

TRAINING AND LOCAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Motion

HON LJILJANNA RAVLICH (East Metropolitan) [10.13 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house condemns the Barnett government for its failure to generate sufficient training and local job opportunities from Western Australia's current prosperity, and calls on the government to implement policies to ensure the missed opportunities of the last three and a half years are not repeated.

In some ways it is difficult to have to say that the government's record in training and workforce development since 2008 has been absolutely embarrassing. I very much hold the view that the Minister for Training and Workforce Development has his priorities wrong, and they have been wrong from the start. His pre-occupation with splitting training and education because of a personality clash with the Minister for Education in my view was unnecessary; and renaming TAFE colleges in my view was a low-order issue and a distraction. Certainly, those things alone indicate to me that this minister is more obsessed with those sorts of issues rather than with the heart of training.

The training system is ultimately to prepare people for the world of work by making sure they have the skills set to make an economic contribution to the economy; in doing so, that generates lots of positive benefits for the individuals concerned. Unfortunately, this government has made a very poor response to the challenges currently before us. There has been some readjustment within the economy. Some parts of the economy have become sluggish while other parts have grown at a phenomenal rate, and there has been very little by way of an adequate response to that from this government.

What we have in Hon Peter Collier, unfortunately, is a minister who has been distracted by all manner of things and who has really not had his focus on the job. We have seen a revolving door of staff through his ministerial office. We have seen 44 staff since he has been the minister. We have seen four chiefs of staff. We know that there is a poisonous relationship between the minister and the director general. There are allegations of bullying within the department. The minister has a poor work ethic and has only two meetings a day plus one event on the odd occasion. Quite clearly the focus seems to be on everything else apart from where the focus should be.

I put that on the public record because at the end of the day it all means that the minister is not focused, the people of Western Australia are missing out on important opportunities, and he and this government are failing. Certainly his strategy for training has been reflective of his work ethos; that is, do as little as possible. One of the most obvious things in the 2013 budget for training and workforce development is the lack of commitment to training. We see over the forward estimates a reduction in the revenues allocated to training and workforce development; we see virtually no expenditure on capital works over the forward estimates for training facilities; and we also see a \$70 million efficiency dividend cut over the forward estimates.

I have to say to you, Mr President, that this is not reflective of a budget that should be supporting the increase in the number of people who have access to employment and training in this state. It is reflective of a budget that says, "We will not grow our own apprentices and trainees in this state. We will source labour from other parts of the world and let them foot the training bill. Why don't we just bring them over here ready to go? We don't have to bother ourselves and our companies don't have to bother themselves with training Western Australians because we'll just handball that responsibility to somebody else."

Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition launched our Priority Start policy. The Priority Start policy is dear to my heart. In fact, it is a policy that I launched when I was Minister for Education and Training. We had commenced the implementation of that policy but there was then a change of government; however, the policy remained a policy of the government. We estimated when that policy was announced, based on the level of economic activity and the amount of building going on, that 4 000 apprentices and trainees per annum would be able to get work as a direct result of that policy. Clearly, that did not even take into consideration, for example, the Building the Education Revolution program—the funding that came from the commonwealth. It also did not take into consideration a number of other things. That was clearly an enormous opportunity, but what did we see? We saw the minister do absolutely nothing with that policy; in fact, he sat on his hands and just point-blank refused to implement it. For the life of me, I do not understand why that was the case, and to this day this minister has not come into this Parliament and given the people of this state a reason for failing to implement that policy. Remember, on an annual basis 4 000 young and not-so-young people would have had an opportunity to have employment-based training. On Wednesday, 13 October I asked how many apprentices had been employed under the Priority Start program in the following years: in 2008 there were 145—keep in mind that we were just starting it up then; in 2009, 144; and in 2010, 85. Quite clearly, this minister just let this policy sit there doing nothing.

Not much has really happened in training since Labor left office. Labor's achievement in training was very, very significant. We, amongst other things, doubled the number of apprentices and traineeships to 39 000—doubled them—and one-third of those were in regional areas. By comparison, as at March 2011 there were 40 800—keep in mind that we had left government with 39 000—which is an increase of fewer than 2 000 apprentices and trainees in training. As of March 2012 there were only 42 000 apprentices and trainees in training, representing an increase of just 3 000 over three and a half years. We would have to say that, by any measure, that is simply not good enough. This minister thinks that is okay and acceptable, but those figures clearly indicate to me that there has been no concerted effort whatsoever to really gear up Western Australian workers for Western Australian jobs—none whatsoever. The attitude was, "I'll take a really slow and steady-as-she-goes approach, we'll make the training figures look as though they are reasonable, and meanwhile we'll just go and source from wherever we can."

I will give members a classic case of what this minister did. For example, Labor reformed the training system so that nearly 10 000 young Western Australians could take up trade training in school through programs like School Apprenticeship Link. Norm Marlborough, former MLA, worked very, very hard on that as parliamentary secretary when I was the training minister. The whole idea was that because the school leaving age was to increase to 17 years, it was very important that students who were being made to go back to school under the new laws had a full variety of options, including trade training in high schools. When the Department of Education was disaggregated and training was pulled out of it under this minister, it meant that that policy objective could no longer be met, or it would be very, very difficult for it to be. So it was not met and it has not been met. He did not even think it through; that is how hopeless this person is. This School Apprenticeship Link program was exactly that. The minister abolished School Apprenticeship Link and took training out of the education department at enormous cost to taxpayers, and of course on top of that we had the cancellation of the years 11 and 12 courses because funding was pulled from district high schools across the state.

I have to say that this is a recipe for disaster. When we look at attendance figures in the education system, of course kids are not attending school—at some schools half the school does not attend! What is the point of attending school? There is nothing there for them. They cannot even access years 11 and 12 courses, and they cannot access trade training in high school. There is nothing for them.

