

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Second Reading

Resumed from 30 August.

MS A.E. KENT (Kalgoorlie) [4.38 pm]: I rise to add my comments to the amendments to the Vocational Education and Training Act 1996. We know that the act and its associated regulations provide the framework for the administration and regulation of the state's training system. I worked in the education and training sector for over a decade. I understand the system and how it works. I value the vital role of vocational education and training in Western Australia and know how it empowers individuals, contributes to economic growth and strengthens our community in a rapidly evolving world. Vocational education and training is not an option; it is a necessity. Importantly, I understand what happens to this sector when strategic planning for the future is not done and how this government, since coming into office in 2017, set about repairing the damage done to the training sector and has invested in training.

VET equips individuals with the skills and knowledge required to enter or progress within the workforce. This form of education is distinct from traditional academic pathways as it focuses on practical skills and hands-on learning. Western Australia's VET system has made significant strides in recent years, and it is important to recognise its importance in our society. A skilled workforce is the backbone of a prosperous economy. For the mining and resources sector specifically, vocational training ensures that we have a diversified workforce ready to adapt to new opportunities. The VET sector has been instrumental in supplying the mining industry with a steady stream of skilled workers.

It is not just about training miners; it is about fostering a culture of adaptability and innovation that extends across industries. The skills acquired in vocational education and training programs are transferrable and enable individuals to navigate a range of employment opportunities. VET empowers individuals by providing them with practical, industry-specific skills. It gives young people an alternative path to success allowing them to pursue careers that align with their interests and aptitudes. This is especially important in a society that values diversity and inclusivity. Furthermore, VET in Western Australia is closely aligned with industry needs. By collaborating with employers, our VET institutions can tailor their programs to meet the demands of the job market. This ensures that graduates are not only job ready but also equipped to excel in their chosen fields.

Last year, the Albanese and McGowan Labor governments signed a landmark 12-month skills agreement to deliver fee-free training in over 130 courses and skills sets in 2023. They have also agreed to a variation of this agreement that will see fee-free continue into 2024. Western Australians have seized the opportunity to take advantage of fee-free training so they can build better lives through a rewarding career. We are supporting employers to take on more apprentices and trainees through a range of incentive schemes, such as the jobs and skills employer incentive program, wage subsidy programs to boost apprentices and trainees in construction, and an adult apprentice employer incentive program that is providing support for businesses that take on a mature age apprentice.

Let me bring members back to what has been done in the goldfields. Central Regional TAFE's Kalgoorlie campus is the largest training facility in the goldfields region, delivering training to the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder region and local communities, and supporting the mining industry. The TAFE offers a range of training courses from certificate I to advanced diploma levels in a wide range of industries. It also offers a range of customised fee-for-service training courses. Courses delivered from the Kalgoorlie campus cover a wide range of industry areas applicable to the needs of industry and the community. These range from nursing, early childhood care, hospitality and general education to a specific program of delivery to apprentices in the heavy plant, metal fabrication, electrical, and fitting and machining trades that all service the resources sector.

Central Regional TAFE's partnerships with industry ensure that courses are practical, job focused and driven by employment outcomes. In 2022, the TAFE enrolled about 9 000 students in over 225 qualifications, including skill sets, across all regions serviced. In 2022, enrolments in lower fees and local skills courses drove enrolments up 38 per cent. Some of the most popular free and low-fee qualifications in 2023 include certificate III in engineering—mechanical trade, certificate III in resource processing, certificate III in early childhood education and care, certificate IV in mental health and certificate III in individual support.

Of course, we need to make sure that the infrastructure is there to provide the facilities for this demand. That is why this government is delivering a record \$268.3 million to upgrade TAFE infrastructure and equipment across WA. As part of our multimillion-dollar upgrades, which is the biggest capital works program in WA's history, there are 15 major upgrades, of which over half are in regional WA and one of those is in Kalgoorlie–Boulder. The \$10 million Kalgoorlie campus heavy plant workshop is magnificent. It will include new specialist training facilities to provide heavy plant machinery training to skill up apprentices for the mining trades and is now in the final stages of construction. The works include a new state-of-the-art training workshop, classrooms and student amenities. It

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also includes \$355 000 to upgrade the existing adjacent trade workshop. It is anticipated training will commence in the new workshops in semester 1 in 2024. The new workshop will deliver priority training in mobile plant mechanic, heavy commercial vehicle and auto-electrical apprenticeship training, all to locals so they can skill up for local jobs. But there's more! As part of our \$25 million upgrade of equipment at TAFE campuses across WA, Kalgoorlie has acquired a variety of equipment to ensure that its students can learn on modern tools so that they can be ready for modern jobs. Some of this equipment includes a hybrid vehicle, an excavator, wheel loader and tractor, and Nursing Anne Simulators.

I will just keep going. One of the ingenious initiatives of this Cook state government was to help the skills shortage in the goldfields through the \$2.9 million regional incentive. This has helped regional TAFE colleges attract and retain staff so that they can continue to improve their skills and employability. Eligible new and existing regional TAFE lecturers in Kalgoorlie–Boulder received a one-off temporary regional incentive of \$10 000 this year. This is how the Cook Labor government is providing a steady pipeline of skilled workers whom places like Kalgoorlie–Boulder needs. In today's fast-paced world, technology is at the forefront of almost every industry. Vocational education and training in Western Australia does not just prepare individuals for the jobs of today; it equips them with the skills needed for the jobs of the future.

These proposed amendments are intended to ensure that persons affected by the council's decisions have access to an effective appeal mechanism and allow proper delegation of the chief executive's functions under part 7 of the VET act and the regulations made for the purposes of this part. This state's commitment to VET is incredible and I commend the bill to the house.

