

TRAINING PORTFOLIO — GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Matter of Public Interest

THE SPEAKER (Mr M.W. Sutherland) informed the Assembly that he was in receipt within the prescribed time of a letter from the Leader of the Opposition seeking to debate a matter of public interest.

[In compliance with standing orders, at least five members rose in their places.]

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham — Leader of the Opposition) [3.01 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the Liberal–National government for its failures in the training portfolio, in particular the reductions in apprentice numbers, increases in TAFE fees and the reductions in enrolments at TAFE.

One of the saddest developments over the last eight years of a shocking government has been the gutting of the TAFE system, the inability of many Western Australians now to obtain training or apprenticeships at an affordable price in Western Australia and the inability of many Western Australians to attend TAFE at an affordable price in Western Australia. It has been a very sad development, particularly over the last four years, whereby we receive complaint after complaint from young people unable to obtain an apprenticeship and unable to access TAFE at a reasonable price. This is an unprecedented development in Western Australia that has occurred over the last few years. It was always a rite of passage for young Western Australians who did not want to go to university to go to TAFE at an affordable price and undertake a course that would set them up for the future or they could obtain an apprenticeship or a traineeship and it was easily accessible for those people exiting our school system.

The situation now is dire. Many Western Australians cannot afford it and many Western Australians cannot access apprenticeships or traineeships. The government, the Premier and the minister have their heads in the sand about this important issue. As the minister said this morning, it relates to the state's economy, and of course this government has created the worst economy seen in Western Australia in decades. I note that on 4 November 2016, the Premier said in relation to the state's economy, "Anyone who suggests WA has got a struggling economy needs to have a closer look".

Mr C.J. Barnett: That's right.

Mr M. McGOWAN: "That's right", he says. Go out there in the real world and talk to people who are looking for a job. Go out there and talk to people who have only a few hours of work a week. Go out there and talk to those families in the outer suburbs in particular and in regional communities of Western Australia who are doing it tough today. The Premier lives in a world of imagination. He thinks that the state's economy and everything else is fine and sweet. It is not. Many people in our state are struggling because of the condition of the economy that he has created. The government's own budget papers show that we have a domestic economy in recession. The CommSec report that came out the other week indicated that Western Australia is now eighth out of eight economies in Australia. Numerous reports have come out about the confidence levels in the Western Australian economy.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: That is enough.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The only thing that will fix it is a change of government. On a daily basis, the government is not just massacring the TAFE system, but also creating uncertainty and a lack of confidence in the Western Australian economy. We saw the Minister for Mines and Petroleum's bizarre performance during question time, screaming about the mining industry in response to a question from a National Party member of Parliament. Does the irony not stare us in the face? A National Party member of Parliament asks the Minister for Mines and Petroleum about the mining industry and he blames us. The government has created this massive uncertainty in the mining industry in Western Australia. It is terrified of the government. I have spoken not just to people in the iron ore sector—I have met with many people in the iron ore sector—but with business leaders in other parts of the mining industry and they are very concerned about a government that has the potential to rip up state agreement acts, send 90c out of every dollar raised to the eastern states and cost Western Australian jobs and investment. That is what the Liberal–National government offers the people of Western Australia. When the Premier is asked, as I understand he was in the party room today, he just says, "I am working well with Brendon; that's all fine." He will not stand up to the National Party and defend Western Australian jobs and investment in this state, and that is what we are seeing today. The business community of this state is terrified of the Liberal–National government because of what it has done through the course of action it is taking. The Premier does not have the intestinal fortitude to stand up and kick the National Party out of the cabinet. He does not have the guts or the bravery to do that.

What are the other consequences of what we have seen in Western Australia? We have seen a lack of training and apprenticeships in Western Australia. This is a big issue for many families around our state. In my electorate

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of Rockingham, it is raised with me all the time by ordinary people who cannot get a job or whose children or grandchildren cannot obtain training or apprenticeships. What was the Premier's answer last week? It was to announce an open-plain zoo with a plastic elephant! When he was asked what it will cost, he said, "Maybe it's \$50 million to \$100 million, but that's just a guesstimate."

Dr M.D. Nahan interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Treasurer thinks that is a joke, but that is what he said.

The SPEAKER: That is enough!

Mr M. McGOWAN: "That's a guesstimate", he said.

Dr M.D. Nahan interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Treasurer, it was a real horse! I was there with a real horse and I do want to promote our state's tourism industry and it is an affordable plan. The Premier's open-plain zoo is a joke.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Thank you! Treasurer, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr N.W. Morton interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Forrestfield, I call you for the first time.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The SPEAKER: Do you want to be called as well, member for Warnbro?

Mr N.W. Morton interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Forrestfield, I call you for the second time.