We have some serious problems here. When we look at what is happening with the economy, it is not a rosy picture throughout; in fact, there are pockets of very high unemployment. We have seen the casualisation of the workforce, we have seen underemployment, and of course there are all the issues associated with structural adjustment. If we look at the area profiles in terms of youth employment, it is a very concerning picture. The teenage full-time unemployment rate for east metropolitan as at April 2012 is 23.1 per cent; for central metropolitan, 21.9 per cent; for north metropolitan, 13.6 per cent; for south east metropolitan, 20.1 per cent; and teenage full-time youth employment in south west metropolitan is 24.9 per cent. That is Australian Bureau of Statistics labour force survey data, and it is very, very concerning. We have heard what this minister has done in terms of pulling the guts and the heart out of training and denying people opportunities. If we look at the data by suburb, in December 2010 the number of unemployed people in Armadale was 1 962; by December 2011 it was 2 289; and for Mundaring the figure goes from 901 to 965. I do not have time to go through all that analysis now.

Hon Liz Behjat: You hesitate, because the figures are so good you don't want to read out the figures.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: No, no.

The market out there is patchy; that is the point. Across the board, youth unemployment is high, and in places like Kwinana and Armadale, for example, the unemployment level is high. There can be no denying that. The minister has not responded adequately to the challenges that we face. His solution has been, and will continue to be no doubt, that it is best to source workers from elsewhere instead of training his own.

I asked a question yesterday about the minister's recent announcement that he was going to source workers from interstate—I have spoken about this in this place before—because he needs 76 000 skilled workers by 2015. He has been referring to that 76 000 figure for the last couple of years at least, and it would be interesting to know how many of that 76 000 have already been sourced, because 76 000 seems to be a constant. Given that that figure has been around for some time, it would be interesting to know how many of the 76 000 have already come here and how many more are yet to come. Of course, an influx of skilled workers puts enormous pressure on regional towns; it puts pressure on services such as health, education, and law and order. I went to a school in my electorate and I was told that 20 per cent of the students could not speak English. Those students were the children of subclass 457 visa workers, and no additional resources had been given to that school. As a migrant who came to this country at the age of five, I can tell members that I remember at primary school sitting in a class of 45 students with no attention given to me, because the teacher could not cope with 45 children. It is incredible that I speak English at all! When people say to me, "Maybe your English is not as great or as

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Jon Ford; Hon Col Holt; Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm; Hon Liz Behjat; Hon Kate Doust

sophisticated as it could be”, I think, “You give it a go and see how hard it is.” However, I fear that these children of 457 visa workers will encounter the same difficulties in that resources simply are not made available. I am sure if I asked the minister how many skilled migrants have arrived in WA from interstate, New Zealand and other nations, he would not be able to tell me. The minister would have no idea of those figures. He has no idea of the sort of pressure it is putting on infrastructure and everything else.

Yesterday I asked the minister whether he had taken a delegation of employers to Kwinana, Rockingham, Armadale and Midland. The minister could have gone to those areas with a delegation of employers who were looking for workers. He could have held a meeting in a hall and all those workers who believe that they have the skill set and the qualifications required for any position could have gone there and the minister could have assisted Western Australian people to get into Western Australian jobs, but he chose not to. The minister chooses not to all the time, because he does not go out of his comfort zone. The minister does not really care about the people who so desperately need those jobs. Instead, the minister takes a trip over east, or, as was the case when he went to England, Scotland and Ireland, he big-notes himself—he is a big shot over there. Basically, who are the losers out of all this? I will tell members who the losers are; they are the thousands and thousands of young people who have had their opportunities ripped out from under them by a minister who is either incompetent or uncaring, but most likely both. Let me give the minister some advice. It is not possible for the minister to do his job with only two appointments a day —

Hon Liz Behjat interjected.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I am glad the member made that comment because my understanding is that the backbench is very, very concerned about Minister Collier’s performance.

Several members interjected.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The government’s backbench! Government members may want to win the next election but I suggest that, after having caused a \$450 million bill from the solar power fiasco, on top of which we now have such lost opportunities to the people of Western Australia, I think it is shocking that members opposite laugh —

Hon Peter Collier: Time’s up!

The PRESIDENT: Order! Hon Peter Collier is not the teacher in here; I am.

[Member’s time expired.]

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Minister for Training and Workforce Development) [10.34 am]: We obviously will not be supporting this motion because it is abject nonsense. Can I just say at the outset that we get a bit fed up with standing and debating this motion day in, day out because, quite frankly, all Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich does is launch into a tirade of personal abuse without providing any substance whatsoever.

I have no problem debating this motion whatsoever. Training is on the crest of a wave in Western Australia. Wherever I go, the government gets accolades for initiating reforms to transform training, giving it the profile that it so richly deserves. We are looking down the barrel of a serious labour force shortage. Yes, the very realistic figures we have at the moment are that we will be 76 000 workers short by 2015. It is not a figure that I have used for the past couple of years; it has been refined in the past 12 months. The figure was higher, but it has been reduced.

First of all, to suggest that we have done nothing is absolute garbage. I wish Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich would get her nose out of the bin because all she tends to do is just indulge in personal vitriol. I remind the member that she had an opportunity in education and training and—this is the only personal thing that I will say—quite frankly, she was the worst education minister that we ever had and she was sacked accordingly. Therefore, I think that if the member is going to talk about quality and standards, she needs to look in the mirror because I will not lower myself to her standards.

Having said that, I will say a few things about training. I point out, yet again, that when the Liberal–National government took over in 2008, we were immediately hit with the global financial crisis. Immediately, there was a decline in apprenticeships and traineeships —

Hon Kate Doust: This is the same speech you give all the time!

Hon PETER COLLIER: Sorry, I do not have time to take interjections.

