

APPRENTICES — PILBARA

586. Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM to the Minister for Training:

- (1) Is the minister aware that apprentices based in the Pilbara currently have to travel to Perth to access technical and further education lecturers to supervise their block-release programs of study in the plumbing, carpentry, electrical and refrigeration trade areas?
- (2) Is the minister aware that the cost to an apprentice of this is well in excess of the \$35 daily subsidy provided?
- (3) Does the minister appreciate that the cost of accommodation in Perth is proving prohibitively expensive for some Pilbara apprentices?
- (4) What is the minister doing to ensure that Pilbara technical and further education colleges will have immediate access to lecturers in these trade areas?
- (5) In the meantime, what steps will the minister take to urgently secure —
 - (a) an accommodation facility to house apprentices at reasonable tariff rates when they have to come to Perth for TAFE lectures; and/or
 - (b) an immediate increase in the daily accommodation allowance for these apprentices?

Hon PETER COLLIER replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

In line with the previous state Labor government's policy concerning travel and accommodation —

- (1) Pilbara apprentices in some trades travel to Perth to conduct their off-the-job training, although it should be noted that Pilbara TAFE does offer electrical trade training and is currently establishing carpentry trade training in the region.
- (2) Regional apprentices are provided with a travel allowance, including airfares to and from Perth. The accommodation subsidy is a contribution towards the total cost of staying away from home.
- (3) See (1).
- (4) As a statutory authority, Pilbara TAFE recruits its own staff, including TAFE lecturers. Where possible, Pilbara TAFE also accesses lecturing resources through short-term secondments from other TAFE colleges.
- (5)
 - (a) I am prepared to examine this proposal; and
 - (b) the government will review the accommodation subsidy as part of its normal budget process.

I have to say to the honourable member, on re-reading my response to (5)(a), I am very receptive to that proposal. I would be very disappointed if we were losing potential apprentices from the regions as a direct result of their inability to gain meaningful and reasonably costed accommodation in the metropolitan area. I will therefore be giving that serious consideration over the short term.