

PILBARA INSTITUTE — NEWMAN AND TOM PRICE CAMPUSES

360. Mr M. McGOWAN to the Minister for Training and Workforce Development:

I refer to the Minister for Training and Workforce Development's answers to questions last week that showed that there would no longer be staff located full-time at both Newman and Tom Price TAFEs, along with a reduction in courses available through those colleges.

- (1) Will the removal of all staff based at these colleges not make further education less accessible in these regional communities?
- (2) Can the minister confirm that many regional students are now being forced to travel long distances or to do their training online?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question.

- (1)–(2) It is true that there has been a significant change in the way that training is being delivered, particularly through our Pilbara Institute. A lot of that change is in response to a pullback by a range of the mining companies that were receiving and contracting their training through the Pilbara Institute campuses. As a result, Rio Tinto's work readiness programs at the Roebourne campus ceased without notice early in term 1. Fortescue Metals Group's work readiness programs will, however, continue through to June 2015. We have not been given any advice by those mining companies, either Rio or FMG, with regard to the continuation of those programs. That is 146 students whom we are keeping a very close eye on and we are working together with the mining companies to try to ensure that they have a broader view into the future, while still maintaining a commitment to partnering with our state training providers to deliver training to the Roebourne campus. There were 65 students enrolled in safety training courses during the year at the Newman campus, and that was being delivered on a commercial basis. Seven students received training at that campus through a flexible delivery model that was being managed from the Hedland campus. We are keeping a very close eye on the Pilbara Institute across our various campuses. We are going to be changing the way that we deliver training. We have to do that because we need the Pilbara Institute to remain sustainable into the future and we need to ensure that we can continue to deliver a training product.

It may well be that some of those students can be retrained in other areas. As an example, we have areas in sustainable construction and we know that we still need people to receive training in electrical trades and a whole range of the science, technology, engineering and maths areas. We will be looking to those students to try to match them to a training program that will allow them to receive some credits for the training that they have already received, and to transition into a training program that will lead to employment. We will keep a close eye on it. There is not much we can do if private companies choose to pull out of their private training arrangements with the state training providers, but what we can do is do our best to look after those students and ensure that they continue to receive training in another format, somewhere else in the state.