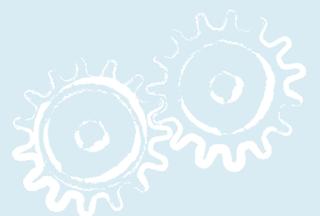


A Skilled Queensland



Skilling Queenslanders to achieve personal and economic prosperity



Queensland's population is projected to reach the 5.5 million mark within the next 20 years. Effective skills development will strengthen Queensland's economic prosperity, the viability of the State's industries and the employment prospects of all Queenslanders.

Queensland Skills Plan

The *Queensland Skills Plan*, released in March 2006 after comprehensive consultation with business, industry and training providers, sets out a policy framework through a range of 24 actions to better match the supply of skilled labour to industry's needs and the economy's demands.

The four key elements of the framework are:

- *a training system that works for Queensland*
- *training that works for industry and employers*
- *training that works for the trades*
- *training that works for individuals.*

Skilling Queenslanders for our fast growing economy

Future economic growth relies on a highly skilled and productive workforce. New approaches need to be taken to give all Queenslanders the opportunity to access relevant and up-to-date education and training that meets their needs and the demands of Queensland's fast growing industries.

Access to training for regional and remote Indigenous communities

Queensland's Indigenous people are being assisted through a suite of Indigenous skilling programs.

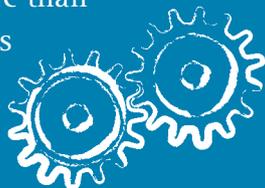
During 2006-07 \$1.23 million was provided to TAFE institutes across Queensland to deliver training specifically to Indigenous people in regional and remote locations. This funding is resulting in employment or community-based work outcomes.

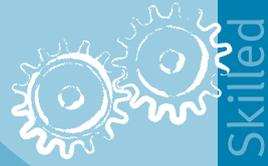
A new-look TAFE network

The Department has initiated a suite of structural changes to increase organisational flexibility, enable more effective scheduling of programs, streamline the use of resources, and establish clearer channels for industry engagement. Initiatives for the new-look TAFE network during 2006-07 included:

- commencing a six-year capital investment program, that exceeds \$300 million, to create world-class facilities
- transferring many Brisbane-based trades training to SkillsTech Australia's campuses at Acacia Ridge and Eagle Farm
- amalgamating several metropolitan TAFE institutes to establish the Metropolitan South Institute of TAFE. The Open Learning Institute became part of Brisbane North Institute of TAFE. The Metropolitan South and the Brisbane North Institutes have a renewed focus on training, other than trades training, that is essential to today's workplaces.
- continuing to establish lead institutes to achieve best practice across the State's training system. These institutes are now the primary point of contact for industry engagement in TAFE training, product development and co-ordination statewide.
- upgrading information and communication technologies across the State's 13 institutes at a cost of \$14 million.

Since March 2005, more than 2,900 Skilling Solutions Queensland customers have enrolled in a qualification with participating registered training organisations. Of these, over 1,550 have already achieved a qualification.





A one-stop-shop for training and career information

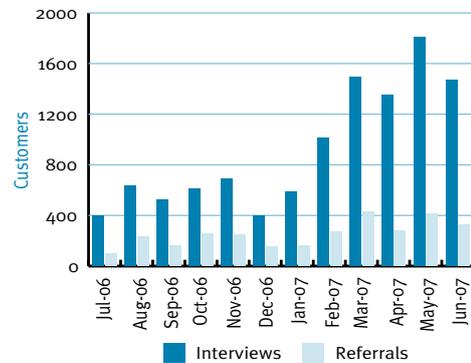
As part of the *Queensland Skills Plan - training that works for individuals*, Skilling Solutions Queensland is a one-stop-shop for information, helping people through the maze of training and career information.

During 2006-07, the Department allocated \$12.3 million in funding to Skilling Solutions Queensland centres. This has given Queenslanders across the State unprecedented access to information on training and career options.

