

## QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 1079

asked on 17 June 2011

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**MR SHINE** ASKED THE MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT, SKILLS AND MINING (MR HINCHLIFFE)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister explain how provisions in the Budget will enhance employment opportunities for those unemployed or disadvantaged in Toowoomba?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for his question and his concern for unemployed constituents.

The Bligh Government remains committed to supporting local job creation and providing assistance to marginalised jobseekers, as we have done for the past 12 years. In the 2011-12 Budget, we will invest a further \$104.5 million into the highly successful *Skilling Queenslanders for Work* initiative that will see around 24,000 jobseekers assisted state-wide.

*Skilling Queenslanders for Work* is characterised by a number of targeted prevention and early intervention labour market programs that have the flexibility to be relevant to the changing needs of the job market. Vital to increasing workforce participation is the ability of the initiative to continue to ensure alternative employment and training pathways to build work readiness skills.

In the Toowoomba region, \$12.1 million has been invested since 1 July 2007 under the initiative providing customised employment and training assistance to 3,209 local jobseekers and low-skilled workers.

The *Skilling Queenslanders for Work* initiative encompasses Indigenous Employment programs, the joint Federal-State Government Productivity Places Program and the Community Literacy Program and can be suitable for people who:

- need / want a bit of work experience prior to commencing a traineeship (eg. First Start);
- wish to gain some accreditation towards a qualification eg. Cert I or II;
- need extra support and basic skills training prior to entering the workforce (eg. Participate in Prosperity); or
- are at risk from disengaging from the education system and workforce (eg. Get Set for Work).

Jobseekers from Toowoomba who participate in *Skilling Queenslanders for Work* will continue to have the opportunity to gain a mix of training from skills sets to full qualifications, vocational skills, literacy training, job preparation and employment opportunities.

Further information about the *Skilling Queenslanders for Work* initiative can be found online at <http://www.employment.qld.gov.au/programs/sqw/index.htm> .

Skilling Queenslanders for Work also encompasses the Green Army which, as the Member is aware, has evolved to make up an integral part of the Government's \$83 million *2011 Queensland Natural Disasters Jobs and Skills Package*.

The *2011 Queensland Natural Disasters Jobs and Skills Package*, being delivered by Skills Queensland in conjunction with the Federal Government, aims to assist approximately 10,000 Queenslanders in recovery efforts. Those being assisted include jobseekers, apprentices and trainees, existing employees, businesses, industry and communities.

Already, \$31 million has been invested in strategies that will assist 2,719 Queenslanders, including \$1.2 million in Toowoomba to assist 76 local people affected by the floods.

It is important that we address the social and economic impacts facing communities like Toowoomba throughout the recovery and rebuilding phase. Under the Package, Toowoomba Regional Council (Council) has been funded \$130,000 to employ a Jobs and Skills Development Officer (JSDO). The JSDO will support Council planning at the local level and identify skills and employment opportunities while supporting specific workforce development strategies aligned to the needs of affected industries.

I understand Toowoomba Regional Council will also be employing seven additional apprentices in skill shortage areas to support the local rebuilding effort and I congratulate Council on their support and initiative in this regard.

The Green Army is on the ground in Toowoomba providing jobs to 22 local jobseekers involved in flood recovery work. There are also two National Green Jobs Corps projects planned for Toowoomba with 30 available places for local displaced young people aged 17 to 24 years.

Funding under the Package has also been directed towards the Queensland Rural Industry Training Council to deliver relevant industry skills sets to assist in the recovery operation, including up-skilling displaced workers and mentoring small businesses through the rebuilding phase. Around 70,000 training hours will be delivered until December 2011 to a target of 350 participants. Regions identified for delivery of this program include the Darling Downs and South West Queensland.

A Jobs and Skills Package Hotline - 1800 773 048, has been established as a first point of contact in relation to these initiatives and further information can also be found on the Skills Queensland website at: [www.skills.qld.gov.au/disasterpackage](http://www.skills.qld.gov.au/disasterpackage).

These initiatives are all part of the Bligh Government's ongoing commitment to increase opportunities for Queensland jobseekers to find work and training, in tough times and in preparation for the growing workforce prospects expected over the coming years.