

## Question on Notice

No. 1473

Asked on 28 November 2006

Mr Wendt asked the Minister for Education and Training and Minister for the Arts (Mr Welford) —

### QUESTION:

Will he outline the details and benefits of the *Queensland Skills Plan* and the important changes to the apprenticeship system that will be introduced in January 2007?

### ANSWER:

The *Queensland Skills Plan* is an outcome of the most comprehensive reform of the vocational education and training (VET) system in this State in more than 40 years. It represents more than \$1 billion in investment in Queensland's economic and social prosperity and its benefits are far-reaching, real, and above all, achievable.

Broadly, the *Queensland Skills Plan* is creating the most flexible, modern and innovative training system in Australia to meet the needs of industry in the 21st century and to ensure Queenslanders have the skills and qualifications to get the jobs that industry is creating.

A key element of the *Queensland Skills Plan* is improving the efficiency of VET by strengthening and streamlining the TAFE system, by investing more strongly in the private training market throughout the State and by building partnerships that foster higher levels of industry engagement with, and commitment to, training.

Not only is the Government giving more young Queenslanders the opportunity to acquire sought-after skills, it is also providing greater options for older and existing workers to update their skills or have their experience recognised formally.

The *Queensland Skills Plan* also brings important changes and benefits to the apprenticeship system.

To ease the skills shortages in traditional trades, apprentices will be able to accelerate their training to enable them to become qualified tradespeople in a shorter time. This is consistent with Queensland's commitment to competency-based training.

Moreover, following extensive industry and union consultation, the Training and Employment Recognition Council has endorsed reducing the nominal duration of some apprenticeships from four years to three years. Importantly, there are safeguards in place to ensure this does not compromise the quality or depth of training, but recognises that many of today's young people and mature-age apprentices achieve competency earlier.

The Government has also introduced an early completion incentive payment of \$1000 effective from 1 January 2007 to be paid directly to apprentices in targeted industries who conclude their apprenticeship at least six months prior to the nominal term. Details of eligibility are progressively being communicated to apprentices and their employers.

Travel and accommodation allowances have been increased to assist apprentices get to their off-the-job training.