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Queensland skills plan 2008



Foreword

Queensland's strong economy and record levels of investment in the state's infrastructure are expected to fuel demand for skilled labour for quite some time.

Over the last five years, Queensland has recorded the strongest annual jobs growth of any state except Western Australia while Queensland's unemployment rate has remained below the national average since July 2004.

To sustain this growth and continue to meet the skills needs of business and industry, the Smart State must continue to build not only the skills of our workforce, but its capacity as well.

In 2006, the release of the *Queensland Skills Plan* marked the most significant overhaul of the state's vocational education and training system in 40 years.

Since its launch, our Government has been working alongside industry and employers to address skill shortages and reforms to enhance the VET system's capacity and responsiveness.

Significant progress has been made to secure Queensland's future.

To ensure the state maintains a comprehensive response to current and future labour market challenges in planning for the future, our Government has realigned the directions of the *Queensland Skills Plan*.

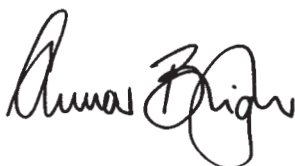
The *Queensland Skills Plan 2008* contains short and longer term measures to alleviate skill shortages at all occupational levels, including the professions and skilled occupations critical to the state's growth such as engineering, construction and health.

Queensland's long term economic growth depends on the skills of its existing workforce, which must be recognised and developed to meet emerging needs.

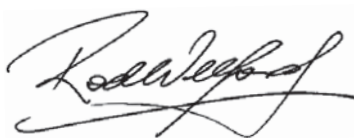
Access to quality training needs to be a priority, particularly for those wishing to re-enter the labour market, marginalised and underutilised workers, and for older workers wishing to upgrade their skills.

Our Government is planning for the future and will continue to share the responsibility of addressing skills shortages through strong partnerships with business and industry.

It is only through these partnerships that the challenges of economic growth will be met.



Anna Bligh MP
Premier of Queensland



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Introduction

More than ever, Queensland's continuing economic strength depends on the state's workforce having the skills to meet the dynamic needs of business and industry.

The *Queensland Skills Plan 2008* has been developed in response to the challenges and opportunities posed by a strong and dynamic economy and labour market. It draws on a review of the *Queensland Skills Plan*, an analysis of the labour market and advice from stakeholders on opportunities to better meet the state's workforce needs.

The *Queensland Skills Plan*, the most significant overhaul of the state's vocational education and training (VET) sector in 40 years, was launched in March 2006. It followed detailed research and statewide industry and community consultation.

Since then there has been significant progress. Additional trade training places have been provided to address skill shortages and reforms have enhanced the VET system's capacity and responsiveness.

New challenges have arisen from the continuing strength of the Queensland economy and labour market. It is clear that we need to give greater attention to the impacts of an ageing workforce and the labour shortages emerging across a number of industries and regions. A stronger focus is also required on building workforce skills in priority professions that are crucial to the state's continued economic growth.

The *Queensland Skills Plan 2008* provides a fresh approach to meeting these challenges. It draws together a number of new actions and strategies combined with key elements from the original *Queensland Skills Plan*.

Vision – Queensland Skills Plan 2008

The Queensland Government's vision is a highly skilled, flexible workforce that will underpin the state's continuing growth and prosperity and lay the foundations of an inclusive and socially cohesive society.

The *Queensland Skills Plan 2008* is a major investment in achieving this vision. At its core, the *Queensland Skills Plan 2008* recognises that to meet the skill needs of business and industry, we must seize the opportunity to build the capacity and skills of our workforce. This includes young people seeking their first job, existing workers who have great experience and skills that can be enhanced and harnessed, those who are disadvantaged or disengaged from the labour market or new arrivals from other states or overseas. It also recognises a need to build the professional skills of our workforce to meet increasingly sophisticated workplace skill requirements.

This vision will be achieved through:

- **Boosting participation in vocational, education and training.** Lifting participation in VET is a key goal. At the same time the *Queensland Skills Plan 2008* aims to better ensure that a greater proportion of those people who undertake training complete a qualification.
- **Recognising the pivotal role of effective partnerships with industry, its workforce and providers.** The *Queensland Skills Plan 2008* acknowledges that success will only be achieved through strong, effective partnerships with industry, its workforce and the higher education and VET sectors.
- **Harnessing synergies across the Department of Education, Training and the Arts.** Combining education and training within the Department of Education, Training and the Arts as a single agency provides new opportunities for schools and VET providers to work together to create smooth transitions for young people. Queensland's national leadership in the development of school-based apprenticeships and traineeships provides a solid foundation for these efforts.
- **Working alongside the Federal Government to address skill shortages.** The Queensland Government recognises the imperative of tackling skill shortages that threaten to constrain national economic growth and fuel inflationary pressures. The Federal

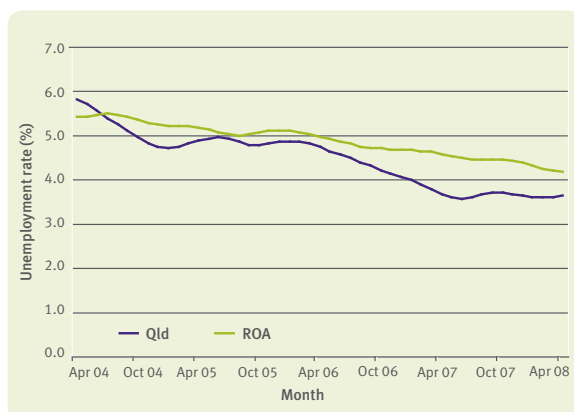
Government's commitment to the skills agenda is most welcome. Queensland will work closely with the Federal Government to deliver new partnership arrangements.

