

SKILLSWEST CAREERS AND EMPLOYMENT EXPO

Statement

HON PIERRE YANG (North Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary) [8.45 pm]: President, thank you for the opportunity to make a contribution today. I wish to report to the house that a few weeks ago, I represented the Minister for Training, Hon Simone McGurk, at the SkillsWest Careers and Employment Expo at the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre. I was accompanied by the director general of the Department of Training and Workforce Development, Ms Karen Ho. We went to a number of stalls and met with people in the training industry. It was very well attended indeed. The expo is owned and operated by Kym Jones Exhibitions and Events. This event is free to the public and has been supported by the state government since its inception in 2010. It was promoted via a website, television and radio commercials, advertisements, billboards and a social media strategy. The event was held on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 27 to 29 July. It was changed from the previous practice of holding it on Friday, Saturday and Sunday to facilitate more school students being able to attend on school days. There were 189 exhibitors at the event, 89 of which were employers, and 102 school groups attended the first two days of the event, comprising 6 035 school students and 407 school staff members. The total number of visitors over the three-day expo was nearly 12 000 people.

TAFE and Jobs and Skills WA also had a large booth at the entrance to the expo. I was very impressed by the showcase of the expo and congratulate the department for its amazing work.

I also wish to take this opportunity to correct the record. On 13 June 2023, Hon Peter Collier said —

We opened five Aboriginal workforce development centres in Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Broome, Bunbury and the city centre. We provided avenues of employment for Aboriginal people and the big miners and employment companies throughout Western Australia. You guys shut them. That is a real shame, because tens of thousands of Aboriginal people accessed those Aboriginal workforce development centres. That was such a bad call. I did not do it because I thought it was a good idea. Aboriginal people asked for it. That is why I opened them. They were working well, and I hear that from a lot of people I am still in communication with in the education sector.

I wish to advise that the Aboriginal workforce development centres continue to exist as part of the jobs and skills centres, with no diminishment in funding, and the services have not been closed. Jobs and skills centres have brought together a wide range of existing employment services, including Aboriginal workforce development services that had previously been operating in silos. Former staff are now working in jobs and skills centres and provide the same, if not better, services to Aboriginal people. In fact, the Aboriginal jobs and skills centre services have been significantly expanded across Western Australia. There are now 19 jobs and skills centres across the state that offer specialist support for Aboriginal people. The centres employ Aboriginal people to deliver Aboriginal support services. The government expanded Aboriginal workforce development services into places like Kununurra, Midland, Armadale and South Hedland. The jobs and skills centres have assisted more than 1 450 individual Aboriginal clients, and many more thousands of Aboriginal clients have been assisted over the past three years. I wish to conclude by advising that more than 2 200 Aboriginal apprenticeship and traineeship commencements occurred in the 12 months to 31 December last year—up 40 per cent from pre-pandemic levels. I wish to provide these in order to correct the record.