An additional 10 centres opened between December 2006 and May 2007 at sites in Cairns, Gladstone, Bundaberg, Caboolture, Toowoomba, Southport, Ipswich, Capalaba, Chermside and Hervey Bay.

In 2006-07, Skilling Solutions Queensland assisted almost 14,000 people, taking nearly 11,000 of them through face-to-face interviews and referring more than 3,000 on to a registered training organisation for formal recognition of prior learning.

Figure 13: Skilling Solutions Queensland customer enquiries and interviews.



Focus on the future

The Department will support Skilling Solutions Queensland in 2007-08 through its commitment of a further \$13.4 million to continue the operation of the existing Skilling Solutions Queensland centres and a new mobile service that will assist people, particularly those in rural and remote communities.



Career service provides a real skilling solution



A visit to the Southport Skilling Solutions Queensland customer service centre was a worthwhile expedition for Alf Cosgrove. As a result, he not only gained a Diploma of Business and a Diploma Business (Frontline Management) but also landed a job – all in the space of a month.

After moving from New Zealand to Queensland, Alf was keen to get formal recognition of his skills and experience. While he had a wealth of experience and some industry-specific certificates he needed a generic qualification for job interviews.

“Because of my work in New Zealand, I knew that recognition of prior learning to gain qualifications could be possible, but didn’t know where to start. After making a few phone calls I was referred to Skilling Solutions Queensland,” he said.

“Not knowing what to expect, I turned up to my appointment formally dressed and with all my documents, but the pre-assessment process was informal, relaxed and friendly.

“By the end of the appointment I had an idea of which qualifications I might obtain through recognition of prior learning and the next steps I needed to take.”

Alf Cosgrove’s Skilling Solutions Queensland experience was a great example of how the service is pointing people in the right direction to attain skills and qualifications to help improve their job prospects.

“I would encourage anyone who is interested in changing careers, re-entering the workforce or up-skilling their workforce to contact Skilling Solutions Queensland.”

Recognising Queenslanders’ skills and knowledge

Upfront recognition avoids people being trained in areas where they are already competent, making training faster and more rewarding.

Queenslanders who may not have studied or trained formally in a particular field may have industry-relevant work skills or knowledge, paid or unpaid work experience, community work experience, and/or life experience.

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) or recognition of current competencies, is the formal recognition of a person’s current skills and knowledge, no matter how, when or where the learning occurred.

Recognition of prior learning could lead to a full or part qualification, and avoid duplication of training. Upfront recognition is being used to identify the relevant gap training needed to complete a qualification. It also provides a pathway to higher qualifications and is helping skilled Queenslanders to accelerate through their qualifications.

During 2006-07, \$4.4 million was invested to further support increases in the use of RPL and credit transfer while maintaining assessment integrity and streamlining services for clients.

This resulted in 11,800 students having their prior skills or competencies recognised through RPL, accelerating these students along their training and accreditation pathway.

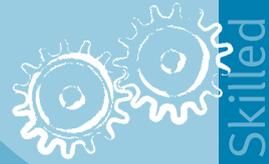
Skills First

Action 19 of the *Queensland Skills Plan*, the Skills First initiative has the key objectives of building the training system’s capacity to deliver quality recognition of skills for enterprises and individuals, and to drive best practice.

The Skills First initiative streamlines skills assessment processes and ensures that assessment is practical, efficient and relevant. The initiative is increasing Queensland’s skills profile.

In driving this new approach in 2006-07, the Department achieved many successful outcomes ranging from the appointment of 13 RPL coordinators across TAFE institutes and the Australian Agricultural College Corporation to embedding RPL targets into performance agreements for TAFE institutes.

To support training providers to implement the use of the new Skills First RPL tools, professional development was contracted for delivery at all TAFE institutes, up-skilling teachers of both private and public training providers.



Vocational education and training pathways and lifelong learning

The Department is committed to developing a culture of ongoing learning and skilling in the community, with targeted strategies that address Queensland's skills shortages and deliver enhanced skills for the *Smart State*.

Up-skilling with greater access to higher level qualifications

Reforms to the *Queensland Skills Plan* are providing better ways of supporting individuals to access training and develop their skills.