MS J.L. HANNS (Collie–Preston — Parliamentary Secretary) [4.47 pm]: Sorry; I thought that the opposition member was going before me. I rise to make a very disorganised contribution now to the legislation. I would like to begin by saying that I wholeheartedly support the Vocational Education and Training Amendment Bill 2023. I just want to outline at the beginning that the bill as it stands will make some very minor but very worthwhile amendments to the Vocational Education and Training Act 1996. It is very important to understand that the VET act has a number of very significant functions, one of which is basically the constitution of the State Training Board and the Training Accreditation Council, which are two very, very important bodies for vocational education and training. I also want to mention the regulation of registered training organisations by the council and the regulation of training contracts. All those are very important aspects of vocational education and training from a regulatory framework perspective.

As both the vocational education and training coordinator and vocational education and training deputy principal, my role was to make sure that all the students involved in vocational education and training achieved the outcomes of each of the units that they were enrolled in to be awarded the qualification. The qualifications are incredibly important because under the VET sector, they are nationally recognised qualifications. It means that people have the ability to transport a vocational education and training qualification from Western Australia to Tasmania or anywhere else in Australia. That is why the regulations around VET are so important.

Employers can appreciate that when someone walks through the door with a certificate II in engineering, they have the same skills as somebody who has been awarded that certificate II in engineering elsewhere in Australia. It builds confidence in employers that the person they are employing has the skills and qualifications to do the job they are required to do. In a nutshell, that is why the vocational education and training sector is so important, along with the Training Accreditation Council, as is consistency across registered training organisations.

I cannot think of the date, so I apologise for not having that information in advance, but I remember back in the early 2000s, there were problems in the VET sector in Victoria. People who attended courses over a weekend were awarded quite high-level qualifications at the end of the weekend that would normally have taken six to 12 months to complete. It is incredibly important to understand why it is so important to have that regulatory framework working incredibly well in Western Australia.

In framing the context of my contribution, I want to say at the outset that the VET sector plays an incredibly important role in the Western Australian economy, whether that is in the training that people undertake through registered training organisations or through registered traineeships. I will talk a little more about those later in my contribution. That particularly includes Aboriginal school-based traineeships and school-based traineeships in VETiS—the VET in schools program—which are two very important aspects of vocational education and training in schools. Obviously, another important role that the VET sector plays in delivering training is ensuring that apprenticeship students can complete the studies that they commence and gain the necessary skills and experience to undertake apprenticeship pathways into fully qualified employment in the areas for which they were trained.

The other really important aspect around VET for people in Western Australia is the ability to progress from the vocational education and training sector to university. Outstanding opportunities are available for people in Western Australia to complete, for example, cert III or cert IV pathways and potentially study at university on

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completion. A really good example of that is when students can undertake a cert IV in preparation for enrolled nursing, move into a diploma of nursing and then undertake a Bachelor of Nursing. A lot of those opportunities are available in regional Western Australia. Geraldton is a really great example of where that model works very well. Albany is another example. I have travelled to Albany and looked at the progression for students at the TAFE in Albany. We cannot underestimate the importance of vocational education and training in regional Western Australia, because there are some challenges and barriers for regional people gaining university qualifications. I will also touch on that later.

The vast number of people who live and work in regional Western Australia engage in education and training pathways when they undertake further study after completing years 11 and 12 at high school. We need to note the nature of the communities. For instance, the skills needed to be employed in the very important mining or agricultural industries often require only vocational education and training. For example, the qualifications needed to become a boilermaker, welder, fitter or turner in the mining sector can all be gained in the VET sector. They are very important high-paying occupations because they are highly skilled occupations. We do see a skewing of vocational education and training within regional Western Australia. I remember being a newly graduated teacher at Tom Price Senior High School. I was certainly one of the poorer people in the community. It was not particularly attractive to be employed in a government role compared with the salaries offered in the mining industry. Sadly, not much has changed in 30 years. There are still pressures and challenges around the attraction of the mining industry versus university study. That is why it is incredibly important to have a robust vocational education and training sector and certainly one that can deliver for regional Western Australia.

I want to touch on the fact that when the Liberal–National Party was in government, I was heavily involved in the vocational education and training sector. It would be fair to say that the vocational education and training sector was decimated under the former Liberal–National government; therefore, training and employment opportunities were decimated. I have just spent some time outlining how important it is in regional WA. Therefore, the training and employment opportunities for regional Western Australians were also decimated under the former Liberal–National government.

I remember being a teacher and, as I said, a vocational education and training coordinator, and literally explaining to parents why students were not able to enrol in courses that students enrolled in over previous years because funding had been cut. It was incredibly difficult to explain to young people that their future opportunities would be severely, significantly and devastatingly impacted by a government decision to slash vocational education and training. They were certainly some of the most challenging times I spent as a vocational education and training coordinator.

It is fair to say that since coming to office in 2017, this government has been very focused on repairing the damage done to the training sector by the former Liberal–National government. We are investing in training so that we can provide a pipeline of skilled workers in Western Australia. Under the Barnett Liberal–National government, TAFE course fees soared by 500 per cent in some cases, placing training out of reach for the average Western Australian. Enrolments fell significantly under the Liberal–National government in each metric—that is, the number of apprenticeship and traineeship commencements; apprentices and trainees in training; apprenticeships and trainee completions, being those people who finish that qualification; and publicly funded VET total course enrolments and TAFE courses. We also saw funding cuts, skyrocketing fees and annual student enrolments tellingly down by 25 000. When former Premier Mark McGowan came to power in 2017, the first thing his government did was immediately freeze TAFE fees to provide students with cost certainty around those qualifications. We slashed fees by up to 72 per cent for 210 courses in key industries, which has made training so much more affordable for young people and those people who are looking to return to training. This includes 17 construction-related apprenticeships and traineeships and 13 pre-apprenticeships. Our Free in '23 initiative is providing fee-free training in over 130 courses and skill sets across high-priority areas such as the care sector, information technology and cybersecurity, agriculture, construction, hospitality and tourism. Under this government, apprenticeship and traineeship commencements are now at their highest level in 10 years, with nearly 4 500 contracts registered in July 2022, the highest monthly total on record, and apprenticeship commencements are 50 per cent higher than they were two years ago.

