

Hon Pierre Yang; Hon Donna Faragher; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Martin Pritchard; Hon Stephen Dawson

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## **TAFE FEES**

### *Motion*

**HON PIERRE YANG (South Metropolitan)** [1.03 pm]: According to standing order 57(c), I advise that I have Hon Samantha Rowe's consent to move the motion that she gave notice of last week. It gives me great pleasure to move —

That this house notes that the reduction in TAFE student fees for high-priority courses supports access to affordable training in targeted areas of projected jobs growth and responds to emerging skills needs.

I understand that Hon Samantha Rowe is on urgent parliamentary business. Therefore, I have the honour of moving this very important, thoughtful and timely motion. Education is one of the most important aspects for a human being. As we know, a good education can really change a person's life and future for the better. I believe that education is a lifelong process. As long as we live, we never stop learning and educating ourselves, and broadening our experience. That is why I support good institutions such as TAFE for providing education to the good people of Western Australia. I also note that TAFE stands for technical and further education. It is very relevant. It is further education for people who want to learn more things, and further educate and upskill themselves.

TAFE is very important to Western Australia and the Western Australian economy. It predominantly provides vocational training for many Western Australians in fields such as business, hospitality, tourism, construction, engineering, information technology and community work. Students trained at TAFE will become part of the backbone of Western Australia's workforce. Therefore, TAFE is very important to the Western Australian economy and makes a tremendous contribution to the future of Western Australia.

If I may, I want to share a little of my personal experience. After my university days, I was hoping to learn a few more things and further educate myself. Therefore, I decided to sign up and do a couple of courses at TAFE. I studied real estate sales agent and property manager courses part-time at TAFE while I was working as an articled clerk in the legal profession. My experience there was overwhelmingly positive. Industry leaders came to our class and taught us what they knew. They shared their wisdom and knowledge about the profession they loved dearly. They wanted other people to share and learn what they knew. I had a very good time and learnt a few things about the real estate industry. Obviously, I was not going into the real estate industry, but I learnt a few things and I found that TAFE was very valuable as an institution that provides education to a real-life standard with contemporary teachings of the industry. It is not a place where people learn theories, but it is completely different in real life. It is a place where people learn what is happening every day in that industry. Therefore, my experience was very positive. I want to commend TAFE, the teaching staff and the administration staff for what they do for students day in, day out.

I like to be positive, but I have to say this: the former Barnett government mismanaged TAFE. Its disorganised approach to TAFE education saw the abandonment of the wonderful name TAFE with replacements such as Polytechnic West and various institutes of technology and training. In my view, if we have a successful brand such as TAFE, we should keep it. We should be loud and proud about what we have. I think it is wonderful that this government reinstated the wonderful brand TAFE in the training sector for Western Australians.

Also, we should not forget about the exorbitant increase in student fees. On average, it was a 510 per cent increase. I want to draw the house's attention to a few particular cases. The advanced diploma of engineering technology cost \$1 252 back in 2013. That was increased to a whopping \$10 989, which was a 778 per cent increase. A certificate III in education support cost only \$626 in 2013, but in 2016 it was increased to \$3 050, which represented a 387 per cent increase. TAFE became a place that was out of reach for many Western Australians. A direct result of that decision was a huge drop in enrolment rates. The training data from 2013 to 2016 showed a 24.5 per cent drop in the number of people going to TAFE. That figure had a real implication for Western Australians and the Western Australian economy. It meant that many young Western Australians who wanted to go to TAFE to further their study, to learn new skills and to learn more stuff for their day jobs so they could make a better contribution to the community, and also learn more stuff to earn a better income for their families, were not able to do that.

Another direct consequence of that meant that people in the business sector who wanted to employ Western Australians for their occupation, for the businesses that they were in, could not find skilled workers. A terrible consequence was that a lot of young and mature-age Western Australians who wanted to learn and wanted to get other jobs could not because they could not learn. We also had businesses that wanted to employ but could not. If I may, I will quote Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign slogan, "The economy, stupid!" or sometimes it is misquoted as "It's the economy, stupid!" I think any government that pays off the economy will not last long because the economy is so important for every aspect of its citizens' lives and the community itself. It links to the welfare and the aspiration of a community, and also to the harmony of a community. A community's future hinges on the education and the prosperity of that community.

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The McGowan Labor team had a plan. It had a plan for jobs for Western Australians. Part of its plan for jobs was about TAFE. As I have mentioned, as soon as it was elected, the McGowan Labor government brought back the TAFE brand.

**Hon Peter Collier:** It did not. Get your facts right!

**Hon PIERRE YANG:** I have not finished what I was saying; if only the Leader of the Opposition would allow me to finish.

This government has unified the TAFE brand. A few institutions still operated under the name TAFE, but during the last phase of the Barnett government, many institutions that were previously known as TAFE were no longer called TAFE. In May 2017, less than two months after coming into power, the McGowan Labor government delivered on its promise to freeze TAFE fees. The TAFE fee freeze allowed a lot more Western Australians to enrol in TAFE courses, to upskill and to have a better chance of getting a decent job to provide for their families and also grow our economy.

The Lower Fees, Local Skills initiative has delivered a 50 per cent fee reduction for 34 selected high-priority qualifications. That will apply from 1 January this year until 31 December 2021. That supports many important sectors of the Western Australian economy, including aged care and disability care, Metronet, and the defence, hospitality and tourism industries. It is a fact that the number of enrolments is up.

Compared with the enrolment numbers in 2019, an additional 146 students have enrolled in a certificate III in engineering–fabrication trade. That represents an increase of 85 per cent. A certificate IV in cybersecurity has seen an additional 114 enrolments, also representing an 85 per cent increase. Enrolment numbers in a certificate III in early childhood education are up by 191 students, or 40 per cent. The number of students enrolled in a certificate IV in preparation for health and nursing studies is up 123. That represents a 31 per cent increase.

An article titled “TAFE fee drop sees student numbers rise” from the *Sound Telegraph* of 18 February was republished on *The West Australian* website yesterday. It relates to the Rockingham campus of TAFE, which is in my electorate. That article reported —

Preliminary data shows a 50 per cent fee cut to certain TAFE courses has resulted in a big jump in students at Rockingham’s campus.

...

Department of Training and Workforce Development director general Anne Driscoll said the lower fees were having a strong impact in Rockingham.

That is in the south metropolitan region. I am sure that is across the whole state, as we have seen. Anne Driscoll was quoted as saying —

“This will benefit the local Rockingham and Kwinana area by making vocational education and training more affordable for thousands of students to train locally and develop skills in areas of jobs growth in Western Australia.

It is also worthwhile to note that course fees were capped at \$400 for concession students under the age of 25. That fee is capped at \$1 200 for non-concession students.

I also want to note a few other initiatives of the McGowan Labor government. I refer to the jobs and skills employer incentive that was launched on 1 July 2019. That provides eligible businesses with a payment of up to \$8 500 to employ apprentices or new entrant trainees. That has already seen a boost in the number of apprentices and trainees. The enterprise training program and the pre-traineeship program were also launched on 1 July 2019. Those programs focus on boosting the social assistance and allied health workforce and skills development for fast-growing sectors. Jobs and Skills Centres were rolled out across the state to assist jobseekers, and also for training. The priority start policy was introduced to help develop a strong training culture in the building and construction sector and to help create jobs for local apprentices and trainees.

