

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 891

Asked on 26 May 2011

MR HOPPER asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Regional Economies (MR MULHERIN)–

QUESTION:

As rural and regional areas have seen increases in mining and CSG projects over the past five years, and as this has impacted upon the availability of staff to work in local businesses and agricultural enterprises, how will the department resolve this problem?

ANSWER:

The Queensland Government is committed to ensuring Queensland maintains a localised and skilled workforce, as communities respond to growth in resource sectors.

The Queensland Government is determined to harness the opportunities generated by the resource boom, whilst protecting the environment and liveability of residents in regional centres. We have already delivered some important policy directions and reforms to help shape the future of our regions.

In 2008, the Queensland Government announced the Sustainable Resource Communities Policy as one of the key planning measures to help manage the unintended consequences of rapid growth associated with the resources boom. This policy was 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 policy bring together the sectors of community, industry and government to develop local solutions to local issues, including sufficient skilled labour for local industries including agriculture.

The Surat Basin Future Directions Statement, launched in March 2010, is another policy which has delivered significant outcomes for resource communities in the Surat Basin. The traditionally strong agriculture sector is the second largest employer in the region, accounting for 11.3 per cent of jobs. This sector remains a high priority and the Government will continue to work with stakeholders to ensure that the workforce development needs of the industry are met.

Under an agreement with Skills Queensland, the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI) provides Skills Queensland with an annual update on the workforce development needs of the primary industries sector. This information is utilised to inform investment into training for agricultural education and training.

In partnership with Skills Queensland, DEEDI has also assisted in the expansion of the Agribusiness Gateway Schools project into 16 schools across Queensland.

Also in partnership with Skills Queensland, DEEDI has assisted industry by developing Skills Formation Strategies in response to skilling needs in the Atherton Tablelands, aquaculture and seafood industries and the agricultural industry around Mackay and Bundaberg. These strategies are designed to assist industry to plan its workforce needs.

In April 2010 I announced reforms to the Australian Agricultural College Corporation (AACC) that position the Corporation as the provider of choice in agricultural training. I am pleased to advise the Corporation is well on the way to implementing these comprehensive reforms. The Corporation is in partnership with Education Queensland in delivering training to school students at Dalby. AACC has established delivery sites at Cunnamulla, Bundaberg, Mackay and Gatton that will enable the Corporation to increase offerings and in partnership with schools and the Tertiary Education sector to develop the future pathways into industry.