Queensland's economic environment

In 2006 when the *Queensland Skills Plan* was launched, the state's economy was strong, with an unemployment rate of 4.8%. Due to a sustained period of strong economic growth, skill shortages were emerging in a number of occupations. Most evident were skill shortages in a number of trade and associate professional occupations.

Since that time, the state's economic environment has further strengthened, with increased investment, strengthening jobs growth and a record low unemployment rate. The state's unemployment dropped to an historic low of 3.6% (*Figure 1*). This growth has been fuelled by demand for commodities, particularly coal and minerals from the Asian growth economies, along with strong net population growth.

Figure 1– Queensland and rest of Australia unemployment rates (trend series)



Source: ABS Cat No. 6203.0, Labour Force Survey, Australia

At the same time, levels of workforce participation reached 66.9% in April 2008.

This strong economic and population growth has, in turn, driven the need for record levels of investment in infrastructure. Construction activity alone has increased by 34.4% over the past three years, with the State Government planning to invest some \$107 billion in critical infrastructure.

This environment has seen exceptional job creation. Employment growth has accelerated sharply and averaged 3.8% per annum over the five years to April 2008. Growth has been strongest in the skilled occupations of Managers and Administrators (6.3%), Associate Professionals (5.2%) and Intermediate Production and Transport Workers (6.4%). Annual growth in the trades remains strong at 4.3%.

Queensland's accelerating growth has revealed some critical skill gaps. These are most evident across the engineering, construction and health sectors where professionals, para-professionals and tradespeople are in high demand.

Of growing concern is the pattern of broad labour shortages across many industries now developing as a result of almost 'full employment' in a number of industries and regions.

What needs to be done?

The continuing strength of the economy and labour market means greater effort is required to maximise and recognise the skills of the existing workforce, identify additional sources of skilled labour and develop professional and para-professional skills.

Many workers have existing skills that could be recognised. Therefore, accelerating the process for officially recognising these skills could help fill skill gaps in the Queensland workforce. While there has been good progress through the Skills First initiative, more needs to be done, particularly in relation to trade areas and the state's growing migrant population.

Despite record levels of workforce participation, a stronger focus must also remain on skilling those people who are unemployed or not currently in the workforce. In spite of record low levels of unemployment statewide, there remain pockets of high unemployment in a number of urban, regional and Indigenous communities. In total, there are some 81,800¹ people officially unemployed in Queensland. There are also significant numbers of people not in the workforce.

It is estimated that some 200,000 people who have the capacity to work remain outside the Queensland labour market. Males aged 25 to 64 years and women aged

25 to 44 years are significantly under-represented in the Queensland and national workforce, as compared to other OECD countries.

In this regard, the Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative that was introduced in July 2007 as part of the *Queensland Skills Plan* will be pivotal as many of those people not in the workforce face multiple barriers to employment and training that must be addressed.

At the other end of the age spectrum, one in five young adults nationally has not completed a Certificate III qualification or Year 12. Gaining a vocational qualification, especially an initial qualification, has never been more important, not only for industry but also young people and others seeking to enter the workforce. In 2006, 82% of people aged 25 to 64 with a post-school qualification were in work. This compares to only 66.7% of people who had no post-school qualification and just 29.6% of people who had no school attainment. The proportion of Queenslanders aged between 25 and 64 years with a post school qualification at 51.3% lags behind the national average of 54.8%.

There needs to be a greater emphasis on linking young people with industry to boost participation in vocational training. While Queensland is leading the nation in school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, the closer alignment of the training and education portfolios within the Department of Education, Training and the Arts provides new opportunities to more strongly support young people's engagement in vocational education and training.

A significant and growing proportion of the state's workforce has come from interstate and overseas migration. In the year to September 2007, Queensland recorded growth in net interstate and overseas migration of 26,985 and 33,696 people respectively. This accounted for 67% of the state's total population growth over this period. Ensuring these people have the skills that match the needs of business and industry is becoming increasingly important.

While there has been strong jobs growth across the workforce, the exceptional growth in para-professional and professional jobs highlights the need for greater efforts to address professional skill shortages in a range of priority industries. In much the same way that industry, government and training providers have come together to address trade training, similar partnerships between the higher education sector, government and industry are now required.

¹ In trend terms

The 2006 *Queensland Skills Plan* achievements

The 2006 *Queensland Skills Plan* identified strategies to address the state's skill shortages. Since that time much has been achieved to reform the state's vocational education and training system and boost the skills of the state's workforce. The following tables provide a snapshot of these achievements.

Actions 1 to 10

A training system that works for Queensland (Actions 1 to 7) has realigned the training system to respond to the rapid changes in skills demands.

To help the Queensland VET sector grow, training providers have been supported through revised contractual arrangements that include longer funding periods. A third-party access policy has been developed to open up TAFE facilities to other registered training organisations, where capacity exists. The regulation of apprenticeships has been simplified to support providers and help those in training to access training more readily.

Much has been done to reform the Queensland TAFE system. Some of these changes include the creation of specialised institutes such as Southbank Institute of Technology and the new trades and technician training institute, SkillsTech Australia. Significant infrastructure investments are occurring across the state in Mackay, Townsville and Cairns, as well as in the Brisbane metropolitan area.

Lead Institutes have been introduced across TAFE to

help create better links with industry. Specialised product development arrangements are being put in place, supported by new technologies to capture content and distribute programs via the net. Staff are being trained in these new systems to increase the availability of relevant learning materials.

A new recruitment strategy, Teach Your Trade, has been successful in attracting new teaching staff in priority industry areas.

Training that works for industry and employers (Actions 8 to 10) has developed new strategies for collaboration between government and industry in addressing skill shortages and workforce development needs.

A new industry engagement framework has been introduced to work with industries to help address their skilling needs.

There are now three new Centres of Excellence in the manufacturing and engineering; energy; and building and construction industries to complement the two existing centres in aviation and mining. These Centres of Excellence have given industry ownership of workforce and skills development strategies. In addition, 28 industry or region specific Skills Formation Strategies have been developed.

