

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

264. Mr F.M. LOGAN to the Minister for Training and Workforce Development:

I refer to the release of yesterday's report of the Auditor General named "Audit Results Report—Annual 2015 Financial Audits", which found that since the introduction of higher fees for vocational education and training in January 2014 under the Liberal–National government, student fee revenue has increased, training delivery has continued to decrease and graduates' employability has declined for nine of the 11 state training providers.

- (1) Why under the minister's government are graduates paying more for training yet becoming less employable?
- (2) What more evidence does the minister need to show that her government's Future Skills WA policy for vocational training in Western Australia has completely failed?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for the question. It is great for me as Minister for Training and Workforce Development to get a question on training in this place.

Several members interjected.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Do you see what happens, Mr Speaker? This is how important the issue is to the Labor Party—members interject before I am even one sentence into my response. This side of the house actually cares about —

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mrs G.J. GODFREY: Point of order.

The SPEAKER: Point of order, member for Belmont.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I withdraw that, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much. I call you to order for the first time.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: As I said, this government is very focused on improving —

Mr F.M. Logan interjected.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: This government is very focused on ensuring that the training and workforce development needs of this state are being met by our training system. That is why I announced some changes to TAFE and that is why I am working within the national framework to try to achieve better outcomes for people in training generally across the sector. With respect to apprenticeships and traineeship numbers and some other aspects —

Mr F.M. Logan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cockburn!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: With respect to the numbers of apprenticeships, traineeships and students going through our colleges, there have been some changes. Predominantly one of the major changes that has happened —

Mr F.M. Logan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Predominantly one of the major changes that happened was that the Fair Work Commission made a ruling and out of that ruling there have been significant increases in apprenticeship wages. Plus, Mr Speaker —

Mr F.M. Logan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cockburn!

Mr F.M. Logan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cockburn, I call you to order for the first time. If you keep talking while I stand up, I will call you to order for the second time. We cannot have a debate during question time.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: The member clearly is not understanding and has no awareness of this issue. The Fair Work Commission has made a ruling. Out of that ruling employers have found it increasingly difficult to sustain apprenticeship wages.

In addition, commonwealth incentives to encourage employers to take on apprenticeships and traineeships have been declining. This happened to coincide with the state government's Future Skills program that was designed around ensuring that people entering our training system were subsidised by government appropriately, according to their employability and the skills demands of the state. Out of that we have a priority skills list, and we will subsidise to the highest level people in the occupations for which we know there is a pipeline of work of available.

As to the decline in apprenticeships between 2012 and 2015 in Western Australia, commencements are down 18.9 per cent; traineeship commencements are down 26.3 per cent.

Mr F.M. Logan interjected.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: No, it is not fees! If the member for Cockburn listens, he might learn something!

Nationally, there has been a decline in apprenticeship and traineeship commencements of 49.6 per cent. Although there has been a decline in Western Australia—we expect that to continue because of the economic conditions in the state and our changing workforce and economic situation—nationally commencements have declined by 49.6 per cent over the time that our commencements have declined between 18 and 26 per cent.

Mr F.M. Logan interjected.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: We are doing better than other states. When we have a look at the commencements —

Mr F.M. Logan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cockburn, you have not stopped. I have been lenient with you; I call you to order for the second time.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: When we have a look at the commencements for apprenticeships and traineeships and compare ourselves with other states, Western Australia had 11 081 commencements last year with a population of 2.598 million. In New South Wales there were 20 449 commencements for a population of 7.544 million. Our commencements for apprenticeships and traineeships are double the rate of New South Wales, even with our economy changing. What are we doing?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Midland, I call you to order for the first time. Member for Cockburn, I have been very lenient with you. If you shout out again, I will call you for a third time and the next time you will have a rest.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: When we adjust the population, we are doing very, very well indeed. We are not happy with the decline in apprenticeships and traineeships, and we are doing something about it. We have the Housing Industry Association, the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund and the Department of Training and Workforce Development working on incentive schemes for employers to try to keep those second and third-year apprentices employed during the change in economic conditions. A range of other initiatives, Future Skills and the priority skills list is designed to ensure all those commencements in training will be for jobs where we see a future pipeline of work. We make no apology for that. We need to be training people to be employed, and that is why we will see more changes to the training sector over the next few years. The entire country has realised that the system needs to change if we are going to continue to meet the needs of our changing workforce.