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is the government's answer to the problems confronting ordinary families around Western Australia—a plastic elephant and an open-plain zoo, without any costings or time frames attached to it. As I said earlier, the only training opportunities that will open up under the Barnett government will be for zookeepers and lion tamers.

All those ordinary families who want apprenticeships for their sons and daughters have missed out, and the figures prove it. In the last year, from 2014–15 to 2015–16, construction apprenticeship commencements were down 25 per cent, including concreting, which was down 83 per cent; bricklaying, which was down 56 per cent; plastering, which was down 19 per cent; plumbing, which was down 24 per cent; tiling, which was down 29 per cent; carpentry and joinery, which was down 21 per cent; and electrical, which was down 20 per cent. That is a dire decline in the number of apprenticeships and traineeships available in Western Australia. If we look at the student numbers at TAFE in the 2015 calendar year compared with the 2014 calendar year—it has got worse over the last 11 months—we can see that the numbers were down by more than 4 000, or 3.8 per cent; course enrolments were down by more 5 000, or four per cent; and student contact hours were down by 770 000.

I now turn to government agencies, which I know some of my colleagues will want to talk about. Traditionally, the role of government agencies such as Western Power and the Water Corporation has been to nurture trades and apprenticeships. Under this government's watch, Western Power is down to zero apprenticeships.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: That is enough!

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Water Corporation, under this government —

Dr M.D. Nahan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Treasurer, I call you to order for the second time.

Point of Order

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The Leader of the Opposition —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I have not heard the point of order. I want to hear the point of order in silence.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The Leader of the Opposition said quite clearly—we do not need *Hansard* to repeat it—that Western Power has zero apprenticeships.

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

Debate Resumed

Several members interjected.

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

Withdrawal of Remark

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: As the Treasurer sat down, he pointed to the Leader of the Opposition and said, “It’s a lie.” I ask him to withdraw.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I withdraw, but there are actually over 70 per cent, but he misled the Parliament.

Debate Resumed

The SPEAKER: Thank you.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call you to order for the third time, Treasurer. Member for Cockburn, I call you to order for the first time. If anybody wants to have a rest, carry on.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Legislative Assembly 2016 budget supplementary information reveals that in 2015–16 Western Power had zero apprenticeships; in relation to the Water Corporation, it is down to five apprenticeships. Under this government there has been a lack of apprenticeships and training in trades generally, and this government has not undertaken its traditional role to provide apprenticeships and traineeships within government enterprises to give ordinary Western Australians an opportunity in life. That has been the story of this government for the last eight years.

The change in TAFE fees has been a disgrace. In 2013, five years after the election of this government, fees were capped at \$1 284 for a full calendar year. Now a cap of \$7 700 exists for only diplomas or advanced diplomas—in other words, the cap has gone up by about 500 per cent—and many courses are uncapped. I meet all sorts of people in the community who want to undertake courses in child care, enrolled nursing, electrical studies and hairdressing, but they find that the cost to undertake those courses had gone through the roof by many thousands of dollars. That is what the government has done to the training system in Western Australia. Training was always a rite of passage for young people. They could undertake training at an affordable price. If they came from a working-class family with little means to undertake training, it was not expensive for them to do it. Under this government, training has been priced so that ordinary families cannot afford it. That has been a tragic outcome for the training system. Now enrolments are in freefall in Western Australia. Contrary to the Premier, I suspect that the Minister for Training and Workforce Development will say, “Well, the economy doesn’t warrant it at the moment.” The Premier says that the economy is great. He is living in his Cottesloe bubble and he does not understand what is going on in the rest of the world. The government might say that the economy does not warrant it, but next time there is an upswing in Western Australia, we might find once again that we will have to import tradespeople from elsewhere. Would it not be better to train Western Australians? Would it not be better if Western Australians had the opportunity to take up the courses and jobs on offer in our great state? That is the best solution for our state. Bearing in mind we are now in the second last week of sitting, one of the legacies of this government will be the gutting of our training system. Training is becoming far more expensive for ordinary people. There has been a massive decline in apprenticeships and traineeships in government trading enterprises, and a huge decline in the number of Western Australians undertaking training and apprenticeships in this state. That will not suit our state and it will not bear fruit for our state in the long term.

MR F.M. LOGAN (Cockburn) [3.15 pm]: In 2013 I stood in this house and said to the then Minister for Training and Workforce Development, the member for Dawesville, that there were 2 678 fewer apprentices in the state than when the Labor Party left office in 2008. There were 877 fewer in metals manufacturing, 1 600 fewer in building and construction and 407 fewer in trades such as sheet metal working et cetera. I asked the Minister for Training and Workforce Development at the time how we had ended up in that situation. How did this state, which had just been through the biggest economic boom in its history, end up with 2 500 fewer apprentices? How did we end up in that situation?