In 2006-07, the Department committed \$7.4 million to fund 3,500 additional training places. This is part of the \$119 million allocated over four years to fund an additional 14,000 higher level, associate professional and professional worker training places.

A total of 62,836 unique students undertook higher level training through publicly funded mechanisms during 2006-07. This level of achievement represented sound progress, with over 3,200 more students participating at these levels than the 2004-05 base year figure.

From TAFE to university

TAFE Queensland institutes have a variety of articulation arrangements in place with a number of universities. They are providing a single point of entry for achievement of qualifications across the vocational education and training and higher education sectors.

Southbank Institute of Technology continues to develop new graduate vocational certificates, diplomas and innovative training pathways with universities. These products encapsulate para-professional training and post-trade studies in speciality areas which include health, biotechnology, sport and recreation, hospitality, arts and entertainment.

The Gold Coast Institute of TAFE has in place a significant suite of innovative pathways with universities in Queensland and New South Wales covering business, design, creative industries, humanities, tourism and hospitality.

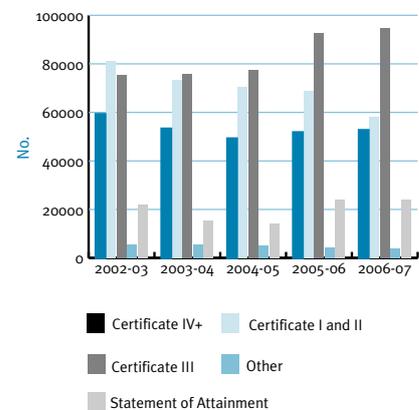
Continuing to develop leading-edge facilities to foster pathways to higher level qualifications

The development of the Southbank Education and Training Precinct, the Government's \$550 million first Public Private Partnership, continued through 2006. Construction of the Precinct is expected to be completed on time by the end of 2008.

The project includes the construction of 10 new, and four refurbished, educational buildings and the fitting out of these buildings with furniture and equipment.

In January 2007, the Southbank Institute of Technology gained access to the new extended Food and Technology building, followed in June by the completion of the Design Technology building and Southbank Central facility. Added facilities included: auditoriums, retail activities facilities, library and eLearning centres that offer larger, more flexible teaching and learning spaces.

Figure: 14 Government-funded (01) students by qualification level



Southbank Central

Queensland in the forefront of addressing trades skills shortages

Information published by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) reports that for the year ended 31 December 2006, Queensland led the nation in increasing the uptake of traditional apprenticeships, with a 26.5 percent growth in this category – more than three times the national average. Overall, almost 18,000 Queenslanders took up an apprenticeship during the 12 months to the end of December 2006.

Figure 15: Number of Apprentices in-training in skills shortage areas

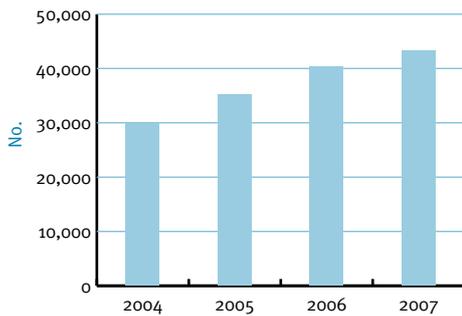
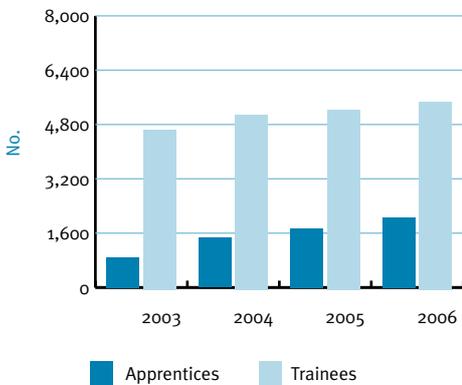


Figure 16: School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeship Commencements from 2003-2006.