Five new industry alliances have been formed: Tourism and Hospitality; Community Services and Health; Sport and Recreation; Automotive; and the Creative Industries. These alliances bring together stakeholders such as unions, employers and training organisations to provide advice to government about the skills needs of key industry sectors.

A new, specialised Small Business Solutions unit has been established within TAFE Queensland to provide tailored training for small businesses.

Faced with a predicted shortfall in labour supply and an ageing workforce, the government has also worked with employers through the Experience Pays strategy to leverage their most valuable asset – experienced, mature-age workers.

Actions 11 to 24

Training that works for the trades (Actions 11 to 18)

has helped alleviate trade skill shortages through a revitalised apprenticeship system. Action has been taken to encourage greater commencements and completions of trade qualifications, as well as to increase options for ongoing learning by tradespeople.

The government is ahead of its target of 17,000 extra trade training places by 2010. Almost 12,000 of these places have been taken up. Significant changes have been made to the apprenticeship system through the introduction of shorter durations across a number of apprenticeships.

Action has been taken to provide improved support to apprentices and trainees through increased travel and accommodation

allowances, and the establishment of the Apprenticeships Info hotline. The department's regional field officer network has successfully implemented an apprentice retention and completion strategy across the state that has seen more than 10,000 targeted workplace visits to apprentices and their employers in its first year.

The Train to Retain Action Plan is being rolled out across the state. The plan was developed

in response to the Training Ombudsman's recommendations to the government on improving workplace practices and enhancing apprentice and trainee retention rates.

Training that works for individuals (Actions 19 to 24)

has provided an increased range of flexible training programs to better match industry needs. It also includes measures to assist more Queenslanders to access training, including those who are disadvantaged in the labour market.

There has been a significant increase in the use of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) processes to recognise existing skills. This has been achieved through: RPL co-ordinators in TAFE institutes; funding to support RPL delivery by private training providers through the Australian Council of Private Education and Training; new tools to help assess skills; and preferred provider arrangements.

Strategies have been implemented to help prepare young people for work. Tuition fees for school students undertaking an initial Certificate III and above qualification as part of their senior studies have been waived, with

arrangements developed for VET qualifications to be included in the new Queensland Certificate of Education.

The Skilling Queenslanders for Work package has been implemented across the state. Building on the successful Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative, it is helping the most disadvantaged job seekers and those disengaged or under-engaged in the labour market to fully participate in the workforce by offering customised assistance. This includes job preparation, paid work placements and accredited training tailored to local skill shortages.

Through Skilling Queenslanders for Work, 42 Indigenous Employment and Training Support Officers have been appointed. In addition, there are now 12 Indigenous Employment and Training Managers working with major regional development organisations, employers and communities to develop job opportunities.

Skilling Solutions Queensland has been expanded and now operates from 16 centres across the state and through a mobile centre.

A significant growth of Certificate IV and above programs has occurred in line with the targeted increase of 14,000 by 2010.



To ensure the skill needs of business and industry can be met, the *Queensland Skills Plan 2008* will focus on:

- 1 Developing the skills of existing workers and apprentices
- 2 Engaging unemployed and under-employed people
- 3 Improving youth transitions to enhance education, training or employment outcomes
- 4 Building the capacity of the VET sector
- 5 Building bridges to the professions

Queensland Skills Plan 2008 in action

1. Developing the skills of existing workers and apprentices

The 2006 *Queensland Skills Plan* included a range of strategies to address the goals of increasing the qualifications of Queensland workers, as well as increasing the number of tradespeople in skills shortage areas.

These goals continue to be paramount in ensuring Queensland has the necessary skill base to sustain economic development.

While training new entrants provides an important avenue to addressing these goals, so too is the recognition and development of the skills of existing workers.

Existing workers have a range of existing skills and knowledge gained from on-the-job informal learning. In the current environment of labour shortages, arrangements that better enable the recognition of these existing skills is a priority for the development of Queensland's workforce.

Employers who make a greater investment in the skills of their workers by actively engaging employees in workforce planning, can increase the retention, development and participation of their staff.

Increasingly, the very nature of work is changing with traditional pathways not necessarily meeting the needs of industry. Innovative approaches to skills acquirement can improve the performance of existing workers and increase business outcomes.

While considerable progress has been achieved in relation to the apprenticeship system, work still needs to be done, including further adjustments to the duration of some trade apprenticeships.

Developing the skills of existing workers and apprentices will be achieved through:

- 1.1 Improving skills recognition processes for existing workers
- 1.2 Supporting innovative skilling partnerships
- 1.3 Designing new skills development pathways
- 1.4 Enhancing apprenticeship reform
- 1.5 Promoting the skills development of existing workers

Queensland Skills Plan 2008 actions

1. Developing the skills of existing workers and apprentices

1.1 Improving skills recognition processes for existing workers	
1.1.1	<p>Giving greater recognition to work-based learning</p> <p>Under an innovative new work-based learning initiative government, enterprises and training providers will work in partnership to capture informal learning. This initiative will improve recognition of skills for existing workers by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promoting the formal recognition of skills gained through unstructured or informal learning in workplaces; and 2. Maximising learning in the workplace through assessment and support for informal learning that is occurring as part of day-to-day activities. For example, capturing e-based learning that employees may gain on the job.
1.1.2	<p>Recognising skills and experience through the Skills First program, particularly increasing the use of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in trades and other occupations where it is not commonly used (a continuation of Action 19 from the 2006 <i>Queensland Skills Plan</i>)</p> <p>Through Skills First, RPL has increased significantly across most vocational areas. A greater focus will be placed on increasing RPL in trades and other occupations where uptake has been slower.</p>
1.1.3	<p>Developing new roles for Skilling Solutions Queensland (<i>from Action 22</i>)</p> <p>Queensland's labour shortages demand new, targeted approaches to delivering career and skills development information and support. The department will tailor the services provided by Skilling Solutions Queensland to better meet the needs of particular industries and client groups.</p> <p>An innovative industry partnership between Skilling Solutions Queensland and Construction Skills Queensland will develop a new Workforce Solutions Centre. This centre will support workers in the building and construction industry, as well as others seeking to enter the industry, to gain skills recognition and career advice. The Workforce Solutions Centre will also play an important role in linking clients to available job opportunities.</p>

