

BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY - SKILLS SHORTAGE

**985. Hon SHELLEY ARCHER to the Minister for Education and Training:**

Will the minister outline how the state government is addressing the skills shortage by ensuring that government agencies involved in building and construction works train apprentices and trainees?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH replied:**

It is always great to hear a good news story, and there are probably not as many as good as the reform of the apprenticeship and traineeship system -

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order, members! I am having difficulty hearing the minister answer the question; I trust Hansard is not experiencing the same difficulty, but I want Hansard to be able to hear the minister's answer.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Thank you, Mr President. As members will be aware, given that we have 14 per cent-plus economic growth in Western Australia, there are some amazing pressures in the area of skilled labour. It is, of course, very important that skilled labour is available to the market. I do not think it would be overstating the matter to say that the Carpenter government has responded more positively in addressing skills shortages than has any other government in the state's history. For example, Western Australia has moved from a time-served apprenticeship system to a competency-based system. The government has introduced 11 new trades in the housing sector alone. The government will increase opportunities for students in years 11 and 12 to be able to access trade training while still studying at that level. That will take effect from 2008. The government also has introduced the very successful school apprenticeship link program. In addition, the Premier and I recently announced a new policy called Priority Start. This is, indeed, an excellent policy that will ensure that the government will be a leader and set the standard by example for the employment of apprentices and trainees in the building and construction industry. This policy replaces three existing policies and, therefore, streamlines a great deal of red tape. This policy will for the first time apply to all government works and all government trading enterprises, including Western Power, Water Corporation, LandCorp, and the port authorities. By ensuring that government trading enterprises are active participants in this initiative, the government is confident that it can provide up to 4 000 additional apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities as a direct result of the Priority Start policy.

The policy will increase the number of apprenticeships and traineeships in Western Australia, because contractors applying for tenders to undertake government work will have to ensure that they have one apprentice or trainee for every million dollars spent on the labour component of the project. The requirement will kick in at \$300 000. For example, the government expects that projects with a labour component of \$30 million will employ 30 apprentices. If it is a \$25 million project, the number of apprentices or trainees will be 25. This is a fantastic new initiative, aimed at providing opportunities for all young people. I am very, very pleased to have been part of the process of bringing this policy to fruition, and I am certainly very proud to be associated with a government that is doing such a brilliant job in the area of training reform.