

## EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

### *Motion*

**HON KATE DOUST (South Metropolitan — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [10.11 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house expresses its concern that the Liberal–National government has failed to —

- (a) sufficiently diversify employment opportunities;
- (b) support local jobs;
- (c) provide affordable training for jobs in the future;

and calls on the government to set out its plan to address these failures.

This motion is about having a grown-up discussion about where Western Australia is heading in the future. Over the past few years Western Australia has been through an unprecedented boom period in its history in the mining and resources sector. People have migrated to the north west to engage in a range of occupations and have reaped the benefit of this prosperous period in our history. But the heat has come off that sector and there is now a steady increase in unemployment numbers—in fact, unemployment figures in Western Australia currently sit at about six per cent. That is a concern. As a parent of three children, all of whom are now almost adults, I know from talking to them and their friends that they are concerned about finding employment, finding permanent employment and having a plan for their futures. I do not think that this government has really thought that through. I think that it thought this boom would last a long time, anything from 20 to 30 years, and that everything would be sweet. Of course, historically our focus in Western Australia has been around the mining and resources sector, because that, along with agriculture, has been the primary driver of industry in Western Australia. However, over the last six or seven years I have stood in this place on many occasions and have talked about the need to have a plan for the future, the need to diversify employment and to plan for that day when we hit that bust period, as we do in Western Australia when it goes through the cycles of boom and bust based upon how things are travelling in the mining and resources sector. We know that things are now slowing down in that industry, that there is the impact of the drop in iron ore prices, and we see people coming away from those jobs. We see major employers putting off hundreds of people at a time and those workers then coming back to the city or to towns trying to find work of a similar nature, or trying to figure out what they will do in work of a different nature, work that does not currently exist and work that is not planned to exist in the future. That is a real dilemma. There has been a failure on the part of the government because it has not planned for that period in time. It has not thought about what will happen when that downturn occurs. This has been exacerbated across every sector. It is not just about the fact that the downturn in jobs has had pressure put on it because more 457 workers have been brought in, which has taken away local jobs. We see 457 workers in the mining and resources sector, we see them in hospitality, and we see them in domestic house building—as I discovered yesterday—so taking away local jobs that Western Australians could have. I am not saying that we should cut all of those jobs; I am saying that we need to be more careful and targeted about where we bring those workers in so that we do not provide a blockage to jobs for Western Australians. At the end of the day, it is about not only those jobs but also creating jobs for the future—the smart jobs.

We all know that our world has changed. I have talked on a number of occasions about changes in technology and how we need to gear up for that future and look at where we can enable job opportunities to occur for our children in the future, and technology is an interesting area. I note that yesterday that Minister Marmion announced a new government initiative to establish an information and communications technology commission or office, but that is really all about cost-cutting and procurement and not about setting up a strategic plan for this state for ICT. It is not about engaging with industry or developing a plan to create jobs for the future. It is not about how to educate young people in the use of technology and the language of technology so that they can then be appropriately tooled up to step up onto the world stage and take on the jobs that are available. If we do not seize these challenges now, we will become the poor white trash in the South-East Asian region. We will be so far behind all of those other countries and those opportunities that the only jobs that we will be able to give to our children will be as ditch diggers and drivers of haul packs—not that there is anything wrong with that, but they are not the jobs for the future in the our changing economic environment.

The challenge for government right across each portfolio is to identify those jobs for the future. I was on the State Training Board very briefly before coming into Parliament, and I know that it has an annual plan in which it talks about what areas need to be targeted in the future and what training areas need to be identified not only in the next five or 10 years but also into the future and beyond so that we can skill up those people, to attract people to those industries and to support future industries. I do not believe that has been happening enough, and we see that with the job cuts.

We know that it has been difficult to enable enough local jobs, because we have seen a decline in employment, particularly in the Henderson area in the South Metropolitan Region. I have spoken to a number of employers down there who have had to cut hundreds of jobs because jobs and contracts have been going offshore and they can no longer afford to employ people. They have been wondering what they are going to do. They have either trained up people or have trained them midway and they have had to cease those opportunities. The challenge for the government is to decide where it wants us to be in 20, 30 or 50 years' time. What sort of employment opportunities does the government want our children to have in the future? There is still two more years for this government to try to remedy these things. It is not too late. We should take this situation in which we see people losing jobs in the mining sector as a bit of a canary in the mineshaft and ask if this is happening with such vast numbers, how are we going to cope, how are we going to change and how will we reskill those people.

When we talk about reskilling or skilling up, the government has added another layer of complexity to that. As we know, not every child wants or can go to university. Some people actually choose to go down a different pathway, and they have chosen in the past few years to go down the pathway of TAFE, which is a fantastic training facility. However, we now know that the government has put a barrier in the way of a lot of young people by significantly increasing the cost of TAFE. If a young person from a family with only one income now has to pay out something like \$5 000 to train to work in an office and they cannot afford to pay, the door is going to be shut on them. I know my colleagues will cite a number of other examples of such barriers, but I refer to that one in particular because that happened to my electorate officer's daughter recently. She was going to be asked to stump up that kind of money for office training.

We need to look at what is happening in other countries. One only needs to look at Germany, which has examined how it can diversify and identify jobs for the future. Germany looked at its apprenticeship and training processes and now ICT apprenticeships are offered in Germany. Thousands of people have completed ICT apprenticeships in Germany because that is the way of the future. Young people work in a different way than the way that we have been educated or worked. That is the way they do their job. Germany identified jobs for the future so that it has the capacity to export highly skilled trained young apprentices in the ICT field. Why are we not addressing those fields? Why are we not looking at educating young people in code as a language in schools? Why are we not looking to train our teachers in better ICT so that they can assist in the development of those opportunities for young people? Why are we not looking to establish an information and communications technology plan in our state and engage with industry and the ICT sector so that we can have a very clear and coherent plan, we can be competitive, we can create jobs and we can export our product to Asia and we will not be seen as poor white trash and will not miss those opportunities? As I have said, now is the time that we can engage in this area and we should not continue to miss those opportunities.

Another area is trade. We have had discussions in this place in the past few months about our trade office in Jakarta. This is an area in which we can do more work to enhance our state and attract more business to our state. We can be more proactive there. One of the areas that the government needs to look at is how those trade offices function. How proactive are they in engaging in other opportunities for our state? It also needs to look at how we engage at the very beginning of a project. This has been part of the problem linked to our local content issues; we have missed out on job opportunities in the state because we perhaps have not utilised those trade opportunities to get in on the ground floor level at the development stage rather than at the later stages when our opportunities have been missed.

