New industry body ensures local skills meet growing economic demand

Education and Training Minister Geoff Wilson said new legislation passed tonight would see the establishment of a Queensland industry led skills and workforce development body.

Mr Wilson said the independent skills commission - to be known as Skills Queensland - would use the latest industry advice to help ensure growing skills demand could be filled by Queenslanders.

"The Bligh Government is dedicated to securing Queensland's economic future and continuing to generate local employment opportunities," he said.

"There is no better way to achieve this than by getting advice from industry experts and Queensland businesses.

"Skills Queensland will be an industry-led body fully equipped to provide independent, frank advice and make recommendations to the government on skills, workforce development and skilled migration.

"The new organisation will become the centrepiece of the vocational education and training sector in Queensland.

"The organisation will also be backed by a strategic skills investment fund of up to $100m from government and industry.

"This will be similar to the existing $10million LNG/CSG training fund."

Mr Wilson said Skills Queensland would commence operations by the end of 2010 with its top priority to develop a Skills and Workforce Development Investment Plan.

"This plan look at the impact on the economy over short, medium and long-term," he said.

"The plan will assist the Government in investing in skills, qualifications and workforce development and provide clear direction on how resources should be used to meet changing business needs.

"This includes any responses to emerging industry opportunities and global economic factors that will see Queensland remain flexible and relevant."

Skills Queensland would work closely with industry and developing relationships with those whose advice will be used to develop the skills plan.

"There is also room for Skills Queensland to identify and create even more opportunities for industry to get directly involved with investment in Queensland's
skill system," he said.

"Non-government investment in training in Queensland is lower compared to other Australian states and territories so this will be a key goal of the new body.

"One example of where industry and government investment is creating new opportunities is in the creation of the Coal Seam and Liquefied Natural Gas (CSG/LNG) investment fund.

"When we start seeing more of this in this state, led by Skills Queensland, then we will see some real dividends being paid for workers across a range of industries."

The Bligh Government's Toward Q2: Tomorrow's Queensland goals include seeing three quarters of Queenslanders holding a trade, training or tertiary qualification by 2020.

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