

**VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING — APPRENTICESHIPS**

*Motion*

**MR F.M. LOGAN (Cockburn)** [5.46 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the Barnett government for its abject failure to support apprenticeship training numbers in Western Australia, for the massive increases in student fees over the next four years and for the undermining of accessible vocational-based training for all Western Australians.

I think this motion sums up the debacle that is unfolding in TAFE colleges and for state training providers across Western Australia from January this year. Again, there is a new Minister for Training and Workforce Development. Hon Kim Hames has taken over from the previous minister, Hon Terry Redman. I must say that a pattern is starting to emerge about the Leader of the National Party, Hon Terry Redman; everything he touches seems to end up as a real problem. Whether it is agriculture, prisons or TAFE colleges, he does not hold on to those portfolios for a great deal of time. They are taken off him and passed on to someone else, and looking at the disasters that are left behind, it is no wonder that those portfolios were taken from him. Here we are in 2014 with a new minister, Hon Kim Hames—although he is not in the house, I am sure he will be listening—and it will be interesting to see whether he can clean up the mess left by the Leader of the National Party, Hon Terry Redman.

The mess that I am referring to includes that the 2013–14 budget highlighted that there would be up to \$26 million worth of cuts to the TAFE budget, which is from the Department of Training and Workforce Development and consequently the state training providers. There would be redundancies. As a result of the rollout of the redundancy packages by the government, we now know that those redundancies have been taken up by key people within the Department of Training and Workforce Development and within state training providers. Contract staff to state training providers have been let go. The Minister for Training and Workforce Development has now come into the chamber. I was just referring to the awful mess that the current minister has been left by the previous Minister for Training and Workforce Development. I will be listening with bated breath to find out how the minister will clean up that mess. The mess I am referring to is the announcements in the 2013–14 budget of up to \$26 million worth of cuts to the budgets of the various state training providers. As I said, the redundancies that have been rolled out by the government have been taken up by key people within state training providers. Therefore, there have been reductions in the number of permanent staff. We now know that there are reductions in the number of staff contracted to state training providers, and there have been reductions in the number of casual lecturers as well, all of which will have a direct impact on the various colleges, the state training providers around Western Australia. On top of the budget cuts and the jobs that have been let go, we have the TAFE fee hikes as of the beginning of this year. For this year alone, the fees for some courses have increased by up to 390 per cent more than the 2013 fees.

This whole debacle is packaged up by the government under what I would say is a joke of a heading called “Future Skills”. These cuts, fee hikes and job losses are bundled up under the heading “Future Skills”. In my view, that heading should have another statement behind it reading “(or lack thereof)”, because that would describe exactly what the rollout of “Future Skills” is doing to vocational training here in Western Australia.

Let us look at the issue of student fees for particular qualifications over the last few years. If we go back to, for example, 2007–08, we find that for certificate III in engineering–mechanical trade—that is for plant mechanics, for example—the annual fee payable for course enrolment for non-concessional students such as an apprentice learning the plant mechanic trade was \$420 in 2007 and \$456 in 2008. Even as of the last financial year, 2012–13, which had an impact on the state training providers right up to December last year, the fee structure was still only \$600. The cost now for students who possibly want to pick up that qualification but who may not be apprentices and eligible for the subsidy that is out there—that is not unusual in state training providers—is \$2 500. The fees for people who want to change the nature of their vocation, upgrade their skills or change their career path to another qualification have jumped hugely between 2013 and 2014. This is even more evident when we compare it with the situation that existed the last time a Labor government was in office in 2008, when the range of fees paid annually by a person in the automotive trades was from \$315 up to \$456, which is the one I referred to earlier for a person undertaking certificate III in the engineering–mechanical trade.

If we compare those fee increases with the number of apprentices who have been taken on and are in training, we see a gradual decline in the number of apprentices over the last five years. This is a critical issue for Western Australia, which I will come to later in my speech. If we go back to the training figures and statistics for apprentices and trainees for the same period that I have just talked about for the fee increases, we will see that the total number of apprentices in training in 2007 was 21 297. In 2008, there were 23 006 in training. Following the election of a Liberal–National government, we see a continual decline in the number of apprentices in training until today. As of last year, there were 20 328. Conversely, there was an increase in the number of

trainees in training. For example, in 2007–08, the number of people undertaking traineeships was 12 591 in 2007 and 13 166 in 2008. As of last year, 24 779 trainees were undertaking traineeships within the TAFE system, which is virtually a doubling of the number of traineeships since 2007–08.