I want to highlight a really important statistic that I am particularly passionate about. Commencements by female apprentices and trainees have increased by more than 90 per cent on pre-pandemic levels, with almost 12 300 commencements by females in 2022. Commencements by Aboriginal apprentices and trainees are also up by almost 40 per cent compared with pre-pandemic levels. Placing that information on record highlights very important differences and some stark contrasts between the approach of a Labor government that invests in education and training for Western Australians and the alternative, which is a Liberal–National government that slashes and burns training and education in Western Australia. That is an appalling record to have and not one I would be particularly proud of if I were an opposition member.

I would like to highlight a factor around fee-free courses. For young people, women who might want to return to work after they have had children, adults who want to retrain or, in the case of Collie, potentially transitioning

workers, fee-free courses offer an amazing opportunity and are a cost-of living initiative of this government. I will talk about what some of them are in a minute. Whereas a person might have been paying thousands of dollars for a qualification under the former Liberal–National government, all these courses I am about to mention are free. I do not think there is a more important initiative for working families in Western Australia than to have affordable training.

Training and education is the key to outstanding pathways and opportunities for young people. I reflect on that in a personal sense as I am now 51 years old. I know, be shocked, please! Of course, some people would say that is incredibly young, and I appreciate that! I want to reflect on working families like mine. My mum was a cleaner and my dad was a timber mill worker at the Bunnings mill in Yarloop. By creating opportunities for education and training, the trajectory of a young person’s life can be changed in one generation. I was the first person in my family to go to university. My dad said something to me, which I can say now because he has passed away so he will not be able to tell me off when I finish my speech. When I expressed an interest in being a teacher, I recall my dad saying, “What would you want to do that for? You’re just going to get married and have babies, and all of that money will be for nothing.” Dad was a pretty old-fashioned fella and that was his opinion, but it reinforces the whole point of view that it is really important for women to have opportunities. Whether they choose to have a family and leave the workforce, it is up to them. The opportunity to retrain and rejoin the workforce is incredibly important, and the vocational education and training sector plays an outstanding part in making sure that people have those options in the future.

I want to touch on a number of important things about the fee-free courses. I believe, Minister for Training, we have called the program “Be More in ’24”. I thought we should say, “Be a hell of a lot more in ’24”, but we will keep it short and sweet. I understand that the partnership between the Albanese federal government and the state government has meant that the people of Western Australia will benefit even more than they have done under Free in ’23. These are some of the courses that were available fee free in 2023. There was a certificate IV in preparation for health and nursing studies, which I have previously mentioned, and the diploma of nursing. There is a huge range of building and construction qualifications, including a certificate IV in residential building drafting. A house cannot be built unless there is a draftsman to design the house. It is an incredibly important paraprofessional role in the building and construction industry.

[Member’s time extended.]

Ms J.L. HANNS: There are a number of priority industry qualifications for Western Australia, such as a certificate IV in work health and safety; certificate III in maritime operations, marine engine driver grade 2 near coastal; and certificate III in maritime operations, master up to 24 metres near coastal. Those qualifications are desperately needed in the shipping and maritime operations industry. There is a diploma of engineering. Again, once someone has done a diploma of engineering, it is an opportunity to step into the university space to gain other engineering qualifications. We desperately need engineers, whether in the mining field or areas with skill shortages at the moment. There is a certificate II in resources and infrastructure work preparation and a certificate IV in supply chain operations. Again, the ability or inability to fulfil supply chain requirements was an issue highlighted during COVID. Training and streamlining these requirements to maximise the operations of a business are incredibly important.

I would like to discuss another range of initiatives today. I would like to start with an amazing initiative developed towards the end of 2021 by the then Minister for Education and Training, Hon Sue Ellery, and that is career practitioners in schools. Career practitioners in schools are teachers recruited to drive career information and exposure to young people in schools. There were 70 career practitioners allocated across public secondary schools in Western Australia, and those practitioners play an integral role in schools providing students with opportunities to explore a range of work and study options that they would not necessarily be exposed to. In my electorate of Collie–Preston, I was very fortunate to have two amazing women chosen to be career practitioners. They were Emily Fraser at Eaton Community College and Rebecca Stewart at Collie Senior High School. When I was re-reading the relevant media statement, I noted the range of regional schools selected to be allocated a career practitioner for their schools.

Mr S.A. Millman interjected.

Ms J.L. HANNS: The member for Mount Lawley is right: it really demonstrates the commitment of this government to regional Western Australia. There was a range of regional schools: Albany Senior High School; Broome Senior High School; Bunbury Senior High School; Busselton Senior High School; Cape Naturaliste College; Collie Senior High School; Dalyellup College; East Kimberley College; Eaton Community College; Esperance Senior High School—there is one for the member for Roe; Geraldton Senior High School; Hedland Senior High School; Kalgoorlie–Boulder Community High School; Karratha Senior High School; Katanning Senior High School—another one for the member for Roe; Manjimup Senior High School; Newton Moore Senior High School; North Albany Senior High School; Northam Senior High School; Pinjarra Senior High School; and the School of

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Isolated and Distance Education. Those very remote farming families who have students looking to transition after school have the career expertise that they can work with at their schools. The career practitioners have done an outstanding job. I believe the Minister for Education graduated them, for want of a better word, earlier this year. They were studying a graduate certificate in career development, so they were not only helping young people upskill, but also upskilling their own ability to help those people going forward.

