

Question on Notice
No. 372
Asked Thursday, 9 March 2006

MR CHOI asked the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations and Minister for Sport (**Mr Barton**):

QUESTION:

With reference to the new Queensland Skills Plan, which calls for new models of engagement between industry, Government and employers—

How will this address skill shortages facing many small business operators in Queensland?

ANSWER:

The Queensland Government will establish a Small Business Solutions unit within TAFE Queensland to deliver a range of training services for current and prospective small business owners and operators, in close collaboration with industry and employer organisations.

This unit will develop and offer high quality, flexible programs that meet small business needs for 'anytime, anywhere' training delivery. Its first priority will be developing two programs that will be available from mid 2006 across the TAFE network:

- a program for new and intending business owners and operators providing skills in researching a business idea, understanding the legal side of business, and developing approaches to financing a business
- a program for existing businesses, assisting them to identify their specific skill needs, assess their existing skills and then tailor programs to meet their individual situations.

Establishment of new engagement strategies will also benefit small business operators and workers. These strategies will ensure consideration of a broad range of industry views, including those of smaller, rural and regional employers. These include:

- 23 new skills formation strategies – progressively over the next two years. These strategies bring industry, regions and government together to develop collaborative and co-operative networks to address workforce development needs, foster ownership by industry and encourage greater communication within each sector
- 3 new centres of excellence by July 2007
- 5 Industry skills alliances – including a tourism and hospitality alliance during 2006-07
- 2 Government-Industry Skilling Partnerships by January 2006
- Direct engagement with industry representative organisations – this will involve consulting with existing industry organisations to obtain advice on workforce development and skilling requirements for a range of industries with large numbers of small businesses including retail, security and laundry/dry cleaning
- Annual cross-industry forums around the state.

Some of the new industry strategies will be established at a state-wide level, while others will be locally-specific. For example, in addition to the industry skills formation strategies, five regional skills formation strategies will be established across the state in Central Queensland, North Queensland, South West Queensland, the Western Corridor and Wide Bay. These strategies will address the skilling issues specifically impacting on the region and aim to develop collaborative solutions.

In addition, a range of Queensland Skills Plan reforms aim to better align the training system with the skills needs of industry. These include:

- improving the availability of skilled and qualified workers, including:
 - an additional 17,000 trades training places and 14,000 higher level training places each year by 2010
 - improved skills recognition processes through *Skills First*
 - embedding employability skills in all training programs
- improved coordination, consistency and quality of TAFE training as a result of major reforms to TAFE Queensland including:
 - the establishment of TAFE lead institutes
 - the state-wide Trade and Technician Skills Institute
 - the Australian Resources and Infrastructure Institute of Technology
 - the Southbank Institute of Technology.
- a range of improvements to trade training arrangements including:
 - marketing trades careers in partnership with industry
 - new brokerage arrangements to link employers and apprentices
 - enhanced apprenticeship arrangements to support increased completion rates
 - full implementation of competency-based training
 - new 'expected apprenticeship durations'
 - a review of school-based apprenticeship workplace time
 - improved assessment arrangements
 - revitalised pre-trade programs and more up-front training
 - increased support for workplace-based training
 - a review of group training arrangements.