

APPRENTICES AND TRAINEES, NUMBER

**380. Mr P.W. ANDREWS to the Minister for Education and Training:**

Given the importance to the Western Australian economy of a highly skilled work force, can the minister provide the House with an update on the number of apprentices and trainees currently in Western Australia?

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER replied:**

I thank the member for Southern River for his question and for his interest in the area. The news on apprenticeships and traineeships in Western Australia is astoundingly good. In fact, all the figures are ball-burstingly exciting and, I think, unparalleled in the history of this State, and probably any other State. Here is a modest little graph we managed to put together to demonstrate the growth in apprenticeships and traineeships in Western Australia. The dotted blue line is the performance under the previous coalition Government. Members can see that, bar a little variation, there was no growth whatsoever during that time. The red line represents the performance under the Gallop Government.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The first 12 months under this Government was when policy was put in place. Everybody can see that truly astounding growth has occurred in the number of apprentices and trainees in Western Australia.

Several members interjected.

Mr J.H.D. Day: Tell the whole story: it is the same across the nation.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: It is as though I push a little button and members opposite provide me with a cue. According to the latest Australian vocational education training statistics provided by the National Committee on Discrimination in Employment and Occupation, there has been a 13 per cent growth in apprentices and trainees in Western Australia during the past 12 months. What was that about the figures nationally, member for Darling Range? The state figure of 13 per cent compares with a six per cent growth nationally.

Several members interjected.

Mr J.H.D. Day: Do you want the answer? Since 2001, there has been a 40 per cent growth in Western Australia and 39 per cent nationally, so there has been no significant difference.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Just like that cartoon character Sad Sack, the member always finds a dark side to a matter. Poor old Sad Sack. A 40 per cent increase has occurred in the number of apprentices and trainees in training since the Gallop Government came to office. The estimated number of WA apprentices and trainees in training increased from 18 800 in March 2001 to 26 200 in March this year. That is an additional 7 400 people, which is a massive 40 per cent increase, who have taken up opportunities in apprenticeships and traineeships. Also, 87.5 per cent of the State's apprentices and trainees are in full-time employment, which is well above the national average of 76 per cent. The fact that 43.5 per cent of trainees are aged 19 years or under reflects the Government's concentration on 15 to 19-year-olds in Western Australia. Among the 15 to 17-year-olds, the news on apprenticeships and traineeships is even more significant. Since the amalgamation of the Education Department and the Department of Training when the Government brought the policy area into full focus, the number of 15 to 17-year-olds in apprenticeships and traineeships in Western Australia has increased by no less than 47 per cent. Those statistics and the graph demonstrate how well the Government is going. Most members of Parliament on this side and opposite would be only too willing to congratulate the Government, the department, people in business and so on. For example, I know that the Leader of the Opposition finds these figures very exciting indeed, although I note that he has fallen remarkably quiet in the last day or so. I think he is a bit shell shocked by such figures. His performance reminds me of a very interesting character in sporting history. I refer to a fella called Malcolm Nash. The Leader of the Opposition is analogous to that cricketer. Malcolm Nash was a bowler for Glamorgan who in 1968 walked into cricket history when he bowled against the Nottinghamshire captain of the time, Gary Sobers, who hit every single delivery of Malcolm Nash's over for six. This is the experience that may well befall the Leader of the Opposition after the next election -

*Point of Order*

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: There would appear to be no relevance to the answer.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: I also draw your attention, Mr Speaker, to the fact that the minister earlier referred to the member for Darling Range by a name that was totally inappropriate and against the code of conduct. I ask him to withdraw.

The SPEAKER: On the second point, I did not hear any such reference. I am positive that the Minister for Education and Training is about to conclude his answer.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Interviewed about the experience afterwards, Malcolm Nash said that by the time he had bowled the fourth ball, he could only wish that the experience would come to an end. I am pretty certain that the Leader of the Opposition is in that little mental space right now: the sooner it ends, the better.