When a previous minister, Hon Peter Collier, had the responsibility for training, he would regularly come out with press statements crowing about the increase in the number of people engaged in vocational education and training in colleges in the period of the Liberal–National government, particularly those involved in skilled training. He did not break down those numbers into trades and traineeships. Of course, the current minister knows that there is a significant difference between a tradesperson and a trainee—as much of a difference as there is between a doctor and a nurse. There is a significant difference in the training that goes into it and the application of that training once the person completes that training on the job. For example, traineeships are usually up to one year, but mostly the training is undertaken in less than one year. On the other hand, trade training is up to four years. However, because it is now modular training, if people pass those modules in a timely manner, they can reduce the period taken to get their full qualification to just over three years. There is a significant difference between the two. When those people come out of their training and go into the workforce, there is a significant difference in the impact of their contribution to the economy.

Trainees usually work in semi-skilled occupations; tradespeople work in trade and paraprofessional occupations. That is the reality. When companies such as Rio Tinto Australia, BHP Billiton Ltd, Woodside Petroleum Ltd, Chevron Australia Pty Ltd, Inpex Corporation and many other giant corporations advertise for people for their expansion or construction projects, what type of people are they asking for? Are they asking for people with traineeships or are they asking for people with trades qualifications, paraprofessional qualifications and professional qualifications? We only have to go to the websites to get the answer. In the professional area, they are looking for engineers primarily; in the paraprofessional area, they are looking for site supervisors, foremen and technicians; and in the trade area, they are looking for the full gamut of tradespeople from highly skilled coded welders to fitters and pipe fitters. In the non-trade area, they are still looking for people, but the number of people is far lower than for the trade and professional areas. In the non-trade area, they are primarily looking for scaffolders, crane drivers and riggers, which, funnily enough, is a trade in the United Kingdom and Canada, but it is not in Australia. Scaffolders, crane drivers and riggers are at the higher end of the non-trade area, and usually the training that is undertaken to reach those levels is significantly higher than it is for traineeships. People who come out of TAFE with a traineeship would not get a job with those companies. They would not have the qualifications or the experience. They just would not get a job. It would be very unusual for them to get a job. They could possibly get a job in an office environment as support staff, but certainly not in the area of construction, operations or maintenance, because they are specifically skilled jobs.

Only a month ago it was reported in *The West Australian* that the oil and gas representative body, the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association, argued that there was a significant shortfall in the number of people I have just referred to who would be taken on by oil and gas companies, particularly in the area of operations and maintenance. As members know, many of the construction projects underway for the large liquefied natural gas facilities for Chevron's Barrow Island and Wheatstone projects and for Inpex will be completed by 2016 or 2017. Those companies are now looking for people who have the skills to work permanently in those operations and undertake maintenance on those giant plants.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** I am told that they will need 2 000 to 3 000 additional FTEs over the next three years.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Absolutely, minister. I think they have probably even underestimated that.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** That's just oil and gas.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** That is right.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** That's not counting all the mining stuff.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** No; that is right. If we take into account the mining operations and the expansions going on at the moment—for example, the Cape Lambert upgrade for Rio—and the introduction, unfortunately, of the floating liquefied natural gas platform for Prelude, there will be at least another 1 000 people required just for those projects alone. Therefore, the demand in the economy is for the types of skills that have been in decline within the TAFE training structure over the past five years. I will give some statistics. The figures that I just read out show that between March 2008 and March 2013, there were 2 678 fewer apprentices in the system, with 877 fewer apprentices in metals and manufacturing; 1 608 fewer in building and construction, which I will refer to in a moment; and 407 fewer in trades such as sheetmetal work. The amount of lagging that goes into an LNG plant onshore and offshore is massive. Sheetmetal workers are always in high demand for construction and, later on, for maintenance.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** What is lagging?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** When the pipes have to be covered with insulation and then covered often with stainless steel sheeting or with aluminium sheeting, it is done by sheetmetal workers. It is specialised work. A person has to be a tradesperson to understand how to apply that lagging. As the minister knows, those LNG plants operate at minus 160 degrees; therefore, the pipes have to be insulated.