Another outstanding initiative was the year 9 career taster program. A lot of schools right across Western Australia have access to that. I will talk about it in a minute, but now I want to talk about the work that the career practitioners are doing and what the year 9 career taster program looks like in schools. Today I had a look back at the initiatives that have been set up at Collie Senior High School by Rebecca Stewart, who is doing outstanding work as the career practitioner for the school. As a snapshot of the work that is going on there, Rebecca organised a Roy Hill mine site tour in July 2022. The year 9 students went off to Roy Hill to see what mining looks like in a different context, as, obviously, coal and iron ore are very different. Students visited South Regional TAFE to look at opportunities that exist for training in the region more broadly. Students visited Edith Cowan University's Bunbury campus to look at the opportunities there. The Career Conversations 2023 parent and student event had experts from the Department of Education come down to talk about how parents can engage in career conversations with their children. It is incredibly difficult. I have a son in year 11 at the moment who has no idea what he wants to do. Even as a skilled career practitioner myself, I feel a bit lost when I am trying to help and be useful to my own child. Opportunities for parents to upskill are incredibly important. Mrs Stewart organised for the year 10 students at Collie to look at careers in medicine. The Rural Clinical School of WA has a clinic in Collie, and its doctors came into Collie Senior High School to explain all the different sorts of careers available in medicine in rural WA.

As part of the career taster program, year 9 students also did the MindFlight 7 virtual reality experience. MindFlight 7 came down to Collie with VR headsets and led the students in activities, and I have three examples: students were able to see what open-heart surgery looks like in virtual reality, dissect a frog—interesting!—and operate a forklift. Those are three very different concepts. I cannot imagine a world in which young people would be exposed to those three pretty amazing examples. There was an absolute investment in making sure that young people understand what careers are available, and it comes off the back of the very, very important work and incredible support that this Labor government is giving students, teachers and communities in regional Western Australia.

Year 10 students also went to the South West Careers Expo. A number of students came up to the SkillsWest careers expo at the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre. At the year 9 career taster program, students were given an overview of what tourism looks like in Collie. Collie is very well known for its mining operations, but tourism has had outstanding growth. Obviously, we are like a lot of other communities around Western Australia, as the huge increase in the number of visitors to Collie has meant that we are looking for people to work in the tourism and hospitality sector. Students went to look at some local motels and hotels such as the Collie Ridge Resort. They saw the Collie Museum and the visitor centre. There was a guided mural walk around town to see the murals that many people come to Collie to look at. There was a guided mountain bike tour. They went out and used the Collie adventure trails, in which there has been a \$10 million investment to attract tourists to Western Australia. We were able to expose those young people to opportunities for local employment because this government invests in vocational education and training and invests in people in the school sector as well.

It would be very remiss of me not to mention a number of other initiatives that this government has brought to Collie. One of those initiatives is the Collie Jobs and Skills Centre to support Collie workers as we go through the transition process. It opened earlier this year. I was just checking; this year has gone so quickly, and I was not sure whether it opened this year or last year. That incredibly important Collie Jobs and Skills Centre means that anyone in Collie, from school leavers right through to adults looking to retrain, can go into the centre and look at opportunities for training and further education. It offers a training needs plan, a skills gap analysis to identify opportunities around upskilling local workers, and an assessment of new worker skills and experience to identify training solutions. The jobs and skills centre is headed up by an amazing team, starting with Nat Cook, who was a former teacher in Collie and has now moved over to the jobs and skills centre to offer outstanding service to the people within the Collie community.

Finally, a new training centre was announced in June this year. Premier Cook and the Minister for Training came down to open the shell of the facility in Collie and to look at the opportunities at that training centre. Again, that is part of the state government's Collie Just Transition package. The \$6.3 million training centre will undergo a huge refurbishment and fit-out to be ready for enrolments in 2024–25. Those facilities will mean that we can deliver the training and skills needed for current and emerging industries, including forklift operations, crane ticketing, tourism, laboratory skills and renewable energy. We will be able to offer those very important training opportunities to people through the Collie Just Transition process.

It is fair to say that this government invests record amounts of money in a number of areas, from health to education and, in this case under this bill, training. I am incredibly proud to be part of a government that understands how important training is. If we do not train people and if we decimate the training system, we cannot be surprised that 10 years down the track we have a skills shortage and a lack of workers in key industries. I will leave my contribution there and commend the bill to the house.

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [5.17 pm]: I will make a relatively brief contribution to the Vocational Education and Training Amendment Bill 2023. On behalf of the opposition, we are supportive of this bill's almost administrative arrangements, I suppose we could say. I think it is important that we go through the amendments. From our briefing, the bill's amendments intend to ensure that persons affected by the Training Accreditation Council's decisions have access to an effective appeal mechanism. The bill will allow for the proper delegation of the chief executive's function under part 7 of the Vocational Education and Training Act and the regulations that will be made for the purposes of this part.

My understanding is that a review of the VET act was carried out in March 2019, and 11 recommendations were made, and the two in this bill are part of those recommendations. Obviously, the purpose of the bill is to amend the appeal mechanism, which would most likely apply to only registered training organisations that may have adverse findings on them through their registration from the Training Accreditation Council. However, on a rare occasion, an individual may want to appeal a decision and this amendment will allow for that to happen. A case in the WA Supreme Court of Appeal in 2021 ruled that "standards" is not in the scope of existing section 58G(2). This meant that the vast majority of the council's decisions were not or are not appealable.

The second amendment will apply to the delegation of duties from the chief executive, who, under the current act, is responsible for signing off on the training contracts that can amount to over \$40 000 a year. Obviously, this will allow for the chief executive to delegate functions to their officers. That is pretty straightforward. I do not think we can expect the chief executive to sign-off on that many contracts.

Somewhat similar to what the member for Collie–Preston said, I point out that our TAFEs and so forth are heading in the right direction. There is a positive environment out there at the moment. It is good that our young people have access to courses and that they can access them through a variety of arrangements. Certain courses offer flexible learning. South Regional TAFE provides many different courses and flexible learning arrangements, which is good for young people who are looking to improve their skills but have other work, study or family commitments. This will allow for a range of options.