The government has been very busy in this sector while it was trying to deal with the financial difficulty left by the last government. The government should be commended for its efforts in looking after the important aspects of Western Australians lives, including ensuring they have decent further education, should they wish to pursue it. I wish to add my personal thanks to the Minister for Education and Training, Hon Sue Ellery. Because of her leadership in this space, we have seen a steady improvement in the sector, which was left in difficulty—I could use more colourful words but I shall refrain—and resulted in many students who wanted to pursue further education not being able to do so. I think Western Australia is truly lucky to have, I would say, the best Minister for Education and Training in Hon Sue Ellery.

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I conclude by thanking Hon Samantha Rowe for this very thoughtful motion, and I thank her for entrusting me to move it on her behalf. TAFE is very important to Western Australians and to the future of the economy of Western Australia. I commend this motion to the house.

**HON DONNA FARAGHER (East Metropolitan)** [1.20 pm]: I also rise to speak to the motion before us. I appreciate that Hon Samantha Rowe is away on urgent parliamentary business. Her motion asks us to note the reduction in TAFE student fees for high-priority courses and how that supports access to affordable training in targeted areas of projected jobs growth and responds to emerging skills needs. As the opposition spokesperson for this area, I agree with Hon Samantha Rowe and Hon Pierre Yang that increasing training opportunities, particularly in areas of projected growth and emerging need, is absolutely important; there will be no difference of opinion from me on that. I am also very acutely aware that this motion is particularly narrow in scope and, quite obviously from some of the comments put forward by Hon Pierre Yang, there is a particular reason for that. My interest in this area is more particularly in some of the current issues and challenges impacting the training sector more generally. This motion provides an opportunity for us to talk a little more generally about these issues. I say that in the context of the fact that training is covered at both state and federal levels.

This motion focuses quite particularly on the increase in TAFE enrolments the government says it is now seeing as a result of the reduction in TAFE fees. Indeed, I think the minister put out a press release last week identifying some preliminary data that shows a 20 per cent increase in enrolments across a range of high-priority areas. Hon Pierre Yang mentioned those areas; they include early childhood education and care, cybersecurity, and aged and disability care. These areas are important; I agree that they require focus. As a former Minister for Disability Services, this is an area that I continue to take particular interest in. It is absolutely fair to say that if it is not already, it is very close to being the fastest-growing sector. We have seen the advent of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, and with the continued rollout of that scheme across our state there are many opportunities for people to become both skilled and upskilled in this critical area. We absolutely need to make sure that the workforce is skilled to provide quality services to people with disability. If I recall my statistics correctly—if the Minister for Disability Services were here he would correct me if I am wrong—at the point of full rollout of the NDIS in this state, we expect around 40 000 people to be eligible for some form of support in the disability services sector. That figure was originally around 25 000, so we are going to see a massive increase in the number of people who will be eligible for some sort of support. Having a skilled workforce in this area will be a particular need.

The motion asks us to note the enrolment figures, and I will also be interested to see the number of course completions and employment outcomes. That is a key issue for us from a training perspective. We can have the training, but what is the outcome after that? Looking at the published figures, we continue to see declines on a range of fronts. For example, the latest Western Australian state-based statistics, released by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research, for apprentices and trainees in the 2019 June quarter showed that 29 445 people were in training. That is obviously as at 30 June 2019. I think the figures were released in December 2019. That is down 7.2 per cent on the figure for June 2018. With regard to commencements, we see that there were 17 140, which again is down 3.5 per cent on the figure for June 2018. Specific detail is also provided on increases and decreases in commencements, cancellations and withdrawals, completions, and people in training. It is quite an interesting read.

Equally, the Department of Training and Workforce Development has also shown that there are continued reductions on the trainee side of things. The minister will say that some of that is perhaps in part because of changes that were made to payroll tax exemptions last year or the year before; that may have had an impact on it, but we continue to see declines. There do seem to be significant issues impacting on the sector, and economic conditions obviously play a key role in employers' willingness or ability to take on apprentices, for example. We see continued declines in building approvals and general construction, and that has an impact as well. As I mentioned at the beginning of my contribution, decisions taken by governments at both state and commonwealth level also have impacts. There are, of course, other issues.

A couple of years ago the State Training Board was asked—I think by the minister—to undertake industry-wide consultation with the training sector to find out the state of play. It produced a report titled “Strategies to Grow Apprenticeships and Traineeships in Western Australia”. That report identified a number of barriers within the VET system. This motion focuses on TAFE fees, but that report identified five key issues. They were —

**The apprenticeship system is complex and difficult to navigate.**

...

**There are cost pressures associated with the employment of apprentices and trainees.**

...

**Apprenticeships and traineeships are not widely promoted or understood by young people and the community.**

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**Businesses want greater flexibility from the training sector.**

...

**Jobs and Skills Centres need to collaborate with industry and VET stakeholders to support users of the system.**

I appreciate that the government will tell us—Hon Pierre Yang has already highlighted a couple of these matters—that since that report, it has responded to these issues through a variety of initiatives, and I acknowledge that there have been some in that regard, but I do not think the Minister for Education and Training would disagree with me that there are still challenges and complaints. Generally, when I meet people across the sector, issues surrounding what I call the unnecessary complexity of the training system are constantly raised. I again return to the report, which highlights a very useful, albeit confusing, organisational chart of the Western Australian VET sector. I am happy to table it; as members can see, it is fairly complex. I will quote from the report, because this is still relevant today —

Many employers reported their frustration in trying to navigate the numerous bodies and websites to obtain up-to-date, relevant information including the rules, regulations, the availability of courses, government subsidies/financial supports available or the fees or costs of hiring an apprentice or trainee. Many small and medium businesses, the bulk of employers of apprentices, advised that don't have time and don't have dedicated HR departments to get the information they need to make informed decisions. These businesses need to be able to obtain accurate information in a timely manner.

Other issues that have been raised with me, and that have been identified specifically by the WA State Training Board, are the lack of flexibility in certain circumstances, and the need for greater support for both employers and apprentices and trainees alike. Another issue is that the state and federal regulatory and administrative requirements can be quite overwhelming. I will say, as the shadow Minister for Education and Training, that issues are often raised with me about the Australian Skills Quality Authority requirements for review and reporting. Some of those issues are, one might say, fairly minor, but they require significant time and effort for training organisations to grapple with. We have also had situations in the past in which there has been a need for a more robust approach. We obviously want to make sure that we have a robust training sector.

I should say also that the language around vocational education and training, particularly in schools, needs to change. The report to which I have just referred highlights the fact that promoting the value of a vocational pathway is critical to improving outcomes in the VET system. It is unfortunate that there continues to be a sense that taking a vocational pathway is somehow not as significant as taking a university pathway. Therefore, we need to provide positive career advice to not only the students themselves but also their parents.

Another issue that has often been raised with me is the need to ensure that training needs are linked to industry needs. That was mentioned by Hon Pierre Yang in his contribution to the debate. This applies to both TAFEs and private providers. We have some very good examples of where those linkages are working. If there is strong industry involvement, the outcomes are generally very positive. As I have said, we can talk about training, but what is most important is the long-term employment outcomes for students who have completed those training options.

This motion refers only to TAFE. I understand that. However, we also need to recognise that a range of not-for-profit organisations and private providers also deliver quality vocational education and training across our state. At times we do not do hear enough about that. Those organisations form quite a large part of the training sector. I will give one example. I do so simply because I was there just this week. It is the Motivation Foundation, which is based in West Swan, in my electorate. I think the Minister for Education and Training has been out there.

**Hon Sue Ellery** interjected.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** I have seen the minister with a hard hat.

