

**Question on Notice**  
**No. 592**  
**Asked Tuesday, 10 May 2005**

MS MALE asked the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations (**Mr Barton**):

**QUESTION:**

Will he provide advice on programs which are assisting mature-aged unemployed workers to gain qualifications and re-enter the workforce?

**ANSWER:**

Under this Government, unemployment has fallen to a thirty-year low. Despite this, many mature age jobseekers struggle to compete in today's job market - they face difficulties in re-entering the workforce and have a higher incidence of long-term unemployment.

As part of the Queensland Government's *Breaking the Unemployment Cycle* initiative, the Department of Employment and Training has developed the Experience Pays Participation Strategy to further improve employment and training assistance to mature age jobseekers. A minimum commitment of \$2.3 million each year has been made to assist mature age jobseekers between 2004-05 and 2006-07.

Through the Experience Pays Participation Strategy, the range of assistance to help mature age people back into work has been broadened to include a mix of employment assistance, work placement, government and community traineeships, and training tailored to best meet the individual needs of jobseekers.

One of the many innovative employment projects assisting mature age workers is the Care Skills-Link project at Toowoomba. Challenge Employment and Training has received funding to provide 44 mature age unemployed people with an introduction to working in the aged care industry through a combination of training and work placement within an aged care facility. The first group of highly motivated participants are due to graduate later this month and most of them are expected to find employment with Toowoomba's home care and aged care services.

Further to this, the Queensland Government is also playing an important role in providing high quality training opportunities to increase employment opportunities for mature- aged jobseekers.

Nearly one-third of all students enrolled at TAFE institutes are aged 45 and over. There has been a concerted effort to strategically align training products and services to better meet the needs of mature age learners.

In particular the Department of Employment and Training is undertaking a concerted effort to increase the uptake of recognition of prior learning (RPL) in Queensland. RPL is an important tool in recognising the substantial skills and knowledge that has been acquired by the mature age worker, through work, life experience and self education over many years. The strategies to increase the uptake of RPL have included simplifying RPL processes, undertaking state-wide workshops and projects, and working with key industry groups and training organisations to improve RPL processes and uptake of RPL in Queensland. Mature age jobseekers are an important priority group for this important initiative.