

TRAINING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT — APPRENTICESHIPS

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

I have a supplementary question. Exactly what has the minister done over her term as Minister for Training and Workforce Development to help arrest this shocking decline in the future of our state's skilled electrical workforce? From what the minister has said so far, nothing.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:**

As I said, we have introduced a new policy to replace the Labor Party's failed Priority Start policy.

**Mr F.M. Logan** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Cockburn, I call you to order for the first time.

**Mr F.M. Logan** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Cockburn, do you want me to call you for the second time? I will. Minister, a quick answer, through the Chair.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** The policy that this government developed to encourage employers to take up apprenticeships and traineeships was done in consultation with industry and has the support of industry and the support of the agencies that need to monitor that employers are doing the right thing. Priority Start was a ridiculous policy.

**Mr F.M. Logan** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Cockburn, I call you to order for the second time.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** The policy that we have put in place ensures that those contractors who want to take on —

**Mrs M.H. Roberts** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Midland, I call you to order for the second time.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** The policy that we have taken on ensures that those contractors who wish to take up government contracts need to demonstrate to us that 11 per cent of their workforce is engaged in apprenticeships and traineeships.

**Mr M.P. Murray** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Collie-Preston, I call you to order for the second time.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** I have previously said in this place that we subsidise apprenticeships and traineeships up to 85 per cent, and, indeed, a lot of apprenticeships are 100 per cent free to the students. We are engaging with our federal counterparts to have a look at what can be done to encourage employers to take on apprentices. When changes were made to the Fair Work Act and employers had to start paying more for apprentices' wages, when the subsidy to pay for the tools that apprentices need to do their work was removed, we started to see less interest in employers taking on apprentices. That has been reflected right across the country. A number of issues need to be dealt with at a federal level, and I am dealing with those. We have our Priority Start project, we have our Future Skills, through which we started to see a 21 per cent increase in the uptake of apprenticeships and traineeships in priority skills areas, and we have our government policy with respect to contractors needing to engage in training and apprenticeships all the time—all year round—not just for specific government projects. We have the policy initiatives in place. We need some assistance from the federal government, and we are going to work on that.