Training places for the trades

To meet the diverse needs of business and industry and to respond to the changing profile of the State's workforce:

- \$8.5 million was provided to create an additional 7,953 trades training places to the end of June 2007, in line with the *Queensland Skills Plan* objective of creating 17,000 extra trades training places by 2010
- 40 manufacturing technology cadetships were funded. These cadets are currently working toward achieving a Certificate IV in Manufacturing Technology through two years of work-based training.

Improving the attractiveness of the trades

To make apprenticeships a more attractive career option, the Department has implemented a range of initiatives to address those factors inhibiting their take-up and completion. In 2006-07 the Department:

- allocated \$1.7 million to improve the attractiveness of apprenticeships, including the establishment of 'Apprentice Info', a customer contact centre providing comprehensive information on apprenticeships to stakeholders
- introduced a new concept of expected durations for 52 apprenticeships
- reduced the nominal term of 23 apprenticeships from four to three years
- launched the *Train to Retain* action plan to help employers build safe and productive workplaces with improved reporting systems that support apprentices to complete their training.

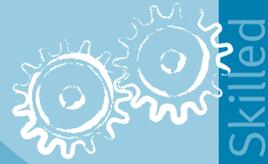
Apprentices and trainees in training

As at 30 June 2007 there were 87,200 apprentices and trainees in training, comprising 45,500 apprentices and 41,700 trainees. This represents growth in training numbers of more than 3,500 since 30 June 2006.

Focus on the future

In 2007-08, the Department has committed to:

- allocate \$156.6 million to the User Choice program to address apprenticeship and traineeship training in priority industry areas, particularly the traditional trades
- begin increasing the number of commencements of school-based apprenticeships and traineeships (SATs) to 12,400 over the next three years.



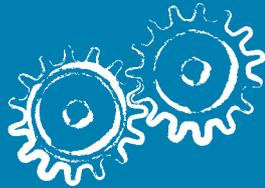
Queensland is leading the nation in the uptake of school-based apprenticeships and traineeships. Research conducted by NCVET shows that in 2006, Queensland accounted for more than 40 percent of all school-based apprenticeship and traineeship commencements in Australia.

An increase of seven percent in school-based apprenticeships and traineeships

During 2006, over 7,500 young Queenslanders commenced a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship (SAT).

Strong growth in the take-up of the school-based apprenticeship and traineeship program reflects the high degree of participation in the initiative by industry, schools and the broader community.

The duration of 23 apprenticeships was reduced from four years to three, helping to make the trades a more attractive career option.



Booking in for her future

When Sarah Rigg volunteered to work at her school's library during lunchtime, she didn't realise that it was the first step in changing her career plans.

Shortly after volunteering, Sarah was offered a school-based traineeship, an opportunity that she jumped at. She is now studying towards a Certificate III in Library and Information Services on top of her school studies and plans to pursue a career as a Teacher-Librarian when she finishes school.

Sarah said that her school-based traineeship is a challenge, but it has been one of the best things to happen to her at school.

"I initially didn't realise that as an OP eligible student, I could do a traineeship," Sarah said.

"But they are a great idea. They give you a chance to try out a potential career while you are at school.

Also, by gaining a qualification at school, you can go straight on to work after school already qualified, if you want a break from study before university."

This doesn't apply to Sarah. The Palm Beach Currumbin State High School Vice-Captain, and state finalist in the Queensland Training Awards, plans to go to university in 2008 to study a Bachelor of Arts, followed by a Diploma of Senior Education.

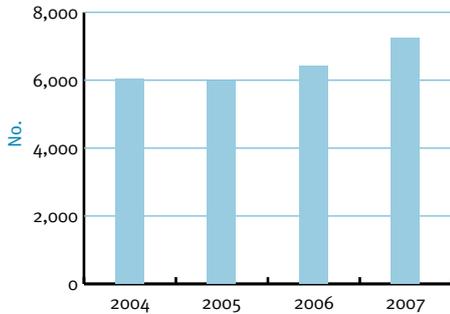


Not just for the young

To meet the demand for skilled tradespeople, mature-age people are being encouraged to participate in vocational education and training. These students, aged 45 years and older, are an important focus of the training system.