This is a problem. It is a problem that I highlighted to the previous minister, but it was completely ignored; the previous minister simply trotted out a series of glib statements about how good the government is doing in training. There are two ways to resolve that problem—that is, to provide incentives for companies to take on more apprentices or to import more tradespeople. Certainly, the unemployment statistics that marry into these trade and apprenticeship figures indicate that young people in Kwinana, for example, or in the minister's electorate around Mandurah, certainly would not be happy that they would be denied the opportunity to undertake a trade and then move into an industry such as the oil and gas industry because that career opportunity was given to someone from overseas.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** Aren't there employer incentives provided by the commonwealth government; is that not the case?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** There are incentives provided by the commonwealth government. There are also incentives provided by the state through subsidised apprenticeship training. Those subsidies will remain for the time being; however, if the fees for these qualifications continue to increase over the next four years but the subsidies do not rise in line with the increase in fees, obviously, as a percentage of the total fee structure, apprentices will get less and less. There is no guarantee that those fee subsidies will remain. At the moment the fees are capped. There are three structures of fees for state training providers. The capped fees are \$400, \$2 500 for trade training and \$8 000 for people undertaking diplomas. The question which I put to the minister and to which I want a response is: how long will those caps be in place? The state training provider has not indicated that those caps will be in place for the next vocational year of 2014, or for 2015, 2016 or 2017. As the minister knows, by the time we get to 2017, the fees for a diploma course, for example, will have risen by something like 900 per cent compared with the 2013 fee structure for a diploma course with the state training provider or TAFE. In fact, if the cap that currently applies does not remain in place, people undertaking those diploma courses will have to pay the full fee. The point I am making is that the debacle that has occurred in technical and further education with fee increases of 390 per cent this year alone, the reductions in staff numbers, and the cuts to the Department of Training and Workforce Development that have been passed onto the state training providers are bad enough because they undermine the fabric of our vocational education training institutions in Western Australia, but they come at a time when, in particular industries, those training institutions should be doing more to meet the demand for skilled tradespeople and paraprofessionals.

I refer the minister to the statistics I have put on record in the house tonight. I seriously cannot understand, and I would appreciate it if the minister can explain it to me, why the number of people in apprenticeships fell between 2008 and 2013, a period in which the state's economy absolutely boomed—the minister cannot deny that—led by demand from China and resource projects that met that demand. How does that happen? I honestly cannot find the answer to that, but I hope the minister might be able to inform the house why that has occurred. The minister should look at the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund. The minister knows how the BCITF works as he was around when it was initiated. A small percentage is applied to each development that takes place in Western Australia—outside the resources sector, I might add. That money then goes into the training fund that is strongly supported by everybody in the industry, both on the employer and employee side. The BCITF highlighted in its annual report for 2012–13 its concerns about the continuing decline in the number of apprentices. The minister should remember that this training fund helps subsidise those apprentices. There has been a continuing decline in the number of apprentices, going into the thousands, from 2010 to 2013, to the point that the BCITF has expressed concerns in its last two annual reports. This year the BCITF says that as there will be a pick-up in the housing market and construction projects around Perth, building activity will experience a crunch as the industry will not have the number of tradespeople it needs to undertake those projects because of the lag that has occurred in the number of apprentices who were being trained from 2008 through to 2013. That in itself will have an economic impact.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** I have not heard them blaming governments of any persuasion for what is happening in the reduction of percentages of apprentices, because, in effect, it means they are not taking enough action. Everybody is doing their best to encourage people into the industry, surely.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** That is a good point, minister. The BCITF's annual report does not point the finger at government. It is pointing out to government its concerns.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** It is all apprentices, really.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** That is why I have said that I cannot understand, throughout a boom such as we have had, that apprentice numbers have declined across all industries. But there has been a significant decline in the number of apprentices in the building and construction industry to the point that the principal training provider in the industry has noted its concerns over two years. From our perspective, it appears that this government has had successive training ministers, none of whom have identified the problem or even listened to industry on this issue or intervened or campaigned to get more apprentices employed. That is the reality. I do not have an explanation and maybe the minister has, but that is what it looks like to me.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** Perhaps it is because unemployment levels went down and down and employment was easy to find. One of my sons started doing a trade, then left because a job was easy to find and he could get straight into earning money. Maybe the low unemployment rate has been the undoing of us in a way, because people have found easy ways to earn money and have not got stuck into a trade, because it takes three to four years.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** That could be one answer, minister. The other answer is that it is has been too easy for employers to bring in people from overseas rather than train them.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** The unemployment rate until recently has been right down during all of that time—otherwise you would expect it to go up, wouldn't you?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** It has, minister, particularly over the last couple of years. When Labor was in power the unemployment rate was 2.3 per cent and currently it stands at just under six per cent, so that is a significant increase over that time.

