

WEST COAST COLLEGE OF TAFE

Grievance

MR O'GORMAN (Joondalup) [9.47 am]: This morning I raise an issue concerning the West Coast College of TAFE because of an unusually large amount of correspondence that I have been receiving through the post, as well as e-mails, phone calls and personal approaches from staff, students and the general community, including federal and state politicians on both sides of politics.

I draw the minister's attention to his recent announcements about recommendations of the McRae report on the training sector. In particular, I will focus on the situation at the West Coast College of TAFE. Under the realignment process, a number of programs and campuses have been removed from the jurisdiction of the West Coast College of TAFE. I refer specifically to the Balga campus, which will be under the new Swan College of TAFE, and the closure of the Carine campus. I am not particularly concerned that the Carine campus will be closed, because I am aware that the closure has been mooted for some time, and it appears that regardless of which party is in government, the Carine campus will be closed for many reasons. It particularly concerns me that, due to the closure of the Carine campus and the realignment of the Balga campus with the Swan College of TAFE, a number of courses involving up to 50 per cent of the three million student contact hours that the West Coast College of TAFE currently delivers have been removed. This is a massive loss of opportunity for students in the northern suburbs to continue or complete educational and training programs close to their home.

It is also evident that the Midland College of TAFE used to deliver approximately 1.2 million hours of student contact time and was deemed not to be viable. The situation in which the West Coast College of TAFE now finds itself is similar to that of the Midland College of TAFE prior to the realignment process. The West Coast College will struggle to maintain viability if its growth estimates are not achieved. The budget papers predict growth of about 40 per cent. We asked the minister about that and he indicated that it was anticipated that growth for the Joondalup campus of the West Coast College of TAFE would be almost immediate, and would result primarily from relocating about 860 students from the Carine campus. The operational budget for the West Coast College of TAFE was previously in the region of \$24 million per annum. Under the new proposals, with a reduction of approximately 50 per cent in its three million student contact hours, the budget will be approximately halved and will amount to about \$12 million per annum. No additional money has been allocated to a capital building program to accommodate the students who will be moving to the Joondalup campus from the Carine campus. Operating in that environment and with the anticipated increase of students at Joondalup campus - now West Coast College of TAFE's only campus - the college will have extreme difficulties accommodating the greater number of students.

All these factors put enormous pressure on staff and the physical resources at West Coast College of TAFE. This is coupled with the resignation of the college's managing director, Mr Ralph Dawson, who I believe will cease his employment there tomorrow. He is being replaced by a pretty reliable person - there is no question about that - Mr Roy Standish, who will be on a 12-month contract. This adds further to the college's difficulties. It is appropriate at this time to advertise the position and employ a managing director on a permanent basis to add some stability to the West Coast College of TAFE. As I said, all these issues have been raised with me by members of the community. I also urge the minister to reconsider infrastructure funding to enable the West Coast College of TAFE to deliver its remaining programs in the professional manner to which we have become accustomed in the northern suburbs.

Yesterday morning I opened the tourism travel show, which was put together by the tourism and travel students from West Coast College of TAFE. The standard that was evident in the 15 stands at that travel show, for both certificate 3 and diploma courses, was very high. I remarked that it was much more pleasant to open that travel show than to view some of the professional travel shows that have taken place at the Fremantle passenger terminal. The tourism and hospitality section seemed to go hand in hand with West Coast College of TAFE.

The segregation for special treatment of the hospitality training sector at West Coast College of TAFE is another matter that has caused a great deal of concern among those involved, whether staff, students or industry - the end users of those graduates. This has further destabilised West Coast College of TAFE as the major provider of training in the northern suburbs.

I have also been approached by a number of departments that operate in and around the Joondalup area, particularly the Department of Justice, which uses West Coast College of TAFE for its equity and access services. The department was concerned that that service might be reduced as well.

I strongly urge the minister to support the West Coast College of TAFE - it is an excellent college - and the method of delivering education and training in the northern suburbs. People who come from all walks of life thrive on the service it provides in that area. A number of graduates from Edith Cowan University also return

through the TAFE system to gain further practical qualifications. I urge the minister to strongly support the West Coast College of TAFE.

