

Question on Notice
No. 753
Asked on 11 May 2006

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

QUESTION:

With reference to the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics data which show interstate migration is leading Queensland's population boom, which in turn is leading to a skills shortage in Queensland —

What is the Department of State Development hoping to achieve with the Building and Construction Industry Skills Forum, being held in Ipswich in May, which will include construction industry representatives and local schools?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for her question and for her strong support for small business within her electorate. The Beattie Government recognises that small business represents 96.5% of all Queensland businesses and employs around 50% of all private sector workers, and as such, this Government is committed to driving economic growth and innovation, developing business and industry and securing employment opportunities for Queenslanders.

The Queensland Government has a number of initiatives underway to address the skills shortage, which is a problem also confronting Governments across Australia and internationally. These include the recently released Queensland Skills Plan which addresses skills shortages in priority industries. The Plan aims to transform and modernise the Vocational Education and Training system including major changes to TAFE such as improving the way institutes deliver training. Industry and private training providers will be key partners in reforming the current system. The Government is also using skilled migration to tackle the problem of more immediate skills gaps where employers have been unable to recruit locally.

The Building and Construction Industry Skills Forum was originally planned for May 2006 but has been rescheduled for June 2006. Key objectives of the Forum will be to investigate the opportunity to establish a Building and Construction Industry School Partnership Group in the Western Corridor and develop engagement strategies and activities to raise the awareness of career pathways and employment opportunities.

The Forum is an example of how the Government is tackling the skills shortage at the local level. The Forum is the second of six being conducted during 2006 through the Government's Education and Training Reforms for the Future Agenda for the Western Corridor Region. The first of the series, the Manufacturing Industry Forum was held on 9 May 2006 to update stakeholders on the activities and outcomes achieved by the Western Corridor Manufacturing Industry – Schools Partnership Group. Other forums will be conducted for the aviation, food processing, transport and logistics and retail sectors later in the calendar year.

The Western Corridor Manufacturing Industry – Schools Partnership Group is a partnership between the Department of State Development, Trade and Innovation through the Ipswich State Development Centre; Education Queensland; the Department of Employment and Training; and local industry and training providers. The Group had its genesis in the “Ipswich Making Local Futures” forum conducted in 2004 for regional industry and education and training stakeholders under the Queensland Government’s Manufacturing Strategy – “Making Queensland’s Future”. The forum was concerned with identifying and implementing local solutions for manufacturing skills shortages.

The key objective of the Group is to foster skills development and career pathways in the manufacturing industry by developing strategies to overcome skills shortages and provide careers for young people in industry. This objective is strongly linked with the Queensland Government’s Smart State agenda including manufacturing skills development programs offered by the Department of State Development, Trade and Innovation; Education and Training Reforms for the Future being driven by Education Queensland; and the Queensland Skills Plan which is being driven by the Department of Employment and Training.

Additional information about Queensland Government initiatives to educate young people about manufacturing careers and to showcase the modern and exciting careers on offer can be found online on the Create It, Make It, Live It website (www.createitmakeitliveit.qld.gov.au).