Mr R.H. Cook: It’s easy—incompetence.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: It is absolute incompetence. It is due to the government simply not caring about the economy and those components of the economy that allow the economy to function properly—that is, skilled tradespeople. It is due to it just not caring about them. We had just been through the biggest economic boom in the state and we ended up with nearly 3 000 fewer apprentices. That was in 2013. It is worse now. I point members to the figures released later this year by the National Centre for Vocational Education and Research. Between June 2013 and March 2016—from the time I stood in this house to today—according to the national figures on apprenticeship commencements by territory, in Western Australia there has been an 18.3 per cent decline in the number of apprenticeship commencements. That is since the time —

Mrs L.M. Harvey: What was it in New South Wales?

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Mr F.M. LOGAN: It is not funny, minister. That is since the time I stood in this house and said, effectively, “You’ve gone and blown the boom when it comes to apprenticeships.” It has got worse. For those who completed their apprenticeships in that same period of time—that is, from the time I stood in this house and complained about the lack of apprenticeships and the lack of care about the decline in the number of apprenticeships until today—there has been a 56.7 per cent decline in the number of apprentices who have completed their trade training. They are appalling figures; they are some of the worst figures in the whole country.

What did the government do about that? It was not as though I did not raise the matter in this house; I raised it over and again for four years. I said we were facing a serious problem when it came to apprentices and when it came to encouraging people to take up trades. I said that the government needed to intervene, put programs in place and work with industry to encourage more apprenticeships to commence and more apprentices to be taken on. What did the government do? It did nothing. It stood back and watched while things got worse. That is a disgrace! The minister should hang her head in shame. She knows that I have stood in this house and raised this issue with her over and again in private members’ business, matters of public interest or questions in this house. Do members know what the Premier said when he was standing on the front steps of this place today and was asked about the decline in the number of apprentices? He said, “There’s no problem.” That is what he said: there is no problem. How can there be no problem? I have just read out the figures, but, as far as the Premier is concerned, there is no problem. It is unbelievable what this government has done to the apprenticeship and general training sectors. The Leader of the Opposition just mentioned the number of apprentices that the government has taken on, and they have not escaped at all. The number of commencements at the Water Corporation since 2009 until this year has dropped by 91.5 per cent. I am sure that the shadow Minister for Water will go into those figures in detail. Earlier, the Treasurer tried to be smart with the member for Rockingham about the number of apprentices employed in Western Power, but failed to admit that the decline in the number of commencements in Western Power for this year is what, Treasurer? Oh yes, it is 100 per cent. That is right; Western Power did not take on one apprentice this year. That is an absolute disgrace.

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Bassendean!

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Members know, because I have raised this issue over and again in this house, why apprentices are not enrolling. One of the major reasons is that it is difficult to get an apprenticeship at the moment and the government has no strategy in place to encourage TAFE to bring on more apprentices, to help apprentices enrol and complete their apprenticeships or even to begin an apprenticeship. Why is that happening? It is because this government has cut hundreds of millions of dollars from the Department of Training and Workforce Development and TAFE since 2009. Not one budget has passed through this house in which the Department of Training and Workforce Development and TAFE have had an increase in their funding. There has not been one increase since 2009. Every single budget of that department has been cut. Fees have increased by over 600 per cent for certain courses and there have been losses of over 350 experienced staff within TAFE. Some of those people who have picked up their redundancies, as the minister knows—because I have raised it in this house and she speaks to her department, we assume, on a regular basis—are the most experienced people we could possibly get. They have just left. They have given up in disgust at their own department continuing to be cut and undermined by this minister and this government. Of course, we know about apprenticeships being cut. I have been on my feet in this house a number of times about apprenticeships and courses being cut. On the ground, in TAFEs, face-to-face contact hours have been cut as well. It is not surprising that people turn away from TAFE in disgust at what has happened and that we have seen this collapse in the number of apprentices in Western Australia, but the worst part is that this government has known since its first term that it was facing a crisis, and it did nothing. It did nothing all the way through its second term. Now, here we are, at the end of the Barnett Liberal government’s second term, and still nothing has been done. Nothing has been done for the next generation of tradespeople that we need in Western Australia.

MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Minister for Training and Workforce Development) [3.23 pm]: This is the usual cowardly tactics of the opposition. Members opposite have not done their research and they cannot present their case. Instead of having a normal process of debate, they sit and wait to get information from me so that they can rebut it, because they cannot be bothered doing the research themselves.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Okay, let us move on.

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

The SPEAKER: That is enough, member for West Swan.

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Mrs L.M. HARVEY: It is a shame that other members opposite did not get up and add to the diatribe of the member for Cockburn and the Leader of the Opposition, because I would like to be able to rebut all the nonsense coming from the other side of the chamber on this issue.