That was a global phenomenon. We initiated a number of reforms immediately to stem the tide in the loss of apprenticeships and traineeships—for example, the \$47.5 million stimulus package, which provided

\$17.6 million for course fee exemptions, \$10.6 million for rebates on workers' compensation premiums, \$4.1 million for improved access to career development services, \$4.1 million in marketing and awareness campaigns and \$3 million for out-of-contract apprentices. That can hardly be seen as doing nothing. It was very proactive and it was very successful. That is not just rhetoric; it is fact. For example, as a result of our initiatives in Western Australia, we had a decline in apprenticeships and traineeships in Western Australia over the 12-month period from December 2008 to December 2009 of 2.92 per cent. That is not good because we do not want to have any decline, but it compared very, very favourably with the national decline in apprenticeships and traineeships of 4.68 per cent. It compared favourably with states such as Queensland, which had a decline in apprenticeships and traineeships of 10.05 per cent. South Australia had a decline of 5.13 per cent and the Northern Territory had a decline of 18.06 per cent. Therefore, the decline in apprenticeships and traineeships in Western Australia over that 12-month period was minimal in comparison with other jurisdictions and much lower than the national average. That was a direct result of the initiatives this government implemented over that period.

We needed a complete shift in mindset for training. As a former educator of 23 years, I wanted a change in the mindset in training. I wanted to make sure that we gave training the profile it so richly deserved. I no longer wanted students in our schools to feel subservient or second-class if they chose vocational education and training subjects. I wanted those students to feel just as significant in their self-esteem, resiliency skills and the contribution that they could make to our community and our economy as anyone who went to university. To do that, we had to raise the profile of training. As a result, we took training out of the education portfolio, just 12 months after we came to office. That was an initiative of mine; it was something that I was very, very keen to do. The former government had put them back together in 2003. I have to say that some members of the former government did not agree with that. I wanted to move training out of education; I did not want it to be subservient to education. Not one industry representative, not one person, came to me and said that that was a bad move. In fact, it was applauded right across the state because at last we were giving training the profile that it so richly deserves. Only one person in Western Australia publicly criticised that—the shadow minister for training. If the shadow minister for training had gone out and engaged with industry, she would have heard the unambiguous message that it was the right move. This government made that move and it was very, very successful. The Department of Training and Workforce Development has gone from strength to strength. The department is now a beacon for success in being accessible to industry and making a clear identification that we are serious about meeting the labour force needs of Western Australia.

In addition to that, as a government we developed 10 industry training councils that represent the broad cross-section of industry sets throughout Western Australia. It cannot be the gospel according to Pete and it cannot be the gospel according to the Liberal–National government; our training policies must reflect what industry wants. If we are going to meet those labour force needs in 2015, we must provide the industry sets that are wanted. So, yes, we have developed the state priority occupation list and we adapt our funding measures to ensure that those specific industry training sets are met. We also developed 14 workforce development centres around the state, including eight in the regions, where they are most needed in many instances, and six in the metropolitan area, including one for culturally and linguistically diverse members of our community and one for ex-offenders. This is a cohort of people that we are going to engage back into the workforce so that they can make a meaningful contribution to the community. That is what we are doing with those workforce development centres.

We developed the Skills West Expo to try to raise the profile of training in the community, and it has been phenomenally successful, working hand in hand with media and industry. Literally tens of thousands of people have come through the door for the first two Skills West Expos, and the next one is being held in August. I encourage all members who are remotely interested in the labour force needs of Western Australia to go and have a look at the Skills West Expo at the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre, because it is well worth it. The government has been proactive; we are getting positive stories in *The West Australian*, week in and week out, on training and training initiatives.

Something that is dear to my heart is Aboriginal workforce development. I wanted to make sure that one of the most marginalised groups in our community could be provided with access to training, so I went right around the state with the chair of the State Training Board, Keith Spence, and his co-chair, Dr Sue Gordon. This was not a short-sighted thing; we wanted to make sure that if we were going to provide opportunities for Aboriginal people, that we would listen to the people who mattered. We went to different communities and listened to Aboriginal groups and elders. We also listened to industry, local government and the community as a whole, to ensure that we got it right. Then we put out the “Training together — working together: Sustainable employment outcomes for Aboriginal people through training” document, and I am very, very proud of that document. The people who were responsible for putting it together with me ensured that it provided positive outcomes for Aboriginal people.

As a direct result of “Training together — working together”, we now have five dedicated Aboriginal workforce development centres throughout Western Australia; we have never had them before. There is one in Murray Street, and again I encourage all members to visit; they have an open door to go and have a look at the Aboriginal workforce development centre in Murray Street. It is magnificent. There are also development centres in Broome, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie and Bunbury, and they are working a treat. They are working with Aboriginal communities and industry and ensuring that we provide training opportunities for Aboriginal people and seamless transitions through support mechanisms into employment. It is not the case that when they get employment we say that that box is ticked; the workforce development centres ensure that Aboriginal people are provided with support so that they can retain those employment positions. That is what the community asked for, and we have provided it. That has been very successful; how do I know that? There has been an increase of 14 per cent in Aboriginal training over that period.

The opposition can hardly say that that is not doing anything; that is providing a positive outcome. We also now have a much more comprehensive mentoring structure throughout Western Australia to support Aboriginal people. We have the Aboriginal affairs coordination committee working hand in hand with government departments to ensure that government departments actually listen to each other and work together to ensure that we provide training and employment opportunities for Aboriginal people. Also as part of the “Training together — working together” initiative, we now have a role model system through which various members of the Aboriginal community go out and talk to, work with, and provide guidance and support for Aboriginal people. That is working fantastically in terms of positive outcomes in training and employment for one of the most marginalised groups in our community.

In addition to that, I have released a number of dynamic documents that are working very, very successfully. “Training WA: Planning for the future 2009–2018” is a very real, living, breathing document, as is “Skilling WA: A workforce development plan for Western Australia”. It provides pillars of success for training in Western Australia to ensure that training is not just for school leavers but for all members of the community, so that those who are marginalised—Aboriginal people, people with disabilities or people who are somehow otherwise disengaged from the community—can be provided with training opportunities. That has been very, very successful. It ensures that we have meaningful, relevant training courses, and that is where the funding is going. The government has injected an additional \$58 million for an additional 21 000 training places. How can the opposition possibly say that that is not doing anything? Members opposite would have to be completely naive and indulging in crass political nonsense to suggest that we are not doing anything. We have runs on the board in terms of policy development and the injection of funds, and we have definitely hit the ground running.