**Mr R.H. Cook:** There were 27 000 unemployed in 2008 and it is over 60 000 now.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** That is right; it was just over 30 000 unemployed when we left government, and since we left government there are now 60 000 unemployed.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** Sure, but in that time it did not steadily increase for the first two or three years; it has only been these last couple of years. I have not been looking at it all the time.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Those figures are real and have been provided by the minister's own government. Those figures also reflect a time when the state's workforce increased as well. They could be seen as conservative figures because of the increase in the workforce.

I will give the minister an example, and I am sure Mr Aeschlimann will not mind because I told him I would read his email into *Hansard* at the first opportunity. Lee Aeschlimann contacted me about an electrical apprenticeship. His email reads —

I am sending this email to the Department of Training and workforce development and to both the Labor and Liberal Parties in the hope that something can be changed.

I am a mature aged man changing careers into the Electrical field. I was hearing non stop about trade shortages and thought now would be the perfect time to change careers as I was working in hospitality and am looking to having a family and working more family friendly hours (not working every weekend and public holiday without extra pay and working between 10 and 30 hours of unpaid overtime a week {this is all chef jobs not just the few I worked in Australia}). I did my Pre-Apprenticeship course at TAFE finishing top of my class and was keen and ready to start my new career. That was at the beginning on July. I was told apprenticeship would have all apprenticeship vacancies listed on it, but in the last 5 months only 4 have been listed, 1 for in the Kimberly not FIFO, 1 for a fire alarm installation which is not electrician and 1 for EGT for school leavers. I have applied to over 200 small electrical companies, all the group training organisations and looked weekly at the bigger companies job forums. So far I have had just 2 interviews. 1 was for a job with Chevron. 2 positions over 2000 applicants.

He then goes on to make the point —

Why are we flying in people from Europe and Asia to fill trade shortage vacancies instead of improving incentives to train ourselves? I worked hard to be able to afford this job change and if something is not found in the next month I will be forced to go back to a job I hate having wasted all the cash I saved working hard for over 3 years.

That letter from Lee Aeschlimann is a heartfelt plea.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** He has done his training and he has qualified. You are talking about all the shortages in certain areas, yet he is out there looking for the shortages, and there does not seem to be any.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** He has finished his pre-apprenticeship, and he is looking for an apprenticeship. That leads back to the issue of the number of apprentices who are undertaking training. There has been a shrinking in the

number of apprenticeships that are available. I am sure the minister has had complaints made to his electorate office by parents—I certainly have—about the tiny number of apprenticeships that are now on offer. Yet we know there is a future trade demand for highly skilled people, and we know that certain organisations in Western Australia are still demanding that we bring in more people from overseas to meet those trade shortages.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** Do businesses not also have a responsibility to look to the future and at putting people on?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Of course, minister. Unfortunately, gone are the times when the government did a lot of the training itself. I say “unfortunately”, because if we talk to a lot of the people in the engineering industry, they look back fondly at the days when Midland Railway Workshops and State Engineering Works, and some of the other organisations that this government has privatised, employed apprentices.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** My father-in-law looked back at that time very fondly. He was able to work two jobs, because he spent eight hours in there and slept for six.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** I think that is a bit harsh on your father!

**Dr K.D. Hames:** My father-in-law. It’s true.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Is he still alive?

**Dr K.D. Hames:** No, he’s not.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Exactly! I am sure he would be turning in his grave, hearing the minister make that comment!

**Dr K.D. Hames:** I always wondered how he managed to work two full-time jobs.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** The poor man—he went off to work every day, and the minister is claiming that he was sleeping on the job!

The reality is that the government provided huge numbers of highly qualified and highly skilled tradespeople into the private sector every year. Every year, 100 tradespeople came into the system from Midland Railway Workshops alone, much to the benefit of the private sector in the engineering game. That has all gone, and smaller companies are now expected to pick up those apprenticeships. There has also been a change in the way apprentices are employed. Labour hire companies in this state do not employ apprentices. If the minister were to look at his own operations within government and ask the organisations that contract to Western Power and the Water Corporation how many apprentices they have taken on, he will find it is a tiny number.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** Sure. I remember that when I was Minister for Water, we placed a requirement on contractors to employ a certain number of apprentices.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** That is correct, minister, and the Water Corporation itself employed apprentices. Those times have gone. As the minister knows, maintenance is now contracted out. The minister only has to ask those contractors how many apprentices they employ and he would find that it is a tiny number. Therein lies the problem. Companies that could do more are not doing more. They just see it as a burden that they do not want to take on.