We have to tap into our proximity to Asia. Again, that is not just about trade; it is about building relationships and looking to our opportunities. I know that the Minister for Agriculture and Food, Hon Ken Baston, has been to Vietnam a couple of times and to a range of other countries throughout Asia in the past 12 months to look for those opportunities, and I think that is a very positive thing. However, at the end of the day, although agriculture is a very positive area of employment, it is quite a narrow area of employment. It does not create thousands of jobs, sadly. I only wish that it did. Although good work is happening in that area and I hope it flourishes, we need to identify areas that will create more jobs in more than just those niche areas. We should not only look to Asia to build our links with agriculture, but also further enhance our links and sell our products in our education area, ICT, other science areas, medical research and the manufacturing side. We should be competitive with those countries; otherwise, we will lose out.

I spoke at a graduation ceremony for the international students at Canning College last week, and I know that Hon Helen Morton has done the same in the past. It was a great event, and I am sure that Hon Helen Morton would have enjoyed it. I looked at this group of young people and I thought that they were indeed very brave to come to Australia. A lot of them do not speak English. They have come here to be educated and acquire skills, and most of them go back to their own country. We need to find ways to replicate that. I know that the federal government has a reverse Colombo plan in place to try to get young Australians to be educated, build their skills and seek job opportunities in Asia. Perhaps we need to link into that at a state level and find ways to encourage

Hon Kate Doust; Hon Michael Mischin; Hon Darren West; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Alanna Clohesy; Hon Col Holt; Hon Adele Farina

---

our young people to do the same. In that way, we would not only build those relationships and those business networks, but also enhance their skills and perhaps bring back opportunities to our state.

Part of this comes back to the concern with the fact that the government has sought to cut its budget so drastically in these areas that perhaps it is denying us those opportunities. I know there have been significant cuts particularly in the areas of innovation and local content and perhaps the eye has been taken off the ball for the opportunities that may be available to us. A local content report was provided in May 2014, but we have had nothing since. An announcement was made about a week ago that a job would be given to a manufacturing company in Henderson for an aspect of the new stadium, which is great for that company in Henderson, but it is a real shame that the other aspects of the work will go offshore. I do not understand why all the work being done on a major project such as the stadium is not done at a local level. Surely that should be the focus.

**Hon Phil Edman** interjected.

**Hon KATE DOUST:** I note Hon Phil Edman. I would have thought that, as a member for South Metropolitan Region, he would be 100 per cent supportive of getting all the work done in Henderson when possible. I see him nodding his head in support of that. If the government is going to focus on this sort of thing and say that it has a plan, it should demonstrate it and give those jobs to local companies.

I have another example. An Indigenous corporation based in Derby said to me that it has young people who are trying to do traineeships and apprenticeships and it has young Indigenous people working in or running construction companies who are putting in for tenders for construction in their town, but the jobs are going to Queensland companies. Those jobs are going to companies outside the state. People who are skilled up and eager to work are based in the town, yet the jobs are going out of the state. The government needs to be better focused on how it looks after its own and how it plans for the future in that regard.

While I am talking about those issues in Derby, we know that there has been a significant decline in the number of apprenticeships. In August 2014, the number was down to about 4 500. This is a real concern. It is not just about sparkies, plumbers and bricklayers; it is about identifying other areas of work that people can be skilled in. We are coming out of a peak historic boom, which happens maybe once in a century, when we could have made the most of it and we could have identified niche areas of expertise that the state could have focused on and skilled people up in so that we would have these people and we could then promote and encourage others to come on. It is about creating those opportunities for our state. It is about diversifying the nature of the employment in which people operate in our state. I think we have missed that opportunity.

Coming back to education and training, another area that links back into Asia is the real disappointment that the capacity to learn a language through our education system has been reduced as part of the cuts to the education area. I have spoken to a number of principals from both primary and high schools in our state who lament the fact that they have had to either reduce access to a language program or cut it out. I am happy to give the minister the examples outside the chamber. It is a tragedy. Again, our young people are missing that opportunity, particularly with Asian languages. I know that there are issues at the moment with other languages such as Italian, but given our proximity to Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, India and Vietnam, why are we not providing students with access to build their language skills? Students in Europe speak three or four languages. They can work across the spectrum of Europe without any difficulty, and that enables them to pick up more job opportunities. By restricting people to predominantly English in Western Australia, we are restricting those job opportunities for people who are looking to engage with Asia or if we are looking to enhance our trade opportunities, enable people to aspire to work outside of our country or encourage people to come and work here. I think that is an area of significance. It may be a generational change that we lose that opportunity, but I would hope that the government rethinks its position.

The other thing that the government needs to think about is the nature of employment. When people look to their future, all they think about is that, down the track, they would like to have a permanent job, a house and a family. They would like to have a plan for those things. They cannot plan that if they have only a casual job; they cannot rely on the hours if they are in a temporary situation. We need to hear the government talk about the opportunities it will put in place to engage with industry about some sort of permanency in employment so that people can have a more fixed plan for their future. I know we had a discussion last week about retail trading hours and the number of jobs that have been created, and we talked about permanent versus casual in that environment. It is no good having somebody working for two or three years as a casual worker, with an employer's capacity to cut their hours at will from week to week. They cannot pay their bills or their rent and they cannot save for a mortgage, and sometimes it puts them off planning for a family.

There are some really broad issues that the government needs to consider about our way forward. The first issue is branching out from focusing just on the mining and resources sector. The second is how we manage our education opportunities so that we can facilitate future smart jobs for our children. Currently, how do we

Hon Kate Doust; Hon Michael Mischin; Hon Darren West; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Alanna Clohesy; Hon Col Holt; Hon Adele Farina

---

encourage people to take on a different type of work? How do we enable them to reskill themselves as they come out of the work situation in the north west? How do we enable that without putting them into an outrageous period of debt? We also need a discussion about permanency in employment. We need a better understanding of how we encourage and support local jobs in our regions. I must say that is a significant concern for me in my electorate of south metro. I look to the southern part of my seat where there has always been historic high unemployment for young people. It creates despondency in the community. Lack of opportunity leads to lack of hope and other issues. We need a concrete plan in place that says, “This is the way forward. We are going to identify the work for the future and we will facilitate how it will happen.” The key areas we are missing out on are in science and innovation, the diversified skills area, and engaging with industry. Although we see a lot of industry setting up some very interesting opportunities, it is a shame that the government is sitting on the sideline watching. Governments need to be engaged, they need to work with industry, and they need clear plans that they will actually deliver. Sadly, I do not think that has been the case over the last six years. It is not too late. The government needs to get its act together and work out where it is going in the future, not only for the next two years, but also for the next 20 to 50 years. It needs to work out its plan for the future of youth in our state and employment opportunities.

