

**DEPARTMENT OF TRAINING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT —  
YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT — KIMBERLEY**

*Grievance*

**MS J. FARRER (Kimberley)** [9.06 am]: My grievance this morning is to the Minister for Training and Workforce Development. I rise this morning to speak about my great disappointment with the minister's Department of Training and Workforce Development, which seems to continue to do nothing to ensure that residents have the means to access training and gain employment in my electorate. People who are unemployed have spoken to me about their extreme frustration with agencies that have been awarded jobactive provider contracts. Numerous young people have explained to me that although they are actively doing their best to seek employment on their own, they unfortunately continue to be unsuccessful in gaining employment. They have also told me that the jobactive provider they are signed up with has not linked them with any potential employers or enrolled them to participate in any form of training, and has simply told these young people that they need to comply with the work for the dole program for at least six months. This is devastating to the self-esteem, self-worth and capacity building of our youth. They do not feel supported. This scenario is being experienced throughout the Kimberley, with many accounts being given to me by young people, especially in the Broome area. The government work for the dole provisions are causing high levels of stress and a loss of morale in communities. Not enough is being done in the region in the areas of vocational education, training and creating pathways to long-term employment for youth, and particularly Aboriginal youth. I believe that only through improved education and training opportunities and more diverse economic development will we be able to start addressing the generational disadvantages in my electorate.

The Premier's broken promises on the delivery of infrastructure, jobs, training, better health outcomes and quality education are crippling the Kimberley. As we all know, the Kimberley consists of four large shires. Just last week in these chambers, it was proven that this government has failed to deliver to the people of the East Kimberley. The Ord River irrigation scheme has failed to provide meaningful levels of training or employment to any locals in the Kimberley region. It is very disappointing that what could have been a positive and successful large-scale project in my electorate has made no encouraging impact on unemployment levels in Kununurra or the wider Kimberley region.

Adding to the government's long list of failures, it has also destroyed Kimberley TAFE. The previous regional director was given a heartless one week's notice that she was out of a job due to the amalgamation of the Kimberley and Pilbara TAFEs. The distance between Broome in the Kimberley and Port Hedland in the Pilbara does not stick in our minds. It is a six-hour drive from Port Hedland to Broome, and a lot of cost is involved for people to travel that distance alone, as well as being housed. The amalgamation process took away a lot of work for people. TAFE Aboriginal mentors and other staff lost their jobs throughout the region causing a big impact on the number and type of training programs that can be delivered. This, along with huge fee increases to all TAFE courses, has reduced the number of people choosing to participate in training.

I now look at Broome. Broome is a very big town with a great deal of potential to employ a lot of our Indigenous people when they achieve training programs, yet we do not see many young Indigenous people employed throughout the business sector or other industries. The Broome Aquaculture Centre that is run by Kimberley TAFE was built to support industry needs through training, research, production and development. The facility supports the production of marine finfish and has been crucial in the care and production of many other species—yet government support for this centre has also gone down. In addition to supporting the production of these commercially important species, the centre has also provided a critical support role for a number of aquaculture ventures—from community-based Aboriginal projects wishing to increase workforce capabilities through to commercial aquaculture ventures with specific projects requiring specialist assistance and needs. This government has now threatened to close this centre and discontinue aquaculture training in the Kimberley.

I truly fear for the future of training and workplace development within my electorate. With cuts to the regional youth justice strategy and Kimberley TAFE, and no increased funding for drug and alcohol rehabilitation or investment in existing youth centres, our young people face an uphill battle to succeed and achieve their goals. We see more and more of our young people who have become suicidal because they do not have jobs and have nothing meaningful in their lives. We have seen a higher number of Indigenous youths being imprisoned.

**MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Minister for Training and Workforce Development)** [9.14 am]: I thank the member for Kimberley for the grievance with respect to training in the Kimberley. I will address some of the concerns the member has raised.