Queensland employers have good reason to employ mature-aged workers for apprenticeships and traineeships because they are highly flexible in their working hours and have good coping skills when faced with change. In general, adult apprentices and trainees bring a range of skills to the workplace making them real assets to the workforce.

Figure 17: Apprentice and Trainee in-training aged 45 years and over



Supporting apprenticeship and traineeship training

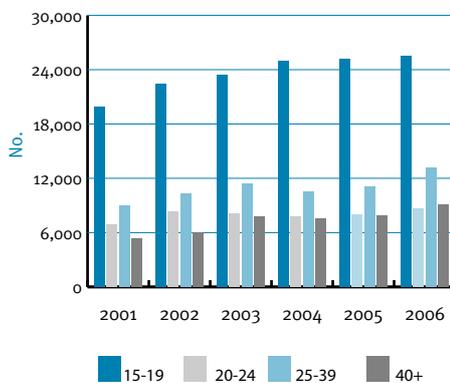
The Department allocated \$139.5 million to the User Choice program in 2006-07 to address apprenticeship and traineeship training in Queensland's priority industry areas. The User Choice program aims to address skills shortages, particularly in the traditional trades, and to improve training provision for qualifications in areas where there are skills shortages.

Approximately 74 percent of this investment went to support trade skills through apprenticeship training. TAFE Queensland is a major training provider, receiving approximately 78 percent of total apprenticeship trade training funding.

The Department's field officers, located in 18 towns and cities across Queensland, played a key role in supporting apprentices, trainees and their employers to achieve successful training outcomes.

With a sharp focus on supporting the retention of apprentices and early completion of apprenticeships in skills shortage areas, these field officers undertook nearly 4,500 workplace visits during the year.

Figure 18: Apprentice and Trainee Commencements by Age Group 15 years to 40+ years



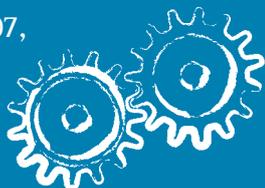
Cutting-edge training facilities for trades training

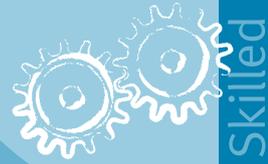
SkillsTech Australia is Queensland's new specialist institute for trades and technician training, producing skilled graduates who will play their part in addressing the State's skills shortages.

During 2006-07, SkillsTech Australia continued to establish 'lead' institute status in the development and delivery of training throughout Queensland for automotive, building and construction, manufacturing and engineering, and electrical and electronics.

SkillsTech Australia is building collaborative partnerships with industry and private providers to achieve best practice across Queensland's training system. The Institute also has responsibility for curriculum management, development and distribution of training support materials, and coordinating product quality and consistency.

To the end of June 2007, an additional 7,953 trades training places were created.





SkillsTech achievements during 2006-07 include:

- in excess of 400 students currently undertaking training at the Acacia Ridge training centre
- further development and planning for SkillsTech Australia's presence at Acacia Ridge, Eagle Farm, Townsville and Mackay
- focus on high-quality, specialist training for automotive, building and construction, manufacturing and engineering, and electrical/electronic industries.



SkillsTech Australia Acacia Ridge Campus

Focus on the future

The Department will continue to support the achievements of Queenslanders with training facilities and opportunities that enhance lifelong learning, including:

- providing \$294 million in funding for TAFE institutes to support the delivery of priority training for Queensland's industries, communities and population groups at the State, regional and local levels
- investing \$17.3 million in the development of new SkillsTech Australia facilities to address trade skills shortages in Mackay and Townsville in 2007-08, and commence the three-year, \$53.5 million redevelopment of the Eagle Farm campus in Brisbane
- investing in information and communication technologies (ICT) projects funded in excess of \$27.5 million to upgrade TAFE Queensland's ICT infrastructure.

Putting the skills into SkillsTech

Apprentice Daniel McManus knows the value of having the right skills. Despite the skills shortage and his desire to be a carpenter, he found it difficult to secure an apprenticeship without first learning skills. However, only a few months into a pre-vocational course at Yeronga Institute of TAFE – now SkillsTech – Daniel had developed job-ready skills and found an employer ready to take him on.