I also initiated the skilled migration strategy and I am very proud of that. We are going to need a vibrant, dynamic skilled migration strategy, and we will need the support of the federal Labor government to ensure that we achieve that. I commend Chris Bowen, Gary Gray and Martin Ferguson for having the vision and foresight to initiate the first Enterprise Migration Agreement two weeks ago.

I turn now to how successful the government has been in training over the last three years. I have outlined just a few things that we have done. I wish I had an hour or two hours on this; I could talk about training all day. As a result of raising the profile of training in Western Australia, we have achieved some terrific outcomes. For example, the number of apprentices and trainees in Western Australia has increased from 37 249 in 2008 to 42 060 in March 2012—a six per cent increase over three years. That is more than ever before in the history of Western Australia. Course enrolments have increased from 130 303 in 2008 to 144 560 in 2012—a 10.9 per cent increase over three years. Student curriculum hours have increased 29.2 million hours in 2008 to 37 million hours in 2011—a 26.6 per cent increase. Non-English client numbers increased to 14 198 in 2011 from 10 911 in 2008—an increase of 9.17 per cent. That compares with an increase of 4.3 per cent between 2003 and 2008 under the previous Labor government. Aboriginal client numbers increased to 8 674 in 2011 from 6 976 in 2008—an annual increase of 7.53 per cent under the Liberal–National government, versus 0.86 per cent under the Labor government between 2003 and 2008. Female client numbers have increased to 53 684 in 2011 from 46 707 in 2008—an annual increase of 4.75 per cent under the Liberal–National government, in contrast with no change under the Labor government between 2003 and 2008. Course enrolments in certificate IV level courses and above surged 38.42 per cent since 2008, contrasting with an 11.55 per cent decrease between 2003 and 2008 under Labor.

In addition to that, we have injected tens of millions of dollars in infrastructure spend for our state training providers, because they are magnificent institutions that are providing quality training for Western Australians across the state. They have rebadged and they have more autonomy and independence than ever before. They are now stand-alone institutes that go out there and listen to their particular cohorts and provide quality training. Students now feel really proud to go to a particular state training provider, knowing full well that they are giving

them exactly what they want—a qualification that will be recognised not only in Western Australia but also nationally and internationally.

As I said, I could go on all day about this, but to coin a phrase, Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich needs to have a Bex and a lie down on this issue. She needs to stop her vitriolic rhetoric and look at the facts, because the facts are there. The numbers have increased across the board in terms of training. The Liberal–National government will always want Western Australians for Western Australian jobs wherever possible; that will always be our top priority, and our runs are on the board in respect of the vast array of policies that we have instituted over the last three years. I can promise members that, as far as training is concerned, we have only just started and the best is yet to come.

HON JON FORD (Mining and Pastoral) [10.49 am]: I cannot believe the structure of the Minister for Training and Workforce Development’s argument. It seems to me that the whole point of training is the end result: jobs. It is easy to talk about increases in participation rates, but there was nothing in what the minister said about how many people actually finish their courses. He must be talking to a bunch of people that I am unaware of, because people are saying to me all the time that one of the biggest problems is keeping people in the courses and getting them to finish. Those people who finish go off and do other jobs. The trouble is that that kills the argument that people are proudly going to an institute and delivering the training that businesses need.

It is always interesting when people rely on percentages. They say there has been a 10 per cent, 18 per cent or 100 per cent increase in Indigenous participation in training. If one person is in training and then we get another person training, that is a 100 per cent increase. I had an example of that the other day when I was talking to the people at Woodside—this in no way is a disparaging remark against Woodside—and they told me proudly that in Broome they had 80 employees. I said that that is fantastic compared to when I worked for Woodside, because then it had one.

The fact of the matter is that in the Kimberley, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics figures, 3 400 people are out of work—that is real numbers. In fact Indigenous people, on a percentage basis, are probably the best trained people in the country. The reality is that none of that training is relevant to getting them a job.

It is great to yell and talk about percentages, but in actual fact the proof of the pudding is in the eating. There is no better example of that absolute failure than members sitting here proudly announcing that they support the federal government’s lazy and cheap scheme of enterprise migration agreements. Those construction jobs that go to those participants are supplying training to the people that they bring over. They go around the invisible barriers that industry puts up, for whatever reason—I do not get it—for employing local people in the industry. An example of that is, if someone wants to get a job in mining construction, it does not matter whether they have all the tickets in the world, they have to have six months’ experience. But if someone comes in on an EMA, they do not have to have six months’ experience. If they want to go into oil and gas construction, they need three years’ experience. But if they come in on an EMA, they do not need to have three years’ experience. The fact of the matter is that those jobs are the entry jobs into long-term industry.

The government has form on this. Members are absolutely right that they have the runs on the board. The Court government came in promising that it would not close the Midland workshops, the biggest single training institute for the black trades, in my language, in the state, and they closed it. A lot of the guys in my cohort, whom I have worked with in the industry, all did their training at the Midland workshops.

Where is the talk about mandated targets? Companies have self-imposed mandated targets for local participation, but the government does not have it. I was one of the critics and raised it when we were last in government, and I have heard no talk about that here. There is a shortfall of 76 000 jobs. The reality is that, although we have low unemployment, more and more people are coming into the state. That could be the reason for the increase in the participation rate. We have an incredible increase in the number of people moving to the state and bringing their young people, but we are not providing and matching them up to the jobs that are available, because if we were, we would not have any argument from this side of the house about EMAs. The fact of the matter is, if members go up into places like Port Hedland, Kununurra or Paraburdoo and talk to the young people there, they will say that, unless their parents live in the town, they cannot get an apprenticeship. We are going to allow companies to go to all the expense of flying people in from overseas, but we are not prepared to say to them, “Why aren’t you going to fly up apprentices from Rockingham?” In fact, the member for Jandakot says that they are all a bunch of useless people who are all on drugs. There is more form; the government has form on its attitude towards training and particularly young people.

