

TRAINING — RENEWABLE ENERGY

556. Ms C.M. ROWE to the Minister for Training:

I refer to the national Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council meeting held in Perth last week, which included a focus on preparing our workforce for the energy transition.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house what this government is doing to build Western Australia's workforce for new and emerging clean energy jobs?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how the government's commitment to reaching net zero emissions by 2050 is creating new opportunities for Western Australians in renewable energy industries?

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

- (1)–(2) I am really pleased to speak about this issue, because it is so connected to the themes we heard from the Premier when he spoke at the Seven West Media breakfast a couple of weeks ago, and the announcement today about the investment in the north west interconnected system and the south west interconnected system. The message is very clear from our government that we take climate change seriously and we are transitioning our economy to not just deal with climate change, but also go one step further and take up the opportunities that come with a clean energy future. I am really confident of our ability to leverage off the many natural resources and also the building and industry capacity we have in our state to make that transition. I was able to showcase that, as the member said, to my state and territory training counterparts and the federal minister in Perth on Friday. Where better a place to meet than in Fremantle? It was really fantastic to show them around the local TAFE facility in Fremantle, including the jobs and skills centre, and to also talk about the sort of work being done by the state government through our TAFEs and private providers. Importantly, we talked about the very sophisticated relationship we have with industry to gear up for the next stage of our economy.

We are working to finalise a new five-year agreement with the federal government. That is important because it comes with money. I note that the previous federal government could not reach agreement with the states or territories; no states or territories would sign up to an agreement by the time the federal government left office. This government has given us money for fee-free places, and we are now very close to reaching a new five-year agreement, so I welcome that. We have a number of priority areas in that five-year agreement. One of them will be the transition to clean energy.

As I said, I was able to give people an idea of what was happening in Western Australia. We could not let the chance go by while federal ministers were meeting here to showcase what we have throughout the whole of our state. As I look around 360 degrees of our chamber, I can see parts of our state that are represented by Labor members. I look at the Kimberley, the midwest, the Pilbara, the south west and the great southern. All of those areas have opportunities to transition. Through opportunities in wind, solar, batteries and hydrogen, we are expecting to create about 350 000 jobs here in Western Australia by 2050. Obviously, we need a skilled trained workforce to do that. As I said, we are working closely with industry, TAFE and universities to deliver the training needed to help our state's workforce work in areas like construction and engineering and in electrical trades. As I said, Central Regional TAFE—the member for Geraldton knows this well—is responding to meet the workforce requirements of wind and solar farms and the exciting potential of Oakajee renewable hydrogen. In North Metropolitan TAFE, we will have a wind turbine and “working at heights” training tower as part of the commonwealth's TAFE technology fund. At the moment, more than 1 000 electrical apprentices are training in North Metro TAFE. South Metropolitan TAFE is home to the Australian-leading Australian Centre for Energy and Process Training. It is the only process facility of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere. Industry is expecting that that will transition to support clean energy work. North Regional TAFE, through the Pilbara hydrogen hub, is positioned to deliver essential training and cutting-edge research for the Pilbara. Finally, South Regional TAFE is involved in the Collie Just Transition diversification project, worth \$347 million. Our work around vocational training is central to those efforts.

It is very exciting to see the work that has been done, not for the future—not off in the never-never—but now. We need to train auto-electricians, people involved in energy and batteries—for example, with electric vehicles. Just today, the federal skills minister and I were at the opening of BHP's FutureFit Academy in Forrestfield. That is a massive facility. Again, North and South Metro TAFEs are cooperating with BHP. That is a fantastic facility and one that I am very proud of.