

MOTOR VEHICLE INDUSTRY, SKILLS SHORTAGE

46. Hon BARRY HOUSE to the Minister for Education and Training:

Although I did not give notice of this question, I alerted the minister to the fact that I would be asking a question on this subject.

- (1) Is the minister aware of the serious skills shortage in the motor vehicle industry, as outlined in *Motor WA*, which is the official magazine of the Motor Trade Association of Western Australia, and through other avenues recently?
- (2) Does the minister support the creation of an automotive training and education foundation?
- (3) What other measures are planned to address this skills shortage?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH replied:

(1)-(3) May I say how pleased I am to be asked this question? I will depart from the usual presentation in which I outlined what a fantastic job the government has done in this area. I cannot go down that path today, because another exciting event happened and I want to share it with the house. It relates to skills formation. This morning I attended the launch of the Western Australian Training Excellence Awards. They are very important because they are about trainees, employers, training providers and the general community coming together to produce the very best training outcomes. These Training Excellence Awards showcase the benefits of skills training to employers, businesses and the community. I was very pleased to have the opportunity to launch that.

I was also very pleased to be able to report to the media that the sort of problem of skills shortages that we have in this state arises from economic growth. Matching supply and demand for skills in any economy is not an exact science. There is obviously a mismatch, part of which is the result of the accelerated economic growth we have experienced over the past few years. Over the past year alone the growth has been 7.5 per cent. Over the next three years the growth rate is projected to be nearly five per cent at 4.7 per cent.

Point of Order

Hon PETER FOSS: Relevance and brevity! I have not heard the word “automotive” mentioned once. As far as I can tell, the minister does not even intend to answer the question. I am quite happy for her to say that she does not intend to answer the question; then we can get on to the next one.

The PRESIDENT: Order! There is no point for a speech. I was hoping that the minister, when she got onto the matching of growth with skills shortages, would then go onto the automotive industry. I now look forward to that.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I am amazed that you read my mind so perfectly, Mr President, because that is exactly where my answer was going. The state has areas of skills shortages, and, yes, the automotive industry is one of them. There are also skills shortages in the metalworking, electrical, building and construction and food industries. I am told there are even skills shortages in the area of hairdressing. As you would be aware, Mr President, the government has made an incredible effort and has an incredible agenda to meet some of the challenges, such as creating positions for 30 000 apprentices and trainees by 2009.

Point of Order

Hon BILL STRETCH: Mr President, could you please outline to the house, particularly to the minister, the difference between a ministerial statement and the answer to a parliamentary question?

The PRESIDENT: It is time for the minister to get to the details that are pertinent to the article to which Hon Barry House has referred.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I am disappointed because it seems that the more I want to share the good news with the members opposite, the less they are able to cope. Quite frankly, that really saddens me.

I raised the excellence awards because in this article the automotive industry admits that it is also in part to blame for the fact that it has a training shortfall. By way of summary, when the managing director of Eurogroup, a gentleman by the name of Rod Slater, was asked why there was a skills shortage in the motor trade industry, he said -

Sadly the industry, as a collective, has failed to provide for its own future in terms of the way we educate, recruit, train and reward. That is not to say some organisations have not made outstanding contributions to training, because they have. It's just that our industry has never had a common vision. In fact, it has never had a true 'vision' in respect to the way we educate, recruit, train and reward.

The second part of the question is an interesting concept that I would be happy to discuss with members of the industry.