

**Question on Notice
No. 340
Asked on 7 May 2014**

MR JUDGE asked the Premier (MR NEWMAN)—

With reference to the Federal Government's commitment to increase age pensions access to 70 years meaning many Australians and Queenslanders will have to work well into their senior years —

Will the Premier explain what measures if any, are now being taken to address age discrimination and equip people over 50 years of age in skilling and finding physically appropriate work?

ANSWER:

This Government's significant reforms to vocational education and training (VET), which are detailed in the five-year action plan titled, *Great skills. Real opportunities.*, recognise that demand for skills in occupations in areas of growth will continue to increase and higher-skilled employees of all ages will be sought by employers.

Implementation of this plan has already begun and is delivering actions whereby the Government's training investment is being directed toward priority courses that address the skills needed by employers today, and in the future.

Mature-aged workers and job seekers are benefitting from *Great skills. Real opportunities.* Mature-aged people who have not completed a Certificate III level or higher qualification, are likely to be eligible to undertake government subsidised training under the Certificate 3 Guarantee or the Community Learning program, which are delivered under *Great skills. Real opportunities.* The Government has not applied an upper age limit for participants on these programs. The intention of these programs is to skill any eligible Queenslanders wishing to gain a qualification that is in demand by employers.

An inclusive VET system will help increase participation in VET and deliver better outcomes for all participants. *Great skills. Real opportunities.* commits to ensuring learners with diverse needs receive assistance to make the most of their training opportunities. This includes mature-aged learners, some of whom may have had a poor experience of formal training and may not have been in a classroom for decades. All registered training organisations delivering nationally recognised training under the Certificate 3 Guarantee and Community Learning are required to meet clear service expectations and provide evidence of inclusive practice as a core business element to ensure they accommodate and support the diversity of learners. Training that improves an individual's skills, employment prospects and social inclusion is a priority for this Government.

The Member may be interested to know that the unemployment rate for Queenslanders aged 45 years and over is 3.8 per cent¹. However, while many mature-aged workers who actively look for work are finding work, the Government does recognise that there is a significant cohort of older people who have been discouraged from participating in the labour force.

¹ 12 months average to March 2014

The Member may also be aware of the range of regulatory frameworks and legislative arrangements such as anti-discrimination and industrial relations legislation that protect the rights of all workers, including mature-aged employees and jobseekers.

The Queensland Government recognises that as well as legislation, a multi-faceted approach is needed to change employer attitudes to recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce, including mature-aged workers. One thing is clear, inclusive workplaces are necessary if employers are to meet current and future skills and labour shortages, particularly in the context of an ageing labour force.

The Member will note that there are a number of VET initiatives at the Federal level that may also provide mature-aged people with continuing opportunities to develop their skills as they grow older. Further, the Federal Government is acting to incentivise businesses to provide more job opportunities to people over 50 years of age. It was announced in the Federal Budget that there would be incentives available to employers who hire mature-aged workers, with businesses that take on a person aged over 50 eligible to receive a subsidy of up to \$10,000 over two years.

The Queensland Government is also supportive of industry led initiatives which promote recruitment and retention for all jobseekers and employees, including mature-aged workers.