The minister talked then about how proud he is of documents. I do not care about documents. I have been representing the Mining and Pastoral Region for 11 years now. Continuously over that time about 6 000 young people have suffered from some level of malnutrition, and that has never been addressed. That is directly linked

to their ability to get into jobs. We have people, as the minister touched on, with alcohol-related impediments through no fault of their own—foetal alcohol syndrome—but we are not really addressing that. We have heard about mentoring, and yet we hear that it is a great example to use EMAs in the workplace. I will sit here and congratulate the government on its training initiatives when there are not 3 400 unemployed people in the Kimberley; when disadvantaged people are not subject to ridicule by members of Parliament; when we have schemes in place and show that we are willing to mentor people right through the ranks and up into these jobs; and when there are thousands of people in training—not a percentage—instead of going for a cheap and easy option of bringing in people from overseas.

I have no problem with immigrants. I would like to see something like the Snowy Mountains scheme. People would like to say that it is a racist debate; it is not a racist debate. The Snowy Mountains scheme was a great social experiment that paid off for Australia. People were brought over as immigrants, so let us have an immigrant scheme. We will bring those skills over here and we will train our young people off the backs of those skilled people, but we do not bring them over here for three months, two years or three years and send them back so that they become our major competitors. We know, as the Leader of the House has talked about, that Africa will one day turn into one of our major competitors. We do not train people to compete against us until we are at that level.

Where is the vision? The government has talked about percentages and pride in its documents. Where do we as a state want to be in 10, 15 or 20 years? Where is the vision for industry? Where is the strategy to bring industry that matches up to the jobs? We are playing catch-up. As part of that role, talking about the vision and where we want to be as a state, is not just about thinking about the current industry we have got; we have to look forward and try to estimate what is going on. We have all learnt, particularly because of the boom in Western Australia, that it is easy to roll out the global financial crisis, but the fact is that WA has been largely immune because of this boom; it is by chance. We have a huge opportunity to have a vision about where we should be going in the future and matching up the jobs to that.

I do not care about percentages. I will take the discussion seriously when the government can control its backbenchers to stop ridiculing disadvantaged people, and when I see the 3 400 people who we know for sure are unemployed—we suspect that there are more—given jobs. When Aboriginal people are mentored all the way from home into work, when disadvantaged people in Rockingham, Armadale, Balga and down in the regional areas are flown in and out to where the jobs are and given training, I will take the discussion seriously. What is wrong with having fly in, fly out apprentices? What is wrong with that? When they are off on their blocks, give them a four-and-one swing—they could have three weeks on the job and one week en bloc in college. That is innovative. When the government starts talking about that, I will take the discussion seriously. The minister can say what he wants, but it is just statistics. He should not get up here and tell us how proud he is of documents, but rather how proud he is of the participation in the workforce.

HON COL HOLT (South West) [10.59 am]: The more time I spend in this place and in government, the more I see the challenges of the implementation of policies and how the implementation of policies leads to an outcome. Often we as parliamentarians deal with legislation, which is one way of bringing about change. I have spoken about that before. I really see that challenges in policy implementation are often much, much harder. In the training and workplace development portfolio, it is probably one of the most difficult areas of implementing policies to get that outcome that Hon Jon Ford just talked about. In my view, a lot of things need to line up that are outside that policy scope to get to the end point. Although governments have some control over funding and investment, we need pathways from that investment or training through to job placement. A lot of things are reliant on that. Serious partnerships need to be developed between government, training organisations and the businesses and corporations that will be the employers; and obviously the people who enter as trainees in workplaces and their potential mentors, and even the people who run the corporations, all have a role to play in taking someone from school who wants to take on some training through to the end point of getting a job. A lot of factors affect that journey along the way. The attitude and capacity of the people entering into those training positions have a lot to do with it. The discussion of late has been about mobility. We know that people have to go to where the jobs are; that has not changed and people have always had to move to get employment.

I want to talk briefly about a personal circumstance. My son is 19 years old, and he works and lives in Karratha as a third-year apprentice. He identified when he was about 15 years old that he wanted to be a heavy diesel mechanic. As a family, we sat around and thought about the best way for him to enter that industry. He identified very early that he wanted to work in the Pilbara. He saw that as having great opportunities for him. Through working together, we found an avenue to enrol him in the Australian Technical College that was running out of Karratha at that time. He spent a year there and when he got a job placement his attitude was, “I am not going to stand around and watch everyone do something; I am going to pick up a broom and sweep the floor if no-one has a job for me.” I am very proud of his attitude. He has been up there for three years and is in the third year of his

apprenticeship. In his circumstance, mobility has been very important. I take on board the comment made by Hon Jon Ford about fly in, fly out apprentices and there is probably an opportunity for that, but obviously we want people living and working in communities. However, there are challenges for people on apprenticeship wages to find affordable accommodation. That is another policy area that the government is tackling to try to bring prices down. We have definite challenges in that.

Training and workforce development provide us with other challenges. In a way, we are training people for future needs in a present-day setting. We have the present-day setting for forecasting trends in industry, availability of trainers and funding; it is all about trying to prepare those people to take up placements into the future. This is not necessarily an easy challenge to overcome.

I want to run through some of what this government has done in the training sector to try to improve training opportunities and to employ people. Everyone would know about the East Kimberley development plan and what is happening around the Ord–East Kimberley expansion project. That is a partnership between the state and the commonwealth governments with the state putting up \$322 million and the commonwealth putting up \$195 million. The commonwealth saw it as a key investment in its Closing the Gap agenda that originated with the Council of Australian Governments. That policy is heavily conditioned towards creating opportunities for training and employment for local people, especially Aboriginal people of the Kimberley. If members go up there and talk to people about what is happening in Kununurra, they will find that that policy setting and the heavy conditions that are set with those contracts are really making a difference. There have been 27 construction projects that have happened or are occurring in Kununurra, Wyndham, Warmun and some other remote communities, with 14 apprenticeships created for Aboriginal people in the area and 47 Aboriginal participants in the employment projects. We have some on-the-ground ways of finding pathways for taking people from training through to some sort of employment, which is a great outcome. Another part of that is the construction involved in the expansion of the Ord irrigation scheme, involving farming land and irrigation channels, with Aboriginal people comprising 25 per cent of the people employed on that project. There has been a \$10 million investment to skill up Aboriginal plant operators. That project has established that we cannot train someone to operate a plant if they have no outcome, no end point or placement at the end of that training. The construction work involved in the expansion of the Ord irrigation scheme has provided a pathway for placement in construction work all over the Kimberley. When we train them up, there is a bulldozer or a grader almost sitting waiting for them. In addition, \$4 million has been spent on that project through Aboriginal-owned businesses. At least five new Aboriginal businesses have started in Kununurra as a result of that project. Again, it is about the policy setting for investment into that project that is driving these changes and opportunities. Interestingly, in 2009 the Miriuwung–Gajerrong Corporation had six staff; it now has 46. That has been driven because of the opportunities it sees for its people to be employed in that organisation because they have things to do; they are very engaged with the project and they are benefiting from it. That is again on the back of the government's investment in that project and its vision to build into the contracts that were signed a local employment requirement so that that opportunity for the local people was not missed. I think it has been a shining example of some worthwhile investment.

