

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE — JOB READY PROGRAM

537. Ms L. DALTON to the Minister for Training:

I refer to the expansion of the early childhood education and care job ready program to more regional locations.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how this free program is training more early childhood educators for work in the important early childhood education and care sector?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how job ready partnerships with industry are encouraging more Western Australians to take up jobs in areas of high demand?

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

- (1)–(2) I am very happy to answer this question because it gives me an opportunity to talk about the fantastic work that the Cook Labor government is doing in vocational education. I made the announcement in concert with the Minister for Early Childhood Education earlier this week to expand the job ready program for early childhood education and care. The job ready program has been developed alongside industry. It will respond to requests for short, sharp training to meet high demands for skilled workers. It is a great model because it works alongside entry-level training. It is designed for people who have not been in the workforce before or who have had a long break from the workforce, to give them the wraparound support they need with a placement in industry. Importantly, it is part of our Free in '23 suite of offerings, so these job ready programs are free for anyone who wants to take them up.

We know that early childhood education and care is crucial for early childhood development and great for the babies and young children who attend care centres. It is also a key enabler for increased participation in the workforce. For working families, and often working women, the proximity and availability of childcare is very important because it means they can participate in the workforce.

Along with the Minister for Early Childhood Education, I have announced the expansion of the early childhood education and care job ready program to Albany, Bunbury, Geraldton, Karratha, Katanning, Kununurra, Mandurah and Northam—all those regional areas. It will also be expanded to more metropolitan areas. This is a very good early introduction for people living in those areas who have had difficulty getting into the workforce and who might be interested in early childhood education and care and working in those centres, but who are not confident enough to do their certificate III or start training. It has already been very successful. In fact, when I was in Geraldton recently I met 19-year-old Yolanda, who had participated in the early offerings of this program in Geraldton. As a result, she already has casual work in the industry, which is fantastic. I understand that the member for Geraldton knows Yolanda from her time at TAFE and has met her previously. That is such a good example. We know it is difficult to get people to work in a range of different areas, but if we can train local people, particularly in regional areas, that is great. They have housing, they are connected and committed to the community and we can get them into these areas of work.

There are job ready programs available across a range of different industries. In fact, more than 2 000 Western Australians have already commenced job ready programs. I am really pleased to announce that almost half of the 2 000 Western Australians who have taken up job ready programs have reported that they have either secured employment or have gone on to do further training, which is exactly what we want. We want them working in those industries and we want them to say, “Okay, yes. I’m ready for my cert III. I’m ready to keep training. I’ve got my confidence up.” They are working in critical industries such as early childhood education and care.

It is also really pleasing that 78 per cent of job ready participants are women. We know we need to do more work, and we want women back in the workforce. We want them to get confidence and training that we know will be accessible. Also, really importantly, another under-represented cohort in our community is Aboriginal people, and 40 per cent of participants are Aboriginal people. This is all good news.

The other job ready programs include construction, bricklaying, hospitality, aged and disability care, truck driving and drillers offsiders—areas in which we know there is big demand. This is a great program, and I give credit to my predecessor, Hon Sue Ellery, who put it in place when she was the Minister for Training. It is part of a suite of work we are doing; we are investing huge dollars into vocational education. There is \$320.5 million to make training more accessible and to get people ready for the jobs that we know are out there. I want to highlight to the house how successful that has been. We are having huge success in apprenticeships and traineeships alone. At the moment, more than 45 000 Western Australians are participating as apprentices or trainees—45 000! That is a great number. As a government, we are very proud of it.

This morning I heard a statistic: 92 per cent of people who participate in apprenticeships go on to get work in that industry, like the member for Scarborough did—he had employment as an electrician, as we know, but he is now in Parliament. These are great job opportunities and great training opportunities, and I am proud to be part of a government that is making this happen for Western Australians.