**Hon Sue Ellery:** Okay. Tell me where it is.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** It is in West Swan, at the old Culunga Aboriginal Community School. I have had the opportunity to visit that academy on a couple of occasions. I spoke at its graduation ceremony at the end of last year. I was there again on Monday with Hon Steve Irons, the federal Assistant Minister for Vocational Education, Training and Apprenticeships, and Hon Christian Porter, the local federal member for Pearce. For those who are not aware, the Motivation Foundation was formed in 2018. It evolved from the Ertech Construction Academy, which was established in 2007 or 2008 and was funded by Ertech Construction. The foundation's civil and mining academy is consistently showing very strong results. Its focus is on engaging young Western Australians from diverse, disengaged and disadvantaged backgrounds. It has involvement with more than 40 metropolitan and regional-based schools. The foundation delivers a certificate II in civil construction and provides graduates with scholarships and linkages with industry partners. That close relationship with industry is critically important.

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However, it is not just about the delivery of quality training. A key part of the foundation's success is the wraparound services that it provides in mentoring those young people and getting them job-ready. The foundation has a particular focus on not only the delivery of training, but also modelling positive behaviours among its students. That includes safety; punctuality—turning up on time; pride in their appearance and their work; and, importantly, self-responsibility. These are all the things that employers expect of their employees, and they are motivated to take on an employee who has those qualities that form part of the abilities they have learnt from their training, and also their everyday work ethic. The foundation also assists its students in practical ways, ranging from raising awareness about how to manage their finances to helping them get their driver's licence, because inevitably as part of their work they will need to drive from location to location.

The foundation also provides hands-on training. The model seems to work very well. In the past couple of years, the foundation has had a 100 per cent graduation rate. Equally, nearly 100 per cent of those graduates have found full-time work. We heard that a couple of former students are working on Barrow Island, and a couple have continued with further training. These are kids who have left school, and close to 100 per cent now have full-time work in the civil construction sector. In 2018, one of the students won the Beazley Medal for VET excellence. We have very good examples of organisations that are doing really good things in not only the delivery of training but also employment outcomes. That is what we absolutely need to focus on—we can provide the training, but what happens next?

I recognise the motion that was moved by Hon Pierre Yang. However, in saying that, there is no doubt that there will continue to be issues across the training sector. It remains overly complex. Further improvements need to be made. That work is certainly not done.

**HON ALISON XAMON (North Metropolitan)** [1.37 pm]: I rise to make a few comments on the motion moved by Hon Pierre Yang, which notes in particular that the reduction in TAFE fees has had a positive impact on enrolments. I am pleased to see that preliminary enrolments in the fee-reduced courses have risen by an average of 20 per cent. I would be interested to receive further data, especially about the previous year and the current year, for each of the qualifications, especially the trade qualifications in fabrication and mechanical. It is not only course fees that impact enrolment in those courses; availability and support from employers matters as well. Although the Pay-roll Tax Assessment Amendment (Exemption for Trainees) Bill 2018 has gone through Parliament and the incentives to employ apprentices have been extended to smaller employers, the stories that I have been hearing from adults—especially adult women—who are seeking apprenticeships is that we need to do a lot more in this space.

I also note the particular focus on aged care, child care and disability care in the reduced fee qualifications. These areas will be in desperate need of workers over the next few years. I support the priority that is being given to those courses. I fully anticipate that the results of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability will reflect the findings of the other major inquiries that have occurred into institutional care and the wellbeing of vulnerable people, and that it will find that not only are these qualifications necessary to ensure that there is a change in the way in which care is delivered, but also, because of the chronic underemployment in these areas, more people will need to be available to undertake that work. However, I have to say that the Greens are spectacularly unsurprised that reduced fees have correlated well with better participation. Fee-free TAFE continues to be a goal that we need to strive to get back to. For those people with very short memories, I remind them that in the past we had fee-free TAFE. As I have said in this place before, my first qualification was a certificate IV from TAFE, and I did not have to pay for it. That was my leg-up to permanent employment that I really needed. We know that the opportunities available through education and training must be made available to the widest possible number of people. Fees, especially the thousands of dollars that are now being charged at TAFE, actively discourage younger people from signing up for training. I have heard from many people who wanted to go back to TAFE to upgrade their qualifications but who had to give up that dream when they saw the cost. I even have a family member who is on unemployment benefits who wants to work in aged care but is too concerned about the impact that fees will have. That is a huge problem and, obviously, from an economic perspective, counterproductive. Education, as we know, continues to be one of the most powerful tools to lift people out of poverty, ensure full employment and open doors to better jobs. Ultimately, that means that people get to have better lives. When we price people out of courses or put them into unserviceable debt in order to gain entry, that is a far too high, utterly unnecessary and completely avoidable barrier. It disproportionately affects the people who are often most in need of the opportunities provided by education and training.

I want to talk about one particular area in which we are not doing very well in WA, and the statistics certainly show it. Speaking about disadvantaged and vulnerable people, we know that the Western Australian vocational education and training sector has a particularly low rate of participation by people with disabilities. The rate of participation in government-funded VET places for people with disability is just over half, or 61 per cent, of the rate of people without disabilities. About 5.5 per cent of the population of people without disability are engaged in government-funded training, and only 3.4 per cent of the population with disability are engaged in government-funded training. The

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Productivity Commission's most generous estimate of the proportion of government-funded VET students in WA with a disability is 7.8 per cent. The Australian average, which has been adjusted for non-reporting of disability status, is 10.1 per cent, with Victoria, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory having a substantially higher proportion of students with a disability. WA has the second-worst mark in Australia, with only the Northern Territory having a smaller proportion of government-funded students with a disability. One of the things that we can see in this data is that participation of people with disability is slowly increasing, but we are still very far behind New South Wales, which has a similar rate of participation in training, regardless of people's disability status, and states such as New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania, where 10 per cent or more of government-funded VET students are working with a disability. This is an enormous gap in Western Australia and points out how very badly we need to provide better training services to people with disability. The Productivity Commission's "Report on Government Services 2020" also pulled out figures to show how very poorly we are providing training to people with disability and how poorly we are doing in comparison with the other states.

Combined with already low enrolment rates, just over half the people with disability who manage to make it into the system complete their qualifications. As Hon Donna Faragher pointed out, the rates of completion are the second part of the equation. Of those completions, barely any—less than one per cent—are at a higher level than the previous highest level of qualification. Unsurprisingly, our VET students with disability have not improved their job prospects after training, which is also another part of the criteria that needs to be examined. When it comes to this measure, WA has the lowest rate in Australia, whereas we are comparable with New South Wales and Victoria for students without disability. That gives us an idea of just how far behind we are when it comes to that area.

I note that the government has said that it will upgrade facilities across the regions to ensure that training for National Disability Insurance Scheme jobs can take place. That is obviously welcome and desperately needed, but it is also essential that training creates better job chances for people with disability, not just work in that sector for people who will provide services. The data tells us quite clearly that we have a lot of work to do in this area. We need to have better systems to support and encourage people with disability into training, and also into training that assists in providing better job opportunities or better access to further education.

I also want to make some comments about the opportunities that are currently being lost in training for the transformation economy. As I repeatedly say in this place and will continue to repeatedly say, I want to bring up the need to dramatically transform our economy over the next 10 years, and for that transformation to continue. Of course, I am talking about the need to reduce our carbon emissions by 47 per cent in the next 10 years and get down to net zero emissions by 2050. As I said before, and will undoubtedly say again, this government's lack of vision in this area is a tragedy for this state and the country, and a spectacularly lost opportunity. It is not responsible to tout LNG jobs and open new training centres focused on LNG jobs, and to spend our precious training dollars on an industry that will pollute for decades. I encourage the government to do some solid work on what the WA economy will look like in two years' time, then in five years, and again in 10 years, because if we are ever going to get serious about reducing our impact on climate change, we will have to identify and support those industries that we will need, and we need to make sure that we are training people up for those jobs that those industries will need through the upcoming transition and beyond.