That brings me to the issue of training. There has already been a decline in the number of tradespeople being trained in Western Australia, and the skilled workforce is not keeping up with the level of demand. There has also been a significant increase in youth unemployment in Western Australia, as the member for Mandurah will talk about in a very short while after me. When we compound those two factors with what I would argue is an attack on our vocational education institutions—TAFE—through redundancies, cuts and fee increases, we have a major catastrophe on our hands. The minister is condemning a significant number of young people to long-term unemployment, and he is cutting off career options for Western Australians and giving those career options to people who are brought in from overseas to do highly skilled and highly paid jobs. That is a disaster for our community in Western Australia. Not only is it morally and ethically wrong, it is a long-term disaster for particular suburbs and the youth in those suburbs around Western Australia.

The point of this motion is to bring to the attention of the house the critical issue of the decline in trade training that is being undertaken in Western Australia. That decline is being hidden by the number of traineeships that have been introduced. It is fine for any government, whether it is Labor or Liberal, to crow about the number of people who are in vocational education and training. However, the government is deluding itself about the type of training that is taking place. As I have pointed out to the house, the decline in professional and trade training is being masked by the increase in non-trade training, such as traineeships.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** Did you do specific things while you were in government to get that growth in the number of apprentices, or did it just happen?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Yes, we did. We followed on from what the Court Liberal government had done, and that was to tie the number of apprentices employed on particular government contracts to the dollar value of the contract. That is the issue. That is what the Court government had in place at the time, and we beefed that up under Hon Ljiljana Ravlich, as the minister may remember. That meant that the value of a contract, whether it was for the southern railway, or whatever, determined the number of apprentices who had to be employed on that job. That was similar to the way in which the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund approaches the contributions that are made to that fund. That obviously had an impact over time with the rollout of government projects, and the number of apprenticeships increased up to 2008. The minister could argue that a similar policy is in place now. However, I put it to the minister that that is not being enforced, and, as a result, we have had the decline that I have talked about.

The point of this motion is to condemn the government for its attack on TAFE and vocational education in Western Australia, and for its undermining of the state training providers. It is also to show, with statistical evidence, that that attack, combined with the decline in the number of trade traineeships—by that, I mean apprentices—is a catastrophe for Western Australia. It is significantly bad for the economy of Western Australia. But it is even worse for young people in Western Australia and their opportunity to create a meaningful career path for themselves.

**MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah)** [6.30 pm]: The motion before the house is very important. I appreciate the fact that the Minister for Training and Workforce Development has held the training portfolio for only two months. I need to highlight to the house the situation in the Peel, which was consolidated by a recent report from the Brotherhood of St Laurence into youth unemployment that was released late last week. It included some very sobering figures relating to the region in which I live—the region in which my children are growing up and, indeed, the region that continues to have a range of challenges that we are required to respond to. There is no more important issue for families than making sure that when their children become adults, they have an opportunity to participate in the workforce, forge out a career that will obviously change over time, as happens in this modern era, and participate fully in the community, which includes full employment. To be honest, the statistics in the Brotherhood of St Laurence report did not tell us a lot that we did not already know. Historically, in the Peel region, which includes Mandurah, youth unemployment has consistently been significantly higher than the state and national averages. There have been periods in history in which the figures have peaked much higher than the figure of 17.3 per cent stated in the report.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** Do you know what that peaked to? I was trying to find out last week and no-one could tell me.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I remember a figure of around 40 per cent was bandied about in the late 1990s. I did not believe that because one of the problems is that some of the statistical data has not always been entirely accurate.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** I recall 25 being the number at some stage.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Yes, but the fact is that 17.3 per cent is just not good enough.

One of the problems that we face in the Peel is that, to be quite frank and honest, the valuing of education generally is still coming off a low base. The reality is that many young people who aspire to further education or, indeed, training have not been to the levels that we would like. In my view, quite frankly, the acceptance of mediocrity prevails in many pockets of Mandurah. I find that frustrating and disappointing. The simple fact is that the experience of education or vocational training is not the norm for many families in the region. There are generational experiences of families in the region in which children, and, indeed, grandchildren, have been going home to families in which a number of the key adults simply have not held down jobs for significant periods. That is then coupled with a range of impediments that have existed and continue to exist in the region. When additional impediments are put in place for some children and young people from families that are already potentially at risk or vulnerable, it simply becomes too hard. That is the reality for a number of families in the Mandurah area. We have to come to terms with that.

