

TRAINING — NATIONAL SKILLS AGREEMENT

Mrs L.M. O'MALLEY: Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Member for Bicton.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Mr R.S. LOVE: Madam Speaker —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Sorry, Leader of the Opposition, I have already given the call to the member for Bicton, so you will need to resume your seat. I have given the call to the member for Bicton.

770. Mrs L.M. O'MALLEY to the Minister for Training:

I refer to the Cook Labor government's significant investment in training that is delivering affordable opportunities for all Western Australians.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how low-fee training initiatives are helping to attract new workers to important sectors such as housing construction?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how the new national skills agreement will provide more opportunities to develop Western Australia's workforce?

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

I wonder whether there is a joke in here about doing a TAFE course on question time here in Parliament; I am not sure. We might be able to deliver one up for members opposite who fail to pay attention.

- (1)–(2) It is another exciting week in the world of vocational training for WA with the announcement of the national skills agreement. It is an agreement that will unlock billions of dollars to continue the good work that this government is doing in vocational training. It is significant that we now have a five-year agreement. There has been a number of years of interim agreements, and I am very proud to be part of the Cook government that has worked with the Albanese government to achieve something that previous federal Liberal–National governments could not do, which is to secure a long-term training agreement. We look forward to replacing the ad hoc approach of the previous federal government. This is a five-year agreement and it will provide much-needed certainty as well as funds so we can get on with the job of developing the skills we need in Western Australia for our growing workforce. This agreement will deliver \$1.3 billion, which is \$380 million more than the previous funding agreement. As part of the package, \$1.2 billion will be in flexible funding. That will enable us to deliver skills in critical and emerging industries, including clean energy, defence, the care sector, and digital and IT.

The Cook government will be required to provide \$109 million in match funding for specific training and workforce initiatives. I want to be clear that this funding, which is significant, a significant quantum, a significant five-year agreement, is on top of the fee-free training investment that we announced a few weeks ago. That agreement will deliver, as I announced, more in 2024. There will be 22 000 more fee-free TAFE and vocational education and training places for our state. This will enable us to continue our efforts to stay ahead of the game when it comes to delivering for skills development for our state. As part of the agreement, \$125 million is available for specific workforce initiatives that are delivering on some priority areas, which includes Closing the Gap initiatives and improving foundation skills such as literacy and numeracy but also digital literacy. We know that one in five workers in Australia has problems with numeracy and literacy, so foundation skills are important. We are going to create centres of excellence across the country and help with our clean energy transition. These are all the priority areas that we will have allocated funding. The work on clean energy transition is important as our government prepares to convene an energy transition summit next month to leverage for job opportunities and make sure that we have the workforce needed to do this important work. All this delivers and continues our track record on keeping training affordable to ensure that we can respond to local workforce needs, which we have advocated is important in this new agreement.

I give one specific example of how this government listens to industry and responds. I received advocacy, and I know the Minister for Housing did as well, from the community sector housing organisations saying that they needed a specific skill set to help people who were supporting those who were at risk of homelessness and those who were having difficulty keeping their tenancy. The housing sector support agencies wanted a specific skill set for those people. The Department of Training and Workforce Development entered into some discussions with the community sector housing organisations, and as a result of that advocacy we now have a traineeship that will deliver a certificate IV in housing, which is in

direct response to feedback from the industry in the need to upskill the social housing sector. Organisations such as Shelter WA and the WA Community Housing sector advocated for this training. The training will also be able to be delivered in low-fee traineeships. That is a really good example of us listening to industry, responding and being able to deliver this training in our low-fee packages, and we will have a specific traineeship that will deliver for that sector. As we are able to deliver this training as a low-fee offering, it will be really good for region-based providers and those working in the Aboriginal community housing organisations. As I said, this is another example of us listening to industry, putting our shoulder to the wheel, doing the hard work, delivering and working with our federal colleagues to deliver huge amounts of money into training and getting local Western Australians into the jobs that are there.