In response to the wording of this motion, I note that reducing fees so that people can access training is clearly an excellent plan, and I am pleased that the preliminary indications are that it is having an effect. We need to move to a completely fee-free training system; that should always be the ultimate goal. I encourage the government to not limit it to two years, and to extend the program beyond the current 34 identified qualifications. This is how people get into jobs. We build an economy by ensuring that access to training is easy, that people are able to change professions easily and upskill easily without the barrier of fees and the burden of debt associated with continuing their pathway to full employment.

I absolutely believe in the value of the TAFE system and that it is one of the best pathways to better opportunities for so many people, but I want to make sure that those opportunities are available to everybody. I want to ensure that my comments about the need to ensure appropriate training options for people with disability, specifically, are noted. I also note that a number of other target areas of the population need opportunities provided by ready access to training. That means that we need to have proper structures to assist people to find the right courses and also get the right supports so that they can achieve the right qualifications for them. Our training system will be integral to responding to the challenges of the near future, both social and environmental as well as from an economic perspective. As a result, TAFEs will need to be a priority area for attention and funding, because we think that our TAFEs deserve the funding and leadership required in order to respond to these challenges.

**HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition)** [1.49 pm]: I stand to make some comments on this motion. One of the great privileges of my life has been being the Minister for Training and Workforce Development for over four years, a role that I absolutely relished. One of the things that I wanted to do

**Extract from Hansard**

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right from the outset as training minister was to ensure that we raised the profile of training. In order to do that, I wanted to make sure that I gave the training providers as much autonomy as they could possibly need to raise the profile of training and that is why they had individual titles. It was the Barnett government that reverted to the TAFE model. Hon Pierre Yang will find that the media release from Tuesday, 15 April 2016 outlines that. Having said that, I will not engage too much in that rhetoric. I thank Hon Pierre Yang for a job well done, given that Hon Samantha Rowe is not too well today. It was a wonderful privilege to be the training minister.

I had been an educator all my life. I taught only academic subjects for 23 years. The most profound thing that I noticed during my entire time teaching and when I became training minister was that the profile of training needed to be raised. A child who does not want to go to university should not be made to feel diminished or insignificant, yet our education system has worked that way for generations. I wanted to make sure that we raised the profile of training. Our whole education system has been generated and led by the nose by universities; it literally has been led by universities. Everything has been generated towards university entrance. Back in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, we had junior and leaving certificates. If a student did not pass their junior certificate, they would do their leaving certificate to go to university. They would leave school and if they were lucky, they would get an apprenticeship or work in the bank. If a student was not going to do the academic subjects, they felt that somehow they were less significant. I could not believe it!

Unfortunately, it still exists today. I can assure members that in the education system and a lot of our schools today that psychological attitude still exists—that somehow if a student does not do their ATAR subjects, they are less significant. Fortunately, we are moving away from that. Changes that we made as a government certainly contributed to overcoming that. We wanted children at the end of year 10 to think about doing some VET courses, to do a certificate II and III and then an apprenticeship or traineeship and obtain a qualification that could take them right around the world and open doors for them everywhere as a hairdresser, a carpenter, a bricklayer, a jewellery maker or whatever it might be. They did not have to be a lawyer, a doctor or a physiotherapist. They were just as significant. In most instances these guys—as in generically guys and girls—would be a lot better off financially. That is what I wanted to do as minister right at the outset.

In 2008, we took over government. One of the biggest issues that we had almost immediately was the global financial crisis. Even prior to that in 2006 and 2007, traineeship numbers were in terminal decline—I will get back to that in a moment; we are not going to rewrite history here—as a direct result of the nonsense that went on in our education system during that disastrous period of the last Labor rule from 2001 to 2007. We immediately provided a \$50 million stimulus package to get people back into the training sector. It included \$17.6 million for course fee exemptions, \$10.6 million for rebates on workers' compensation premiums, \$4.1 million for improved access to career development centres, \$4.1 million for marketing and awareness campaigns and \$3 million for out-of-contract apprentices. We were proactive at that stage. It worked very well and I will talk about the outcomes in a moment. We developed 14 workforce development centres throughout regional and urban Western Australia to assist people in training and moving into the workforce. We worked with employers and those who wanted to be trained. We worked with the unemployed, people with a disability and Aboriginal people to assist them into training. We did that; they were magnificent. We had literally hundreds of thousands of people through those workforce development centres.

One area that is close to my heart is Kalgoorlie. I keep on saying this. I have a deep personal affection for Aboriginal people. The unemployment level for Aboriginal people was appalling. I wanted to personally make sure that we gave every single Aboriginal child and person an opportunity to get employment. Fundamentally, that is what our education system should do. After completing compulsory education, the system should provide every single person with an opportunity for employment. The fundamental aim of any education system globally should be to best prepare that person for employment, whether it be through university or training. With that in mind, I developed the Training Together—Working Together program. I got together with the State Training Board, Sue Gordon and Robert Isaacs. We went around the state to the Pilbara, the Kimberley, the midwest, the Gascoyne, the goldfields, the south west, the great southern and right throughout the metropolitan area—we went everywhere. We listened to dozens and dozens of Aboriginal people and asked them what they wanted. They said that they wanted a go-to place for advice.

We opened five Aboriginal workforce development centres in Perth, Broome, Bunbury, Geraldton and Kalgoorlie. That was great. They were magnificent. I opened every single one of them. Let me show members how successful they were. From 2010 to 2018, those Aboriginal workforce development centres provided 41 181 interactions with Aboriginal people as a conduit to employment. It was not the gospel according to Pete, Madam President; this is what Aboriginal people asked for and we delivered it to them. They could go to these centres, be embraced by people within the centres and provided with meaningful advice to get employment. We worked with the mining companies and local councils to ensure that conduit into employment. What did this government do? It closed them all down. Give me a break! What about the bastions of egalitarianism over there? This is what Aboriginal

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people wanted. In 2016, 8 432 Aboriginal people accessed those centres. That shows that they were exactly what Aboriginal people wanted. The Training Together–Working Together initiative was phenomenally successful. I cannot believe these guys opposite closed them down. I am so disappointed. Members opposite should not say that they go off to the workforce development centre incorporated into that; it is not the same. They should speak to Aboriginal people who will tell them what they want. They want those workforce development centres re-established.

I will move on to the SkillsWest Careers Expo. I worked with Chris Wharton who was one of the editors of *The West Australian*. I said to him that we should work together to raise the profile of training right throughout the community. The people at *The West* were fantastic. At the opening of the first centre, we had Dave Wirrpanda and then later on we had Danny Green attend. We used to get all these high-profile people who had come through a traineeship and take them to the centres. We had tens of thousands of students come in and see the attributes of training from the training providers. All areas of the community from the mining sector through to the retail and hospitality sectors bussed in people to have the opportunity to hear about what they could get out of training. I think the SkillsWest expo is still going, is it not?

**Hon Sue Ellery:** Yes, absolutely. It is huge.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I started it. I proudly say that I started it and it is still running today. Hundreds of thousands of kids have benefited from that expo because it raises the profile of training. I have so much to get through and I could keep going, but I have only 10 minutes to go.

