

Question on Notice
No. 531
Asked on 19 April 2006

MS STONE asked the Minister for Small Business, Information Technology Policy and Multicultural Affairs (MR CUMMINS) —

QUESTION:

How is the Government assisting the ICT industry to encourage women into the industry?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Springwood for her question and for her concern for the challenge of increasing participation of Queensland women in the information and communication technology (ICT) industry.

Australian women are currently under-represented in ICT education and employment, comprising less than 25 per cent of students and 20 per cent of employees respectively. These numbers are having an impact on ICT faculties around Australia and on the performance of Australian industry.

The Queensland Government is acutely aware of the importance of increasing the participation of women in the ICT industry and is taking a number of steps to encourage and support women to participate in this sector. This support is happening across a number of departments and involves several initiatives.

The Government has supported the Women in Technology Scholarships and Awards program since 2001, providing a total of \$56,000 in sponsorship for the awards over that time. TAFE Queensland has also provided \$16,500 in sponsorship since 2004. The awards raise the profile of women in technology, promote ongoing professional development for women and recognise and reward women for outstanding achievement.

The Department of Education and the Arts, through its Smart Classrooms initiative, has released a Girls and ICT Strategy for 2005 to 2008. This strategy aims to increase the participation of girls in ICT initiatives and enrolment in ICT specialty subjects through events, projects, career resources, industry experience programs and an online computer club.

The Office of Small Business within the Department of State Development, Trade and Innovation currently provides a Woman in Business Coaching Scheme, Women in Business Discussion Forums, information and assistance for women in business and Smart Women Workshops which are designed to help women advance their businesses as well as their personal lives. These initiatives are open to women in any industry and women within the ICT industry are encouraged to participate.

The Queensland Government is hosting a National ICT Skills Summit in June 2006. The Summit will build on themes identified in the partIcipaTion Summit held in Sydney in September 2005 and will seek ways to harness the creativity, talents and perspectives of all Australians to ensure they are incorporated into the ongoing creation of new technologies and processes.

These examples demonstrate the Queensland Government's awareness of and commitment to encouraging and increasing the participation of women in the ICT industry as a key strategy to supporting the growth of the industry and the economy.