**HON MICHAEL MISCHIN (North Metropolitan — Minister for Commerce)** [10.31 am]: I rise as the lead speaker for the government on this debate, given that the first two supposed failings that have been identified touch on my portfolio responsibilities; that is, the assertion that the government has failed to sufficiently diversify employment opportunities and failed to support local jobs. Dealing with that and its terms, “sufficiently” is not an objective term; “sufficiently” is uniquely subjective. Everyone would have a difference of opinion as to what is sufficient or not —

**Hon Kate Doust:** That is your problem—you are so tied up in language —

**Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN:** With respect, Mr President, I allowed the honourable member to say her piece and I listened with interest to it. Now it is my opportunity and I would like to do it without interruption. She might learn something about what the government is doing in this field. “Sufficiently” is a subjective term. I suspect that no-one will be satisfied whether we are sufficiently doing something if they take a different view of it.

As to the failure to support local jobs, that is easily refutable. I remind the opposition that a number of projects have been initiated by this government, or supported by this government, over the last several years that have been termed “vanity” projects. I mention the Perth Stadium as one. Some 100 tenders will be offered over the course of Perth Stadium’s construction, keeping the construction industry occupied and creating jobs and maintaining jobs for local people.

**Hon Darren West:** They are not long term. We want some long-term jobs.

**Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN:** I do not believe this. Perhaps we ought to construct a stadium every year then. Is that the idea?

Anyway, I might continue. It is one of a rolling series of projects that have been supported by the state government in a variety of ways. They have been criticised as being vanity projects but they are in fact creating and maintaining jobs for the very people that I thought the opposition was interested in. The Perth Stadium is one. Only a couple of weeks ago we announced that Civmec Construction Engineering, a WA company based in Henderson, was awarded a contract in the order of \$73 million to provide steelwork, and pylon and construction work, for the stadium. That is the second of the tenders to be awarded. Another one was to a company called CASC. It won a \$30 million contract to supply formwork and concrete for the stadium project. No, they are not long-term jobs in as much as they are not permanent public sector jobs; they are jobs that rely on work being done, business opportunities being taken, construction work being undertaken, and providing employment for as long as that job lasts. The key to it is to try to provide other projects that can take up where these ones leave off in due course. Not only is there Perth Stadium, there is also Elizabeth Quay and Perth Children’s Hospital, and the Northbridge–Perth City Link project has been operating for the last several years. All of those projects are transformative. They not only provide jobs, but they also provide infrastructure for the future.

Of course, there are other construction projects that are not being supported by the government but will benefit the city of Perth. We recently had the topping out last week of the Mirvac tower in the old Treasury building complex. In future, that will house the civil jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of Western Australia; something that has been overdue for 50 years but was undertaken by this government. We have seen construction projects and courthouses across the state—that will be a significant one. That has created and maintained jobs over these last several years. It will also house the Department of the Attorney General and the Treasury office. All of those projects will transform the centre of Perth. People looking back six years at photographs of what Perth was like when we took government will be astounded at the way this city has been transformed in that time; not simply by cosmetics, but by encouraging business and undertaking projects. There have been court projects across the

state. In fact in a few weeks' time the Carnarvon Police and Justice Complex will open. We opened the Kununurra court complex towards the end of last year. Others are in train.

That is part of what we are doing. As I have mentioned, some 100 tenders will go towards Perth Stadium alone. Otherwise, there are other forms of local participation that the government has undertaken as part of its commitment to foster and build local industry capability and competitiveness, and maximising the opportunities for WA businesses to participate in resource and other projects within the state. Local industry participation is one such initiative. The local industry participation framework was established in July 2011. Its purpose is to ensure that local industry receives full, fair and reasonable opportunity to participate in major resource projects that are taking place throughout the state. The level of publicly announced, locally awarded resource sector contracts since it was established is estimated to have totalled \$62.9 billion. They have resulted in the maintenance or creation of an estimated 223 900-odd employment positions, either directly or indirectly, within the state.

Part of the long-term vision was the Australian Maritime Complex. Last year, it celebrated its tenth anniversary. I think it was a brainstorm of Hon Hendy Cowan back in the day. That was established. It has proven an enormous success. It provides the ability for local businesses, who cannot afford the infrastructure to contribute to other projects, the opportunity to share facilities that are provided and maintained for their use as they require them. It is critical to building local industry capacity; it has been very successful in that role. Hon Phil Edman is very proud to have the Australian Maritime Complex in his electorate, as I am sure other members from the South Metropolitan Region would be equally proud to have that there. It assists local manufacturers in their endeavours to not only become part of the supply chain for the resource industry in Western Australia, but also become competitive internationally. Many of the firms down there have sought success—not locally—when they have seen that change is in the wind and an appreciation that the Western Australian economy is changing, but have expanded by going overseas and setting up branch offices overseas in order to use their expertise and to exploit what they have learnt in their capacity there. Turning back to the Australian Maritime Complex, it has delivered something like \$1.7 billion worth of economic benefit to Western Australia. It has created 26 700 local jobs, and 373 major projects have been completed within its boundaries.

I turn now to the industry facilitation and support program. The government is committed to supporting businesses to build their capacity, increase their competitiveness and help them supply the resources and utility sectors, as well as commercial and government sectors. It is particularly important as major resource projects within the state move from what has been recognised as the construction stage to the operational stage.

I should just refer to Hon Kate Doust's comment about how the government has assumed the boom times will last forever. I remind members that Premier Hon Colin Barnett has never called this current period of construction a boom; in fact, he has been saying exactly the opposite. He has been cautioning against the use of the word "boom". On the contrary, the opposition has been talking about it as having been a boom time. It comes as no surprise to the government that these projects are moving from one phase to another. The estimate is that for every 12 people involved in establishing an oil and gas project, for example, only one is required to actually run it—there may be peaks from time to time as maintenance periods arise and a greater demand is created—but that is the reality and a fact of life. It must be recognised that people will not have long-term jobs in those areas unless construction projects are continuing all the time, and that is a function of the international market. In mining projects the estimate is about six people required for the construction phase for every one person required to run the project. So, yes, there is a significant impact from the transition, and with the drop in price in iron ore and the marginal benefits to be obtained from that industry in establishing new construction projects, we are faced with some serious difficulties. But it is wrong to expect that just because someone has a highly paid job in the mining industry, it is there for life. If one chooses to have employment in those areas, they must also recognise that it is volatile and there is nothing government can do about that other than to encourage further investment. It is ironic that these complaints have arisen about how we are going past the boom time. The government made significant efforts to encourage the James Price Point development. I was up in Broome after that failed only to be told how much anticipation there had been of that being a success. It is no fault of the government that that was not successful. If one recalls, the Greens were opposed to it and there was a variety of so-called activist groups that did everything in their power to ensure it did not go ahead. Was that to the benefit of the Broome population? I think not.

