

**Question on Notice
No. 109
Asked on 8 March 2011**

MS Male asked the Minister for Government Services, Building Industry and Information and Communication Technology
(MR FINN)-

QUESTION:

What is the Government doing to encourage more women to become apprentices?

ANSWER:

The Bligh Government wants all Queensland women to have real opportunities to access the benefits and prospects offered by traditionally male-dominated careers and industries.

We also want Queensland to benefit from the full extent of our female talent. We want our most talented people - male and female - working in some of our state's most vital and most promising industries, building our economy and taking Queensland into the future.

Many careers in mining, construction, science, engineering and technology are traditionally considered 'men's work'. These careers can be exciting, challenging, rewarding, and often well remunerated. However, research indicates women continue to be under-represented in these industries at all levels, including trades and professional levels.

Women in Hard Hats is a Queensland Government Office of Women initiative which encourages women into non-traditional employment in the traditionally male-dominated mining, construction, science, engineering and technology (also known as 'hard hat') industries.

QBuild is one of this Government's largest employers of building trade apprentices and is proud to offer a range of dynamic and challenging career opportunities for the right people.

QBuild is committed to attracting, retaining and developing employees irrespective of age of gender have been identified as one of these groups.

QBuild actively participates with various stakeholders, including the Department of Communities and the Office of Women, to assist in identifying ways to increase female participation in the building industry and develop ongoing networks and employment avenues for women.

In 1992, QBuild employed its first female apprentices. One as an apprentice stonemason and the other as an apprentice wood machinist. Since then, and including the 2011 intake, 69 women will have undertaken apprenticeships and traineeships in the following trades: wood machining; stonemasonry; sign writing; polishing; carpentry; painting; plumbing; electrical; fitting; joining; school-based carpentry; horticulture trainees; and construction worker trainees.

During the QBuild 2009 apprentice intake, 118 applications for apprenticeships were received from females and for the 2011 intake, the number of applications received from women increased to 251 applications. In this year's intake, 11 women were successful in obtaining an apprenticeship.

Each year QBuild hosts a 'Women in Construction' forum for its female apprentices and field staff. QBuild invites a variety of guest speakers from both the public sector and private sector and uses this forum to promote career paths for women in the construction industry and encourage the participation and retention of women in a male dominated industry.

By working with the Department of Communities, QBuild has been able to employ six young, Indigenous women on Palm Island in a pilot program 'Indigenous Women in Hard Hats'. The program was specifically created to employ Indigenous females in the construction industry.

My Parliamentary colleague, Minister Struthers is responsible for *Women in Hard Hats* a flagship initiative for the Office for Women which incorporates three key themes of attraction, skilling and best practice and retention.

The purpose of *Women in Hard Hats* is to support women, girls, parents, teachers, employers and industry groups to break down the multiple barriers to women's participation in non-traditional fields such as mining, construction, science, engineering, technology, and transport and logistics.

Women in Hard Hats works to both promote non-traditional employment to women and girls as viable career options and develop pathway and skilling programs in collaboration with other government agencies, women's networks and industry bodies.

Women in Hard Hats promotes best practice in non-traditional industries to ensure the retention of women. *Women in Hard Hats* provides annual sponsorships to awards programs that support great industry-led initiatives, and also partners with industry bodies, employers and other government agencies on significant projects, such as creating mentoring programs, topical forums and gender friendly workplaces, to enable women to continue on non-traditional career trajectories.

Further to the above initiatives, I am also aware that my Parliamentary colleague, Minister Hinchliffe, is supporting an initiative through the Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union (CEPU) - Plumbing Division to increase the number of female apprentices in the plumbing industry.

Under this initiative, the Department of Education and Training will allocate a total of \$300,000 (excluding GST) over six years to enable the:

- recruitment of approximately 20 women as plumbing apprentices
- coordination of blue card training for the apprentices before commencing placement with their employer
- coordination of awareness and assertiveness training for the apprentices prior to placement with their employer and on an annual basis for the term of their apprenticeships
- facilitation of a two day networking and advisory meeting each year for the apprentices
- provision of regular mentoring and support visits to each apprentice in both their workplace and TAFE Institute during the term of their apprenticeship.

To date, 16 female plumbing apprentices are engaged in the program which commenced in the 2006-07 financial year.