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for West Swan, I call you to order for the first time.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Clearly, members opposite do not understand how the apprenticeship system works. The member for Cockburn was on his feet saying that TAFE should take on more apprentices. Businesses employ apprentices. If businesses do not employ apprentices, TAFE cannot train them. The issue is real and important. There has been a nationwide decline in the uptake of apprenticeships, because the Gillard government changed the Fair Work Act in 2012 to increase the rates of pay for apprentices, which has costed them out of the market. The decline started in 2012 and it has continued. Some states are looking at a 50 per cent decline in the uptake of apprentices. In Western Australia, we have seen a decline in the uptake of apprentices, but it is nothing of the scale we have seen on the east coast. We have not seen the decline in the uptake of apprentices in Western Australia that has occurred on the east coast because our economy has been stronger and our government has put policies in place to encourage apprenticeship and traineeship uptake. We introduced the Future Skills WA priority skills program to encourage trainees and apprentices to go into areas of training that would lead to employment. I make no apology for that, and we still subsidise all courses up to 85 per cent. We made that policy change because we believe that publicly funded training should train people for employment. That is the issue and that was the reason for that state government policy initiative.

The member for Cockburn's assertion that TAFE fees have increased by exorbitant amounts may be true in a small number of cases, but I draw members' attention to the fees for this year, which have been held at a zero per cent to four per cent increase. That was a deliberate government action to bring some stability to the fee structure to ensure that we still have students willing to enrol in training and that the system is affordable. Since the introduction of our Future Skills program, we have seen student curriculum hours in broad priority courses increase by 26 per cent and the fees for government subsidised training that were supposed to increase over a four-year glide path reined in to a four per cent maximum increase. We have looked at other initiatives to try to encourage the uptake of apprentices. We have our Aboriginal Workforce Development Centres looking at Aboriginal employment and training opportunities. We have scholarships for women in trade areas in which traditionally there has been low participation by females. We have subsidisation of all apprenticeships and traineeships sitting at around 85 per cent, on average. Apprentices are subsidised through not only the government system but also the building and construction industry training fund, which has subsidisation of up to \$19 000 for employers that take on an apprentice. We have payroll tax exemptions for eligible employers that take on trainees and develop their workforce, which is still available to employers. We have funding under our Western Australian Group Training Scheme to support apprentices in training areas that are a priority for the state. Those priority areas are areas that we know will lead to employment. Those are the areas we want people to be trained in.

Let us look at one of the government's major policy initiatives. The member for Cockburn has bleated on in this chamber about the Priority Start program, which is the building policy program that was supposed to stimulate the uptake of apprenticeships in Western Australia. The program was panned by industry and by the Office of the Auditor General. The program was difficult to evaluate and impossible to comply with. It was an unwieldy, overly burdensome administrative system that was full of red tape and businesses were unable to comply with it.

Mr F.M. Logan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cockburn, I do not want to hear from you.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: In March 2015, cabinet endorsed our new government building training policy, which replaced Labor's flawed policy. This has been widely supported by broad industry sectors. It came into effect on 1 October 2015. Our policy initiative was that government projects of \$2 million or over could be awarded only to contractors that had a record of 11.5 per cent of their employee base being in training or apprenticeships. We looked to those companies that have a long-term commitment to traineeships and apprenticeships, and they qualify for the government work of \$2 million or over.

Mr M.P. Murray interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Collie–Preston, I call you to order for the first time.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Our program looks to reward with government work those companies and businesses that have a commitment to training, not those companies and businesses that can do a ring-around and get some apprentices on to a job, so they can comply with a flawed policy that was so difficult to administer and so ill-conceived that it failed.

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Mr F.M. Logan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cockburn!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: We believe that our government building training policy is working and it will continue to work.

What else have we done since 2008 to boost apprenticeships? Let us have a look. Look at our state government infrastructure program. We have increased the state asset base by 55 per cent, to \$192 billion.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Through its infrastructure programs, this government has created 98 000 direct jobs. Where have those jobs come from? They have come from government projects that the Labor opposition has said it would not support, would not have initiated and would not have spent the money on. They are things like the new health facilities at over 80 locations across the state—\$7 billion worth of health infrastructure. The opposition said it would not have spent that money. That project created jobs and opportunities for apprentices and trainees right across the state. There are 32 new primary schools and high schools right across the state; there is the Perth busport, which is a terrific project—job-creating economic infrastructure that helps support jobs in this state.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: That is enough!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: There is the \$1.4 billion Perth Stadium. The Labor Party hates the stadium. The opposition bags out the stadium every opportunity it gets.

Mr F.M. Logan interjected.

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

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: For my constituents and those of the member for Forrestfield and the member for Belmont, the Burswood stadium is creating employment opportunities into the future. There will be employment opportunities for people as part of that stadium infrastructure, as tourism kicks in and we start to get the hospitality and tourism opportunities through the stadium. That is why the government invested \$1.4 billion in the Perth Stadium. We are proud of that stadium. It created jobs and an economic stimulus —

Mr J.R. Quigley interjected.