Getting back to the industry facilitation and support program, which was launched in 2011, \$3.3 million has been committed to 172 companies across Western Australia, and more than \$208 million in new contracts at 353 youth employment opportunities, including 35 apprenticeships, have been realised. That represents a return of \$85 on each dollar invested. The government has also launched further rounds of the program in 2015 to support small businesses, and funding of \$1.3 million has been committed to 65 companies throughout WA. The outcomes will be reported later this year. Recently, Onslow businesses celebrated the benefits they reaped from

Hon Kate Doust; Hon Michael Mischin; Hon Darren West; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Alanna Clohesy; Hon Col Holt; Hon Adele Farina

---

that round of the program, which was jointly funded by Chevron. Many of these resource companies get bad press, but in fact they contribute enormously to encouraging local jobs and opportunities for businesses. In Onslow, 14 businesses were awarded a total of \$200 000 in funding through the program, which has resulted in \$4 million worth of new contracts awarded in that town.

**Hon Mark Lewis** interjected.

**Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN:** I thank the member.

Business development briefings continue to be delivered by the Department of Commerce to small and medium-sized local businesses, with details of our state and commonwealth government assistance programs being delivered across the state. They have enabled local businesses to learn how to supply major markets, including resource projects, underpinning improvements in competitiveness and productivity.

The Australasian Oil and Gas Exhibition and Conference is the only major oil and gas event held in Perth. This year's conference featured some 600 exhibitors with 1 500 attendees and it promotes Western Australian oil and gas industries in particular. This year that was combined with the Africa Oil and Gas Forum. It must be remembered that there may be job opportunities overseas for Western Australians, particularly if Australian companies get involved in those projects overseas to sell their expertise to those other markets. Although they have a desire for local participation too, it does not mean that Western Australians cannot provide that by going overseas and providing some mentoring and assistance in that fashion for at least some time. The conference itself generates some \$443 million in business leads and 38 per cent of exhibitors surveyed had made investments in WA as a direct result of the conference.

In the time available to me I just want to touch on half a dozen other things the government is doing in that regard. Hon Kate Doust mentioned the industry and innovation division of the Department of Commerce and it is the case that machinery-of-government changes are being considered in that regard, but it would be premature to say anything further about that. The government has also recently endorsed an intellectual property policy aimed at encouraging the creation and better use of intellectual property, with the state government providing the prospect for rewards for officers who innovate and give better prospects to government agencies to exploit innovation. One example of that recently has been the integrated court management program that has been mentioned in this house on several occasions. It is a great success of the Department of the Attorney General that has recently been picked up by the government of the Australian Capital Territory, which has purchased rights to use that program, and I understand that interest has been shown from Tasmania as well. Those sorts of things will be encouraged by the government's intellectual property policy.

The issue of 457 visas has been raised. That is a commonwealth program of course and there are meant to be stringent controls over how it is used. I do not have enough time to go into aspects of that, but suffice it to say that the government is always exploring new ways of assisting local industries and encouraging jobs. It would be helpful if some positive comments were made in that regard, rather than constant criticism, for the efforts, particularly of those so-called vanity projects that are doing so much to transform the city and the state.

**HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural) [10.47 am]:** The fact that the Minister for Commerce did not once in 15 minutes mention a plan for jobs in Western Australia was a great précis of the government's performance in this very important issue. Not once did I hear anything about plans for the future. All we heard about were vanity projects and how good they might be in creating employment.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Members, in a general sense just keep the lid on it. Two members have spoken with relative cooperation from everybody and we certainly do not achieve anything by trying to shout over everybody else in the chamber. I isolate Hon Jim Chown and Hon Ken Travers in that respect.

**Hon DARREN WEST:** As I was saying, the beauty of this motion is that it pointed out that the Liberals and Nationals do not have a plan for jobs. In 15 minutes the Minister for Commerce was unable to give us —

**Hon Jim Chown** interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Did you do not hear me the first time, Hon Jim Chown?

**Hon Jim Chown:** Yes, Mr President.

**The PRESIDENT:** Thank you.

**Hon DARREN WEST:** In his 15-minute address, the Minister for Commerce was unable to give us any insight into the plans of the Liberal-National government for job creation in Western Australia. The government's view, as was pointed out by the Minister for Commerce, is that unless something is in mining, oil, gas or the building of vanity projects, the government has nothing for people. That is exactly what we heard from the Minister for Commerce and it was most disappointing. The Minister for Commerce even went back to Labor projects of

Hon Kate Doust; Hon Michael Mischin; Hon Darren West; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Alanna Clohesy; Hon Col Holt; Hon Adele Farina

---

10 years ago and stated how much employment they have created in the south metropolitan area. There was no mention at all of a plan. That is a key failing of the government and it is what makes Hon Kate Doust's motion such a good one. The government has failed in those areas to sufficiently diversify employment opportunities and we certainly heard that from the Minister for Commerce. We did not hear much in the way of support for local jobs from the Minister for Commerce and we certainly know the government's failings on training and workforce development. They have been abundant for all to see and anyone attending or working at a TAFE college would certainly agree with those sentiments. The government clearly does not have a progressive mindset at all—not even a bit. It is all conservatism and cut and reduce. It is mining, mining, mining—that is all the government thinks about. The government does not grasp the concept of diversity in the jobs market. I will go through a few ideas, because one government member asked in an interjection what the opposition's plans are. I can give the government a few suggestions that may be helpful. Certainly the government has placed all its eggs for jobs in the one basket, which is mining and which has been cyclical from time immemorial. We all know that. Although the Premier would not admit that there has been a mining “boom”, it was a boom. He did not want to use the word “boom” because it is usually followed by something else, which he also did not want to talk about. We will call it a downturn, because there is a downturn in the mining industry. I heard today that the iron ore price has reached an all-time low, which is very sad for the state of Western Australia because we are so dependent on it; it is very important. Mining is an important industry that provides lots of well-paid jobs. Indeed, it is a tremendous industry and it is a credit to all those in the past who, in a bipartisan effort, have set that industry to where it is now. However, we cannot always rely on mining. Another little story I heard this morning was that Karara, the largest employer in the mining sector in my electorate, is shedding 70 jobs as a direct consequence of the downturn in the iron ore price. It has nothing to do with how the company is being run or how the workforce goes about its day; it is purely because of the price of iron ore. The government should have thought about that when it put all its eggs into that mining basket.