Lifting the valuing of education is one element that has to change. We have to install in families in Mandurah and the Peel region a strong desire to ensure that their kids must go to school and they must participate because that is the very best opportunity they will have of exploring what the world has to offer in terms of employment and career paths. I quite honestly believe that that aspiration does not exist in a number of families in the region. We have to lift the valuing of education. We also have to come to the realisation that if we are to offer the opportunities that our young people need, and that, hopefully, many of them will desire, we have to think outside the box. We should not make cuts to education. That is a criticism of this government. Some schools in my electorate—the minister also has these schools in his electorate—are losing a couple of hundred thousand dollars of funding a year from their budgets in the out years. That is the reality. Many of those cuts in education will have to be found through programs that support many kids who are already vulnerable. Some primary schools in my area face cuts of \$150 000 plus a year, including a mind-boggling component in which the schools have to

pay the leave loading for their teacher, so that has to come out of the budget. They have to find those cuts somewhere. Schools such as Meadow Springs Primary School, a new school with a massive number of students, have big pressures with numbers and space. It has to find cuts of over \$170 000 a year. Nearly \$300 000 has to come out of the budget of vulnerable schools such as Coodanup Community College. It is a great school, with great staff and a great principal who are working hard but they have a lot of kids who need extra support. Those schools are being targeted by these cuts, and they are not where we should be seeing cuts coming into my community. That is something that frustrates me and makes me really angry, because I am on the board of four schools in my electorate, and I know from the work that those boards do that they need every dollar they can get to deliver the programs that would deliver the outcomes that they are hoping to achieve.

I turn to the unemployment rate. I am sure the minister is aware that in last year's budget, his predecessor closed our only workforce development centre. The workforce development centre in Mandurah was seeing around 3 500 to 4 000 people a year, including a lot of young people. The workforce development centre was based in Mandurah and it serviced the greater Peel.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** That's the one Rhys was on.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Rhys Williams was the CEO. I did this during estimates, but I again declare a pecuniary interest because I am on the board of the community service organisation that it was operating under. I am quite happy to declare that. I do not really care whether it was Community Solutions Inc or another organisation that was operating the workforce development centre but the fact is that here was a key resource targeting vulnerable people who are seeking to upskill and move into the workforce. What did this government do last year? I am not talking about this minister, but the previous government. It closed it. I went into the estimates committee in May last year and I asked the minister why he was closing the workforce development centre in Mandurah when in every other region the government was keeping them. No other region in Western Australia lost its workforce development centre—only Peel. What was the minister's answer to me? To quote the minister, he said that the closure of the Peel centre was the result of a budgetary consideration. That is rubbish. Tell me one other region that has the sorts of figures that we saw in the youth unemployment figures released earlier this year and myriad other issues.

I consider that the Kimberley would have similar statistics, but the Kimberley is a very different type of community because of a range of other factors. Given the nature of my community's historic unemployment rate amongst young people, the lower base level of education valuing and the lower participation rate in education and training generally, I would have thought any minister worth his or her salt would have fought tooth and nail to keep the workforce development centre. Every year the centre assisted between 3 000 and 4 000 people, most of whom were young people. What was the then minister's reason for the closure? The government kept two centres in Perth and the centres in the other regions, but it closed Peel's centre. I was disgusted. I had a go at him and I was told off by the member in the chair at the time. It again highlights the frustration in Peel at the assumption that everything will be serviced from Perth. That is the real thinking behind the former Minister for Training and Workforce Development and the Leader of the National Party. I am not attacking the current minister.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** It is part of Fremantle–Peel.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I think the minister understands where I am coming from; it is so frustrating when people assume our young people can be serviced by Perth-based entities. The reality is that they cannot. We also have to understand that many of our young people are vulnerable; they are trying to enter the workforce and find jobs that are already hard to get. When we close down a workforce development centre and make young people travel further to find services to assist them, we place impediments in front of already vulnerable young people. I am really glad the member for Dawesville is now the minister, because —

**Dr K.D. Hames:** I am too because I do not agree with it either. It is not just our area; it is Pinjarra and Boddington as well.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** It is the Peel region.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** I objected at the time.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** We need to do it more strongly. The minister is in a position now whereby he might be able to reverse it. I do not care about Community Solutions Inc getting it or whoever gets it, but I think we need to rethink how this whole training aspect should be delivered in the Peel. I will provide another example. The trade training centre in Pinjarra, which was trumpeted a couple of years ago by the member for Murray–Wellington—rightfully so—closed in December. That was another entity aimed at delivering apprenticeship training. I have not confirmed this, but I understand that 30 or more students —