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

Mr J.R. Quigley: Is it the first time?

The SPEAKER: I think so.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: We have invested over \$5 billion in road infrastructure since 2008–09—\$5 billion. We have successfully completed key road projects. We have \$908.6 million in the Gateway project. We are building the Forrestfield–Airport Link. This is infrastructure that creates jobs, employment opportunities, opportunities for apprentices and opportunities for Western Australian businesses. Those are some of the things that we are doing as a state government. The opposition needs to explain to the community of Western Australia what it would have done in lieu of those 98 000 jobs. As the mining sector transitions from construction to production, where would we be if the state government had not had infrastructure projects to kick the economy along and create those jobs?

Mr F.M. Logan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cockburn!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Every single project that the opposition has opposed has created employment and training opportunities for Western Australians and opportunities for businesses to employ apprentices even when they have become so cost prohibitive as a result of Gillard government ideology.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: That is enough!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I will continue to liaise with my federal counterparts on opportunities for apprentices in businesses. We will continue with our payroll tax exemption, we will continue with our scholarship program, we will continue with our subsidisation of apprentices and traineeships, we will continue to support the construction

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industry training fund to ensure that it provides support to employers to take on apprentices and, importantly, we will continue to invest in infrastructure projects funded by the state government that will create employment opportunities. That is our strategy, that is our plan and that is what this government has a fine record to stand on. The opposition, with its opposition to every single piece of job-creating infrastructure, does not have a leg to stand on. There would not be 98 000 job opportunities had it been in government and we are proud of that achievement.

MR D.J. KELLY (Bassendean) [3.35 pm]: We have just heard a minister basically tell us that there is not a problem; there is no problem with apprenticeships in Western Australia.

Mrs L.M. Harvey: I did not say that.

Mr D.J. KELLY: She just said she is proud to stand on her —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: That is enough!

Mrs L.M. Harvey interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister, the member for Bassendean is speaking. Let him speak.

Mr D.J. KELLY: We had a minister say she is proud —

Mrs L.M. Harvey interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister, I call you to order for the first time.

Mrs L.M. Harvey interjected.

The SPEAKER: Do you want to be called for the second time?

Mr D.J. KELLY: We have just had a minister proud to stand on her record in this area when she has just heard about the collapse in apprenticeship numbers. What do we get? No acknowledgement from the government that there is a problem—no acknowledgement at all. I suggest the minister gets out and talks to people. I suggest that there is probably not a member in this house who has not had a parent in their office talking to them about where the opportunities are for their kids to get jobs. I would be very surprised if they had not, because certainly on this side of the house we have families in our offices all the time talking about this issue and what a lot of them want to know is where their son or daughter can get an apprenticeship. They know that apprenticeships are now extremely hard to get, so they know the problem, but clearly the minister does not. We do not have to talk to these people for very long before one of the issues they raise is whether they can get an apprenticeship in government. People see that with the decline in the private sector and the downturn in the economy, the government has a role in this issue; the government can be part of the solution. They ask about opportunities for apprenticeships in government.

Looking at the figures under this government, as shadow Minister for Water, I have had a look at what the Water Corporation has done. In this area the Water Corporation and this government are not part of the solution, they are part of the problem. This government was first elected back in 2008. In 2009, there were 41 apprentices employed by the Water Corporation. As at 30 June 2016, there are five apprentices employed by the Water Corporation. That is a drop of approximately 90 per cent in the number of apprentices employed by the Water Corporation. During that period, the 100 per cent government-owned Water Corporation has been walking away from its role of employing the next generation of tradespeople. Is it not ironic given that the government, the minister, is talking about the number of programs it has to encourage the private sector to employ apprentices? Is it not ironic that the government is telling the private sector to have apprenticeships, but its own government enterprises are walking away from employing apprentices? The Minister for Water might even say that those apprenticeship numbers do not include the apprentices employed by private sector alliance partners. I asked a question about that as well, Minister for Water. In 2009, the Water Corporation's alliance partners employed 11 apprentices and now they employ nine, so there has been a decline; there certainly has not been a corresponding increase. As the Water Corporation itself reduced its apprentice numbers, those apprenticeships might have effectively transferred to private sector alliance partners. Minister, the figures clearly show that that has not been the case. The Water Corporation, a major government employer of more than 2 000 employees—it used to have more than 3 000 full-time equivalent positions, but it is now under 3 000—which traditionally has employed a significant number of apprentices, is now walking away from its role as the trainer of the next generation of apprentices. The Minister for Water might stand and say, "Well, one of the reasons that we have a reduced number of apprentices is that we have sold off the engineering division of the Water Corporation and the apprentices have transferred." Quite frankly, the minister cannot hide behind that either. I asked: how many of the 114 employees that transferred from the Water Corporation over to RCR Tomlinson are still employed?