Now approaching the end of his apprenticeship, he is enjoying the benefits of SkillsTech's new facility at Acacia Ridge.

Under the one roof, he can polish his skills in suspended concrete formwork, stair-making and advanced roofing, or any of the other skills an apprentice needs to master his craft.

With state-of-the-art facilities and a proactive approach, SkillsTech Australia is working with apprentices like Daniel – and their employers – to develop new and more effective ways of delivering trades training.



Pathways from school to industry

Schools and industry are working together to provide more opportunities for young Queenslanders to experience direct pathways from learning to earning. The Department is assisting some of Queensland's best and brightest Year 10 to 12 students to fast-track their learning by working with universities to offer them a unique learning experience. Student demand for more integrated learning pathways is also being addressed through direct industry involvement with education and training.

Enhancing school-to-industry relationships

The Industry School Engagement Strategy aims to enhance industry-school relationships and labour skills solutions. This will mean a better match between industry skilling needs and the educational aspirations and outcomes of Queensland's young people. The following initiatives continued in 2006-07:

- Aerospace Project – 421 students participating in the trial of the innovative subject of Aerospace Studies
- Official opening of the \$6.3 million Queensland College of Wine Tourism at Stanthorpe. The Department also delivered a range of educational and work experience opportunities for students through the seven Wine Industry Gateway Schools. Sixty-six students engaged in school-based traineeships in the wine tourism industry and 20 teachers upgraded their qualifications to enable them to deliver education and training in Wine

Tourism. Strong partnerships have emerged between the seven schools and key Queensland wineries.

- Trade Immersion Program - Delivered general construction training for students in Years 11 and 12 as part of the partnership with industry and Miami and Merrimac State High Schools
- ICT Gateway Schools Project - Designed two new industry-certified courses to maximise employment opportunities in information technologies and related industries for students, with eight students undertaking a school-based traineeship through the Project
- Queensland Minerals and Energy Academy was launched in Gladstone, Moranbah and Mount Isa. The first scholarships and awards were presented to students who demonstrated an interest in the minerals and energy sector. The first Right Direction Teachers Award was presented for innovation in curriculum development in a minerals and energy context.

A gateway to future employment

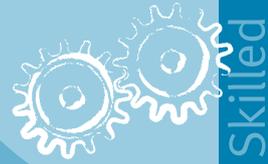
The Queensland Minerals and Energy Academy (QMEA) provides students with clear pathways into one of the State's most innovative and economically important sectors.

The Academy has been developed in response to the skills shortages in the minerals and energy sector, which is currently experiencing significant growth.

The project involves three hubs, each with 'gateway' high schools to develop and promote curricular structures and allow students to access a broad range of minerals and energy-related learning and career opportunities.

The partnership with minerals and energy companies provides students with work experience, on-site activities and opportunities to take up traineeships and apprenticeships.





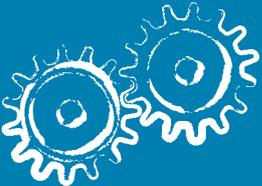
A direct pathway to careers in the aviation industry

A new era in education took off from January 2007 with the opening of Australia's first dedicated aviation high school. 'Aviation High' is the hub for the 17 gateway schools involved in the Department's Aerospace Project.

The Government will invest \$18 million over the next four years which includes over \$6 million for upgrading facilities at Aviation High in Clayfield, Brisbane. Construction work will commence in 2007-08.

Students study core subjects such as English and Mathematics but will also have the opportunity to pursue a range of aviation-related subjects. These subjects are designed to support a variety of aviation careers - everything from caterers and flight attendants to pilots, meteorologists, aviation lawyers and engineers.

The new school will work with Aviation Australia, universities and training providers to offer students pathways to careers in the aviation and aerospace industry in Queensland.



Aviation High is Australia's first dedicated aviation high school. This school will further the relationship between the Department and the aviation industry.