There are many magnificent heritage buildings in Kalgoorlie. I have been told by a councillor in Kalgoorlie that many of them were retained because there was a downturn in the gold mining industry at a time when a lot of buildings in other parts of the state were being demolished and replaced. We can see from the beautiful old buildings there that have been restored and repaired that many of them are a result of the cyclical nature of mining. It might do the government some good to think a little bit more broadly. For instance, my electorate of Geraldton is one of the IBM Smart Cities in Australia. Geraldton almost had the national broadband network. The federal Labor government almost got the NBN into Geraldton before —

**Hon Kate Doust:** We've got it in Victoria Park!

**Hon DARREN WEST:** Yes, it is in Victoria Park! Thank you, Hon Kate Doust.

Some areas are lucky that Labor stayed in government for as long as it did, but, of course, the NBN is now gone. It would have created enormous digital-age opportunity in Western Australia because of our proximity to Asia. Indeed, we live within a couple of hours' time zones of almost half the world's population. We live in a geographically and politically stable part of the world, and it would have been a huge opportunity for cloud storing and IT industries. One can operate an IT business from anywhere; indeed, one could operate an IT business from Kellerberrin in the wheatbelt. Kellerberrin was good enough to be the birthplace of Wesfarmers and I am sure that it would be a suitable place from which to run an IT business had we had the NBN and suitable communications. Liberal governments, both state and federal, are standing in the way of that. They do not have the mindset for all the IT digital possibilities that exist across Australia.

With solar power, the midwest of Western Australia could well be the renewable energy capital of the world. There is a large solar power station up there and we could certainly expand the wind farm. There is wave energy and all kinds of possibilities in the midwest, but clearly the Liberal government is tied to coal mining and does not want to explore the opportunities of alternative energies.

**Hon Martin Aldridge:** Who built the solar station?

**Hon DARREN WEST:** The solar power station has been there for a while. I will let Hon Martin Aldridge explain that when he gets up to speak about this motion.

I refer to value-adding, which is certainly ahead of us in the frame. I know that my colleagues in the National Party do not know much about farming; they do not know any farmers and they do not understand agriculture very well. Indeed, they recently labelled the Western Australian Farmers Federation as irrelevant. But there is enormous potential in the future of agriculture.

**Hon Martin Aldridge** interjected.

**Hon DARREN WEST:** I will listen quietly when it is Hon Martin Aldridge's turn to contribute to this debate.

Hon Kate Doust; Hon Michael Mischin; Hon Darren West; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Alanna Clohesy; Hon Col Holt; Hon Adele Farina

---

There is enormous potential in the value-adding of agriculture and agricultural-associated industries. The mining boom is coming to an end; it is probably finished. It is said that the dining boom is the next big thing in the world economy. Why do we not start pursuing jobs and value-adding in those areas, because they would certainly help to make our communities more liveable and sustainable with more jobs in those areas? But that is not in the government's mindset—it is all about mining.

I went to the Wheatbelt Workshop, which involves a collection of stakeholders in the wheatbelt—local governments, Regional Development Australia and the Wheatbelt Development Commission, which is a fine way to brainstorm ways to make our wheatbelt more prosperous and liveable. There were things around; for instance, succession planning of farming. That is a big issue that our family is grappling with at the moment. It could be made easier if we could get more value-adding agri-jobs into wheatbelt towns to make them more viable, sustainable and liveable. In that way we might be able to attract more young people back to agriculture and to farms. We need the jobs to sustain these communities. I have not heard any plans from the National or Liberal Parties, which are in government together, about jobs. I did not hear one word about a plan during the 15 minutes that the Minister for Commerce used to speak to the motion. I hope a government member can stand to enlighten us.

I refer to small business, which is the biggest employer in Australia. To create jobs we need to nurture small business. Everywhere I go I love to drop in on small business owners—I am a small business owner—to ask how things are going. The usual complaints are that there is a downturn, that things are quiet, that there is too much red tape and that they wish the government would just get out of the road and let them operate their business. The biggest complaint is that this government has a Buy Local policy—do members on the other side of the house realise that their government has a Buy Local policy?—but it is never used. When I support local businesses they often say “This is the first work I have got from government”. Members should enact their government's Buy Local policy and support small business in regional areas, because that is where we need to keep the jobs to attract liveable communities. Members opposite should talk to some small business owners. I can vouch for them; they will tell members the same thing.

In an article written by Joe Spagnolo, Labor leader Mark McGowan, conversely to this government, has declared that he will be the “Jobs Premier” if he wins the 2017 state election. In the article, the Leader of the Opposition sets out a plan for jobs in Western Australia. We need to keep local people employed. I will not have time to talk about the vicious and cruel cuts that this government has made to TAFE. It has been an issue for me. My children attend university, but at one stage, one of my children was looking to attend TAFE. The government has no idea how difficult it has made it for young people to attend TAFE with its enormous fee increases and hikes. The government does not have a plan. It is making it hard for people to be trained and it needs to do more.

**HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Leader of the House)** [10.57 am]: With only 10 minutes to go, I do not have much time, but I will try to get through a few things.

I will deal specifically with paragraph (c) of the motion, which deals with providing affordable training for jobs in the future. My cabinet colleague dealt with the first two components of the motion. Hon Darren West has been rabbiting on about not having a plan. Hon Darren West, the plan for Western Australia for education and into the workplace training and employment is the envy of the nation. I will go through that plan and explain what it is. This year we have made significant changes in our education system that will be life-changing in terms of making students job ready. The ultimate aim of our education system is to ensure that our students are job ready. Unfortunately, for literally generations upon generations, our education system has pretty much been led by the nose by universities; that is, a fine-grained assessment and a four-digit figure so that students are ready to attend university, which is fine for those students who want to go to university. But the fundamental issue that rests here is that more than two-thirds of students do not go to university; they simply do not go and they have no endeavour to go to university, but they are still doing university-bound pathways at school. That has been eminently identifiable, but no-one has done anything about it in a formal sense—until now. This year is the first year in which we will make sure all students are job ready, not only those who want to go to university. I am not for a second diminishing the significance of university, but we must be mindful of those students who do not want to go to university. That is why we made those changes to the Western Australian Certificate of Education. We have had a number of issues with regard to —

**Hon Adele Farina** interjected.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I am not taking interjections, thank you. The member can have her say in a minute.