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The answer I received from the Minister for Water is that it is not her responsibility and it is a matter for RCR Tomlinson. The government privatised the engineering and construction division and it has no idea how many apprentices who went across are still employed. The minister should not stand and hide behind that.

Under this government, however we look at the figures, the Water Corporation has had about a 90 per cent reduction in apprentices, whether they are directly employed or employed by its alliance partners. The minister is out there saying that there is not a problem and, when there is a problem, the government is encouraging the private sector to do the right thing. The government has direct control of a significant employer such as the Water Corporation and it is down to five apprentices. That is it. The government has failed in the private sector and it is failing in the government sector as well.

MR D.T. REDMAN (Warren–Blackwood — Minister for Regional Development) [3.42 pm]: I rise to make a couple of comments, particularly from a regional development perspective and also to support the comments made by the Minister for Training and Workforce Development of this Liberal–National government; she has a plan for Western Australia. I will come to some of the Labor Party’s planning in a minute. I thought that the minister outlined very, very well what we are doing in the training space. We have seen a substantial growth in the resources sector in this government’s time. We have also seen a fairly substantial shift in the economy in Western Australia, which this government is responding to. One of the government’s initiatives, besides having an effective training plan, is the \$5 billion to \$6 billion asset investment program in this state, which supports jobs. I ask members just to think for a minute about what would happen if that was not there. Just think for a second what would happen if that asset investment program through the royalties for regions was not there right across Western Australia.

Mr F.M. Logan: It’s supporting jobs in Malaysia.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: It is supporting jobs in Western Australia in construction, building and civil works. It supports jobs in this state because the fundamental —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: That is enough, member for Cockburn, member for Girrawheen, member for Warnbro and member for West Swan.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: The fundamental issue here is not training; it is jobs. That is what we are about and that is what the state and this government is about. If we do not have jobs, what is the point of training? We need a pathway for aspirational people to achieve employment and get into, share and partake in the economy of Western Australia. It is about jobs. I took the time to look at the “WA Labor Plan for Jobs”. I have the catch-all cover page. What is interesting about the cover page is that, from what I can understand, the Labor Party has two objectives in its jobs plan. The first one is that before the election it has motherhood statements. The second objective is no commitment after the election. If members read the Labor Party jobs plan, they will see that it has motherhood statements before the election and no commitment after the election. I searched and searched but I could not find the bit that stated that the Labor Party will substantially increase investment in training in Western Australia. There are only a handful of commitments on the page, of which I must give the Leader of the Opposition —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Kwinana, member for Warnbro and member for West Swan, I call you all to order.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: The one bit for which we will give the Leader of the Opposition credit is tourism because the investment in tourism is the biggest number I have seen on the front page; it will make a \$425 million commitment over five years. That is the biggest piece I saw in WA Labor’s commitment to jobs in Western Australia. The member for Bassendean stood and talked about commitments to projects and Water Corporation and government agencies picking up training and apprenticeships. The other commitment in here is to ensure that government projects have a commitment to training. That is great. That is a motherhood statement and I understand why it is there and I understand why it might be a good policy objective. But we must have an investment in infrastructure in Western Australia to achieve that. This government has a \$5 billion to \$6 billion investment in asset development in Western Australia. Inherently, that will support jobs and training and give someone born in Western Australia a chance to be aspirational for their future. I am waiting desperately to see what opposition members will say about their financial plan for Western Australia, because if they do not have a financial plan, and if all they can do is sit over there and say, “Don’t cut this, don’t cut that”, but not present an alternative, they are in a policy vacuum. I want to see their financial plan for Western Australia. The minute the Labor Party comes up with that, we have half a chance of seeing something that refers to a jobs plan. Right now the Labor Party is making motherhood statements before the election. There is no commitment for after the election. There is only one plan out there right now and I am looking forward to the rest!

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 8 November 2016]

p7649d-7659a

Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Fran Logan; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Dave Kelly; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Rob Johnson

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cockburn, I have been very lenient on you. I have called you to order twice. If I call you to order again and another time, you will have a rest. Member for Kwinana, relax.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: In his presentation, the Leader of the Opposition said that he promotes the tourism industry. I assume that he saw the plastic cows. I think he talked about a plastic elephant. He saw the plastic cows along the street. I have not heard a murmur out of him to criticise the plastic cows in the CBD. I think the CowParade is fantastic for Western Australia. Four years ago, in the lead-up to the 2013 state election, the Leader of the Opposition said that the royalties for regions funding was being wasted on the biggest CowParade in regional Western Australia.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Butler! Member for West Swan, do you want me to call you for the third time?

