

CORONAVIRUS — SKILLS TRAINING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

**391. Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE to the Premier:**

I refer to the devastating impact that COVID-19 has had on Western Australia's workforce. Can the Premier outline to the house how the review being undertaken into the skills and training needs of our state will support the work being done by the McGowan government to help the economy recover from COVID-19?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

I thank the member for Thornlie for the question. Our workforce has undergone the biggest shock in living memory. We have seen thousands of jobs lost, both in Western Australia and across Australia, and we are seeing that in both large and small businesses across Western Australia. No doubt, that is heartbreaking for many people. Whether someone is a business owner or an employee, it is a very difficult situation across the state. As we recover from the coronavirus pandemic, we will need to rebuild opportunities for Western Australians and make sure that we have people trained in the skills that industry and business need. We have established an urgent review of skills training and workforce development in Western Australia as a consequence, and the review team will work with Western Australian industry and business to identify what skills they need and where the training gaps are, and provide a direct line of advice to government. We want to ensure that we have a practical and responsive training system that ensures that the workforce is ready for the COVID-19 recovery period, and prevent long-term unemployment as much as we possibly can. I am concerned about those people who have lost their jobs, particularly older people, and their opportunity to get back into the workforce. Making sure our training system is aligned to employment opportunities and helping those people is very, very important.

This review will be led by the director general of the Department of Training and Workforce Development, as well as the managing directors of North and South Metropolitan TAFE. It will be a short and sharp review, with a report to the State Recovery Controller by 30 June of this year. It will outline key opportunities, actions to be taken, areas of growth and ways that we can get Western Australians trained for jobs that will be out there. We already know that the resource sector will need mechanics, engineers and plant operators, and we already have an emphasis on defence, health and construction in Western Australia. As I have said, training will be an important part of our post-COVID recovery. As members know, since coming to office we have frozen TAFE fees, and late last year we announced that we are going to halve TAFE fees for around 40 important courses to make training far more accessible to Western Australians. Training will be an important component of the recovery from COVID-19. Our training sector is world class but we want to make sure it is even better and more attuned to the needs of industry in the new environment we face.