

TRAINING AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION — WAGE SUBSIDY SCHEME

**800. Ms C.M. ROWE to the Minister for Training:**

I refer to the WA Labor government's election commitment to support the employment of an additional 300 apprentices and trainees across WA.

- (1) Can the minister update the house on the delivery of this initiative, which is helping to get more homes built in WA?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how the government's expansion of this program will provide even more opportunities to Western Australians completing an apprenticeship?

**Ms S.F. MCGURK replied:**

- (1)–(2) I am really pleased to speak about training. At the start of another week, we made another great announcement about vocational training in our state. Before I talk about this particular announcement, what always strikes me when I talk about vocational training is that the members on the other side of the chamber—the opposition—have their heads down; they have nothing to say. When they were in government, they not only did not do anything, but also set the whole cause backwards. They set our TAFE system backwards, they set our vocational training system backwards and they sent a message that saw 25 000 fewer enrolments as a result of their management of the vocational training system. It was outrageous. We are now paying the price. We are continually in catch-up to try to get enough people into vocational training.

We are doing a great job, and this announcement is a really good example of it. It was a \$21.5 million announcement to expand the group training organisations subsidy scheme, particularly focused on the housing and commercial construction industry, in which, as we know, there is huge demand. The previous announcement was for 300 places, which has the effect of fully subsidising those apprentices. Small and medium-sized businesses can take on an apprentice in housing or commercial construction and know that the wages of those apprentices will be fully subsidised. We could not be more generous. We had 300 places, of which 150 were made available to private industry and were taken up very quickly. We just announced another 150 places, which will take effect next year. It is an incredibly generous scheme. We are really listening to industry, which is saying that the big pinch point in delivering housing is that we need skilled workers. Of course, we want to train as many local people to have those skills as we can.

The 300 places that I talked about under the previous scheme are fully subscribed. Thirty-nine of those places were picked up in regional Western Australia. It is such a good story about training local people for local jobs to get houses built, to get construction humming and to make sure that locals are filling those positions.

Another part of that same announcement, after listening to our partners in industry and in the private sector, came about as a result of the funds available from the construction and training fund. The \$5 million pilot program will make money available for private registered training organisations to assist with their infrastructure builds. This is not something that the government would usually fund because they are private training organisations, but they are also feeling the pressure from such huge demand in the training sector. This pilot scheme will see \$5 million made available to private RTOs.

There are so many good examples of what we are doing in training. A great one involved the member for Thornlie, the honourable—sorry, Chris Tallentire. I think of you highly, member for Thornlie, but you are not quite honourable! The member for Thornlie and I went out to South Metropolitan TAFE's Thornlie campus, because Barmenco had just donated a Sandvik underground truck. This is a huge piece of machinery used for underground mining, as the name implies. It would cost \$1.8 million to replace this piece of equipment. Obviously, it had come to the end of its life on the mines.

As a demonstration of Barmenco's commitment to our training system and to South Metropolitan TAFE, it spent \$50 000 making that piece of equipment good. I met some of the apprentices out there, who are doing fantastic work. They will be working on that piece of equipment doing diagnostic repairs, servicing and maintenance of various systems on one of those big pieces of machinery—hydraulics, brakes, steering, engine, driveline and electrical systems. I met 20-year-old Jay, who is in the second year of his apprenticeship. He was working on suspensions this afternoon. I imagine that for those working underground, it would be a handy part of the operating system to have working properly.

That is the sort of partnership we have with industry. It understands that our TAFEs—our vocational training systems—work hand in hand with employers in training up the next round of employees who are so sorely needed. For instance, Barmenco employs 92 apprentices and trainees, including 70 heavy-duty mechanical apprentices. I thank Barmenco for the donation. I thank the people at South Metro TAFE's Thornlie campus,

who are doing such good work. I look forward to seeing those apprentices take up their places in the housing and commercial construction industry.