We have to make sure that we provide an avenue for those who do not want to go to university. As a result of changes to WACE that will be implemented this year, every single student who gets a WACE from 2016 will get an Australian tertiary admission rank and a certificate II in something. That will prepare them for training and prepare them for life beyond compulsory education. In addition to that, we are insisting that they have

a minimum literacy and numeracy standard. That has been called for by universities and employers throughout the nation for generations, and we in Western Australia have been bold enough to insist upon that.

We are not just saying, “There’s a line in the sand; you meet that line in the sand or you don’t get your WACE”; we are saying to students in year 10, “If you don’t reach band 8 in year 10 with the ELNA, you actually get supplementary assistance in years 11 and 12 for literacy and numeracy.” We are not abandoning these kids so that they go through years 11 and 12 really struggling in subjects that are completely irrelevant to them. Students who have difficulties with literacy and numeracy are coming out at 17 years of age without a qualification and with substandard literacy and numeracy. We are identifying those students in year 10 and providing them with supplementary support in years 11 and 12 so that they meet a minimum standard that will assist them into employment. At the same time, they will have a certificate II in one qualification. That could be anything at all; it does not have to be ICT. It could be jewellery making, cooking, hospitality or whatever, but at least it will put that seed of achievement in the minds of those students.

That is something that the other states have been talking about for generations, but we have been bold enough to actually do something about it. We have a plan for our students to ensure that they are job-ready after year 12. At 17 or 18 years of age, they can hand over their WACE, and it will actually mean something now. It will say to the employer, “I’ve got a reasonable standard of literacy and numeracy, at a bare minimum, perhaps, or beyond, and I also have a cert II or an ATAR.” As I said, that is something that the other states, employers, the training sector and the universities have all been talking about for generations, and we have actually done it. As Minister for Education I know that at the end of next year, when that first cohort of students comes through, I will be proud to have initiated those changes. The other states will follow suit; I go to ministerial council meetings all the time, and members can watch them jump on board. They are looking at the minimum literacy and numeracy standard and at ensuring that all students are job-ready at the end of year 12, not just those who want to go to university.

That comes particularly from the era that existed up to this year for year 12s, where we had these ridiculous stages—stage 1, stage 2, stage 3—that were introduced by Hon Mark McGowan, and, quite frankly, meant nothing. We had a bizarre situation in our education system in which more than 50 per cent of students in years 11 and 12 were doing stage 1; that is the equivalent of year 9. There were students who were leaving school at the end of year 12 without any qualification, and on average about 5 000 students left school with absolutely nothing—no Australian tertiary admission rank, no qualification and substandard literacy and numeracy—and were consequently behind the 8-ball when they left. We have now replaced those stages with very clearly delineated areas of responsibility in terms of curriculum—either ATAR or a general pathway with training through vocational education and training options et cetera and a cert II, and minimum literacy and numeracy.

That is a plan, and I will repeat that it has been embraced universally nationally, and accepted by everyone—no-one has opposed it. The unions support it and all education sectors support it—the Association of Independent Schools WA Inc, Catholic Education of WA, Department of Education, obviously, teachers and principals—and it has been rolled out this year in a very seamless fashion and has been embraced throughout not just Western Australia but also the nation.

We then move them into training to make them job ready. Of the 27 per cent who go to university, it is very transparent in terms of what they will achieve. For the others, we have a wonderful training sector in Western Australia and we have done more to raise the profile of training in Western Australia than ever before by providing training with its own department, the Department of Training and Workforce Development, to provide that profile, and it has been very well received. When we took office there were 10 state training providers, formerly TAFEs, and there are now 11 because we opened the eleventh state training provider in my hometown of Kalgoorlie to provide training opportunities for those in the goldfields. Within those state training providers there are numerous opportunities for students to gain a training qualification post-high school education. In addition to that, we have 14 workforce development centres and five Aboriginal workforce development centres, which look after one of the most marginalised groups in our community, Aboriginal people. They are assisting Aboriginal people into the workforce. There is a centre in each of Broome, Geraldton, Bunbury, Kalgoorlie and Murray Street in Perth, and they assist Aboriginal students in developing CVs, making applications and moving into the workforce.

With regard to funding and Future Skills WA in particular, Future Skills WA still provides a significant amount of subsidised funding in priority areas, and it is important that funding goes to priority areas. Prior to Future Skills WA, a number of courses were subsidised to the tune of 93 per cent, and that was simply unsustainable, particularly when a number of those courses were not in priority areas. Should the state fund training in areas that are not in demand? Of course not. We do not want to fund boutique courses for students just for their own personal satisfaction; we should fund and subsidise those courses for which there is an

Hon Kate Doust; Hon Michael Mischin; Hon Darren West; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Alanna Clohesy; Hon Col Holt; Hon Adele Farina

---

enormous amount of demand. There are now more than 630 state priority qualifications, including more than 500 apprenticeships and traineeships and around 130 priority industry qualifications. That is an enormous number of courses that are still heavily subsidised, including aeronautics, agriculture, aquaculture, civil construction, engineering, hospitality, information technology, finance, retail and health and community services. These are the areas for which the state must still subsidise our students. Western Australia continues to heavily subsidised training to the tune of 85 per cent of the total cost of training, on average. This will lead to future employment opportunities for those students in the areas of most need. We assist students through an annual course cap of \$410 per year, which is available to students of secondary school age in 2015; 50 per cent concession for eligible students on lower incomes; and a HECS-style loan for students studying diplomas and advanced diplomas through the VET FEE-HELP scheme. We are doing an enormous amount to assist students in education and training.

**HON ALANNA CLOHESY (East Metropolitan)** [11.08 am]: I rise to express my support for this motion. It is a particularly important motion about what is happening in the Western Australian economy and communities and gives us an opportunity to look at what is going to happen in the future. The problem is that so much of what happens in the future is actually impacted by what is happening now, and this government does not currently have a plan for future economic growth or the future of vocational education and training, no matter what the Minister for Education tried to tell us with regard to what is happening in that area. A whole lot of changes are happening in vocational education and training that the minister did not choose to focus on because they are not positive. The minister will be very interested to hear about the impact of efficiency dividends and productivity savings on the sector, when I get to that.

