

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT — BALGA TAFE

169. Ms J.M. FREEMAN to the Minister for Training and Workforce Development:

I refer to the Brotherhood of St Laurence's report "Australia's Youth Unemployment Hotspots Snapshot" released on 2 March, which shows the north west suburbs of Perth as an unemployment hotspot, with 14.5 per cent youth unemployment. This area goes from Yanchep to Osborne Park and includes Balga and Mirrabooka. In addition, December figures show that Balga and Mirrabooka have one in four young people unemployed, which is 18 per cent higher than the state average. How can this government justify its funding cuts to technical and further education, in particular Balga TAFE, with such a clear need for training and job opportunities in the area?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

I thank the member for the question. I am not quite sure exactly what funding cuts the member is referring to. Quite frankly, some of the initiatives that I have undertaken in the technical and further education sector are designed around freeing up as much money in the sector as possible to deliver training programs that are required for those areas where we have high youth unemployment and where we have a low participation rate, for example, with women who need to return to the workforce. They are this government's priority areas. I think the member for Mirrabooka might need to articulate the funding cuts she is referring to. We have invested over \$288 million into the training sector in infrastructure improvements —

Ms J.M. Freeman interjected.

The SPEAKER: Listen, let us try to get the answer out. We are running out of time. Through the Chair—quick answer, thank you.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I recently announced that we are collapsing 11 administrative structures for TAFE into five. What do those changes mean for the sector? The difference between this government and the Labor opposition is that we look at ways to find efficiencies in the sector that will not impact on students. The government is amalgamating —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Mirrabooka, I call you to order for the third time. Member for Cockburn, you are on three calls. If you want to have a talk to somebody, go outside.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: The government is amalgamating 11 TAFE administrative structures, comprising 11 governing councils that require a minimum of eight to 14 people, and 11 managing directors with teams of up to 35 support staff. The government is taking 11 of those structures and amalgamating them down to five. That means that I can return \$23 million a year to the sector. That means that students who want to attend TAFE this year have a zero per cent increase in fees for foundation skills, and a one to four per cent increase in fees for other courses. I have held the fee increases steady, because I know I can make savings through reducing administrative staff and lecturing staff delivering training to students. It is a no-brainer for me. I know the opposition does not get it.