**Dr K.D. Hames:** I think it is about 25.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** It is 25 or 30. Where will the students go now? They will have to go to Perth. These young apprentices want to be skilled in their apprenticeship training and they had an entity such as the Pinjarra Trade Training Centre available to them, which delivered a local service at a local training centre where it should be delivered, if possible. But that has been taken away and those young men and women now have to go to Perth. This assumption that things can be delivered to Peel through Perth-based bureaucracies is just wrong. It happens many times in many areas. We must stop thinking about simply pushing the boundaries of Perth further south and expect that by doing that places such as Mandurah, Boddington, Waroona and Pinjarra et cetera will be serviced from Perth, because they will not. It is particularly important when we have so many vulnerable young people involved in trying to be up-skilled.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** There is a funny thing though; there is a commonwealth program called Fremantle–Peel and they are based in Peel, servicing Fremantle.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** That is an issue we will no doubt face in the coming years.

We have high levels of unemployment across the board. The state's unemployment figure is now about 6.1 per cent. In Peel it will be about eight per cent because it is usually a few percentage points higher. Nationally it will be higher still. We have to do something about it, but one of the things that we do not do is attack education at its base. The second thing we do not do is allow entities such as workforce development centres to leave our communities.

I really hope the minister will do something about that. I do not think that the minister's predecessor understands at all about the situation in Peel. In the statistics that show where there is socioeconomic stress, mortgage stress, high levels of unemployment, high levels of domestic violence and issues associated with low socioeconomic challenge, by and large, Peel is either number one or two. That is the reality. It is about time government and political parties of both persuasions understood what is happening down our way.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** In the Peel region we should aspire to excellence. I disagree with a lot of people in country towns or big regional cities who say we want to keep all our young people. I disagree with that, particularly in a place where there is growth. I think we should be aspiring to make sure that the young people who live in the community that my children are growing up in are given the very best education and training opportunities so that they are well-skilled and well-balanced to go out into the world into whatever sphere they choose. Some will leave and never come back; some will leave and come back later; some will leave and come back intermittently. If they come back and espouse to whomever they may meet or talk to as they grow up that they grew up in a region that valued education and quality training and skilled them to make their way in the world, I think that is what our aspiration should be. Sometimes people say that we have to keep all our young people here, but Peel does not have a declining population such as in some small country towns where most people leave before the age of 18; we are not in that situation. We want to make sure that more and more of our young people, as they reach the age of 18 and go into adulthood, are well-trained, have a range of career options, do not accept mediocrity and aspire to a career path that is rewarding and interesting. It may be something that mum and dad or their grandparents never experienced. That is what I want to see for my kids. I would love for them to stay with us—it seems to be the trend that children stay with their parents forever—but I want to see them, like all kids in Mandurah, grow up in a safe place that not only values their education and them as young people, but also gives them the skills to make their way in what is an exciting world to be growing up in.

I know that we move motions about condemning the government and whatever, but I suppose my plea to the minister is more of an appeal. The minister is now in a position as the Deputy Premier and now the Minister for Training and Workforce Development to do something about a very serious issue for those in the Peel region. I do not want to call it a crisis because the last thing I want to do is talk down the region. I do not want to do that. We have to face up to the fact that it is a major problem for us. There are ways forward—invest more in education and look at what we are doing in training.

I want to finish on Challenger Institute of Technology. I have a lot of time for Challenger and the courses it delivers. I honestly believe that, like other major regional centres, we need a much broader TAFE sector delivered through Peel. The minister knows as well as I do that Challenger is attached to Fremantle and Rockingham and that the courses delivered at Peel vary. Those courses will now cost more—the member for Cockburn highlighted that very clearly in his contribution earlier this evening. The minister would know this point. Many constituents in my electorate are young single mums whose kids are now at school, and not only are those mums being forced back into the workforce, if there are jobs, but they are also being very strongly encouraged to retrain. Many of them are doing the nursing course run at Murdoch University. Many of them are attracted to the education assistant training programs. Many are looking at getting involved in hospitality and all

those sorts of things. A lot of them are on fixed incomes. For a lot of them it is a juggling act—they are single mums juggling their kids at school but they also want to relearn and retrain, and they are excited about doing it. When we bang on top of that TAFE fee increases of 400 to 500 per cent, it is another impediment. It is another impediment on people who really want to improve their opportunity to participate in the community in a meaningful way. One woman I know, who lives in the minister's electorate, brought up her child on her own as a single mum. I have known her for a long time. She worked hard, retrained and worked as an education assistant at Falcon Primary School. She then put herself through teachers' training and is now a wonderful teacher. I am not focusing just on women, but she is an example of a person who recognised that she wanted to retrain in something she had a passion for. Now she is making a great contribution as a teacher in our region. She is magnificent. There are many people like her. Let us not put more impediments in front of these people to prevent them from participating and building a more resilient life for themselves and their families. I would really like the minister to look at the Challenger Institute of Technology aspect. Albany has its own TAFE centres —