One of the challenges—I am sure the minister is well aware of this; she has certainly made comments about it—is that the next generation of workers need to deliver on the energy transition, which is being hampered by a shortage of skilled lecturers and limited apprenticeship spots at companies that are willing to take apprentices on. The key point I want to make today is the challenges that people in the metropolitan and regional areas are finding with a lack of skilled trained lecturers. A recent Jobs and Skills Australia report found that electricians are tipped to be a critical occupation during Australia's net zero journey. They will be in high demand, with almost 32 000 electricians needed in the next seven years. I understand that this government is keen on the transition to clean energy. The minister may have been in the chamber when I recently spoke about the challenges that I see with the move towards wind energy and so on and so forth and the challenges with neighbourhood issues, especially in relation to wind farms in regional areas, but also issues with transmission lines that will inevitably pop up as time goes by. Victoria is looking at 28 000 kilometres of transmission lines, which is causing a massive amount of grief with protests at Parliament House and the like. All this, of course, leads back to needing skilled workers for large wind farms. When the minister was, I think, at the energy forum, she said —

“We have got some pinch points, one of our challenges is skilled lecturers . . . and also employers that will take on those apprentices,” . . .

“Unless we have the skilled people to train those new apprentices and trainees, we'll be really stuck.”

I have spoken with some senior figures in group training. One said that the key issue for the VET sector at the moment is the bottleneck caused by a lack of trainers. They said that we can start as many apprentices as we like but if we cannot get them through their certificate III at a private registered training organisation or TAFE, they will be delayed in finishing, causing a longer skills shortage. Another senior figure said that the silver bullet for apprenticeships in all industries is to provide financial support to employ adult apprentices over the age of 21. They said that construction is always touted as the sector with skill shortages, but there are huge skills shortages in other industries not associated with housing—hospitality, defence and infrastructure, for instance. Of course, as we know, the resources industry has a tendency to employ workers from other industries. The point I want to make is that the challenge—we have seen in it all industries, and the minister has recognised it—is getting skilled people nearing retirement, for argument's sake, such as an electrician or whatever, into the mode of helping train the new wave of apprentices and people who go through TAFE and the like. It is a real challenge. I have had feedback that

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some paperwork requirements, if you like, are quite challenging for those who have been out in the trades working in a more practical sense who then come into the mix with the TAFE system, in which a large amount of paperwork needs to be done and followed through.

I emphasise that the TAFE and vocational education and training systems have been well adapted; it is a promising way ahead. With Western Australian industries as they are, we obviously need to improve our skilled sector. There will be demand for skilled workers, whether it comes from the government's renewable focus coming onstream or the resources industry and the like.

We have already heard a couple of comments about the former Liberal–National government; I will not dwell on that. I am sure that some members will bring that up during their contribution, but I want to be positive, quite frankly. There certainly is a good outlook for our industries going ahead. The year before I was elected to Parliament in 2016, I remember former member for Warren–Blackwood Terry Redman and former member for Scarborough Hon Liza Harvey announcing \$25 million for the Esperance TAFE campus. I am glad that this government saw fit to see that through. When Hon Alannah MacTiernan came onstream, she said that the government would reassess some of our projects, including the \$5.8 million early childhood hub in Katanning, which we had spent seven or eight years working on. We had just about finished the groundwork for it and so forth. Here we are now, with the site opposite Katanning Primary School still having only a couple of piles of dirt on it. Seven years later, Hon Alannah MacTiernan has gone and the project remains on the backburner. Things like that are quite upsetting, so I was glad that this government pressed on with it. It was a commitment by the Minister for Training and Workforce Development and the Minister for Regional Development through royalties for regions. I remember when former Premier McGowan lodged his budget in 2017 and said, “Look at this Esperance TAFE project”, as though it was a brand new project. Of course, it had been announced by the previous government, with the funding to follow. Nonetheless, it is a positive for the Esperance community, but as always it is a challenge to get qualified lecturers for all those courses that one would like to have delivered in a regional location. That is an ongoing challenge for this government and the way that it structures it. As I said, I am not here to make political capital or anything like that, I just want to present a positive approach to this particular sector that is important and that we all need to support in the years ahead. Obviously, it is important to recognise that this government has made some financial contributions to the sector. The opposition is very happy to support the Vocational Education and Training Amendment Bill 2023. I will leave my contribution at that.

MS M.J. HAMMAT (Mirrabooka — Parliamentary Secretary) [5.30 pm]: I also rise to make a contribution to this very good debate on a very important topic and one that I know many members on our side of politics feel strongly about, the Vocational Education and Training Amendment Bill 2023. There have been a number of good contributions and I am sure there will be many more. We do dwell on the performance of the Labor government on TAFE and training compared with what happened under the previous Barnett Liberal–National government because our record is so outstanding. I appreciate that the member for Roe does not want to traverse that ground, but we are incredibly proud of our record not just because we have done so many great things, but because we understand how important TAFE and training is for the individuals who access that training and go on to have skilled, quality jobs. We understand how important it is for the strength of our economy and the transitions that our economy will go through, and we understand how important it is for anyone who has been out of the workforce for a period of time or anyone who is perhaps looking for a late career change. It is TAFE that has been the heart and soul of being able to ensure that people have access to that training. We love to talk about it. I particularly love to talk about it and I am going to do that again tonight.

As others have outlined, the bill before the house today is somewhat administrative in nature. As a former member of the State Training Board and someone who in a previous career ran a registered training organisation, I know that having a framework for how we deal with vocational education and training and having an act that is up to date and attentive to the various functions that it provides for is really important for the smooth running of all the elements of the vocational education and training system in Western Australia. I am not going to talk about the system more broadly as it touches on a lot of things. I want to specifically talk about TAFE and our record on it because it is incredibly important.

As I said at the outset, our side of politics is incredibly passionate about it because we understand how important vocational education and training is to building a skilled economy. TAFE is not just for young people leaving school, and I really want to underline this point. Often when we talk about TAFE training and VET, people tend to think about it in the context of school leavers, but it is not just about that. VET is an essential part of the way in which people retrain for new careers. In my electorate of Mirrabooka, it is an essential way for people to get language skills. Refugees and migrants in particular use the Balga TAFE campus to undertake English language courses, which allows them to not only enter the workforce, but also do a range of things in our community that are very difficult unless a person has some English language skills. Politics aside, we believe in a fair go for everyone. We really do

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recognise that having an agenda that is about jobs, skills, training and careers is the way to ensure that everyday people get good jobs and can lead good lives. TAFE is an integral part of achieving that, as has always been the case.