1.2 Supporting innovative skilling partnerships		
1.2.1	Developing our health industry workforce: The Health Workforce Skills Capacity Development Program	This program will develop a more skilled health sector workforce, including the supply of qualified health workers to alleviate existing and emerging skill shortages and improve service delivery. It will provide flexible delivery and partnership initiatives and 30 scholarships and fellowships for vocational health educators over three years.
1.2.2	Upskilling engineering workers: the Innovative Skilling Partnership Program – Engineering and Construction	High levels of activity are expected to be sustained in the engineering and construction industries for some time. Partnerships with employers in the engineering sector will be the centrepiece of this new initiative to tackle skill shortages in vital associate professional occupations. Over four years, 450 places will be made available to meet the industry’s higher level skill requirements.
1.2.3	Providing improved support for businesses through skill development (<i>from Action 9, Action 12 and Action 17</i>)	To better support skill development for small businesses in Queensland, the department will: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue the roll out of TAFE Queensland’s Small Business Solutions; 2. Expand business and management training for tradespeople through the TradeBiz program; and 3. Provide a further 1,000 subsidised places in training and assessment programs to equip supervisors to support greater training and assessment in the workplace.

Queensland Skills Plan 2008 actions

1. Developing the skills of existing workers and apprentices

1.3 Designing new skills development pathways		
1.3.1	Creating Enterprise Skills – through Dual Trades	SkillsTech Australia will work with industry to develop dual trade qualifications to help ensure relevant pathways are available to meet business and industry needs. There are potential dual trade opportunities in a number of trades including electrical/Instrumentation and mechanical automotive/electrical automotive.
1.3.2	Investing in Skill Sets to support workplace needs	Skill sets, or combinations of training competencies, which can be linked to an industry need or employment opportunity will be developed.
1.3.3	Improving learning pathways for distance learners and those who experience barriers to training	Distance combined with work and family commitments can be a barrier to accessing training. To better support distance learners and those who experience barriers to training the department will: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Integrate Learning Network Queensland into existing TAFE facilities and services; and 2. Enhance TAFE Open Learning products and services.
1.3.4	Establishing a Skills Bank pilot	A new Skills Bank pilot will be conducted to develop a repository of an individual's training outcomes that will provide: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A lifetime record of training and skills outcomes; 2. Assistance in the identification of pathways and Recognition of Prior Learning possibilities based on the learner's skills; and 3. Training providers with a secure repository of student academic records.
1.3.5	Delivering training in high level qualifications for associate professionals and trades (<i>from Action 12 and Action 24</i>)	The department will continue to focus its training efforts on trade and associate professional occupations by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Further developing pathways for Master Tradespersons using Vocational Graduate Certificates and Vocational Graduate Diploma qualifications; 2. Providing an increased range of cadetships in skill shortage areas; and 3. Developing a new marketing campaign that targets both individuals and employers to help boost higher level training.

1.4 Enhancing apprenticeship reform		
1.4.1	Meeting the increased demand for trade apprenticeships by increasing the number of trade training places, with 17,000 additional places available by 2010 (<i>from Action 11</i>)	The government is committed to providing an additional 17,000 trade training places by 2010 to address trade skill shortages. A strong focus will remain on ensuring these places are targeted to critical shortage areas. This focus will be supported by improved training demand forecasting and necessary adjustments to User Choice funding.
1.4.2	Fully implementing competency-based training (<i>from Action 15</i>)	Efforts to fully implement competency-based training (CBT) arrangements will continue, allowing earlier completion by those apprentices who achieve competence without any reduction in the quality of their skills. The department's regional network of field officers will continue to work with employers and their apprentices to ensure CBT arrangements are widely known and understood and help improve retention and completion of apprentices and trainees. Industry support and mentoring of both apprentices and their employers remains one of the critical elements in improving apprenticeship completion. The department will establish a pilot in the building and construction industry, where some apprenticeship support responsibilities will be transferred to Construction Skills Queensland. The pilot will focus on the provision of industry relevant mentoring for apprentices and their employers.
1.4.3	Completing apprenticeships more quickly (<i>from Action 15</i>)	To build on the work undertaken through the <i>Queensland Skills Plan</i> , the department will work with the Training and Employment Recognition Council and industry to consider further opportunities for the reduction of the term of apprenticeships where quality outcomes will not be affected.
1.4.4	Delivering intensive up-front training for apprentices (<i>from Action 16</i>)	The department will continue to work with industry to develop and deliver intensive up-front training programs that enable apprentices to undertake a significant amount of the off-the-job training at the beginning of their apprenticeship. This will include expanding SkillsTech Australia's employability induction training initiative across a range of industries.
1.4.5	Enhancing pre-trade training pathways (<i>from Action 16</i>)	Pre-trade training will be revitalised to better meet the needs of workplaces and equip participants with the opportunity to fast-track their trade careers. SkillsTech Australia will pilot pre-trade training across priority training areas.
1.4.6	Establishing a Trade Training Advisory Council	To further ensure that apprenticeship training meets the growing demand of industry a Ministerial Trade Training Advisory Council, comprising representatives of industry, unions and training providers, will be established. A key focus of the Council will be to provide advice on innovative strategies to meet this demand, both now and into the future.
1.5 Promoting the skills development of existing workers		
1.5.1	Promoting learning while earning to build a sustainable workforce	Employers manage a range of issues to create a successful business. In this environment, it is easy to lose focus on the importance of developing and maintaining a skilled workforce. A new promotional package will support employers to better understand the need to invest in skills as part of their workforce development strategies. A key element of this will be to pilot industry-based project officers who will work with individual employers to plan for current and future workforce needs.



