

JOBS — TRAINING

593. Ms C.M. ROWE to the Premier:

Before I ask my question, on behalf of the member for Willagee, I acknowledge the students and teachers from Blue Gum Montessori School in the public gallery.

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to creating more jobs for Western Australians and delivering the strongest economy in the country. Will the Premier update the house on the work undertaken by this government to not only create jobs and deliver record employment, but also ensure that Western Australians have the skills necessary to meet the demands of business and industry?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I thank member for Belmont for the question. Today the Australian Bureau of Statistics released the jobs figures for September. I urge every eastern states commentator who regularly attacks Western Australia to take note: Western Australia is not locked up. We are a free community—a free society. Our economy is not struggling. We are not holding back the nation. We are supporting the nation. We are driving the nation. We are producing the revenue and income that is being poured into the COVID-19-positive states of New South Wales and Victoria. Today's figures show that Western Australia continues to lead the country through our investment in economic recovery and by protecting the state from COVID-19. We have delivered the strongest jobs market of anywhere in Australia.

Today's jobs figures show that the unemployment rate in Western Australia is now down to 4.1 per cent. That is the lowest unemployment rate in Australia. It is the lowest rate in nearly 10 years. We now have 1.427 million Western Australians in work. In September, 3 580 new jobs were created. Since the WA Labor government came to office we have created 123 100 new jobs. That is a record that is better than any other state in Australia and I expect better than any other government in Western Australian history. But what it does mean, of course, is that there are pressures out there in the labour market. That is why we held the WA skills summit in late July. We are responding to the issues raised at the summit. This week we announced more low-fee courses at TAFE colleges, particularly in child care, aged and disability care, and the civil construction sector so that we can get more people into those areas.

I was at a childcare centre in the member for Mirrabooka's electorate the other day and the childcare workers are great people. The cost of a diploma in early childhood education and care has been reduced by \$7 200 from nearly \$10 000 to around \$2 000. Obviously, the previous government increased the cost of that course to over \$10 000. That is a very important reform we are putting in place. Under the last Liberal–National government TAFE fees went up in many courses by more than 500 per cent. We froze fees when we came to office and we have reduced fees for 180 high priority courses by up to, and more than for some, 72 per cent across the state. A certificate IV in hospitality has been reduced by \$3 000; a certificate IV in transport and logistics has been reduced by \$1 500; and a diploma of surveying has been reduced by over \$3 500. A range of others have been reduced.

The government is ensuring that we have the strongest economy and strongest jobs market in Australia, training Western Australians for these jobs more than ever before by making TAFE more affordable and more available for ordinary citizens.