I will talk about the disastrous consequences of having a Liberal–National government that gutted our TAFE system. I remember the decisions that were made at that time. I remember when the government was jacking up course fees, and I will provide more detail on that later in my contribution. I remember that families were in tears when they learnt of those fee increases for some of the essential TAFE courses and realised they could not afford to send two of their children to TAFE. Parents had to contemplate which child they could afford to send to TAFE to get an education. Those families were having to make heartbreaking decisions. It is important to remember that TAFE has been one of the key institutions that has allowed people to access skilled jobs, often moving them forward in not just their careers, but also their socio-economic status. It is a way in which people can get skilled careers, move themselves out of insecure work and potentially out of poverty, and provide a better life for their children than perhaps they had. To put parents into a situation in which they had to choose which child might access TAFE was absolutely disgraceful. We should never forget that.

I will start by talking about the TAFE in Balga. As the member for Mirrabooka, I am very fortunate to have this excellent institution in my electorate. For decades, it has provided to people in my community essential skills and training across a wide range of areas. It is an important training hub for many of the skills and trades that we rely on in the construction industry in particular. I have the statistics for the beginning of 2022. These will have increased since, but back then, 4 500 students studied at the Balga campus of North Metropolitan TAFE and nearly 75 per cent of those students were male, which reflects the construction trades that really dominate at that particular campus. I want to underline the point that I made earlier. The fact that in 2022, 61 per cent of the students at Balga TAFE were over the age of 20 years goes to the point I made earlier that TAFE is not just about training school leavers. Indeed, eight per cent of the students were over 50 years of age, so that TAFE is training a significant cohort of older workers. As I said, it is primarily for students involved in the construction trade. The biggest cohort of 700 students were studying plumbing, 600 were studying the electrical trade, some 380 were in carpentry and about 160-odd were in cabinet-making. Those are the significant courses run at Balga TAFE. It also provides training in hairdressing, and, as I said, it provides significant support to recently arrived migrants and refugees in learning English language skills. It provides a range of essential support to not only our immediate community in terms of migrants and refugees, but also the broader community in Western Australia and our economy. I think we all understand how important it is that we have skilled people coming through for those construction trades.

I am incredibly excited to reflect that Balga TAFE, which is already great, will soon be even better because we are delivering a \$47.9 million redevelopment of that campus. That work has already begun. I was really delighted to attend the sod turning last December with the former Premier, and more recently I was very excited to have the opportunity to visit that TAFE campus to see that work is now well underway. It was incredibly exciting to see the project taking shape and we will start to see what it will look like before too long. This is a significant project for not just that campus, the people who study there and the trades that are so important to our economy, but the whole Mirrabooka community. It will provide an uplift in the suburbs of Balga and Mirrabooka and an opportunity for some confidence and pride in that area. I am very excited to see this project develop. It is a major redevelopment of the campus. It includes a new three-storey building that will replace 22 quite rundown transportable classrooms. A specialist teaching block will be used to deliver a range of training across different areas, including building and construction, electrical, English and adult migrant education. It will have a mix of modern learning spaces with technology-enabled classrooms and computer laboratories, and a large furniture trades training workshop is being built that will accommodate smart building and emerging construction technology. The ground floor will have a modern library hub, a reception, student services and a brand new jobs and skills centre that will connect the community with free professional advice on training and employment.

As I said, I recently had the opportunity to visit with the minister to see Balga TAFE taking shape. It is incredibly exciting. I want to thank Michelle Hoad, the managing director of North Metropolitan TAFE, Keith Campbell and Kath Wallace for taking us around. At this point in the construction, I could imagine how fantastic the new facility will be. It was great to stand in the areas that will soon have a new library and a new flexible learning space, see its new trades area taking shape and the 22 demountables that will soon be replaced with the new classrooms. It will be super exciting for the students. It will be great for the staff but, as I already said, it is a great project for the people in my electorate, regardless of whether they study there. It is incredibly good news for employers, who we know are desperate for well-qualified workers in construction trades.

The redevelopment of Balga TAFE is just part of the government's record investment in capital upgrades. Significant work is going on all around the state to deliver improved facilities for our TAFEs. The government has invested a record \$243 million in capital works to upgrade 14 of the TAFE colleges right around the state. It includes a number of regional campuses as well, with nine regional projects, including Kununurra and Broome, south to Albany and east to Kalgoorlie. It is a fantastic investment in modernising some of the most important training institutions in

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our state, ensuring that they are fit for purpose for the future. To see firsthand the transformation at Balga TAFE is very impactful. I toured it when I was first elected. It is a good facility but it was ageing, and to imagine what that will look like when that work is done is incredible.

The other thing we were able to do that I thought was incredibly exciting while visiting Balga TAFE was see the government's \$25 million investment in new TAFE equipment starting to take shape. We got to see some new equipment that Balga TAFE was able to purchase, such as electrical equipment. I am no electrician; I wish I could describe better what we saw. A room that had several different circuitry boards that do a range of different things now has one smaller board that does all those functions for training. I saw very dated equipment. For those people who watched *Chernobyl*, imagine the control room in it. I am not saying that it was Russian equipment, but it is probably from about the same era! To replace that kind of equipment with new electrical circuitry is a great initiative of this government. We also saw a new cabinetry cutting machine, which is now digitised. To see the cutting edge of cabinetry—pun intended—was really exciting. As managing director Michelle Hoard said, they aim to get their students riding the crest of the wave of technology, neither too far ahead nor too far behind, at the cutting edge of the skills and knowledge that they will need as they go into workplaces in the future using modern equipment. This is a great initiative, with \$25 million to upgrade the equipment in our TAFEs to make sure that our students are learning not on the equipment of yesterday, but on the equipment of tomorrow and that we are producing graduates who are able to have all the industry standard equipment to train on, creating that pipeline of job-ready graduates who will be able to walk into jobs and have the right skills to get the job done.