I think I have expressed quite clearly in this place why we undertook the TAFE reform project. It was necessary to collapse those 11 administrative structures down to five. Doing that has freed up \$23 million for the system from year to year, which has allowed us to keep increases in TAFE fees down from zero to four per cent and

allowed the state government to continue to fund all TAFE courses between 85 per cent to 100 per cent, depending on the course. For example, our foundation literacy and numeracy skills courses are free of charge to students.

The Kimberley Training Institute is the state's biggest public provider of vocational education to Aboriginal students. There are 3 500 course enrolments and 437 000 hours of publicly funded training was delivered to Aboriginal students in 2015. More than 58 per cent of all publicly funded course enrolments at the institute were undertaken by Aboriginal students last year, compared with a state average of eight per cent uptake. A significant investment has been made.

In terms of industry, the areas of study include agriculture, forestry, fishing, construction, health care and social assistance. Publicly funded course enrolments by Aboriginal students at the Kimberley Training Institute have almost doubled. Since 2008, uptake of courses by Aboriginal students through the Kimberley TAFE has increased by 93 per cent, from 1 808 enrolments in 2008 to 3 388 in 2015. The uptake in training is inconsistent with population growth in the Kimberley; the uptake of training has nearly doubled. The growth in enrolments has been particularly strong at higher levels, and this is a very, very positive outcome. Certificate III and above qualifications have increased by 94 per cent since 2008. With our Future Skills WA program we direct students to take courses that lead to employment, and more Kimberley students have taken up programs with a certificate III or higher qualification that improve employment outcomes for students who undertake that training.

In 2015, the Aboriginal students studying at the Kimberley Training Institute reported an overall satisfaction rating of 97.6 per cent, compared with 93.5 per cent for students generally. Students who engage with the Kimberley TAFE have said they have had a very positive experience and are satisfied with their learning experience. Our programs are tailored to be consistent with the "Kimberley workforce development plan 2014–2017". The Department of Training and Workforce Development and the Kimberley Development Commission engaged with businesses in the Kimberley to ensure that training delivered through the Kimberley Training Institute was consistent with industry needs for skilled workers to step into employment opportunities. The Kimberley workforce development plan will be undergoing review to put that strategy in place for the three years post 2017. The Department of Training and Workforce Development, together with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Kimberley Development Commission, collaborate with the Lombadina and Warmun communities to research and document community successes in achieving very high workforce participation rates. They have taken into consideration the role of initiatives that feed into that positive uptake of employment participation—for example, the role of community councils, mining company contributions, local government employment practices, the very positive opportunities in the pastoral industry in the pipeline, and the employment resulting from community development projects and Aboriginal business activities. Aboriginal businesses in the Kimberley have been thriving, particularly those engaged in cultural tourism.

The West Kimberley Aboriginal Workforce Development Centre is collaborating with regional industry associations and government agencies to inform employers of the various forms of government and other support and assistance available for Aboriginal employment. The Department of Housing is also reviewing its training and employment requirements for construction and maintenance contracts for remote Kimberley communities. That is with a view to ensuring that intended employment and training opportunities are being offered to the communities—local people living locally being trained to perform the maintenance contracts within those communities. That is consistent with our Aboriginal communities reform project, in which we are trying to look at developing the local talent in the communities to be employed doing the work to keep the communities running and to provide an economic base and structure for the future, and some hope for the future, for those young children in those communities. I thought it was a very disappointing report last week from the Auditor General on the Ord project. The Ord project has delivered significant Aboriginal employment outcomes already and we see a massive future in the agricultural sector. The state government's investment has been a stimulus for economic development. There are opportunities there around fisheries, aquaculture and the Ord, and soon we will enable the Ord final agreements for the Indigenous people with respect to that project and we are very excited about that. In response to the grievance from the member for Kimberley, we will continue to focus on particularly Aboriginal youth, with our Aboriginal youth transitions employer engagement project and a range of other initiatives to ensure that Aboriginal jobseekers and young Indigenous people are provided with the training opportunities and the support that they need to go into employment and contribute to the economic development of the Kimberley. That is our purpose.