**Dr K.D. Hames:** I am meeting them next week or the week after.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** We really have to ask more of them. I admire the people who have been involved. Paddi Creevey, Mandurah's former mayor, has been chair of Challenger for six years, from memory. I think we now have to ask more of some of these agencies. We face some real challenges. We want to invest in education and training in particular because that will be the best way to lead a lot of people out of poverty and out of the situation they have historically and sometimes generationally found themselves in. The key is that we have to call in some of these education and training areas. We should be questioning all the time how many students are involved in vocational education and training, how many students are pursuing an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank pathway, and how many students are doing the transition from work to workplace learning and other aspects of training that is based and focused on giving them the very best skills and experience they can get to find a positive, rewarding pathway for them into the future. Challenger is where I want to start.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** The one bit of positivity in it all is that while 17 per cent of that youth group are unemployed, which represents about 2 000 people, that means there must be 8 000 of those young people—so the other 83 per cent—who are employed in the region.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** They are employed or they are in some form of training, or a mixture of both. But 17.3 per cent is too high.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** It is. I do not disagree with that.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Let us get it down. We should have an aspirational target for Mandurah–Peel that says by a certain period we want to see that figure driven down.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** Fremantle is 11 point something per cent, even though that represents 9 000 kids out of work in that region.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I think we should aim for that aspiration. I want to work with the minister on it because I have a vested interest, quite frankly. I will do anything to support the Minister for Training and Workforce Development to achieve it. If there is a lasting legacy that the minister can leave, whenever he might choose to leave Parliament, it is to actually make a difference in that aspect of training; I will applaud him for it.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** You mean apart from Peel Thunder footy club and the swimming pool!

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** That is right. They are great things but would it not be wonderful to be known to have turned around one of the most important things we could turn around for the young people of the region? Can the minister please look at Challenger? I am sure he will, but please ask the hard questions. Ask about the courses that are delivered, ask about the take-up and ask about the genuine impact that these increased fees will have.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** I think I am meeting them next Friday or the Friday after.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** The government will keep throwing back, "We've got programs that will support people who might find it difficult to pay these fees." Ask them those sorts of questions. We should be posing the question: why have we not got a fully-fledged TAFE sector delivered in Peel like any other region would have, particularly given the sorts of statistics that I highlighted over and over again tonight?

I will finish there. No, I will not finish now; I will go another four minutes. I will conclude before we adjourn at 7.00 pm to talk briefly about the secondary school situation in Mandurah, which I know is of interest to the member for Dawesville. The government has a major expansion program in Halls Head Community College, which is applauded. It is a very significant investment of \$30 million plus.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** I think you guys committed to it.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Whichever government, I am not going to argue about who started it —

**Dr K.D. Hames:** We agreed.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** It is a \$35 million plus investment, which is very important. We have to make sure that the education sector has as seamless a transition as possible. The middle school model in Mandurah was, quite frankly, another impediment for many students as they made their way through the secondary system. We used to have senior high schools, years 8–12, and then in the late 1990s we went into more than a decade of middle schooling. Quite frankly, it did not work. That is very clear.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** The numbers have grown a lot at Halls Head since then.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** They have. It will grow when there is good quality infrastructure, quality teachers and people's confidence is boosted.

I know the minister has had pressure from people living further south of Dawesville wanting a new school, but the fact is the numbers do not stack up at the moment. It is clear they do not stack up. I appreciate the investment in Halls Head Community College.

Coodanup Community College is a very different type of model. The board, of which I am a member, and indeed the staff there in particular, are very focused. It again has a cohort of years 11 and 12 this year. Its courses are very much tailored to specific outcomes including vocational training.

John Tonkin College is an amalgamated school of the old Mandurah High School and the Peel education and TAFE campus near Gordon Road. The reputation of John Tonkin College is improving. There is an improvement in what it is delivering and can deliver. I have heard of spillage back from the private sector into John Tonkin, but I think there is still a way to go, particularly given that nearly \$500 000 has been cut from its budget by this government. Again, that is money that should not be cut from a school that badly needs it. Secondary education in Mandurah continues to be a priority, or should be a priority, but it is all about this transition from school into further training that is so important.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr J.H.D. Day (Leader of the House)**.

*House adjourned at 6.59 pm*

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