Mr D.T. REDMAN: Clearly, when the Leader of the Opposition was doing —

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for West Swan, I call you to order for the third time.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: Clearly, the Leader of the Opposition was leading with his chin when he criticised the CowParade during his campaign launch speech. The opposition might mock it now, but, clearly, it was high enough on the agenda for the Leader of the Opposition to criticise it. In the same sentence, he talked about talking or self-cleaning toilets. What the opposition lacks in all its policy, including this one, is a commitment to regional Western Australia. I could easily go through investments in the training space supporting quality facilities in regional Western Australia.

Several members interjected.

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

Mr D.T. REDMAN: I could easily go through the list of investments that we have made, such as in Kalgoorlie in the Agricola College to support students to live in the regions, in this case with the WA School of Mines. We have made investments in the Kimberley Training Centre in Broome and the trade training centre in Derby to support training in the ag sector. Halls Creek received \$2.8 million. We also made investments in the Pilbara Institute, the Durack Institute, the Peel campus of Challenger Institute of Technology, and Muresk. If the opposition wants to see real policy development, it can look at the Seizing the Opportunity Agriculture initiative that the National Party took to the 2013 state election. That contained real commitments, not hollow statements up-front with no commitment post-election. The opposition has a job to do to convince the people of Western Australia that it is not making a bunch of motherhood statements without a real commitment, because that is how this document reads. I cannot understand how members opposite can take up an argument that links training to employment and investment when they are not going to make investments and they do not have a plan to make investments. The only investment in this document is Metronet. What are they going to gut to make that work? The opposition has no planning in this space. The National Party has been able to manage a pathway for someone born in Western Australia to be aspirational, to move through to employment and to live in this state, which is a good place to live, including regional Western Australia, which was a place that was vacated by the opposition.

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington) [3.50 pm]: Apparently the Treasurer is too scared to participate in the debate, so I will have to take up the opportunity. Normally we get to hear the government's presentation, and opposition members reply, but apparently today —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I do not know who is shouting at the back there—settle down!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Apparently today the government is not prepared to put its case. We have 11 minutes left on the clock and the government is not prepared to put its case. The practice is that the opposition speaks last on a matter of public interest motion, but not today. The government is too scared to hear any analysis of its work. We know that in 2008–09, \$505 million was spent on vocational education and training, and in 2015–16, it was \$365 million. That is \$140 million taken out of the VET budget during the life of this government. No wonder members opposite are proud to stand and defend their record, leaving 11 minutes on the clock! They know this government has gutted the training system. Government members whinge about trainee apprentice rates of pay—my God! Why then did the government support the “A shared responsibility—Apprenticeships for the 21st century” review that recommended increasing rates of pay? In 2009, this government participated in a review that reported in 2010 and recommended the increase. Why did this government, and that minister and that minister, support the increase in apprenticeship wages? It was because we had an incredible level of

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wastage, with 48 per cent of apprentices not completing their trade training. The Minister for Training and Workforce Development would know that, because I am sure she has read the report that this government contributed to and that recommended an increase in those rates of pay. Now government members come in here and say that that decision has led to this. That is not the decision that led to these problems. It was the minister's incompetence and the decision by this Treasurer to stop Western Power hiring apprentices so that the government can fatten up Western Power for privatisation that led to these problems. Western Power used to hire 50 apprentices a year. How many did Western Power hire this year? It was none. Last year Western Power hired only 16 apprentices. That is the problem.

Western Australians are rejecting the Liberal government because they reject privatisation. If Western Australians vote Liberal, they will get privatisation. If they vote Labor, Western Power will stay in government hands. That is what the population of this state wants. If Western Australians vote Labor, they will get a plan for jobs. If they vote Liberal, they will get 11 minutes left on the clock! What about the National Party? I would love to see the Minister for Mines and Petroleum get up and tell us what he thinks about the \$5 a tonne tax? What is the minister's view on the \$5 tax?

MR R.F. JOHNSON (Hillarys) [3.53 pm]: Mr Speaker —

Mrs L.M. Harvey: This will be good!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: This will be good, I promise you, because I have never heard so much hypocrisy from the former Leader of the National Party as I have heard today. The reason this state is in such financial dire straits is because of the incompetence of the Liberal–National government led by the present Premier. I can tell members that as soon as Parliament rises he will be gone. There will be a special party room meeting held for the Minister for Police to take over his job. It will not occur before Parliament rises, because members opposite do not want her to face scrutiny in Parliament. That is what is going to happen, mark my words!

Mr S.K. L'Estrange: Conspiracy!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I hear what goes on in the party room, do not worry, my friend. That is why the Minister for Police cannot face scrutiny in this house.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I want to hear the member for Hillarys.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The trouble is that some people cannot handle the truth. The truth is that this government has mismanaged the state's finances for the last eight years, but particularly in the last four years.