Focus on the future

- In 2007-08 the first of five School Industry Trade Centres will be established as part of an \$11.8 million, four-year initiative to address skills shortages in sectors such as marine and allied trade, engineering, manufacturing and mining.

Beginning a career in the mining sector

Queensland Minerals and Energy Academy (QMEA) student Matthew was awarded a \$2,500 scholarship as part of the drive to address the skills shortages in the booming resources sector.

The QMEA has played a significant role in fostering the interest of young students like Matthew in the minerals and energy sector. The QMEA Scholarship was sponsored by BHP Billiton Mitsubishi Alliance (BMA) which operates nine mines in the Bowen Basin. The scholarship will help Matthew, an Anglican Church Grammar School student, to undertake his first year of a Bachelor of Engineering (Mining) degree at the University of Queensland.

Matthew chose a career in mining engineering because, through the QMEA, he became aware of the excellent career prospects offered by the sector as well as the opportunity to travel, live and work in small communities in Australia and overseas.



BMA Vice-President Human Resources, John Stephans and Matthew

Creating a skilled workforce is a shared responsibility

The Department continues to develop a range of partnerships with community, industry, business and all levels of Government to design and deliver high-quality programs and initiatives which achieve value for the Government's investment in skills development.

Identify and develop practical solutions

Skills Formation Strategies are designed to help industries and communities understand and address the issues associated with skills and labour shortages. They work by bringing together industry, communities, Government, regulatory authorities and registered training and education providers to work collaboratively to support workforce planning and development.

The initiative began with four pilot programs in 2003-04, growing to 17 strategies by the beginning of 2006. The *Queensland Skills Plan* identified a further 23 strategies for development from 2006-09 to be established across key industries.

Currently, there are 22 skills formation strategies operating across the State. The Department invested \$3 million in 2006-07 to continue to support the initiative.

Twelve new strategies have been established in: civil construction; film, TV and digital content; tourism and hospitality; food processing; child protection; information and communication technologies; fibre composites; biotechnology; agribusiness; local government; tourism on the Sunshine Coast; and manufacturing in the Western Corridor.

Driving leadership in workforce development

Centres of Excellence play a key role in leading industry and Government responses to vocational education and training, skills development and labour market issues.

The centres provide a true partnership between Government and key industry sectors to ensure that workforce development issues, including strategic skill needs, training priorities, suitable training products and ideal training delivery methods, are developed collaboratively.

In 2006-07, the Department provided \$6 million to establish three new Centres of Excellence.

- The Building and Construction Industry Training Fund (BCITF) was transitioned to become the Building and Construction Centre of Excellence, trading under the name Construction Skills Queensland.
- QMI Solutions Limited established an arm within its operations to undertake the role of the Centre of Excellence for the manufacturing and engineering industry. It is trading as Manufacturing Skills Queensland.
- The management committee for the energy centre of excellence has been formed and is working to operationalise Energy Skills Queensland during 2007.

These three new bodies complement the existing Centres of Excellence – Aviation Australia and the Mining Industry Skills Council.

Providing strategic advice on industry skills needs

Industry Skills Alliances have been established as autonomous organisations made up of major industry stakeholders, unions and employers that provide strategic advice to Government about industry skills needs.

During 2006-07, through an investment of \$1 million, five Industry Skills Alliances were established in the areas of tourism and hospitality, community services and health, sport and recreation, automotive and creative industries.

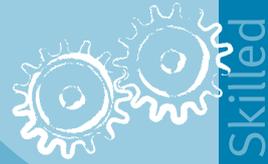
Industry Skills Alliances provide Government with strategic advice on the skilling needs of these industries and work with the Department to progress the skills agenda.

The Department is also leveraging off existing relationships that other government agencies have with communities and industry. Two Industry/Government Skilling Partnerships have been established with the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries and Queensland Transport, for the rural and transport industries respectively. These partnerships are building on existing relationships between industry and other Government agencies to address industry skilling and workforce development needs through a whole-of-Government approach.