MR KOBELKE (Nollamara - Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection) [9.55 am]: I thank the member for Joondalup for raising the community's concerns about the realignment of the TAFE network. I hope he can assist me in convincing people that this really is a win-win situation all round. The changes we are making will ensure that we have more student contact hours and student places, particularly in the northern suburbs and especially at Joondalup. The Government has taken up a whole range of the recommendations in the McRae report. Some of those recommendations referred to the need for a more effective structure to provide TAFE programs and, with the exception of the Carine campus, it was not about changing from where programs were delivered or the locations of the campuses. The key recommendation was more about how the campuses were administered and organised.

The Balga campus of the West Coast College of TAFE delivered the largest number of building and construction courses within the metropolitan area, and it did not fit within the general profile of the West Coast College of TAFE. At the Midland and South East Metropolitan Colleges of TAFE there was a much heavier commitment to trade or traditional-type programs. If a lecturer in those areas was under-utilised, it was difficult to get him or her to work for another college, and we are trying to address that. Administratively it is better if such a person is aligned with the other campuses that deliver those types of programs. That is why the Balga campus is better suited to the Swan College of TAFE, as it will be called, based on the old Midland and South East Metropolitan Colleges of TAFE.

Turning to the Joondalup and Carine campuses, the Carine campus is under-utilised. It is starting to age, but, in general, it is a fine campus. It is close to the coast, but it is not on good transport routes and difficulty has been experienced obtaining sufficient numbers of students for many of its courses; however, it has a fine hospitality training centre. Following the closure of that campus, the hospitality training centre will be replaced. There is also concern that, during the transition, students will not attend the Carine campus as there will be ample courses at Joondalup, and this relates particularly to the hospitality courses. I am advised that the college is looking at a communication and marketing strategy to ensure that, during the change, people do not lose sight of the excellent hospitality course that will continue to run at Carine for the next 12 months.

When change occurs, there is always concern that things might happen, but ultimately they do not come to pass. People often worry needlessly. The Joondalup campus is a fine and very important campus, and it is located in an area in which demand for training is increasing, and that growing demand will be better met by these changes. Many of the courses, other than the hospitality courses, currently offered at Carine, are expected to be transferred to the Joondalup campus of the West Coast College of TAFE, providing a greater student population base and economies of scale. Although a final determination has not been made, study areas currently operating at Carine, which may be wholly or partly transferred to Joondalup, include health and fitness, visual arts, human and community services, health, small business management, information technology and literacy and access programs. As part of the TAFE network realignment, all courses currently delivered at the Central and West Coast Colleges of TAFE will be assessed and probably some of those courses will be transferred from Perth to the Joondalup campus. It is anticipated that student contact hours at the Joondalup campus will increase from approximately 874 000 in 2002 to approximately 1.4 million in 2003, representing an increase of 60 per cent. We are currently anticipating an increase of approximately 40 per cent. The issue then becomes the adequacy of the facility at Joondalup. Money has been provided in the forthcoming budget to deal with the realignment of that campus with the whole educational precinct, but, as the member indicated, there is no money for new buildings. It is anticipated that because new major buildings that were built by the last Government are already there, a lot of the delivery programs at Joondalup are flexible. That means that extra classrooms are not needed to increase the number of students who can attend. It is envisaged that the increase in the number of students can be met with the current facility. We will need to plan into the future to expand the facilities at Joondalup, because it is a growth area.

The member for Joondalup also mentioned that Ralph Dawson, the current managing director, is standing down. That is in part due to health reasons and is a loss to the technical and further education system. He has been an excellent servant of TAFE training in this State. I thank him very much for his contribution and wish him well in his various future endeavours. The new managing director will be Roy Standish, who is currently the Managing Director of Midland TAFE and in whom I have great confidence. I am sure, given his reputation and long experience of training, he will do an excellent job as the Managing Director of the new Joondalup TAFE.

I refer to Carine. The member for Joondalup is the chairman of a review committee that will ascertain the best location for a brand new, leading-edge hospitality training centre. The Government has designated neither the model that is best able to serve that need nor the location. The committee consists of a wide range of

representatives and in the next few months will provide me with recommendations on how we can best provide that facility for the start of 2004.

Another concern is the child-care centre located at the Carine TAFE. Its lease is due to expire in early 2004. We have given a commitment that it will continue to operate during that time. We have also given a commitment to excise the land it is on so that it can continue to operate as a child-care centre while we consider what will be done with the rest of the land on which Carine TAFE is situated.

The SPEAKER: Grievances noted.