

Question on Notice
No. 341
Asked on Wednesday, 7 March 2007

MR WEIGHTMAN ASKED THE MINISTER FOR STATE DEVELOPMENT, EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS (MR MICKEL)—

QUESTION:

Will he advise what the Government is doing to assist people disadvantaged by mental illness to become work ready?

ANSWER:

The Queensland Government recognises that people with a disability face multiple barriers to finding employment, including employers' attitudes. The *Skilling Queenslanders for Work* initiative has a Workability strategy which seeks to assist people with a disability into work. Under this strategy, a number of employment programs are being funded to provide employment assistance to people with a disability which is tailored to their individual need.

The Department of Employment and Industrial Relations is contributing to the Queensland Government's Implementation Plan on Mental Health through an initiative to increase the ability of people with a mental illness to participate in employment and training.

This is in response to the National Action Plan on Mental Health endorsed on 14 July 2006 by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). The Plan provides a strategic framework that emphasises coordination and collaboration between government, private and non-government providers in order to deliver a more seamless and connected care system, so that people with mental illness are able to participate in the community

Under *Skilling Queenslanders for Work*, \$5 million will be provided to the non-government sector to provide job and training opportunities to people with a mental illness who experience difficulties in entering the job market. Funding will initially be provided to community and public sector organisations to provide job search assistance and training and/or employment for three to six months on projects that will enhance their skills development and future employment prospects. Approximately \$1 million has been directed towards projects during 2006-07 to assist 130 people with a mental illness. From 2007-08 onwards, it is proposed that about 100 people will be assisted each year for the following four years.

The aims of projects are to:

- provide paid work placements and training to jobseekers who face disadvantage in gaining employment due to mental health issues
- assist participants to gain ongoing employment on completion of the program
- build the capacity of community based organisations to employ mental health consumers and deal appropriately with mental health issues in the workplace.

- educate prospective employers regarding the capabilities of people with a mental illness or psychiatric disability, decreasing stigma and increasing access to employment
- provide employment opportunities for people with a mental illness or psychiatric disability in the geographical area where they live or access daily.