As a direct result of the expo, we raised the profile of the institutions and we gave them individual titles. Yes, we did that. It came as a direct result of the institutions and industry wanting to raise the profile of training. People would say that yes, they are going to Polytechnic West—the one that the member mentioned—or the Challenger Institute of Technology or wherever it might be. Yes, we did that and it worked. Let me show members how much it worked. Apprentice and trainee numbers increased from 37 249 in 2008 when we took over to 43 000 in April 2012, a 16 per cent increase in three years. These are figures that members opposite can only dream about. Course enrolments increased from 130 303 in 2008 to 144 560 in 2011, a 10.9 per cent increase in three years. Student curriculum hours increase from 29.2 million hours in 2008 to 37 million hours in 2011, a 26.6 per cent increase in three years, and it goes on and on. On every single level there was a phenomenal increase in enrolments as a direct result of what we did as a government in those years. Between 2006 and 2008, when the current Premier, Mark McGowan, was the training minister, there was a 13 per cent decline in course enrolments for certificate IV and above. Between 2008 and 2012, our first term of government, there was a 38 per cent increase in course enrolments for cert IV and above. Between 2006 and 2008, there was a 14.7 per cent decrease in recurrent expenditure per person aged between 15 and 64 years under Mark McGowan as training minister. Between 2008 and 2012, there was an increase of 19.4 per cent in recurrent expenditure per person. It decreased by 14.7 per cent under Mark McGowan and increased by 19.4 per cent under the Barnett government. Between 2006 and 2008, total recurrent expenditure decreased by nine per cent under Mark McGowan, but it increased by 23 per cent under the Barnett Liberal–National government. So, as I said, our track record speaks for itself. There was a massive increase in spending and a massive increase in the number of traineeships and apprenticeships over the same period. As I said, you only go around once, so you have to get it right; you cannot reconcile regrets.

When I became Minister for Education, I really wanted to do something to change our education system. It was not just rhetoric. We actually did something for our education system. We manifestly reformed it to ensure that those students who did not do an ATAR course came out with something. Immediately when I became Minister for Education midway through 2012, I got a delegation together, a group from the education sector, the union, the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia and Catholic education. We all got together and I said, “I want to have a review”, because at this stage we had these ridiculous stages that you guys introduced; you had kids all over the place. I said, “I want to make sure we have some integrity behind our education system for graduation.” They said, “Okay, we’ll do a review and come back in 12 months.” I said, “No, you won’t. You’ll come back in three months. You know what’s wrong: those stages are not working.” For those members who remember it, it was just appalling. We had a situation in which there was stage 1, stage 2, and stage 3 and all public school kids were bowing out of stages 2 and 3. Indeed, 51 per cent of our public education students were doing stage 1, which was the equivalent of year 9. They were coming out of school with absolutely nothing. On the other hand, 37 per cent of government school students, 53 per cent of Catholic school students and 63 per cent of independent school students were doing stage 3. Only 33 per cent of Catholic school students and 19 per cent of independent school students were doing stage 1, but 51 per cent of public school students were doing stage 1. We had to change it. I introduced changes to the Western Australian Certificate of Education in 2015 and now every student who comes out of the Western Australian education system has got either an ATAR or a cert II, plus a minimum literacy and numeracy standard. We were the envy of the nation.

Whenever I went to those education council meetings, people were asking about it. A number of states have instituted exactly what we did in Western Australia. A student must come out with something. The report that came back from



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the committee showed that 5 000 year 12 students came out of the compulsory education system with nothing—not a qualification, not an ATAR, not a VET qualification; nothing. After 12 years in the twenty-first century, here in Australia, which is one of the most developed nations in the world, almost one-quarter of our students were being prepared for nothing. Is it any wonder that we have the social issues that we have in our community? It is a result of the fact that we were preparing them for nothing. Imagine the self-esteem of a child who comes out of year 12 and cannot get a job after 100 interviews and has to stack shelves. Of course, they would be looking for alternatives and that is why we had to give our education system integrity. I said, “I want to make sure that we give every student something when they leave year 12.” You can shake your head all you like, mate, but it worked.

**Hon Darren West** interjected.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I beg your pardon.

**Hon Darren West:** Stacking shelves is an important job.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** As a career pathway?

**Hon Darren West:** You said it’s not a job.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Grow up. You do not know what you are talking about, mate. I am saying that if we ask anyone who comes out of year 12 —

**Hon Darren West** interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** Order, members! Hon Peter Collier has the call.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** If we ask anyone who comes out of year 12, “Do you want to spend your whole life stacking shelves?”, I would love to know how many would say yes. We want that person to have a meaningful career. I did not want a child to say at the end of year 12, “I’ve got nothing.” I did not care what the cert II was in, but I wanted to make sure that that student had something to hold on to that was a stimulus for more improvement in their life. A person can do a cert II, cert III, cert IV or a diploma; they can get it. That raises an individual’s esteem and helps them develop resilience. That is what I wanted and, as a direct result of that, we have an education system now that really has integrity. I wanted to make sure that I did that as education minister. I succeeded in that role. The current government wants to reduce training fees. Good; that is fine. The proof will be in the pudding across the board. We will see what the proof of the pudding is in two or three years’ time. What did the McGowan government do? Immediately when it took office, it put training and education back together again. The government will not find anyone in the training sector who wants it there.

**Hon Sue Ellery** interjected.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I would really love to know whom the government consulted with before it made that decision.

**Hon Sue Ellery:** You’d be surprised.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** No, I would not be surprised. Training wanted its own discrete department, which is why we made it training and workforce development, so that we worked with industry.

**Hon Sue Ellery:** We have.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** It does not; it is engaged within the department. It is with the minister.

**Hon Sue Ellery:** It’s a separate department.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** No, it is not. It is the department of education and training.

**Hon Sue Ellery:** No.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Yes, and you are the Minister for Education and Training.

**Hon Sue Ellery:** It’s two portfolios.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** The government has combined them. The government abolished —

**Hon Sue Ellery** interjected.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I have not got time.

**Hon Sue Ellery** interjected.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I have not got time.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** Order, members!

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Thank you, Madam Acting President. The Leader of the House is not in control here.

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The government closed the Aboriginal workforce development centres. I want to see some justification for that. Why did the government close those centres? It is an absolute disgrace. What about the *pièce de résistance*, the regional skilled migration scheme? You have to be joking! The government wanted it removed. It made a bland decision that it would give local jobs to locals. That went well, did it not? It lasted about 12 months: “Oh, we’ve completely stuffed this up.” The regional skilled migration scheme meant that students could not claim the additional five points, so international students left the state in droves. International enrolments plummeted as a direct result of the actions of this government. Although there was a media release espousing the virtues of this great decision on Wednesday, 21 June 2017, there was a change of mind, because there was another media release in October 2019: “Oh, we actually got that one wrong.” It did exactly the same thing with the skilled occupation list. I do not have time to go into that. All this happened as a direct result of decisions by this government. It cannot blame the previous government. It is almost siren time, guys. The government is going to be judged on its record.

Let us look at its record in training. For the year ending June 2019, there were 29 445 individuals in training, which was a 7.7 per cent reduction from June 2018 and way down from the 43 000 in April 2012. There were 17 124 commencements, which is 3.5 per cent lower than in June 2018, and 6 375 individuals commenced trade training, which is also down by 3.5 per cent compared with June 2018. The number of males in training fell by 6.5 per cent, while the number of females in training marginally increased. Over the past year, there were 2 885 fewer commencements for existing workers and 2 007 fewer commencements in the private sector, which is down by 7.5 per cent; 1 870 fewer commencements in non-trade fields, which is down by 13 per cent; 1 530 fewer full-time positions, which is down by six per cent; 1 105 fewer positions for 20 to 44-year-olds, which is down by 11 per cent; and 525 fewer technicians in trade worker commencements. This is going really well for the government in training. For a government that purports to be about jobs, quite frankly, it does not matter whether the government reduces the fees because it is not working.

**HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Minister for Education and Training)** [2.09 pm]: I thank my colleagues, both the one who is not able to be here today, Hon Samantha Rowe, and Hon Pierre Yang, for stepping in and moving the motion. I want to make a few comments. I thought the debate was going quite well until the shrill last little bit of the Leader of the Opposition’s contribution.

When we came into government, we needed to seriously tackle a whole range of issues that were identified as barriers to people pursuing formal training through the TAFE system. Not the least of the obstacles that were clearly having an impact on TAFE enrolments was the increase in fees when the now Leader of the Opposition, Hon Liza Harvey, was the Minister for Training and Workforce Development. The fee increases in the now Leader of the Opposition’s time as minister for training were astonishing in their breadth and size, and had a chilling and devastating impact on the number of TAFE enrolments. They put TAFE education and qualifications beyond the reach of many ordinary people who saw TAFE as the place to go for retraining at a time when our economy was going through a shift, and parents of many young people, who saw a TAFE education as a very solid way to get a sound qualification for the children in their family. That was put beyond their reach. I distinctly remember meeting with a group of parents at a south metropolitan region secondary school in 2015 or 2016. One of them told me that her daughter had always wanted to do a childcare qualification and work in child care, but that the increase in fees had significantly impacted on that family. They were going to make the adjustments that they needed to make to their family budget to ensure that their daughter could get that qualification, and they did. But it meant they would have to go without many other things. She said she had one daughter who wanted to do this, but she had three kids and if all three of them want to do these courses with the fees at this level, she would not be able to make the kind of adjustments she would need to make to ensure that her children could do their courses. Cutting the fees by 50 per cent for 34 key courses makes training more accessible and builds our skills base as our economy shifts. Capping the training fee at \$400 for young people and those on concessions, and \$1 200 for everybody else, makes a real difference to families having confidence that they will be able to afford—for young people in particular—to get a high-quality qualification. It is essential that we give them the confidence that they will be able to do that.

The announcement that we made of \$53.5 million is about not only reducing the TAFE fees in those 34 courses, but also upgrading facilities. In Karratha, Broome, Bunbury, and Rockingham we are allocating funding for capital works out of the \$53 million to upgrade those facilities. In particular, the skills that are needed to do some of the health and ageing courses to support the growing demand for aged-care workers and NDIS workers mean that we need to provide training facilities and a training environment that will match what those workers will be faced with—that is, people’s homes. They need to be able to learn how to safely shower and assist with personal care in people’s homes—not in the kind of hospital-like facilities that TAFEs generally have. They have to learn how to manoeuvre safely in any kind of bathroom and how to do all those personal care provisions in people’s homes. We are upgrading the facilities in the TAFEs that I mentioned.

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Hon Donna Faragher made the point that the State Training Board identified a range of measures that had been obstacles to employers taking on apprentices and trainees. She is right. The cost of training was one of those. I will talk about some of the other measures that we have put in place to assist employers understand and navigate the complexity that is the training system. I agree with Hon Donna Faragher, who I thought gave a very considered and sensible contribution. I am not sure what happened to the Leader of the Opposition. He got a bit excited. Hon Donna Faragher made a point about the complexity of the training system and held up a graph. Conversations that I have had with training providers and people in the Department of Training and Workforce Development, which is a separate department with its own director general, indicate that over the years what has essentially happened is that well-meaning people, and probably some who are not so well meaning, have added bits onto the training system. They have added a bit here, then added a bit there and a bit there, so we have an incredibly complex system that has provided endless job creation for policy wonks, but made it really difficult for ordinary people who run their own businesses, whatever the size of the business, to navigate and understand how to use the training system to their benefit. We are also working on how we might make that simpler. The commonwealth is committed to doing that as well.

As an aside, if I may, I want to make a comment about the commonwealth. If members have been a minister before, they will know that in this job we must have working relationships with our counterparts in other states and federally. I must admit that I had a preconceived notion of what working with Hon Michaelia Cash might be like. I do not agree with Michaelia Cash on many things, and I am concerned with one element of what she is doing in training, which I will touch on in a moment. However, I have to say that although working with her is noisy—I will say that—because she is very enthusiastic, she is listening to what Western Australia is saying and we hope that we can convince her to ensure that the proposals set out in the Joyce review, which was commissioned by the federal government, do not end up disadvantaging Western Australia. One of those proposals is to have a centralised price-setting model for training and taking that power away from the states. That would be disastrous for Western Australia. It is regularly the case that our labour market runs counter, cyclically, to the eastern states, and our need for skill upgrades and emerging industries are different from the east coast. Not a state around the table at the meetings of training ministers agrees that we should hand over that power to the commonwealth. I invite the state Liberal Party to join the voices of the state government, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia, the Chamber of Minerals and Energy, and all the major stakeholders in asking Michaelia Cash not to go down that path, because it would not be good for training in Western Australia.

We have taken a targeted approach to reducing fees for people doing TAFE. We looked at what New South Wales and Victoria had done. They introduced far broader reductions in TAFE fees. When we had a conversation with those states and asked them what they might do differently if they did it again, they talked about targeting. One issue was that if everything is cut, there is not an incentive for people to see through their courses. People were enrolling, finding that it was not what they wanted, and dropping out. The TAFE colleges had to staff up to meet the massive enrolment numbers and then staff down when people did not see through on their commitments because everything in all the courses was free. That was a real issue.

The early figures this year, indeed, show a high take-up in the 34 key courses that we targeted. It is running at about 20 per cent now across the 34 courses. They are preliminary figures and we will see the real figures when enrolments are locked down. Just last week, the Premier and I went to Joondalup to draw attention to the TAFE fee reduction. We met a young woman called Amy, who I am sure will not mind me naming her, who is doing a certificate III in commercial cookery. Amy is a classic example of why these TAFE fee reductions needed to be made. She is living in a single-parent household because her mother passed away just a few years ago. Her dad is a single dad who is raising his family. Without the reduction in TAFE fees, Amy would not have been able to attend and do that course. Cooking was something she had done at school and was really keen to pursue. Amy faced the media very bravely. I told her that they would be nice to her and mean to me and the Premier, so she did not need to worry. She very bravely faced the media and told her story. She is a classic example of why cutting these fees and putting TAFE back within the reach of ordinary families is so important.

Under the previous government, when fees increased for some courses by 800 per cent, there was a 24 per cent drop in the number of TAFE enrolments. I have some examples: TAFE fees for an advanced diploma of engineering technology increased by 778 per cent, a certificate III in education support went up by 387 per cent, and a diploma in nursing went up by 409 per cent. At one point, undertaking a diploma in nursing at TAFE was actually more expensive than commencing a graduate Bachelor of Nursing at a university. That is just ridiculous, but that is what those course increases led to.

I was interested in how the decision was made and what modelling was done about the impact those course fee increases would have, and whether the previous government made a deliberate decision to put a TAFE education beyond the reach of ordinary families. What modelling had been done on the social impact? I did what is required when looking to inform myself about the detail of decisions made by the previous government. That information

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cannot be automatically accessed. Departments are not able to provide the material that goes to the decision-making of a previous government. Even though a department might have the information, an incoming government cannot get it. The process is to write to the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. The Department of the Premier and Cabinet asks the Leader of the Opposition of the day whether they will agree to release the cabinet papers in respect of decision X. In this case, the request was to Hon Liza Harvey to release the papers that supported the cabinet decision, when she was in government, to increase fees. Liza Harvey declined. I am not sure what she is hiding. I am not sure what it is about the decision-making that she does not want to release. I am not sure what it is about the modelling or the proposed impact those fee increases would have on people's access to TAFE that she does not want to release. I am not sure why she does not want to defend her legacy. What is it about her legacy as Minister for Training and Workforce Development that she does not want to release? Despite her formal response to us saying no, I again call on Liza Harvey to release that information; and, if not, to tell us why she thinks the government should not have access to whatever modelling was done in respect of the decisions that she made when she was minister.