I am running out of time, but I want to talk quickly about some of the investment into training infrastructure in the regions. The Broome campus of the Kimberley Training Institute has new carpentry and joinery workshops and a refurbishment program for the existing metal, engineering and automotive workshops. Derby campus has also had an upgrade in the areas of engineering, building construction and automotive studies.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Is that royalties for regions funding?

Hon COL HOLT: Some of it is, but not all of it. There have also been upgrades at the Halls Creek campus, again for building construction and automotive studies. In my view, what is happening in the Kimberley means that those people have avenues, after going through that training, to work locally. That opportunity is provided to a lot of the TAFE and training students; they can train locally and get placements locally. My son is an example of that in Karratha.

In the Pilbara, projects are spread across the three campuses, and Karratha, South Hedland and Pundulmurra are all getting some funds to improve their infrastructure and what they can offer to local people. In the midwest, the Durack Institute of Technology is getting some upgrades, although its focus in the first instance is on a new health and community service facility. A new campus is also being built near the airport, and the minister has talked about that before. That is in recognition of how the iron ore industry around the midwest is developing and how the government is looking to the future; it is training people locally and placing them locally.

HON MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM (Agricultural) [11.08 am]: I welcome the opportunity to comment on today's non-government business motion, and I thank Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich for the opportunity to talk about training issues. I want to talk about training and apprenticeship issues and workforce development in Geraldton

and the midwest especially. I will start by saying that I listened to the litany of great achievements from the Minister for Training and Workforce Development. I understand that I will probably never be a minister in government, but I suppose that if I were a minister, I would have to do something very similar to what he has done.

But, at the end of the day, I think what ministers need to convey to the Parliament and to the people of Western Australia is not so much a great litany of all their fantastic achievements, but what they are going to do in the future. Is the minister going to sit down and review things and say, “This particular policy or this particular initiative is not working; let us go off in a slightly different direction and let us revamp something”? That is what I would like to hear from the Minister for Training and Workforce Development. I am not for one minute saying that everything that any government minister ever does is a complete load of nonsense; of course it is not. But what I want to hear from the minister is: in these trips around Western Australia, and elsewhere, that he is engaged in, what are the sorts of things that people are saying the minister needs to improve upon? I want to hear from the minister what programs he envisages putting in place in the next year or two. To be perfectly honest with members, I know that we always hear about the faults and failings. But we need to listen to the faults and the failings and work on those. We cannot just sit on our laurels and say, “Everything is fine; we are just going to wait for everything now to fall into place.” No matter what we are involved in—I have been involved in education and I have been involved in business—things do not just happen. We have to make them happen. It is all very well for the minister to talk about that great litany of achievements. But if the minister is just going to sit on his laurels, I am afraid things are going to go pear-shaped for him in the near future.

I was very, very much taken, as I always am, with the comments of Hon Jon Ford. I think that Hon Jon Ford hit the nail on the head when he said it is all about jobs. Members need to understand that my region is the Agricultural Region. I want to give members some quotes from the Aboriginal Workforce Development Centre. I think Hon Jon Ford talked about not quoting percentages. I am sorry, but I cannot give members any raw data and numbers. But these particular percentages are indicative of the number of people, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, in the midwest area who are unemployed. People can go through traineeship and apprenticeship schemes as long as they like. Some years ago, back in the early 2000s, I was a committee member on an Aboriginal school-based traineeship program that operated out of Albany. The beauty of that particular scheme was that occasionally students who had gone through a training program and had scored a job were invited back to speak to the students. We also spoke to a number of students who had not achieved a job. But the object of the exercise was to put these people into long-term, meaningful, rewarding employment. When they came back and said, “This is what we have achieved; this is what we have done; thank you very much to the school; thank you very much to the officers who helped us get into this particular traineeship or apprenticeship program, which saw me get a job”, that to me was one of the more rewarding things that I have done in education. But it is all about getting a job, and Hon Jon Ford was spot on in that particular context. Students need to get through a course. They need, then, to get a job. They do not want to go through one course and then have to turn around and say, “Oh, well, there are no job prospects”. It may be in Geraldton and the midwest, but it could be anywhere. It could be around the central midlands region, or it could be in the lower great southern. There is no point in these people then finding another traineeship or apprenticeship if there is no prospect of employment. To me, members, the role of the government and the Minister for Training and Workforce Development and his department is to organise programs that will see kids and young adults slot into long-term, meaningful employment. If that cannot be achieved, then the problem that Hon Jon Ford alluded to, of people coming from overseas or interstate to take up employment in this state, will become a reality, and that will not solve the regional unemployment problem.

I now want to quote from the document from the Aboriginal Workforce Development Centre that I mentioned earlier. The document is headed “Mid West snapshot 2011”, and it states in part —

In 2009–10 the regional unemployment rate was 5.7 per cent compared with the State rate of 4.9 per cent.

Despite strong economic conditions, Aboriginal people are four times more likely to be unemployed than non-Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people tend to be in lower paid jobs and to be concentrated in a fairly narrow range of industries. At the time of the 2006 Census the main sectors in which Aboriginal people were employed were public administration and safety, education and training, health care and social assistance, construction, and mining.

