other fantastic school-based programs, including our highly successful Gateway to Industry Schools program to which we have added the hydrogen sector. Up to 40 schools have already been offered the opportunity for their students to create a pathway to jobs in this hugely important industry, meaning potentially at least 2,000 new entrants to the industry.

I look forward to providing further updates to the House on the valuable partnerships being created between industry and schools. This government is committed to creating good jobs, better services and a great lifestyle, and these early trends are testament to that commitment.