

Question on Notice

No. 703

Asked on 12 May 2011

Ms Stone asked the Minister for Employment, Skills and Mines (Mr Hinchcliffe) —

QUESTION:

How will the federal budget assist in skilling up Queenslanders?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for her question.

Training and participation reforms are a key feature of the Commonwealth Budget which includes a six year, \$3 billion training package, "*Building Australia's Future Workforce*".

These reforms reflect the Commonwealth's commitment to ensuring all Australians have the opportunity to participate in education and training to gain the qualifications and skills for sustainable employment. It is pleasing to see that the Commonwealth's commitment is consistent with the Bligh Government's *Toward Q2: Tomorrow's Queensland* target to see 3 out of 4 Queenslanders hold trade, training or tertiary qualifications by 2020.

A key feature of the Commonwealth funding package is a \$558 million National Workforce Development fund, incorporating \$200 million from the already established Critical Skills Investment Fund, to deliver 130,000 training places across Australia over four years.

Regional Universities will receive a loading boost of \$109 million across four years, to alleviate higher costs of delivering education in regional areas and the budget also includes \$500 million for a Regional Priorities Round of the Education Investment Fund. These funding commitments will give students, staff and researchers in regional Australia access to world-class teaching, training and research facilities.

In addition to these training initiatives, the Budget will deliver \$425 million in bonuses for excellence in teaching and \$18 million to provide new pathways into teaching careers. \$200 million is budgeted for more school facilities and programs for disabled students.

Further, the Commonwealth budget recognises the need for an industry-led approach to skills development and training. The Queensland Government, through Skills Queensland, is well placed to use any new Commonwealth funding to build on the strong industry partnerships already in place in our State. Skills Queensland is responsible for leading Queensland's skills development strategies across the labour market, including vocational education and training (VET), VET in schools, employment programs, higher education and skilled migration.

Skills Queensland will play a strong role in driving reforms to the vocational education and training sector through the renegotiation with the Commonwealth of the National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development and the introduction of a new National Partnership, as well as assisting Queensland industries and businesses to access new funds.

The Commonwealth Budget also includes a number of positive apprenticeship support initiatives as part of its *Building Australia's Future Workforce* package including:

- \$101 million for the Apprenticeship Mentoring package to enhance mentoring, recruitment and support services for 40,000 apprentices and trainees across the country;

- \$100 million to help apprentices gain qualifications sooner – this funding creates an opportunity to modernise wage arrangements for apprentices and is seen as a key driver to increase apprenticeship commencement and completion level throughout Australia;
- \$19.7 million through the Australian Apprenticeship Access Program to help vulnerable job seekers develop the skills needed to succeed in an apprenticeship;
- \$50.7 million to establish the Indigenous Youth Careers Pathways providing school-based traineeships, mentoring and work experience placements;
- \$143 million over four years to fund approximately 30,000 training places under the language, literacy and numeracy program to benefit disadvantaged learners

The Queensland Government has led the way on many key apprenticeship initiatives and we've made significant achievements in modernising apprenticeships and ensuring that apprentices are able to gain qualifications sooner in our State. Queensland has a strong record in apprenticeship completions and school-based apprenticeships and traineeships and the initiatives announced in the Federal Budget have the potential to build on services already supporting our apprentices and trainees.

Together with the \$8.7 billion for education and training announced today in the State Government budget, the new Commonwealth funding will help us to ensure that all Queenslanders have access to quality training and the support needed to achieve trade, training and tertiary qualifications across the State.

The Bligh Government is committed to working with the Commonwealth, the community and industry to achieve our Q2 targets and we will be working hard to ensure that Queensland receives its fair share of the funding under the new *Building Australia's Future Workforce* training package.