I want to talk a little about some of the figures referred to by Hon Peter Collier and Hon Donna Faragher. One of the complexities about this training system relates to how the state and national figures are collected. The national figures are collected through the National Centre for Vocational Education Research. The problem with comparing apples with bananas—that is, when comparing state figures with those collected by the NCVER—is that there is a lag in the NCVER data. There is more of a lag with the NCVER data for apprenticeships and traineeships than with the data from the Department of Training and Workforce Development. The NCVER also counts apprentices differently from the way the DTWD counts them. Members know that is a separate department with its own director general. It is a standalone department. The NCVER reports on trades but it does not determine whether the trade qualification is an apprenticeship or a traineeship. There is more of a lag with the NCVER enrolment data than the Western Australian enrolment data. The NCVER reports what has been started and completed in that period; the DTWD counts what has started and is expected to be completed. The same thing is not being compared. It is important to bear that in mind.

The government inherited a downwards trend after years of those fee hikes by the Liberal–National government. There was a 24 per cent drop in the number of people going to TAFE. That legacy has taken some time to turn around. In 2017, those declines continued—there was a five per cent decrease. In 2018, there was a 1.3 per cent increase. The most recent data, of September 2019, shows that apprenticeship and traineeship commencement figures have remained steady compared with the same time in 2018. I am pleased that we have started to slow down that decline. Obviously, I want to see the figures go up as the economy grows. Importantly, the data shows a 3.8 per cent increase in the number of commencements for apprenticeships and a 6.2 per cent increase in new entrant trainees compared with the same time in 2018. People also need to have at the back of their minds, of course, the difference we made to existing worker traineeships. We removed that rort whereby companies were enrolling their entire executive management teams into traineeships to take advantage of the payroll tax exemptions. I am pleased with the way TAFE enrolment numbers are trending. They are good. I am pleased that they are supporting a wide range of initiatives that we put in place and that they are having a positive impact.

The Jobs and Skills Centres are an important delivery point of service. Hon Peter Collier would have members believe that we abolished the services provided by Aboriginal-controlled organisations to Aboriginal labour-market seekers. That is not the case. Jobs and Skills Centres partner with local Aboriginal-controlled organisations and provide services to Aboriginal labour-market seekers. Indeed, those Aboriginal organisations report on how well their services are being provided. The Aboriginal people whom I meet whenever I visit Jobs and Skills Centres, who use those services, speak well of the assistance that they have been given. I meet the people who have been placed into jobs as a result of the fact that they are dealing with Aboriginal-centric service providers through our Jobs and Skills Centres.

The enterprise training and the pre-traineeship programs started on 1 July 2019. They are also focused on boosting the social assistance and allied health workforce. We know that we are going to need those skilled people. That is the fastest growing sector where the skills need to be.

The introduction of the priority start policy has been important as well to ensure that the building and construction sector creates jobs for local apprentices and trainees on every major state government-funded construction project. New partnerships have been developed with industry to roll out leading-edge qualifications. Australia's first qualification in automation, in a partnership between Rio Tinto and South Metropolitan TAFE, has been really successful. I am really pleased that is being delivered in schools and in the vocational education and training sector. The \$53.5 million investment was a deliberate and targeted decision to make training more affordable to young Western Australians and those seeking to reskill as a result of changes in the labour market.

It is important that they are across the key areas of the economy: aged and disability care; Metronet; civil construction; defence; hospitality and tourism; cybersecurity; automotive electrical technology; drilling operations; engineering;

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social services; and agricultural mechanical technology, which is an area that is rapidly growing and really going through a massive adjustment as a result of farmers using digital technology. If members get the opportunity to talk to the people at Muresk about how they use digital technology on the farm, they will learn that it is absolutely amazing. This was an important economic lever that the state government could pull to make training more accessible to Western Australians. I am proud that we have been able to do it and I am confident that it will have a significant impact. I am disappointed that the current Leader of the Opposition, Liza Harvey, is not able to defend her legacy by releasing that information to us. I am sure that my request to her again today—I am not sure; I hope—may cause her to reconsider and release that information. We have had to clean up the mess, yet again, of the 24 per cent reduction in TAFE enrolments as a result of the outrageous increase in TAFE fees while she was minister for training.

**HON COLIN de GRUSSA (Agricultural)** [2.29 pm]: I will keep my remarks brief, as I know others want to make contributions. I thank Hon Pierre Yang for moving the motion today. I, too, am a graduate of TAFE, having studied at what was then Mount Lawley TAFE before our courses transferred to what used to be called the Advanced Manufacturing Technology Centre in East Perth. That microcomputer technology advanced certificate was very valuable to me for my work in the IT industry afterwards and also on the farm. As the minister alluded to earlier, with technology changing on farms, any skills and training in technology were very useful to us.

Members have raised a number of issues about TAFE enrolments and enrolment numbers and have talked quite generally about training. Hon Alison Xamon made a very good point when she said that she was absolutely unsurprised that a reduction in fees would lead to an increase in enrolments. She also said that she would be interested in seeing further data on enrolments. The minister talked at length about her attempts to get that data from the former minister. I think it would benefit all members in this place to have that data to look at, to see what has happened with TAFE enrolments and the courses delivered. I would like to propose an amendment to the motion, if I may.

*Amendment to Motion*

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** I move —

To insert after “emerging skills needs” —

and directs the Minister for Education and Training to table by 12 March 2020 enrolment figures for all courses at each individual TAFE campus for the years 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 to date and include which courses have been added or removed at each campus

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Adele Farina):** Members, the question before us is that the amendment be agreed to, but before I give the call to anyone, I seek an issue of clarification from the Leader of the House. It is my understanding that in your contribution to the debate you indicated that you cannot get figures for 2016. Is that correct?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** No, I do not know about that. I was talking about cabinet documents supporting the original decision. I do not know whether I can access 2016; I presume I can. I will just say to the house, if I may abuse my answer to the Acting President’s question for one minute, that if it assists the house, there are actually two parts to this. The first is the enrolment figures for this year and the second is enrolment figures going back to 2016 and a list of courses that have been added or removed at each campus. That is a massive amount of information, so the member might want to think about whether he needs that in this motion.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** Okay, members, that is going a bit further. I just wanted to check whether we were going to have a problem with implementation because of the dates that have been indicated, but if that is the amendment that is being moved, that is the question before the house.

Hon Colin de Grussa, I have been advised by the clerks that because you have moved the amendment, you lose your time to speak to the amendment, so you have effectively lost your time to further contribute to this debate. I would have been happy to let you run the rest of your time, but I have been told otherwise, so that is the ruling. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

**HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition)** [2.36 pm]: Given the Leader of the House’s impassioned plea for information from the Leader of the Opposition, I think she needs to support this motion without any problems.

**Hon Sue Ellery:** You ask Liza to release the papers!

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Excuse me, I have the call. Having said that, I can sympathise with the Leader of the House in respect of the time line, so I will move an amendment to the amendment.