There is a lot to talk about when we talk about TAFE, member for Roe. There are so many good stories to tell that I have to pick and choose a bit. I am incredibly excited to see Balga TAFE take shape. It is a great initiative. I think when people see it, they will see that it underlines the government's great initiatives. The other one that is important to talk about is fee-free TAFE, because our commitment when we came to government was to freeze TAFE fees and then reduce them for 210 priority courses. Since then, we have gone even further in a collaboration with the Albanese government to make sure that we can now have free training for over 130 courses and skill sets across high-priority areas such as the care sector, information technology, cybersecurity, agriculture, construction, hospitality and tourism. These are key occupations and key areas of training that we need in our economy. People are now able to access that training free of charge. It is an incredibly important initiative to make sure that people are able to get the training that they need to then go on to jobs in those important parts of the economy. Of course it is no surprise that Western Australians have embraced fee-free training, with 36 000 people enrolled in courses so far this year. That is an incredible result, and one that demonstrates the commitment that Labor governments have to making sure that training is available and accessible to people no matter who they are or where they are from. On the back of the success of Free in '23, we will be extending that into 2024. That is really exciting news. It is a great initiative that will ensure that we continue to see climbing enrolments in the key courses that we need.

As an example, care sector enrolments climbed by 19 600—up 31 per cent from the same time in the previous year. It is basic economics, members. I feel like we often have to explain this to the opposition, but if we put up fees on courses, we will see a decline in the number of people doing it. Of course, in reverse, if we make it free, it is not surprising to find that more people will access that training. That is good for them and also good for the economy. One of the things that is really great about the fee-free initiative is that overwhelmingly it is being embraced by women and young people. Women make up 65 per cent of the enrolments of the fee-free courses. That is a fantastic result that is ensuring that women get skills that will set them up for good jobs. Young people aged between 15 and 24 years make up about 35 per cent of those enrolments. It is not just happening in the metropolitan area; demand in the region for these courses is also incredibly strong, with 29 per cent of enrolments being undertaken by people living in regional areas. It is an incredibly important program that is seeing more people get into training and then get the jobs that come from that.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms M.J. HAMMAT: As I said, we have made significant investments in TAFE and training since this government was elected in 2017. The initial task of this government was repairing the significant damage that had been done to the training sector by the Barnett Liberal government. I made reference to that in my opening remarks, but I come back to it because the TAFE course fee increases under the Barnett Liberal government were really shocking. Course fees soared by 500 per cent. That is a shocking figure and an incredible indictment of the opposition parties for thinking that that would ever be acceptable to everyday working people. It gutted the TAFE system by increasing those fees so significantly. As others have said before me, not surprisingly, the number of enrolments fell by 25 000 people. As I said earlier, that is basic economics. The government did that in several key course areas in which we now have shortages, and at the time we knew they were skills that we needed in the economy. It was never a decision based on what was good for individuals and it was never about what was good for the economy.

It could have been only an ideological view that those institutions should be semi-privatised and there should be a transfer of costs from the state to the individual. It had devastating impacts, not surprisingly. That is part of the

problem with Liberal–National governments. They are driven by ideology, not by evidence about the impact that those decisions will have on individuals or on the economy. It was clearly an ideological attack on an important institution in Western Australia. Basically, that is what we saw—a fall overall and a fall in every single number. There were declines in commencements, declines in the number of students in training and declines in the number of completions. When we were elected in 2017, we immediately froze TAFE fees. This was to provide cost certainty. We then set about slashing course fees by up to 72 per cent for 210 courses in key industries. Of those courses, 17 were construction-related apprenticeships and traineeships. As I said, the construction industry positions, in particular, are important in the context of Balga TAFE and in the context of our economy. We reduced course fees in key areas across the board.

We did a range of other things to encourage employers to take on apprentices and trainees, particularly in the building and construction industry. We provided generous employer grants through the Construction Training Fund. We set about rebuilding TAFEs through an investment in infrastructure worth nearly \$250 million. We committed \$25 million to improve equipment in TAFEs. We supported employers to take on apprentices through other targeted programs, including the jobs and skills WA employer incentive and the adult apprenticeship employer incentive. Not surprisingly, apprenticeship and traineeship commencements are now at their highest level in 10 years. I congratulate the minister, the former minister and the cabinet for this incredibly important work, which is delivering important results. Apprenticeship commencements now, with fee assistance, are almost 50 per cent higher than they were two years ago.

That is an excellent result. We can compare that with the term of the Barnett Liberal government between 2013 and 2017. Its record was a fall of over 10 000 in the number of commencements, a fall of 10 232 in the number of apprentices and trainees and a fall of 5 737 in the number of completions. Every indicator shows a fall in numbers. The different measures are important because getting someone to start an apprenticeship or traineeship is important, but we also have to get them to stay until they complete it. It is important that they complete it so they can enter the workforce. We need to keep the numbers up at commencement, but then support people through the programs so they can graduate and start working.

We are proud of our record and that is why we like to talk about it. It is getting results; it is doing great things. It is delivering real benefits to people in Western Australia. I have made the point a couple of times in this contribution that it is not only about delivering opportunities to the individuals who may choose to go to TAFE, but also sound economic policy. We need people who have skills in those areas. They are critical to our economy, especially to our care economy, which is fundamental to making sure people are well cared for, whether that is in child care, aged care or any time in between.

Our commitment to TAFE underlines an understanding about the key role that skills and training play in our community and economy. Member for Roe, we are incredibly proud of our TAFE record, and we will continue to talk about it. I think it is important to remember that we cannot trust the Liberals and the Nationals with the TAFE system. They will not do the right thing by it.

Mr P.J. Rundle: You're a hard woman.

Ms M.J. HAMMAT: I thought I was in an obliging mood this evening, member!