In 2006 unemployment rates were highest among young Aboriginal people, with rates of unemployment commonly above 50 per cent for those in the 15 to 24 years age cohort, dropping to around 17 per cent for those aged 25 to 44 years.

Those figures indicate that there are significant issues. To my way of thinking, despite the efforts of the nation’s big mining companies, the state government and the federal government, Aboriginal youth unemployment sits

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firmly in the too-hard basket. We can train kids and we can give them apprenticeships. I listened to you, Mr Deputy President (Hon Col Holt), when you spoke about particular issues. But my concern again in the midwest is for a group of people who have unique issues. The issues that I see are fourfold. The first issue is accessibility. Accessibility does not mean just that a person might live 10, 20 or 30 kilometres from a main country town. Accessibility may involve a range of issues that perhaps some of us in this chamber know nothing about because we have not lived that particular lifestyle. The second issue is the availability of training courses for people who live in more remote parts of the state. Having been an education administrator, I know what budgeting is all about. This issue came to the fore in Mount Barker a few years ago when courses were closed down because there were not enough students to undertake those courses. So, a student from Rocky Gully or Frankland who wanted to do an apprenticeship or engage in training had to go all the way to Albany. For a lot of people it is just not possible to do that. Another issue is affordability, as I am sure members would understand. Other issues are truancy, and the basic literacy and numeracy problems that confront many people. Like the minister, I could talk for a significantly longer time, but I realise that I have only about one minute left. It is amazing how time flies when we are standing and talking about these sorts of very passionate issues.

One of the big issues in Geraldton and the midwest is, of course, Oakajee. Oakajee has promised a lot. The Premier has nailed his colours to the mast of “SS *Oakajee*”—state ship *Oakajee*. But I am afraid that ship at this point in time is going nowhere.

Hon Max Trenorden: I would like to talk to you about that.

Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM: I understand that, and I know Hon Max Trenorden is very genuine about that, because it is part of his patch as well. But there is so much that that place could offer. My point here is, though, in the little time I have left, that traineeships and apprenticeships need to be part of a much bigger package. It is not just about the minister spruiking all of his fantastic achievements. It is a lot, lot more than that.

HON LIZ BEHJAT (North Metropolitan) [11.18 am]: Well, what can I say? Here we have Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich —

Several members interjected.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Hold on! Before I go on, we have all sat here in silence listening to everybody else; I just ask the same.

Here we have Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich, and how do we describe her on this side of the house? She is like the puppy that we rescue from the dogs’ refuge home. She is not just for Christmas; she is for every day. She is the gift that keeps on giving. She is the one who gives us this opportunity to come into this place and talk about our achievements in training. Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich will be moving from the East Metropolitan Region—your loss over there, I am afraid—to the North Metropolitan Region, because she knows the team that she wants to be on. She is going to come onto our team in north metro, with our Minister for Training and Workforce Development. Members opposite say that this minister sits on his laurels and does nothing. I have to say that on our side of the house, we describe him as the Energizer bunny of the Barnett government.

He just keeps on keeping on! He would go for 25 hours a day if he could! Seriously, therefore, I cannot understand the proposition that he is sitting on his laurels! I do not know who wrote Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich’s motion but I think we need to go back to the wording of the motion, which in part reads —

That this house condemns the Barnett government for its failure to generate sufficient training and local job opportunities ...

She then started a personal tirade against the Minister for Training and Workforce Development—let us forget about the Barnett government and let us make it all personal about the minister! Government members stand in this place and talk about generating sufficient training and local job opportunities and get pilloried for it! I mean, seriously, Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich should read the motion herself and stop making it a personal attack on a minister who is doing an outstanding job in a portfolio that was sadly neglected. Members who attended the estimates hearings last week would recall that on probably nine or 10 occasions we heard Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich use the phrase “in order for us to understand the present and the future we have to understand the past”. That is what we need to do: we have to understand the past. Let us look at the past.

Hon Peter Collier: Surely you are not comparing me to her!

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: I would never do that.

In order for us to understand what is going on now and into the future, we have to understand the past. Let us look at some of the past. Let us look at some of Labor’s failures in training. That is a good place for us to start.

Hon Robyn McSweeney: That will take all day!

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Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Unfortunately, I do not have all day, Hon Robyn McSweeney. Like the minister, I wish I had. We might one day have a day to talk about training and workforce development.

Labor's failure in training Western Australians for the future economy is clearly highlighted by the 13 per cent decline in course enrolments for certificate IV and above between 2003 and 2008, a large chunk of which the now Leader of the Opposition, Hon Mark McGowan, presided over. In contrast, course enrolments for certificate IV and above under Minister Collier and the Liberal–National government increased by 38 per cent between 2008 and 2010. I know that members on the opposition benches have said that they do not want us quoting percentages and statistics. Why? Of course they do not want us doing that because they were woeful during their term of government. Guess what? I am going to quote them because we on this side of the house are about real jobs, real people, right here, right now. That is what this is all about.

Between 2003 and 2008 Labor increased student curriculum hours in training a measly 8.1 per cent, or an increase of 1.6 per cent in cumulative annual terms. I am again talking about percentages. That figure was pathetically below Western Australia's growth rate at the time. In contrast to this negligence and incompetence, between 2008 and 2011 Minister Collier and the Liberal–National government increased student curriculum hours a whopping 26.6 per cent—an increase of 8.2 per cent on a cumulative annual basis; just remember that: 8.2 per cent on a cumulative basis—as opposed to 1.6 per cent under Labor's failed term of government. Once again it shows diligence, sound management, focus and a desire to really benefit Western Australia, not just the union movement. We are about all of Western Australians. Labor's mismanagement can be reversed and that is exactly what we are doing.