*Amendment on the Amendment*

Hon Pierre Yang; Hon Donna Faragher; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Martin Pritchard; Hon Stephen Dawson

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**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I move —

To delete “12 March” and substitute —

2 April

**Hon Darren West** interjected.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Yes, I can. Does the member mind?

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** Order, members! The constant interjections are not helping the debate advance. Members need to understand that time continues to run on the clock, so the more we bicker, the more time will run out and we will not get an opportunity to address the amendments before us.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** As I have said, I do have capacity to do that, contrary to the rantings of some members. I have the capacity to make an amendment on the amendment. I have tried to be conciliatory as far as the Leader of the House is concerned. These are not difficult figures to get; they are not. In the era of transparency that we all apparently are advocating for here in the upper house, I do not think there should be a problem with this. We all have a genuine interest in ensuring that we have the best training system in Western Australia we can possibly have, and information is power. If we could find out where our training profile for the last four years stands, it would be eminently sensible and eminently reasonable. At the same time, it will still give the department two months to get that information. I think that is more than enough time. With that, I have moved to amend the date to 2 April.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** Leader of the Opposition, the amendment that has been provided to me does not have your signature on it. It requires your signature at the very least.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Sorry, Madam Acting President. It now has my signature.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** Members, Hon Peter Collier has moved an amendment on the amendment that deletes the date 12 March 2020 and inserts the date 2 April 2020. The question is that the amendment on the amendment be agreed to.

**HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Minister for Education and Training)** [2.39 pm]: Can I ask for assistance? I am going to speak to the amendment on the amendment, but I do not want to give up my opportunity to speak to the amendment.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** You can speak to the amendment moved by Hon Peter Collier, and you will not lose your right to speak to the previous amendment.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Thank you, Madam Acting President. I am desperately seeking advice about on what date I will get the enrolment figures. I do not want to mislead the house; however, equally I do not want you to put a motion that I am not able to meet. I am still seeking advice. Logic would tell me that 2 April is better than 12 March. I guess I am just foreshadowing that in the absence of that advice, I will not be supporting the total amendment, because I do not know whether I can meet it. I understand the intent of the amendment. I will give the house an undertaking that I will do my very best to provide as much of the information that is available to me by whatever date the house sits, but I am just warning members that I may not be able to do that.

**HON PIERRE YANG (South Metropolitan)** [2.40 pm]: Madam Acting President, I understand that I am speaking on the amendment to the amendment moved by Hon Peter Collier. To me, this is a major diversion from the intent of my original motion. I would ordinarily not support that. At the same time, we have heard about the practical difficulties as articulated by the Leader of the House.

**Hon Donna Faragher:** Potential.

**Hon PIERRE YANG:** Potential, yes; I thank the member very much for adding that clarification. I think there is a major issue here. I will not be able to support the amendment to the amendment moved by Hon Peter Collier.

**HON DONNA FARAGHER (East Metropolitan)** [2.41 pm]: I want to add a couple of words. As the Minister for Education and Training has indicated, obviously 2 April is better than 12 March. I would have thought there is no issue in supporting the amendment to the amendment, and, overall, an amendment to this motion. The minister has already indicated that she is prepared to provide as much information as she can. If the amendment is agreed to by the house, and we get to 2 April, or 12 March or whatever the date ends up being, the minister can come into the chamber and give an update on what the situation is and seek an extension.

*Division*

**Extract from Hansard**  
[COUNCIL — Wednesday, 19 February 2020]  
p725c-739a

Hon Pierre Yang; Hon Donna Faragher; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Martin Pritchard; Hon Stephen Dawson

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Amendment on the amendment put and a division taken, the Acting President (Hon Adele Farina) casting her vote with the noes, with the following result —

Ayes (19)

Hon Robin Chapple	Hon Diane Evers	Hon Michael Mischin	Hon Dr Steve Thomas
Hon Jim Chown	Hon Donna Faragher	Hon Robin Scott	Hon Colin Tincknell
Hon Tim Clifford	Hon Nick Goiran	Hon Tjorn Sibma	Hon Alison Xamon
Hon Peter Collier	Hon Colin Holt	Hon Charles Smith	Hon Ken Baston ( <i>Teller</i> )
Hon Colin de Grussa	Hon Rick Mazza	Hon Aaron Stonehouse	

Noes (10)

Hon Alanna Clohesy	Hon Adele Farina	Hon Matthew Swinbourn	Hon Pierre Yang ( <i>Teller</i> )
Hon Stephen Dawson	Hon Kyle McGinn	Hon Dr Sally Talbot	
Hon Sue Ellery	Hon Martin Pritchard	Hon Darren West	

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Pairs

Hon Jacqui Boydell	Hon Samantha Rowe
Hon Martin Aldridge	Hon Alannah MacTiernan
Hon Simon O'Brien	Hon Laurie Graham

Amendment on the amendment thus passed.

*Amendment to Motion, as Amended, Resumed*

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** Members, the question now before the house is that the amendment moved by Hon Colin de Grussa, as amended, be agreed to.

**HON ALISON XAMON (North Metropolitan)** [2.46 pm]: I have to say that I am in two minds on this particular amendment. I do not like the principle of effectively hijacking a member's motion. The Greens have said consistently in this chamber that if members do not agree with a motion, they should vote against it. However, I also recognise that this amendment is not quite opposing the motion; it is simply trying to get additional information.

I will say that a lot of the information that is being sought is information that I have already put on notice previously and have received answers to. I am aware that a lot of the information is already readily available from this term of government. I am a big fan of getting information and making sure that everyone has exactly the same information. I think this information would be very easy to get. As I have said, a lot of it has already been provided in answers to questions on notice that I have put previously to the minister. I am curious to hear what other members have to say. However, as a principle, I hope we do not continue to do these sorts of things to other member's motions.

**HON MARTIN PRITCHARD (North Metropolitan)** [2.47 pm]: I will speak quickly and leave it to the ministers. I am quite disappointed. I know that there is a cut and thrust in the way this chamber works, and a motion is on the table. I will just say to the original motion that increasing fees does not enhance opportunities; it is a disincentive. This amendment is very opportunistic. It does not give us an opportunity to debate the motion. There is a well-established way of getting information, and that is through question time.

Several members interjected.

**Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD:** I cannot understand why members opposite would use this as an opportunity to deny the opportunity for Hon Samantha Rowe's motion, moved by Hon Pierre Yang, to be debated properly. I agree with Hon Alison Xamon.

Several members interjected.

**Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD:** Are there not conventions that we follow in this house? Do we not have some respect for this house? I am very disappointed today.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** Order, members!

**HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Environment)** [2.48 pm]: I listened intently to the contribution of Hon Sue Ellery. She did, of course, refer to the fact that the government has sought access

Hon Pierre Yang; Hon Donna Faragher; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Martin Pritchard; Hon Stephen Dawson

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to documents from the now Leader of the Opposition about decisions made by the Barnett government in 2013 to increase TAFE fees. It is no surprise to anyone in this house that we wrote to her. We asked for her to release the documents. We wanted to see how and why the previous government made the decisions that it did to increase TAFE fees substantially, an issue that we are still dealing with as a government.

*Amendment on the Amendment*

**HON STEPHEN DAWSON:** Therefore, I move —

To insert after “at each campus” —

and calls on Leader of the Opposition Liza Harvey to release the cabinet documents related to the decision by the Barnett government to increase TAFE fees in 2013

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Adele Farina):** Order, members! Based on the advice that I have received, I ask the Deputy Leader of the Government whether you would be willing to withdraw that amendment, enable us to consider Hon Colin de Grussa’s amendment and then move to your amendment, as your amendment comes in at the end of his amendment.

**HON STEPHEN DAWSON:** Can I ask for some clarification? If we were to go back to Hon Colin de Grussa’s amendment, there could be further speakers on that and we will therefore run out of time to enable me to move my amendment. For that reason, I am not willing to withdraw now.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** I understand those reasons. Members, I will leave the chair until the ringing of the bells, because I want to give this some further consideration.

*Sitting suspended from 2.53 to 3.00 pm*