

**RETAIL TRAINEE OF THE YEAR AWARDS**

*Statement*

**HON MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM (South West)** [9.57 pm]: I would like to make a brief statement about this year's Retail Trainee of the Year Awards, which were held on 17 October. It was my pleasure to represent the government and present a series of very well deserved awards on that night. Every year the Wholesale, Retail and Personal Services Industry Training Council of Western Australia hosts the Retail Trainee of the Year Awards for the retail industry. The purpose of those awards is to recognise excellence in training - that is, in traineeships - with the long-term goal of encouraging retailing as a career. The awards are in their thirteenth year and cover the retail, pharmacy and floristry industries. Significantly, the retail sector is Australia's largest employer, comprising large, medium and small businesses. These particular awards are very highly regarded. The Retail Trainee of the Year Awards is an important event, because it not only recognises excellence in training but also promotes retailing as a rewarding career.

The retail industry recognises the value of excellence in training, as does the government, and has generously sponsored and supported the Retail Trainee of the Year Awards. Applicants for the awards must first submit a written application. A panel comprising employer and employee representatives, and a previous award winner, then interviews all the finalists. The Wholesale, Retail and Personal Services Industry Training Council of Western Australia is pleased to be at the leading edge of promoting and developing industry-based training packages and is constantly striving to increase the value of retail training in Western Australia. I congratulate it on its endeavours and many successes. The awards are supported by the retail industry in the form of sponsorship. It is the generosity of the retail industry that allows WRAPS to run the awards each year.

I particularly thank and acknowledge Norma Roberts, the executive officer of WRAPS, for the invitation to represent the government and distribute the awards. I also acknowledge the hard work and direction of Martin Pritchard, the chairman of WRAPS. I congratulate all concerned, particularly the sponsors in the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association, whose vision set up the awards program some 13 years ago.