Let us talk about the failure to increase the number of non-English vocational and education training clients. Labor's inability to successfully manage training is highlighted by the fact that in the five years from 2003 to 2008 it managed to increase the number of non-English VET clients by 23.4 per cent. In contrast to this, Minister Collier and the Liberal–National government, in only three years, between 2008 and 2011, increased that number by 30.1 per cent. I know about this because I do a lot of work with people in that sector and they tell me about the fantastic opportunities they have.

Talking about apprenticeships, I can bring an apprenticeship story to this house. My husband is a mature-age apprentice at the moment, at the age of 52 years. He is retraining because of opportunities presented to him under this state government. Of course at the other end of that scale there is my 15-year-old son who may go to university but, if not, there are opportunities available for him. In 2010, this government launched the annual Skills West Expo in partnership with West Australian Newspapers. It is a great initiative, again started by Minister Collier in conjunction with West Australian Newspapers, for people to obtain information about a diverse range of career options and education pathways that are available to them. In 2011 the expo attracted 111 exhibitors and 22 000 visitors over the three-day event, including 3 000 school students on day one. They are just examples of things that can be done.

One thing I find really interesting is criticism from members on the opposition benches of enterprise migration agreements. This government supports EMAs. Am I correct that EMAs are a federal government initiative? Are they not an initiative of the Gillard government?

Hon Peter Collier: The federal Labor government.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: The federal Labor government. So something is not quite right here. Why are Labor members coming into this chamber criticising EMAs that are being put in place? Is it because they want to distance themselves from the Labor government in Canberra?

Hon Peter Collier: I wonder if they are working with the union movement against Gary Gray at the next election.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Indeed. I was sitting with Gary Gray at a function and had a very long, interesting conversation about that very subject. I might tell the minister outside the chamber, but I would not want to embarrass opposition members by repeating what he said at that time. Of course we are supportive of EMAs because we need to bring in people to fill vacancies. The opposition's claim is that we encourage business to hire foreigners over Western Australians. We know that is just not true. The difficulty is that we cannot get enough people into jobs now. That is why we are doing the training and that is why we have all these increases in the workplace now. The state population last month increased by 6 000—that is, people coming into the state from other places—yet the total number of people employed in the state increased by 7 000. Therefore, 1 000 more jobs were created than the number of people who came in. So, we are not creating jobs? I am not quite sure about that. That figure is not a percentage; it is a cold, hard fact that 7 000 jobs were created. It is absolute nonsense for opposition members to come into this chamber and say that this government is not doing anything in the area of training and workforce development.

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Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich started off her comments by saying that this minister was a failure and that there was a personality clash between him and the education minister to disaggregate education and training. No, there was not. It was, again, an example of this government placing the importance that is required on training and workforce development and lifting it to the level where it belongs. Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich said that the renaming of TAFE colleges was just a distraction and nothing but that. She should go out there and ask Sue Slavin from the West Coast Institute of Training and people from Polytechnic West, Central Institute of Technology and Challenger Institute of Technology what the renaming has meant to them. Those people are delighted that they now have this separate branding. They go out into the marketplace and compete against redbrick universities and other sorts of institutions as well. They are proud to be named the way they are. Renaming was therefore not just a distraction. All I ask of Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich is that the next time she comes into this place with a motion on something that we would love to talk about, why not play the ball and not the man?

HON KATE DOUST (South Metropolitan — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [11.26 am]: I have sat in this place and listened to the debate this morning. I want to thank Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich for raising this matter because I know she is passionate about training. While she has just copped a bit of a bollocksing from the member of the Liberal Party sitting on this side of the chamber, it was unfair and unwarranted. I think it is healthy that we continue to raise these debates.

If Hon Liz Behjat had bothered to read the motion, she would know that it does not say that the government has not done anything at all; it is about condemning the government because it has failed to generate sufficient training and local job opportunities. I sat and listened to the minister do his normal song-and-dance routine about training—I am sure I have heard the same speech time and time again. If the minister says it in front of the mirror, he can certainly get it down pat. But the reality does not always match the vision or fantasy, and although the minister may think the numbers demonstrate that things are actually happening, we are consistently hearing through media reports—be it radio, TV or print—and from our constituents about the difficulties that young people and senior workers are having in trying to access work, particularly in the mining and resources sector, and in trying to access apprenticeships or traineeships. We hear from the various peak bodies, particularly in construction, about the problems they face in trying to attract people to that type of work because they are being seduced to work in the mining and resources sector by the high wages that the construction industries cannot match. One of the serious issues that needs to be taken up is how we are going to attract young people, particularly, to apprenticeships and traineeships when the wages have not kept up with those in other parts of the workforce. Traditionally, those wages have been kept lower because they are a training wage, but I think there needs to be a rethink of that to retain people in that industry.

I do not know whether it was canvassed this morning, but one of the significant issues that have been raised in my discussions with peak industry bodies is what we are going to do beyond the boom. What will happen to all those people who have been encouraged to go off and work in the mining and resources sector before finishing their trade training or having the formal qualifications for the jobs they are employed in? What will happen when we eventually reach the point of a decline in that sector and those people have to come back to the city or suburbs on a permanent basis? What will happen about finding employment for those people? What are we doing to identify the gaps? I think the State Training Board is a very important body, and when I was on it for a very brief time in 2000, one of the key pieces of work it used to do was identify future need and those areas that the government should be targeting in not just the next 12 or 18 months or couple of years, but the next 10 to 20 years. I do not know whether it is still doing that.

It is all very well to identify work for young people coming into industry, but I think it also needs to be done for older workers for what will happen beyond the boom. I do not know whether the issue of identifying skill gaps, or how we will accommodate local people back into the local workforce in the city, has been canvassed. I think it is important that that has been raised today. I am sure we will continue to have this debate as time goes on. It is important that we find ways to give the people who already live here a job in their own state so that they do not have to leave. A number of people are already leaving our state because they cannot find work here in their appropriate skill field, and I think that is a real challenge for government.

It is appropriate for us to have this debate. Although Hon Liz Behjat may get up and do her normal ridicule of Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich—I am sure they will get to spend a lot more time together in the next four years—Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich raises these matters because she is concerned, and she wants to make sure that the government is delivering on its commitment to the Western Australian working community.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.