Queensland Skills Plan 2008 in action

2. Engaging unemployed and under-employed people

Research indicates Queensland's labour supply will not be able to keep pace with the jobs demand over the next five years. Proactive strategies to maximise workforce participation are essential.

While overall workforce participation rates are high, engaging those people who are unemployed or not fully participating in the workforce remains a priority.

The Business Council of Australia, for example, has highlighted that the participation by males aged 25 to 54 years in the workforce ranks Australia 23rd in the OECD. A similar situation applies to women aged 25 to 44 years of age. At the same time there is an opportunity to harness the skills and experience of the state's growing population of skilled migrants.

While unemployment rates are low, there are still 81,800 people in the labour market who are unemployed in Queensland. Additionally, there are another 200,000 who have the capacity to work but remain outside of the Queensland labour market.

In response, the *Queensland Skills Plan 2008* includes a stronger focus on initiatives that will assist those people unemployed or under-employed to gain the skills necessary to maximise their workforce participation.

Engaging unemployed and under-employed people will be achieved by:

- 2.1 Improving access for people under-employed or outside the workforce
- 2.2 Promoting participation in non-traditional occupations
- 2.3 Encouraging flexible and inclusive workplace cultures

Queensland Skills Plan 2008 actions

2. Engaging unemployed and under-employed people

2.1 Improving access for people under-employed or outside the workforce		
2.1.1	Implementing the Participate in Prosperity Program	<p>Although Queensland is experiencing its lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, there are still areas where unemployment is greater than 10% and workforce participation rates below 60%.</p> <p>Participate in Prosperity is a four-year strategy that targets the multiple barriers that prevent people in areas of high disadvantage from participating in work by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improving the coordination and integration of government and non-government human services in targeted locations to help people overcome barriers in their lives, for example, financial, health and housing issues as well as employment challenges; and 2. Supporting the expansion of social enterprises to provide transitional and real employment for individuals. <p>The program will be piloted in three areas: Logan/Beenleigh, Caboolture/Deception Bay and in the south-west corridor of Inala, Carole Park and Ipswich.</p>
2.1.2	Implementing the Indigenous Skilling Partnership Program	<p>The new Indigenous Skilling Partnerships Program (ISPP) will capitalise on the buoyant labour market to maximise long-term employment opportunities for Indigenous people through a suite of skilling initiatives that utilise culturally appropriate mentoring models. Initially, ISPP will target communities in north and north-west Queensland in partnership with the civil construction and mining sectors.</p> <p>The program will include pre-vocational training of up to 13 weeks delivering competencies specifically tailored to equip participants for identified, full-time entry-level positions. Training providers will be required to provide culturally appropriate mentoring and support, including post-placement support for three months.</p> <p>Mentoring and support will be provided through the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations' Indigenous Employment and Training Support Officers and linkages will be maintained with the Skilling Queenslanders for Work (SQW) initiative allowing clients who require more intensive assistance to move from SQW to ISPP.</p>
2.1.3	Implementing the Skilling Assistance Package for Skilled Migrants	<p>The department will support skilled migrant participation in the labour force through the Skilling Assistance Package for Skilled Migrants. The package includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improved information about job opportunities and assistance measures such as gap training and bridging programs; 2. Recognition of Prior Learning; 3. Work experience and English language training; and 4. Skills recognition.
2.1.4	Maximising our workforce through the Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative (<i>from Action 21</i>)	<p>Skilling Queenslanders for Work, an initiative assisting eligible disadvantaged Queenslanders to secure sustainable employment outcomes, will continue with an emphasis on improving workforce participation.</p>

2.2 Promoting participation in non-traditional occupations		
2.2.1	Developing diversification strategies to enhance engagement at all levels of the workforce	<p>Competitive organisations can benefit greatly by engaging people from a range of backgrounds and life experiences. The department will support a number of strategies that promote diversification and maximise participation in the workforce. These strategies include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Providing services to women managers and Indigenous businesses through Small Business Solutions; 2. Piloting a Women in Management program that enhances engagement, mentoring and the achievement of higher level qualification by women; and 3. Promoting trade training to under-represented groups including women, the unemployed and Indigenous people.
2.3 Encouraging flexible and inclusive workplace cultures		
2.3.1	Reducing discrimination barriers to improve recruitment and retention of apprentices	<p>The Train to Retain Action Plan was developed to implement recommendations from the Training Ombudsman’s report on improving workplace practices to help reduce the harassment of apprentices and trainees.</p> <p>To further support the attraction and retention of apprentices, the department will expand the Train to Retain Action Plan to address barriers faced by apprentices or trainees who are disadvantaged in the workplace due to discrimination.</p>
2.3.2	Reviewing learner and employer incentives	<p>Incentives play an important role in encouraging participation in training. The department will review current incentive arrangements for learners, employers and industry to identify those that are most effective in the current labour market in encouraging participation in training and skills development.</p>
2.3.3	Continuing the Experience Pays awareness strategy (from Action 10)	<p>The successful Experience Pays awareness strategy will focus on promoting ways for employers to better age-proof their workplaces.</p>



Queensland Skills Plan 2008 in action

3. Improving youth transitions to enhance education, training and employment outcomes

Young Queenslanders can benefit from increased vocational opportunities and improved transitions between school, education and training.

National and international research shows that completing Year 12 or its equivalent gives young people greater opportunities for further education and employment.

