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95% APPRENTICE INCREASE BOOSTS IPSWICH SKILLS

New figures out today show the Ipswich region is playing a vital role in making Queensland the nation's powerhouse in tackling skill shortages, with a 95 per cent rise in apprenticeships since the Beattie Government came to office in 1998, Member for Ipswich Rachel Nolan said today.

Ms Nolan said there had also been a 59 per cent increase in traineeships in the Ipswich region.

She said the latest count of apprentices and trainees in training statewide of 80,800 was an all-time record high.

"The Ipswich region's total is 3572 in training," she said.

She said Queensland's growth had produced 24 successive quarters of year-on-year record numbers of apprentices and trainees in training.

"In contrast, the Australian figure has declined year-on-year or remained static for the last seven quarters," she said.

"When the Beattie Government came to office there were 23,408 apprentices and 22,740 trainees in training in Queensland. Currently there are 40,472 apprentices in training, a rise of 72.9 per cent, and 39,783 trainees, an increase of 74.8 per cent, since June 1998.

"In 1998 in the Ipswich region there were 723 apprentices and 1358 trainees in training. The current Ipswich region total is 1407 apprentices and 2165 trainees."

Ms Nolan credited Queensland's strong record in skills development to the early priority given by the Beattie Government to increasing apprenticeships and traineeships, and improving the vocational education and training system.

"From the beginning the Government understood that if the state economy was to reach its full potential it would need the skilled workers required by industry," she said.

"We recognised that skill shortages were beginning to emerge and responded with record investment in vocational education and training, with an emphasis on skills relevant to particular regions.

“That foresight is now paying dividends in the current tight labour market.”

Building on the earlier focus the Premier and Employment and Training Minister Mr Barton this year announced the groundbreaking \$1 billion *Queensland Skills Plan* to upgrade the state’s vocational education and training system to meet the skill needs of the 21st century.

The plan includes the development of regional Skills Formation Strategies.

The 2006-07 State Budget allocated an all-time record \$979 million for jobs and training in 2006-07 to begin to implement the *Queensland Skills Plan*.

“The Budget provided a major increase in funding for apprentices and trainees in industries facing skills shortages,” Ms Nolan said.

“It lifted funding to train apprentices and trainees over the four-year period from 2006-07 to 2009-10 by \$170 million, or 39.5 per cent.

“A record \$600 million will be available to train apprentice and trainees over the next four years, specifically in industries with skills shortages.”

Ms Nolan said the Government was anticipating continuing record growth in apprenticeships and traineeships, with an estimated 58,000 new commencements in 2006-07.

“The Queensland Government pays for the training of all apprentices in the state,” she said.

Ms Nolan said Queensland was also leading Australian in school-based apprenticeships and traineeships with 39 per cent of all commencements in 2005-06.

“We have strongly supported school-based apprentices and trainees as the way of the future since we came to office,” she said.

“In June 1998 there were 427 school-based apprentices and trainees in training. By June 2006 this had multiplied to 7742—an increase of more than 1700 per cent—and we expect this tremendous growth to continue.

“The school-based figure for the Ipswich region is 406—up from just 26 in 1998.

“The latest Budget included a \$4000 incentive for private sector employers across the state who offered additional school-based apprenticeships or traineeships in industries with skills shortages.

“This payment will provide an additional incentive to take on school-based apprentices or trainees in the areas which really count—industries with skills shortages.”