

Question on Notice

No. 1188

Asked on 3 August 2011

Mr Wettenhall asked the Minister for Employment, Skills and Mining (Mr Hinchliffe) —

QUESTION: Will the Minister advise the House how the Queensland Government monitors and assesses the current and future skills requirements for Far North Queensland and what programs are in place to support the training and skills needs of the region?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for his question and ongoing advocacy on behalf of businesses and training providers in the electorate of Barron River and across the Far North Queensland region.

The Bligh Government recognises that meeting the skill needs of Queensland is a shared responsibility of Government and industry. To this end, we have established Skills Queensland, an industry-led statutory authority to engage with industry and facilitate a shared leadership role.

Through its industry-led board and broad based industry reference group, Skills Queensland is now working with industry to plan for its future workforce. This work builds on a number of existing State Government initiatives in the Far North Queensland region including:

The Health and Community Services Workforce Council

The Council, a member of a network of cross-government agencies service providers and local organisations, is currently looking at the workforce issues and skilling needs of the community in Cairns in relation to the health and social services industries.

Indigenous skills and training programs (Department of Education and Training)

- Cape York Employment and Training Strategy – addresses training needs of Cape York communities; and
- Training Initiative for Indigenous Adults in Regional and Remote communities – supports training and skills development in remote indigenous communities.

User Choice program

Public funding is provided for the delivery of accredited, entry-level training to apprentices and trainees. Over \$11 million in User Choice training was delivered to apprentices and trainees employed in the Far North Queensland region in 2010–11.

Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE

The Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE has eight campuses servicing the Far North Queensland region. In the last financial year, over \$20 million in public funding was allocated to this TAFE for delivery of key skilling priorities across the region.

Further, a total of \$932,000 was awarded across both public and private registered training providers to deliver responsive training and sustainable employment outcomes for Indigenous people in Cape York communities.

The Department of Education and Training has also developed links with Local Employment Coordinators and Employment Service Providers enabling them to apply directly to the Department for the allocation of job seeker training places where qualification and location gaps exist.

Importantly, the Far North Queensland office of the Department of Education and Training positions itself as the primary point of industry engagement and ensures the nuances of the local economy and employment market are well represented in advice provided to Skills Queensland.

Skills Queensland will capitalise on regional networks already created through the above initiatives and will further interact with industry through mechanisms such as:

Industry Skills Bodies networks

Industry Skills Bodies (ISBs) represent priority sectors across Queensland. Each ISB provides an annual report to Skills Queensland which outlines the skills and labour needs for their industry. This intelligence will inform Skills Queensland's annual *Skills and Workforce Development Investment Plan* which will make recommendations to achieve a closer alignment between Government investment and the needs of regional industry.

Skills Formation Strategy networks

Skills Queensland has established the Far North Queensland Mining and Support Services Skills Formation Strategy, to work towards addressing issues affecting the development and retention of a productive workforce in the face of local mining activity.

Gateway to Industry Schools Program

The Gateway to Industry Schools Program for Agribusiness is currently operating in four schools in Far North Queensland. The program has proven to be a valuable workforce attraction strategy for industry by providing opportunities for students to gain practical industry experience. This experience assists students to develop networks and make informed choices about their future career opportunities.

Strategic Investment Fund

Skills Queensland awarded the Queensland Tourism Industry Council approximately \$120,000 under the Strategic Investment Fund (SIF) for the development of learning resources and delivery of training for Tour Guides in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

The SIF will provide up to \$50 million in funding per year to industry and enterprises contributing like for like, to shape the nature of training strategies implemented by industry. Through this initiative, Skills Queensland will partner with key enterprises, industry sectors and regional supply chains to address priority skills needs and local demand for skilled labour in areas that are critical to the continued development of Queensland's economy.

Further information on the SIF, including how to apply, is available online at www.skills.qld.gov.au .

Natural Disasters Jobs and Skills Package

Finally, under the Skills Queensland led \$83 million Natural Disasters Jobs and Skills Package, over \$500,000 has been committed to support the employment of Jobs and Skills Development Officers (JSDOs) across the State, including in North and Far North Queensland. The JSDOs are working with community, industry and regional councils in the recovery and re-building effort. I am confident these positions will foster long lasting local relationships between all levels of Government and across industry networks adding to the economic strength of regions such as Far North Queensland in the future.