Several members interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Government members do not like the truth. They should listen. They should give their ears a chance and listen. Over the last two or three years we have seen tens of thousands of Western Australians lose their jobs and become unemployed. We have seen tens of thousands lose their jobs and we are seeing it today. The biggest growth industry in Western Australia today is liquidations. Liquidators are coming from the eastern states to WA because there are so many companies, small business and big business, going out of business. If they are going out of business, they cannot afford to take on apprentices. That is a fact. The National Party, quite frankly, squandered some of the money on plastic cows and musical toilets. They do not like being reminded of that, but the National Party is part of the problem. Now the National Party is enhancing that problem. Members should talk to the mining companies and people outside this place. A large number of people have contacted me. A lot of the people who live in my electorate and surrounding electorates write to me rather than their own members because they think they might get something like the truth from me. If they are involved in the mining industry they are writing and emailing me, and they are phoning my office, because they want to put on record that they oppose the National Party's \$5 a tonne tax on mining companies. That is the biggest disincentive to employment this state will ever see. That is why the mining companies are taking up advertising space. They will spend millions and millions of dollars, and I think they will be very successful at the end of the day, because they will knock out the member for Pilbara. This is his last term. He should give a valedictory speech next week because he will not be coming back in my view. He will lose that seat.

Mr I.C. Blayney interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I do not need one, my friend. I can tell the member that I will be here after the election.

Mr I.C. Blayney: You reckon!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Yes, I do reckon—absolutely. I will tell the member what: the Liberal Party and some members in this place can play all the dirty tricks in the world that they want to play—I know there are still some

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to come; I am aware of them and I will be highlighting them—but I am told that the candidate for the Liberal Party in Dawesville has a great big picture in his campaign office. It shows the candidate and the former member for Dawesville—as he will be—but who is in the middle? It is the future Premier!

Mrs L.M. Harvey interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I have a house in Mandurah, my friend, so I go there all the time. That is who is in the picture in the campaign office because they know the present Premier will not be there. They believe the Minister for Police will be the next Premier. That is what will happen, and it will happen before the next election. I guarantee it will happen before Christmas. It will happen fairly soon after this house rises. We are in dire straits. People are losing their jobs. I have people coming into my office all the time and they are losing jobs in all sorts of industries. Those people in the mining industry are particularly concerned that they will be losing their jobs. I know they are. For God's sake, I hope that the National Party does not make it as the X factor. I hope they do not, because, if they do, God help Western Australia!

Mrs M.H. Roberts: We are hoping that you make it as the X factor.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Joe Spagnolo thinks I will, but whether I do is another matter. At the end of the day, after eight years, it is time for a change. Government members will have to get used to being on the other side of the house. It will not do them any harm; it will do them good, actually. Some government members have never ever been in opposition and they need to spend some time in opposition to really appreciate the job they are supposed to be doing and who they are supposed to be standing up for. I know the member for Warren–Blackwood was disappointed when he lost his job. I know he really loves the member for Pilbara! I know exactly how much the member loves him, but I will tell the member that I will stand up for my electorate every time before any party.

Division

Question put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (21)

Dr A.D. Buti	Mr D.J. Kelly	Mr J.R. Quigley	Mr P.B. Watson
Mr R.H. Cook	Mr F.M. Logan	Ms M.M. Quirk	Mr B.S. Wyatt
Ms J. Farrer	Mr M. McGowan	Mrs M.H. Roberts	Mr D.A. Templeman (<i>Teller</i>)
Ms J.M. Freeman	Ms S.F. McGurk	Ms R. Saffioti	
Mr R.F. Johnson	Mr M.P. Murray	Mr C.J. Tallentire	
Mr W.J. Johnston	Mr P. Papalia	Mr P.C. Tinley	

Noes (35)

Mr P. Abetz	Ms W.M. Duncan	Dr G.G. Jacobs	Dr M.D. Nahan
Mr F.A. Alban	Ms E. Evangel	Mr A. Krsticevic	Mr D.C. Nalder
Mr C.J. Barnett	Mr J.M. Francis	Mr S.K. L'Estrange	Mr J. Norberger
Mr I.C. Blayney	Mrs G.J. Godfrey	Mr R.S. Love	Mr D.T. Redman
Mr G.M. Castrilli	Mr B.J. Grylls	Mr W.R. Marmion	Mr A.J. Simpson
Mr V.A. Catania	Dr K.D. Hames	Mr J.E. McGrath	Mr M.H. Taylor
Mr M.J. Cowper	Mrs L.M. Harvey	Mr P.T. Miles	Mr T.K. Waldron
Ms M.J. Davies	Mr C.D. Hatten	Ms A.R. Mitchell	Ms L. Mettam (<i>Teller</i>)
Mr J.H.D. Day	Mr A.P. Jacob	Mr N.W. Morton	

Pair

Ms L.L. Baker

Mr I.M. Britza

Question thus negatived.