

## TRAINING SECTOR RESPONSE TO ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

*Statement by Minister for Training*

**HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Minister for Training)** [4.03 pm]: I am pleased to update members of the house on the ways in which Western Australia's training sector is responding to employers and individuals adversely affected by the current economic downturn. Members may have noticed today an advertisement on page 18 of *The West Australian*; this is the first of four to appear over the next four weeks. The advertisements illustrate the coordinated approach being taken by the Department of Education and Training and its extensive network of training and other service providers that are available to assist both employers and employees in these uncertain times. I will table the advertisements for those members who are interested.

[See paper 676.]

**Hon Ken Travers:** I am sure Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich will be interested.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I am sure that she will. She will be floored.

The first call in response to the advertisement was at nine o'clock this morning seeking the advice of the Career Development Centre. The department's Career Development Centre is the coordination centre and the first point of contact for people seeking career assistance and training information, and referral to additional services such as the state government funded Employment Directions Network and the ApprentiCentre. Importantly, for people wishing to have their skills and experience formally recognised, the Career Development Centre recently became the shopfront for the department's skills recognition service. The Employment Directions Network has significant experience in providing personalised support to people who have been made redundant through business closures. The department provides funding of \$7.7 million per annum to support the network, which consists of 24 not-for-profit community-based agencies strategically located throughout the state. Employment Directions Network staff assist clients with career exploration through workshop activities and one-to-one guidance interviews, information on how to access employment and training information, work experience insurance cover, internet access and job search support. The network also delivers the Profit from Experience program, which comprises career information, advice and assistance to people aged over 40 years, and over 35 years for Indigenous people, and includes up to \$500 a person for training assistance.

The department, through its ApprentiCentre, offers support and assistance to apprentices, trainees and their employers affected by the business downturn. ApprentiCentre staff are industry specialists who offer support, solutions, service and advice to employers and apprentices and trainees. This coordinated response has already provided vital support to people who have been made redundant through business closures, including support to employees at the BHP Billiton nickel mine in Ravensthorpe, Austal Ships in Henderson, Gunns Limited Company in Yarloop, Carrier Air Conditioning in Bentley, Harvey Beef at Harvey and at Rio Tinto's HIs melt project in Kwinana. This has been a great success, and a source of reassurance and support to people affected in these very uncertain times.

Training plays an integral role in building the state's workforce participation, skills and productivity during this time of economic challenge and uncertainty. TAFEWA colleges have joined together to make use of their intimate knowledge and close working relationships with local industry to create the TAFE response unit. I have called on the TAFEWA colleges to develop and implement this coordinated response to address the job losses that are occurring and to ensure that support is provided to employees to acquire training that will assist them to gain or retain employment. The TAFE response unit will also provide assistance to employers to manage the effect of redundancies on their workers. This mobile tactical response group will coordinate career planning guidance, support, recognition of prior learning—RPL—and industry consultations for human resource departments and employers and employees. Utilising its intimate knowledge and close working relationships that exist between local TAFE colleges and enterprise and industry, the TAFE response unit will be able to provide targeted and appropriate support in an immediate and responsive manner.

In order to be a single point of contact for those seeking assistance, the TAFE response unit will utilise TAFE and Department of Education and Training resources—namely, the Career Development Centre, ApprentiCentre and the Employment Directions Network—across the state to provide the required expertise in every situation, and it will work with other government agencies, community organisations and, where appropriate, private training organisations to provide a comprehensive support service. The TAFE response unit will assist individuals seeking help by connecting them with the appropriate TAFE personnel who will best serve their needs. The TAFE response unit will respond to all requests for assistance within the first 24 hours of notice.

I am aware that many members will be fielding inquiries from constituents who have been affected in some way by the economic downturn. As a consequence, I will be writing to all members next week enclosing a package of training support information that can be utilised in offices to assist with constituent inquiries.

Consideration of the statement made an order of the day for the next sitting, on motion by **Hon Ed Dermer**.