

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 770

asked on 24 May 2011

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

QUESTION:

What is the government currently doing to assist farming communities maintain staff in areas where resource projects are conducting exploration or are fully operational?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for his question.

The Bligh Government is committed to ensuring Queensland maintains a localised and skilled workforce ready to harness the opportunities generated by the resource boom, whilst protecting the environment and liveability that residents in regional centres in Queensland love.

We have moved quickly to address challenges associated with the resources boom, to ensure Queensland is not faced with labour and skill shortages that could threaten the farming sector and overall Queensland's future economic prosperity. By building stronger regions, growth and economic opportunities can be shared throughout Queensland. To this end, our Government has introduced a range of initiatives including:

- The Sustainable Resource Communities Policy – a key planning measure backed by \$100 million to provide community infrastructure including trade skills training for young people, road safety improvements, health, housing, youth, aged care, leisure and community safety facilities;
- Local Leadership Groups – established under the Sustainable Resource Communities Policy to bring together community, industry and government to develop local solutions to local issues like ensuring sufficient skilled labour for local agriculture industries;
- The Surat Basin Future Directions Statement – includes the Surat Basin Workforce Development Plan with strategies aimed at assisting in the attraction and retention of people to the region, particularly in the agriculture sector as the second largest employer in the region;
- The *Skilling Queenslanders for Work* initiative – recognising and breaking down barriers that can prevent people, such as long-term unemployed or disadvantaged jobseekers, from undertaking training and ultimately employment; through an annual investment of \$104.5 million to assist approximately 24,000 participants throughout Queensland.

- Skills Queensland – established at the end of 2010, Queensland's new independent skills commission is working with industry to identify and address skills needs for all sectors right across our State;
- Skills Formation Strategies – providing a framework for industries and communities to work with each other, Skills Queensland, the Queensland Government and other relevant stakeholders to analyse and address current and future workforce issues that may affect their future viability;
- Expansion of the Agribusiness Gateway Schools project – in partnership with Skills Queensland; and
- The *2011 Queensland Natural Disasters Jobs and Skills Package* (JSP) – led by Skills Queensland, the JSP demonstrates the Bligh Government's commitment to the continued development of a skilled workforce Statewide and to building Queensland back better after the damage caused by recent natural disasters.