

TAFE — TRAINING DEMAND

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

I refer to the \$21 million that the government has cut from the TAFE colleges in this year's budget, which cites an expected softening in demand for training delivery even though the budget also predicts the unemployment rate to increase to 6.75 per cent.

- (1) How does the government expect demand for training to decrease when more people are becoming unemployed?
- (2) At a time when people are desperate for work, why would the minister deny them the opportunity to upskill?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for Cockburn for the question. As the member for Cockburn would have heard me say in this chamber a number of times, I have been looking at TAFE sector reform, specifically with a view to try to drive down costs in the sector and get more efficiency through the sector. I have also articulated previously that training demand will often follow the ebb and flow of the economic cycle. For example—we spoke about apprenticeships and traineeships last week—when businesses experience a slowdown in activity, they are less inclined to take on apprenticeships and traineeships. As a result, we expect that there will be lessened demand for the delivery of some of those student curriculum hours in TAFE colleges. That is why we have anticipated that there might be a decline in demand. We have spoken about it at great length.

Member for Cockburn, while I am on my feet talking about proposed cuts to the TAFE sector, I will address some of the comments that have been made publicly about this issue. The Leader of the Opposition made the assertion that we have cut \$53 million from the training sector. But when we look at what that \$53 million is—it was very clearly articulated in the budget papers; it is no wonder he was a hopeless Minister for Education—we see that it is because the national partnership agreement that we are negotiating with the commonwealth has not been finalised. The \$53 million drops off after 2017-18 because we do not know the amount of the new national partnership agreement, neither does any other state. We are not going to put a figure in the budget if we cannot articulate it. It was outlined clearly in the budget papers. I am very dubious about any claim that the member for Cockburn and the Leader of the Opposition make about cuts to TAFE, because they do not read the budget papers and they do not inform themselves appropriately.