Western Australia has gone through unprecedented economic growth over the last 10 years; that is particularly notable and remarkable when we remember that we have also come through a global financial crisis. The global financial crisis devastated other Western economies but thanks to the work of the Australian federal government at the time, Australia was shielded from the impact of the GFC. I know many of those opposite are critical of the then federal government's economic stimulus package, which saved jobs, created more jobs, and provided people with a shield from the worst impacts of the global financial crisis; but otherwise people would have lost their jobs and felt the pain of much higher unemployment than we have ever seen post-war in Australia and other Western countries. We know that a couple of factors have contributed to our amazing and unprecedented growth—that is, the urbanisation of China and its demand for our natural resources, particularly iron ore. China has never before experienced modern infrastructure growth like this, and that has in turn assisted the Western Australian economy. However, like all good things, that has come to an end, and that good thing coming to an end could have been and was predicted by some, but certainly not by this government. There has been no plan to address what happens after that demand to ensure employment growth—a diverse economy that helps us pick up where those other jobs have been lost. The Barnett–Redman government could have seen that coming, as others have predicted, and done something about it, but it did not have a plan then and it does not have a plan now to diversify our economy and provide support for people no longer able to get jobs in the mining industry, to move into different sectors where there are jobs.

The government has given us a few things. It has given us an operating deficit of \$1.3 billion this year—I need to remind members that that is on the back of unprecedented economic growth—and public sector debt this financial year of \$25.3 billion, again on the back of unprecedented economic growth. We are looking at public sector debt in future years of around \$30.8 billion. That has been achieved by quite incredible mismanagement.

I will turn to the TAFE component of this motion. We have heard from the Minister for Education about an education plan. It is really important that young people have an opportunity to get a job when they leave school, and that they are job ready. That is important, but the question remains open about where the jobs are for those young people. They are not in the mining, retail or hospitality sectors, all of which are now experiencing downturns. The economic outlook for them is not very good. The minister also mentioned that the government has done more to raise the profile of the vocational education and training sector than ever before, and I agree with him there, but that profile has not been raised in the way he expects. It is quite incredible that we have seen an increase in TAFE fees of up to 515 per cent. That certainly raises the profile of the VET sector, but only to create blockages for people who want to access education and training that is not tertiary education. That is the profile that has been raised. Not only that, but over time, through efficiency dividends and productivity savings forced on the sector by the government, and budget cuts, significant dollars have been cut out of institutes, or TAFEs, as we like to call them.

Several questions were asked by the former member for North Metropolitan Region, Hon Ljiljana Ravlich—whom I know we all miss, particularly in relation to this motion—about the dollar value of those efficiency dividends, productivity savings and budget cuts between 2008 and 2012. I will pick just one of those TAFE institutes. In the period between 2008 and 2012, Polytechnic West, or Midland TAFE, as we know it, has had

Hon Kate Doust; Hon Michael Mischin; Hon Darren West; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Alanna Clohesy; Hon Col Holt; Hon Adele Farina

---

nearly \$11.5 million cut out of its budget. In 2008, \$280 000 was cut out of the budget, and in 2012, \$3 615 962 was cut. The impact of that, and of the dramatic increase in TAFE fees, has been a fall in enrolments, closing the door on people who want to be able to study to get a job—hundreds of young people, and older people, who want to take up the courses offered. The impact is shocking.

Not only are those people being denied access, courses have now been closed. In the foundry work course at Midland TAFE, three lecturers have been laid off. That means that foundry work at Midland TAFE has closed; it is no longer available, and it is not available anywhere else in the state. The impact on industry is even greater. The other point is that this course was only opened in 2012, and it no longer exists. It has gone forever. That is extremely sad. It is a shocking waste of resources. One business told me that it could not get painting and decorating pre-apprentices anymore because that course is now available only in Thornlie. Young people cannot travel to Thornlie to attend that course if they live in, say, Mundaring, and do not have access to a car, because public transport is totally pathetic. That business cannot get pre-apprentices, it cannot grow its business, and therefore it cannot employ more people. The VET sector has had the guts ripped out of it. The impact is shocking, and has far reaching consequences.

**HON COL HOLT (South West — Minister for Housing)** [11.18 am]: I will be very brief, because other members want to speak on this subject. Diversification is easy to say and harder to do, especially in regional Western Australia where, traditionally, the economy has been underpinned by a fairly narrow base of industry. The opposition has highlighted iron ore and agriculture in that sense. When there is a downturn in those industries, it affects the whole community. The government has been trying to build some resilience into those communities in a different way. We want people to move to, live in, and be employed and educated in regional Western Australia. Once people are there, we have a great opportunity to diversify industry and the employment base. I have a couple of great examples. Recently I heard about the opening of the Dôme Café in Port Hedland. I am sure that Hon Stephen Dawson has been there. It is in a remodelled former nurses quarters, I believe.

**Hon Stephen Dawson:** It is very impressive.

**Hon COL HOLT:** Has the member been there?

**Hon Stephen Dawson:** Yes.

**Hon COL HOLT:** Absolutely.

In years past, when there has been a downturn like this in the mining industry there would have been a Shay Gap or a Goldsworthy, where they just closed up shop and left. In these times, with investment into cities in our north, we are saying we can have a diversified economy; we can build a Dôme and other services that provide a different range of employment opportunities for people outside the mining industry. For tourism operators in the Pilbara, the first place that any tour into Port Hedland visits would be the Dôme Café, to see the restored old building and have a coffee.

**Hon Stephen Dawson:** We have other good coffee shops in Port Hedland.

**Hon COL HOLT:** I understand that, I am just using that one as an example of investment into the north.

Several members interjected.

**Hon COL HOLT:** I only have a few minutes.

Another thing I want to talk about is the investment in the Water for Food initiative. While that is about supporting agriculture, it is also about facing the challenges in seasonal variations. Seizing the Opportunity and Water for Food are about investing in different agriculture systems to build resilience. It is about providing adequate waterproofing of water resources so that people can diversify into irrigated agriculture on a much larger scale in our state. There are many examples of that across the state. One example is in Mowanjum where a centre-pivot irrigation trial is located next to an Aboriginal community. It is all about seizing the opportunities on our doorstep and meeting the demand on our doorstep from our Asian neighbours for beef. It is a great initiative and we should expand those opportunities.

Two or three years ago, the federal Labor government stopped live cattle exports and brought that industry to its knees, but the industry has now recovered to the point that it is seizing those opportunities over our Asian neighbours. Not long ago I read somewhere that some of the incomes on stations in the Kimberley have tripled over the past few years. They, themselves, are investing.