Recent reforms to education and training have focused on retaining young people in education and training to age 17 in order to achieve a Queensland Certificate of Education, Certificate III vocational qualification or secure full-time employment.

With this in mind, efforts must be maintained on supporting young people's transition through education to secure employment.

The new opportunities arising from the amalgamation of the training and education portfolios within the Department of Education, Training and the Arts will be harnessed towards a number of initiatives that seek to better support the transition from school to work or training.

Improving youth transitions to enhance education, training and employment outcomes will be addressed through:

- 3.1 Enhancing information and access to vocational education, training and employment pathways
- 3.2 Creating innovative partnerships between industry, education and training
- 3.3 Improving transitions for 18 to 24 year olds

Queensland Skills Plan 2008 actions

3. Improving youth transitions to enhance education, training or employment outcomes

3.1 Enhancing information and access to vocational education, training and employment pathways		
3.1.1	Extending Skilling Solutions Queensland's services	In partnership with schools, Skilling Solutions Queensland will tailor its services to enable students to more effectively utilise existing online resources and career information services.
3.1.2	Developing a Youth Career Information Framework	<p>To make effective transitions from school to employment, young people require access to information and qualified people to assist them in making decisions about jobs, courses and career paths.</p> <p>A Youth Career Information Framework will be developed through an ICT-based portal which draws together a range of career development products and services to provide information for school students on VET programs. This will include information on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships; 2. VET in School options; and 3. Skilling Solutions Queensland services.
3.1.3	Trialling a revised work experience strategy for Year 9 students	To provide a better understanding of possible career options, a work experience strategy that links Year 9 school students undertaking vocational programs to industry, Group Training Organisations and other stakeholders will be trialled.
3.2 Creating innovative partnerships between industry, education and training		
3.2.1	Using creative partnerships to increase student participation in vocational education and training in schools and in school-based apprenticeships and traineeships	<p>The department will work with stakeholders to double the participation in school-based apprenticeships and traineeships over the period 2006–2010.</p> <p>To support this, the Training Ombudsman will undertake a review of school-based apprenticeship and traineeship training across the state to identify and share best practice with industry, education and training stakeholders.</p>
3.2.2	Expanding opportunities for pre-trade training	More pre-vocational training will be delivered to enable young people to get a head start on their trade career.
3.2.3	Increasing partnerships between training and education	Vocational, education and training staff are working with schools to build links to training and employment. To support these activities the department will develop a professional development framework across the education and training sectors that enables the sharing of good practice and capacity building.

3.2 Creating innovative partnerships between industry, education and training (continued)		
3.2.4	Enhancing the school-industry engagement	To build transitions from school to work and vocational education, school-industry engagement will be further developed by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Streamlining school-based industry relationships; 2. Implementing Gateway Schools projects that include agribusiness; building and construction; manufacturing; and 3. Sharing best practice and capturing innovative projects at the local, regional and state level.
3.2.5	Giving young people a taste of the trades <i>(from Action 13)</i>	To broaden young people’s understanding of the opportunities that trade careers can offer, the Try a Trade program will be enhanced through the development of online technology.
3.3 Improving transitions for 18 to 24 year olds		
3.3.1	Expanding Get Set for Work	The successful Get Set for Work program will be expanded to include intensive transition assistance for school completers up to age 19. The initial focus will be within selected areas of high disadvantage and low labour force participation.
3.3.2	Delivering the YouthWorX Strategy	Better targeting and tailoring of assistance to young people aged 18 to 24 years who are finding it difficult to secure full-time work will be provided through the YouthWorX Strategy. The strategy will include paid work placements, job preparation assistance and accredited training.
3.3.3	Prioritising First Start	First Start provides additional traineeship and apprenticeship opportunities for young people. Wage subsidies available through First Start have been prioritised to the local government and community sectors servicing rural and remote communities as well as to urban areas with high levels of disadvantage.





Queensland Skills Plan 2008 in action

4. Building the capacity of the Queensland VET sector

The Queensland Skills Plan 2008 includes a number of new and continuing initiatives and programs that seek to boost participation in VET and address skill and labour shortages.

These initiatives and programs need to be underpinned by a VET sector that has the capacity to respond to them and the broader challenges posed by a growing economy and workforce.

The *Queensland Skills Plan 2008* has a stronger focus on the professional development of the existing VET workforce, both public and private, and the attraction and retention of new teachers and other staff.

Ongoing reforms of Queensland's training delivery and regulatory systems and investment strategies will also be maintained.

Building the capacity of the Queensland VET sector will be achieved through:

- 4.1 Industry partnerships and VET system reforms
- 4.2 Implementing a VET Futures program to develop the skills and resources of VET workers
- 4.3 Continuing Public Provider redevelopment
- 4.4 A Sustainable VET Policy and Action Plan

Queensland Skills Plan 2008 actions

4. Building the capacity of the Queensland VET sector

4.1 Industry partnerships and VET system reforms		
4.1.1	Increasing industry partnerships	<p>The department will increase the involvement of industry to help ensure training responses meet industry needs. Key activities will include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The release of training staff to industry to build skills, as well as the development of exchange and mobility programs between industry and VET trainers; 2. Greater promotion of training in the workplace; 3. Establishing local industry and community forums to provide input into the provision of training; 4. Incorporating industry feedback into the department's annual performance agreements with TAFE institutes; 5. Exploring new options for training delivery that are led by industry. One such option to be explored will focus on the unprecedented demand for skills in the civil construction sector. Through a partnership with SkillsTech Australia, Construction Skills Queensland will investigate the development of an industry-led college focused on accelerated skills development for new and existing workers in the civil construction industry; and 6. The department will work with key industry sectors to investigate the potential for further industry training levies to help address critical skill shortages.
4.1.2	Refocusing regional planning	<p>The department's regional planning activities will be enhanced to better integrate information from a range of industry and community sources into local and regional Skills Formation Strategies and activities.</p>
4.1.3	Establishing designated 'Lead Institutes' with a clear mandate for leading product development and coordination across the state in designated fields (<i>from Action 4</i>)	<p>To ensure the quality and consistency of TAFE Queensland's training products, a Lead Institute model has been established for the development and coordination of product development in specific fields. The Lead Institute model will be enhanced by embedding innovation funding and driving all market research and product development through this model.</p>
4.1.4	Establishing new models for industry engagement including Centres of Excellence, Skills Formation Strategies, Skills Alliances and annual skills forums (<i>from Action 8</i>)	<p>A range of industry engagement models have been established to enhance industry involvement in the development of relevant training products. In 2008, the implementation of Centres of Excellence, Skills Alliances, Skills Forums and Skills Formation Strategies will be completed. A key outcome of these new arrangements will be improved integration of industry advice to inform training purchasing decisions.</p>