Focus on the future

\$4.5 million in funding will continue the operations of the three new Centres of Excellence during 2007-08.

Further Skills Formation Strategies will be developed in areas such as sport and recreation, heavy vehicle repairs, manufacturing, sustainable energy and transport, and a direct engagement arrangement will be investigated in water management.



Additional direct engagement arrangements have been established with a number of industry representative organisations. Direct engagement obtains advice on workforce development and skilling requirements for industries including racing, retail and personal services, forestry, security and local government.

Western Downs community connects to tackle skills shortages

The Western Downs Skills Formation Strategy is making a real difference to the way the local community around Dalby tackles the unique challenges faced by rural Queensland businesses.

The strategy raises awareness and brings like businesses together to talk about common issues they are all facing especially when trying to attract people to the area. Equally important is to communicate to school leavers and others what businesses do within the community by visiting local schools as well as offering work experience to local people.

A local business attributes its recent recruitment success directly to the collaborative work local businesses are undertaking through this skills formation strategy.

Departmental officers continue to build on the success and achievements of the skills formation strategy to ensure that when the reins are handed over to the community a sustainable strategy is in place for the future.

Partnerships to enhance skills

To develop immediate education and training solutions for the mining sector, Anglo Coal Mining, Central Queensland Institute of TAFE/TAFE Queensland Mining Services and Central Queensland University have combined forces. They have produced an industry-based Mining Technology Education Program incorporating the Associate Degree of Engineering (Mining).

The Anglo Coal Mining Associates program delivering high-quality training for staff is in its third year at Anglo Coal surface mine sites, and the second year at underground mine sites.

Mining Associates are required as part of the program to move around technical jobs at the mine site in order to obtain the experience required for the successful completion of their TAFE competencies and university studies. Associates are exposed to a full complement of skills in mine planning, scheduling, surveying, environmental monitoring, drafting, geology, coal quality, laboratory and geotechnical services.



Successful mentoring in the world of small business

Peter Baldwin says that strong leadership, good people skills and lots of experience are what it takes to be a successful mentor in the world of small business.

Peter owns a business consultancy on the Gold Coast and runs a successful company in the United States. Before settling in Australia, Peter operated a chain of fashion stores in South Africa.

Now in his role as mentor for Small Business Solutions, he is drawing on his experience as a successful business operator to work with 22 businesses in the South-East Queensland corner.

Mentors working in the program take a health check of the business they are paired with, looking at its skills, strengths and weaknesses. Key recommendations for growth areas are then negotiated between mentor and mentee and implemented to help the business to advance.

Small business owners can gain qualifications for their industry knowledge and experience through recognition of prior learning, or participate in tailored workshops to raise existing skills to achieve industry qualifications.

Chris Riordan, manager and owner of Paramount Engineering, enlisted in the program.

"I knew I had to get help from somebody who had firsthand experience with overseas competitors, otherwise the business could begin to suffer," Mr Riordan said.



Business looking for smart solutions

Small, home-based and micro businesses account for almost 97 percent of Queensland enterprises, and employ more than 610,000 Queenslanders.

Enhancing business skills, profitability and growth

Small business enterprises face unique challenges in accessing suitable and affordable training. Despite the range and diversity of training programs available, many supervisors, managers or owner-operators in small business enterprises have not traditionally accessed training. The challenge for the Department has been to develop solutions tailored to meet individual needs for training any time and anywhere.

In March 2007, Small Business Solutions, a key initiative of the *Queensland Skills Plan*, was launched through the Metropolitan South Institute of TAFE. The initiative is designed to enhance business skills, profitability and the growth of small businesses across Queensland.

Small Business Solutions enables small businesses to access personalised one-on-one mentoring from experienced and qualified small business professionals on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis. Services include skills diagnosis on business performance and strategies to take it to the next level.

Qualified business mentors are actively engaged with small business owners across Brisbane and Townsville. Initial engagement with enterprises has exceeded the pilot target of 100 small businesses, with about 200 businesses already involved in 2006-07. In the first three months of this initiative 27 small business owners are already on target to receive a Diploma in Business.