

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 1184

asked on 18 September 2018

MR S KNUTH ASKED THE MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT AND SMALL BUSINESS AND MINISTER FOR TRAINING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (HON S FENTIMAN)—

QUESTION: With reference to the shortage of qualified tradies in Australia, in particular Queensland, with many firms forced to look overseas for skilled workers— Will the Minister advise of (a) the incentives offered to businesses to take on apprenticeships and (b) other initiatives the government is undertaking to fix this issue?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Hill for his question.

Queensland is leading the nation in new apprenticeship commencements as more people are recognising the lifelong benefits and secure work that result from learning a trade.

The Queensland Government remains committed to ensuring Queenslanders have access to quality, supportive and affordable training to start on a pathway to a brighter future that meets the ongoing needs of both individuals and employers.

In 2018–2019, \$777.9 million is being allocated to help Queenslanders gain the skills needed to obtain and keep a job through subsidised training and skills development opportunities available under the *Annual VET Investment Plan* (the Plan).

In response to part (a) of the member's question, the Palaszczuk Government's initiatives and programs that are helping Queensland lead the nation in new apprenticeships include incentives for businesses, such as the Advancing Apprentices Fund of up to \$1 million, to partner with industry and employers to continue to promote and highlight the benefits of the apprenticeship pathway.

After conducting a series of roundtables with industry, employers and apprentices to help design the Fund, we are now in the process of considering proposals for industry and regionally specific campaigns to encourage the take-up of apprenticeships to ensure we have the skilled workforce Queensland needs. We plan to have the first campaigns start by the end of 2018.

As at 4 October 2018, our \$369 million Back to Work package has provided funding of \$114.8 million to eligible Queensland businesses. More than 3900 apprentices and trainees have been supported, representing 24% of total employees in the Back to Work program.

We doubled the payroll tax rebate for apprentices and trainees to make it more affordable for employers to hire an apprentice or trainee. This incentive will deliver up to \$45 million in payroll tax rebates for employers of apprentices and trainees. As at 13 August 2018, 4920 businesses have had their payroll tax liability reduced, representing a net cost saving to industry of \$60,782,000.

To further encourage employers to hire apprentices, we are driving down the cost of doing business through the WorkCover Queensland's premium and benefits package. Businesses hiring apprentices are benefiting greatly, as they will not pay a cent for WorkCover Premiums on apprentices they hire. So far this financial year, 8741 business have saved \$10.3 million in WorkCover premiums. This is in addition to \$16.8 million in savings last financial year.

In addition, \$3.25 million of funding under the 2018–19 Queensland Group Training Program creates additional apprenticeship opportunities for apprentices employed through group training organisations.

In response to part (b) of the member's question, \$202 million in User Choice funding for apprentices and trainees in 2018–19, which supports over 60,000 Queenslanders in apprenticeships and traineeships – including Free tafe for eligible Year 12 graduates in high priority areas, school-based apprenticeships and traineeships and complementary trade training programs.

While students in the electorate of Hill can attend TAFE campuses across Queensland, two of the 160 courses are on offer locally at both Innisfail and Atherton campuses in priority subject areas of Community Services and Early Childhood Education and Care.

High School students can also undertake school-based apprenticeships and traineeships (SATs) while studying for their senior certificate, undertaking a training qualification with a supervising registered training organisation. The workplace skills and confidence students gain during their SAT provide a solid foundation for any career.

The *Skilling Queenslanders for Work* (SQW) initiative has been boosted and extended to a total of \$420 million over six years to provide nationally recognised training, skills development and employment opportunities to disadvantaged Queenslanders, including increasing traineeships through the Work Start Incentives, First Start and Work Skills Traineeships programs – including a new \$20,000 youth boost for employers putting a trainee or apprentice on who participated in a SQW project.

From 1 September 2017, the Queensland Building and Construction Training Policy ensures 15% of the total labour hours on major building and construction projects are undertaken by apprentices and trainees. The Government has applied this Training Policy to the \$85 million Advancing Our Training Infrastructure (AOTI) program that is redeveloping and expanding six high-need TAFE facilities in order to increase apprenticeship opportunities.