

TRAINING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT — APPRENTICESHIPS

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

I refer to the July Building and Construction Industry Training Fund annualised figures of electrical apprenticeship enrolments, which show a 15.5 per cent drop in commencements over the last 12 months, and to the minister's own figures from answers to question without notice 5490, which show an increase in electrical apprenticeship cancellations over the last three years.

- (1) Does the minister support the disgraceful decision by Western Power not to employ one single electrical apprentice this year, when normally it takes on over 100?
- (2) What is the minister's plan to deal with the rogue electrical companies that are taking on apprentices for only one or two years in order to get federal funding and then cancelling their indentures?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

(1)–(2) I thank the member for the question. The decline in apprenticeship numbers is an issue that the entire country of Australia is facing. We have seen less of a decline in the uptake of apprenticeships and traineeships in Western Australia compared with other jurisdictions. Indeed, in New South Wales the decline in the uptake of apprenticeships has been in the region of 46 per cent. With respect to the issue with Western Power, I am not aware of its policy around apprenticeships and traineeships but I will certainly take that up with the Minister for Energy and find out exactly why that decision was made. However, a number of issues are facing employers at present. When we see a decline in economic conditions and in future project growth for some of these companies that traditionally take on apprenticeships, they are less inclined to take on apprenticeships.

Mr F.M. Logan: What are you doing about it?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: As a government, we have our government policy with respect to employment.

Mr F.M. Logan: Tell us about it.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cockburn! Through the Chair.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Thank you, Mr Speaker. As the member for Cockburn is well aware, we announced our policy around government projects. All contractors who take on government project work need to demonstrate to us, if they have an employee component of over \$2 million, that 11 per cent of their workforce is engaged in training or apprenticeships.

Several members interjected.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: That is a requirement now.

Mr F.M. Logan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cockburn!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: That is a requirement now for government contractors. With respect to the issue the member has raised about Western Power, it sounds as though that may well be contrary to our policy, and it is an issue I will need to take up with the Minister for Energy.