4.1 Industry partnerships and VET system reforms (continued)		
4.1.5	Growing the Queensland VET Sector (from Action 1)	<p>The <i>Queensland Skills Plan</i> included a number of measures that have increased the number of training providers offering apprenticeship and traineeship training. To build on this momentum and enhance the development of the training market action will be taken to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Further refine administrative arrangements that build the capacity of training providers to deliver apprenticeship training. This will include better use of industry advice and refinement of training demand forecasting processes along with necessary prioritisation of funding for key skill shortage areas; 2. Greater promotion and communication of new third-party access arrangements to TAFE facilities in order to maximise the use of these facilities; 3. The promotion of best practice partnering arrangements to encourage greater co-operation between providers; and 4. Further reforms to help reduce the regulatory burdens and maintain quality training outcomes.
4.1.6	Reviewing the role of Group Training Organisations (from Action 18)	<p>In 2006, a review of Group Training Organisations was undertaken to identify and address issues, policies or practices that may affect performance. Since completion of the review, legislative changes have been made and the recommendations are being implemented. Working with Group Training Australia (Qld and NT), the department will continue to refine it's priorities and arrangements with Group Training Organisations.</p>
4.2 Implementing a VET Futures program to develop the skills and resources of VET workers		
4.2.1	Implementing a VET Futures program	<p>A VET Futures program will be implemented to help build the capacity of providers to meet the skill needs of business, industry and its workforce. The program will comprise:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Investment in the development of new innovative products and services; 2. Research and development of new approaches to training delivery, new support services and enhanced engagement with industry; and 3. Professional development to ensure Queensland VET practitioners have the skills in modern delivery and assessment practices and current industry experience. <p>To support the VET Futures program, a 'Futures Group' will be created. This will be a think-tank for innovative planning that links to VET investment and involves innovative skills development approaches.</p>

Queensland Skills Plan 2008 actions

4. Building the capacity of the Queensland VET sector

4.2 Implementing a VET Futures program to develop the skills and resources of VET workers (continued)		
4.2.2	Improving the skills of training sector staff <i>(from Action 1)</i>	As part of ensuring Queensland's VET sector has a highly capable, responsive workforce, a Queensland VET Professional Development Strategy has been developed and will be implemented from 2008. This strategy will be supported by the new Vocational Education and Training Professional Development Advisory Network.
4.2.3	Working with industry organisations to ensure that employability skills, including workplace literacy and numeracy, are incorporated within all training delivery <i>(from Action 23)</i>	Employability skills are non-technical skills that are important for effective participation in the workplace. The VET Futures program will incorporate a greater focus on supporting staff in the delivery of employability skills training.
4.3 Continuing Public Provider Redevelopment		
4.3.1	Implementing a staff attraction and retention strategy	A new program to support the attraction and retention of staff will be implemented within TAFE. It will build on the successful Teach Your Trade initiative. The strategy will include a focus on attracting teaching staff in areas of emerging demand such as civil infrastructure and sustainable technologies.
4.3.2	Aligning the Australian Agricultural College Corporation (AACC) to better meet the needs of rural industries	To enhance responsiveness to the skills development needs of the state's rural industries, responsibility for the Australian Agricultural College Corporation will transfer to the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries.
4.3.3	Reforming the Queensland TAFE System <i>(from Action 2)</i>	Work will continue on the reform of the TAFE system including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Following the Southbank Institute of Technology's establishment as a statutory authority, further roll-out of TAFE statutory authorities will be considered in light of developments with the new Federal Government and other stakeholders; 2. As part of a more commercial approach, TAFE institutes working with industry to leverage further industry contributions to skills development; and 3. The department reviewing the activities of its state office functions to reprioritise resources for service delivery and training within TAFE institutes.

4.3 Continuing Public Provider Redevelopment (continued)		
4.3.4	Restructuring TAFE across Queensland and creating new specialised institutes (from Action 3)	Continued realignment of TAFE services will occur in the following ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. During 2008 SkillTech Australia's leadership role for the development and delivery of trade training across South East Queensland will be consolidated. By July 2009 this role will be expanded across Queensland, ensuring that all apprentices receive the very best in trade training and learner support; and 2. Further integration of TAFE Open Learning and Learning Network Queensland services to improve service delivery to students.
4.3.5	Enhancing product development (from Action 5)	TAFE Queensland's product development capacity will be enhanced through the implementation of new technology systems to support the capture and sharing of learning products.
4.3.6	Investing in TAFE ICT (from Action 7)	Significant work will continue to implement upgraded ICT capacity across the TAFE system. Part of this investment will be the implementation of a new Learning Management System to help students better manage their training and a new Learning Content Management System to enable teachers to better access training resources.
4.3.7	Implementing a major seven-year capital works investment program to modernise existing infrastructure and construct new leading-edge training facilities (from Action 7)	The major capital works program commenced under the <i>Queensland Skills Plan</i> will continue with a range of new facilities being developed across the state. This program of work will help cater for the strong growth in trade and other training demand that is being experienced in metropolitan and regional centres.
4.4 A Sustainable VET Policy and Action Plan		
As countries, including Australia, act to reduce greenhouse emissions there is the challenge to reduce our environmental footprint. TAFE Queensland is already taking up the challenge through a range of measures to conserve water, cut waste and reduce energy consumption. Challenges also bring opportunities. The Queensland Government will work with its partners and the community to develop a Sustainable VET Policy and Action Plan.		