**Hon Kate Doust:** I did acknowledge the work the minister is doing.

**Hon COL HOLT:** I am glad Hon Kate Doust did.

One guy up in the Kimberley is investing in an abattoir to add value to his investment in the cattle industry. Much more is going on in irrigated agriculture throughout the regions. Our history in irrigated agriculture is

fairly poor in Western Australia. We want to expand it to a great degree. There are challenges in regional Western Australia to diversify our industries, and a key to that is to get people living there. We have often said in this place that once we get people in the regions, we will get services, employment opportunities and a diversity of employment opportunities. We will continue to do that by investing in those sorts of things in every regional town as much as we can. We want to see people being born, educated, employed, retired and enjoying their senior years in regional Western Australia, and all of that will bring employment opportunities to the people who stay there. We know there are challenges because of remoteness and critical mass, but we are not going to turn away from that. That is what the challenge is and that is what we will step up to.

**The PRESIDENT:** Before I go to the next speaker, I welcome into the gallery, I believe, members from Waikiki Primary School and a public tour. I think I have it wrong. Anyway, welcome to those members of the public in the gallery. My notes did not work! I am sorry about that.

**HON ADELE FARINA (South West) [11.23 am]:** If we want to grow jobs and diversify the economy, we have to invest in critical infrastructure, and the south west is now at a bottleneck, and has been for a while. Infrastructure in the south west has reached capacity and we really do need investment in infrastructure. I have been raising in this chamber since 2009 this issue and the need for government to invest in the Roads to Export project, but it has fallen on deaf ears. When we exclude the projects that were committed to by the former Labor government, this government has not invested in any of those critical projects. We need to double the freight line capacity to the port, we need to grow the port and we need to divert Preston River so that the expansion of Bunbury port can take place. Those things are critical to grow jobs in the south west and to diversify the economy. Yet in the six years that I have been raising this issue, this government has not invested one cent into delivering those projects. Stage 1 of the Bunbury Outer Ring Road has been completed, but to date there has been no plan or funding to deliver stages 2 and 3. We cannot grow our economy if we do not have that critical infrastructure in place.

The freight rail lines to the port are at capacity. It is interesting to see that the “South West workforce development plan 2013–16”, which was prepared by this government, lists 18 major investment projects in the South West Region. Of those, six were already completed before the report went to print—that is hardly a plan when projects have already been completed—and four are on hold; so that already reduces the number of projects down to about half of the projects actually on the go. Then one of them is overstated. The development plan lists the entirety of the Bunbury Outer Ring Road project, but only stage 1 has been delivered, and, as I said, there is no funding for stages 2 and 3. Another project is highly unlikely to proceed and four are yet to secure environmental approvals. When a plan states that we are diversifying the economy, delivering jobs and creating jobs and we look at the plan and find out that a large number of projects have already been completed, it is not much of a plan—and of those that remain, most of them are not going to go ahead, are on hold or are yet to secure any level of approval. There is huge doubt whether those projects will even go ahead. That is a report for a 2013–16 plan that was released at the end of 2012, so it is really not much of a plan.

There is a fast-growing population in the south west which is growing at a faster rate than the rate of the state or the nation. We need to ensure that the creation of jobs and the diversification of the economy keep pace with that growth, but it is not. We really do need a plan from the government about what it is going to do to ensure that as the population continues to grow there will be the jobs to meet the need.

One of the big concerns in the area of Busselton is that most of the jobs that have been created are casual jobs, and people who are able to secure casual work find it absolutely impossible to secure mortgages to buy homes. That creates a whole lot of flow-on effects that this government needs to address. The rate of casual employment in the Leeuwin area is huge and it really does need to be addressed because people are struggling to do simple things such as provide permanent shelter for themselves. It is a matter that really needs to be addressed.

The minister talks about the government doing great things in training, and there certainly have been some positives, but the massive increase in TAFE fees is something that the minister chooses to continue to ignore and it is having a huge impact. When I travel throughout the south west, a large part of our economy is built on the hospitality and tourism industry. Whenever I talk to that sector, they tell me that they are struggling; they cannot find cooks and chefs; they cannot fill jobs and have job vacancies for long periods of time. They have to rely on 458 visa workers to fill those positions because they simply cannot fill them with Western Australians.

There are also concerns about growing youth unemployment in the south west area. We should be directing those children into training, yet these are the problems they face. A commercial cookery certificate III course in 2014 costs just over \$5 000. In 2015 it is just under \$5 500. Time and again we are told that a Newstart student will get a 50 per cent discount, but they do not. They get a 50 per cent discount on the tuition fee, which is about half of that amount, and they get no discount on the resource component of that fee. Even if a person were to get a 50 per cent concession under the Newstart concession provided for people who want to secure a TAFE

Hon Kate Doust; Hon Michael Mischin; Hon Darren West; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Alanna Clohesy; Hon Col Holt; Hon Adele Farina

---

education, that person would need to still pay \$4 156 for that TAFE course. Explain to me how a person can afford to pay that sort of course fee when living on Newstart. It is just not possible. On top of that, the federal government recently announced that it is not going to extend beyond 2016 the VET FEE-HELP extension to cert IV courses. Once we hit 2016, there will be no VET FEE-HELP available for any TAFE student seeking to do anything lower than a diploma course. There will be no assistance whatsoever, despite the Barnett government repeatedly telling us not to worry because the feds will extend VET FEE-HELP and HECS-type fee loans for students who want to do that training, and it does not matter that the fees are going up because people will be able to get that assistance and pay it when they are earning an income. That is not happening. The government needs to start addressing these issues. It cannot continue to massively increase fees, blocking students from getting the skills training they need to get employment, and think that it is a great system and it will continue to work.

Enrolments at the South West Institute of Technology last year were down 22 per cent as a result of this government's massive fee hikes. Of the 89 training qualifications that are identified as priority one, which means that there is a capped fee on the tuition component of the course fee, not the resource component, only 19 are offered at the South West Institute of Technology. That means that regional students who want to avail themselves of one of those qualifications with which they know they will find employment in the longer term have to not only pay the massive fee hikes, but also relocate to Perth to access those courses in the first place. It is completely and totally unacceptable. Once they have relocated to Perth, we lose them, when we have a desperate crying demand for skilled workers in the south west. It is just wrong. The government's policy and plan for education and training in this state is all wrong and it really needs to be addressed. The government needs to start putting its mind to job creation and job diversification.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.