Queensland Skills Plan 2008 in action

5. Building bridges to the professions

The Queensland Skills Plan 2008 recognises that the state's economic success has increased demand for a range of professional occupations.

Professional skill shortages are a local, national and international problem, which requires policy, systemic and operational responses.

Significant work to address these shortages is well underway. At a state level, Queensland Health is implementing a range of health and allied health professional workforce initiatives. A number of Skills Formation Strategies are considering professional skills where a need is identified by industry, and there is a range of mechanisms in place for collaboration between industry, government and education and training providers.

The professional skills initiatives to be included in *Queensland Skills Plan 2008* provide a framework for focused, coordinated activities.

A cohesive tertiary education sector relies on seamless linkages between VET and higher education. Actions will be taken to better align higher education and training policies to improve linkages.

Building bridges to the professions will focus on:

- 5.1 Expanding pathways to the professions
- 5.2 Shaping the system for professional skills

Queensland Skills Plan 2008 actions

5. Building bridges to the professions

5.1 Expanding pathways to the professions		
5.1.1	Expanding pathways in specific professions	<p>A number of initiatives to address specific priority professions will be implemented, including the:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ICT Skills Formation Strategy with a cross-sectoral focus on schools, VET and higher education, and an associated ICT communication strategy promoting a positive image of the ICT industry and career opportunities; 2. Nursing Clinical Education Best Practice Program – reforming clinical education for nursing and midwifery; 3. Nursing Work/Study Pathways Program – developing a flexible segmented pathway into nursing/midwifery with multiple entry/exit points; and 4. Nursing school level and school leaver media campaign: ‘Be a Nurse’ – promotional strategy.
5.1.2	Increasing numbers of Indigenous professionals	<p>An Indigenous Higher Education Action Plan will be developed to improve opportunities for Indigenous people to enter the professional workforce through increased access, participation, and attainment in higher education.</p>
5.1.3	Promoting cadetships, internships and upskilling	<p>The further uptake of cadetships, internships and other work-based study programs will be promoted along with the support of higher education institutions to cater for these programs. This initiative will be complemented by changes to the State Government Building and Construction Contracts Structured Training Policy (10% Policy) that will support greater upskilling of the professional workforce.</p>

5.2 Shaping the system for professional skills		
5.2.1	Setting system directions	To achieve shared objectives, a Higher Education Strategic Statement setting out the relationship between the State Government and the higher education sector will be developed.
5.2.2	Realigning the Office of Higher Education	The Office of Higher Education will be aligned with the department's training portfolio to improve skill development outcomes for the professions and para-professions.
5.3.3	Assessing professional skills needs	A strategy will be implemented to annually assess priority professional skill shortages in industry and government, and identify collaborative action to address them.
5.2.4	Forming industry responsive pathways to the professions	Work will be undertaken on the development of pathways that respond to industry and community needs through innovative approaches to: articulation and credit transfer; program linkages; flexible delivery and work/study arrangements; and course entry and exit points.
5.2.5	Advocating for Queensland in the national agenda	The Queensland Government will put Queensland's position to the Federal Government's Higher Education Review, the Review of the National Innovation System and to other key policy activities, to optimise professional skills outcomes for the state.
5.2.6	Adapting the regulatory framework	The higher education regulatory framework will be monitored to ensure an effective, efficient, high quality system is maintained while minimising the regulatory burden on providers.
5.2.7	Researching professional skills	Research will be undertaken on professional skills issues and the factors that affect them to inform strategies aimed at addressing shortages in priority professions.
5.2.8	Sharing information and best practice	The Office of Higher Education will foster enhanced alignment of professional skills training with needs through disseminating labour market information, system statistics, research findings, and innovative models for education and training programs, including articulation and credit transfer arrangements.
5.2.9	Engaging Industry and Institutions	Industry, institutions and government will be engaged in collaborative action on priority professional skill shortages through established means such as skills formation strategies, industry alliances, centres for excellence and government regional networks.

Conclusion

Since its launch in 2006, the *Queensland Skills Plan* has had a significant impact on addressing trade skill shortages and reforming the VET sector to meet the workforce needs of business and industry into the future.

Progress to date includes:

- Major industry partnerships such as skills alliances, centres of excellence and skills formation strategies;
- Nearly 12,000 additional trade training places; and
- Reform of the state's TAFE network.

However, with continuing strong economic and employment growth resulting in record low levels of unemployment, a broad pattern of skill and labour shortages across many industries is developing.

This means we must identify additional ways of attracting, training and retaining the skilled and professional workforce that is pivotal to the state's continued growth and prosperity.

The *Queensland Skills Plan 2008* responds to this need with a number of new actions that have a focus on boosting participation in workforce skills development. These new actions will complement continuing actions commenced under the *Queensland Skills Plan*.

The challenge of addressing the state's skill needs cannot be met by the government alone. Accordingly, the Queensland Government looks forward to continued strong partnerships with business and industry, its workforce and vocational and higher education providers in implementing the *Queensland Skills Plan 2008*.

The government also looks forward to working with the Federal Government in tackling the skill shortages that threaten to constrain state and national economic growth and fuel inflationary pressures.

The *Queensland Skills Plan 2008* will make a significant contribution to addressing this challenge and building the highly skilled flexible workforce that will underpin the state's continued growth and prosperity.