I want to talk about someone I heard from recently. He is a young person called Lueth Dengdit, and he was the winner of the youth category in the 2023 Western Australian Multicultural Awards. He is a young person who was involved in the leadership program at the Edmund Rice Centre in Mirrabooka. It recently celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. It has a long track record of supporting migrants and refugees when they first arrive, but it also has a long track record of providing ongoing support, particularly working with young people so that they are able to step up to leadership roles both in their communities and in society more broadly. The centre held a fundraising breakfast yesterday; it was also to celebrate its 25 years. Lueth was one of the guest speakers at that breakfast. He spoke because not only had he been involved in the youth programs at Edmund Rice as a young teenager growing up in and around the Mirrabooka area, but also he now works with the centre. He is a staff member. He told his story. His story is that he is the son of South Sudanese refugees. He arrived here as a refugee. He said that he felt the pressure as a young South Sudanese person in school. There was pressure from his family to study hard, get good grades and then pursue a professional career in the health sector—as either a doctor or a nurse. That was the pathway that had been mapped out and expected for him. He explained that he found that incredibly stressful. He struggled with the study. He was not enjoying that level of schoolwork. He described how he had an epiphany—he did not use that word; that is the word I am using. He decided he wanted to pursue a career in which he would be able to help other people—a career in social work or a career in youth work. That was his passion. He said that the day he went to school and withdrew from the ATAR courses was the best day of his life because he felt the weight of that lift from him. He was passionate about the career path he was choosing. That was a career path that he could access through TAFE—vocational education and training. VET was the pathway for him to go on and

qualify as a social worker or a youth worker and now pursue his passion. Again, he did not use that word, but it is clear he is driven by a passion to help people and to provide support to people who are like him. He now works at Edmund Rice but plays a really important leadership role in that organisation, as well as in the broader community. The leadership role he is playing was recognised at the WA Multicultural Awards, at which he won the youth category. I want to say how incredibly proud I am of him. I know our whole community is proud of him and the work that he is doing. He is still young and I am excited to see how his career and his leadership in the community develops.

That underlines the important role that VET plays for young people. It is a key part of providing training pathways into meaningful careers. It is not a training institution of last resort. I think anyone who is engaged with the TAFE or VET sector understands that. They get incredibly frustrated with the idea that ATAR is great, but if they cannot do ATAR, they should do VET. It is not true. VET is incredibly important. It provides all sorts of applicable skills that are highly valued by industry. It provides training pathways into careers that universities do not easily accommodate. The member for Collie–Preston talked about vocational training providing pathways to tertiary education. Again, it is an important way for people to get qualifications that they may need as their career progresses. Combining work and study provides valuable people for industry, and I know it is highly valued.

Members, I am almost out of time. As I said, I could probably talk on this topic for some time, but I will bring my contribution to an end. I want to commend the minister for the great work that she is doing. I also want to recognise the work that the former minister did. For us, on our side of politics, it is very important to recognise how training can transform people's lives and that it underlines a strong economy. For those reasons we will continue to be incredibly proud of our achievements in this area. There is so much that we can celebrate and there is so much work that we can still do. I look forward to being a part of the government that continues to deliver on such an important part of the Western Australian economy and provide opportunities for young people. With that, I commend the bill to the house.

MR S.A. MILLMAN (Mount Lawley — Parliamentary Secretary) [6.00 pm]: I also rise to make a contribution on the Vocational Education and Training Amendment Bill 2023. I thank the member for Mirrabooka for her contribution. I could never understand why the former Liberal–National government took a chainsaw to our vocational education and training sector and to our TAFE sector. I wrestled with it and I thought maybe it increased fees for some fiscal responsibility; maybe it thought it was a way of managing the books. That never made sense to me because the former government blew the budget the whole time that it was in power and left to us the largest budget debt and deficit we had ever seen in the history of Western Australia. I was wrestling with why it saw fit to increase fees so significantly. It was only during the member's contribution that I had this moment of epiphany. I realised that it was entirely ideological. The former government had a philosophical antipathy towards the vocational education and training sector. It could not possibly have been on the basis of financial prudence, because it demonstrated no financial prudence over the eight and a half years it was in government. The only real explanation for taking a chainsaw to our vocational education and training sector and eviscerating our vocational education and training sector must have been philosophical.

When I think about the contributions that people on our side of politics have made just to this legislation this afternoon, I note that the member for Mirrabooka and the minister were former members of the State Training Board. The members who spoke were former union officials and expert in understanding the economic role of a pipeline of skilled workers coming through our vocational education and training system. The member for Collie–Preston beside me made a brilliant contribution and talked about the importance of the vocational education and training sector in regional WA, particularly in her electorate of Collie–Preston, as that community moves through the energy transition. She talked about the vital role of a well-qualified workforce with skills and abilities in these fields that we are now prioritising as a government. That is incredibly important. As a former teacher and advocate for her community, the member was perfectly articulate. You, Acting Speaker (Ms A.E. Kent), spoke about the contribution of the vocational education and training sector to the people of Kalgoorlie. On our side of the chamber, we are passionate about making sure that our VET sector works because we see how important the role of education is in allowing people in our society to access opportunity.

All members will be participating in their school graduations at the moment. It is graduation season at local primary schools and high schools. I love going to those high school graduations, where we get a sense of what endeavours the graduating class will pursue. I congratulate all the local schools in the electorate of Mount Lawley, including Mount Lawley Senior High School, John Forrest Secondary College and Dianella Secondary College. I want to give a quick shout-out to two incredible educators in the Mount Lawley electorate who are both calling time on their careers at the end of this academic year—in the next couple of weeks. In one instance, it is a very moving set of circumstances.

Shortly after I was elected in 2017, we got a new principal at Coolbinia Primary School, Paul Westcott. Paul has given more than 40 years of service to public education. At Coolbinia Primary School he is beloved by the staff, the parents and the students. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Paul was exemplary. He went above and beyond to make everyone feel safe and welcome at the school. If we go down to Coolbinia Primary School, we will see him

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out and about every day, warmly greeting families down at the Kiss ‘n’ Drive before and after school. He wanders around the primary school, mixes with the kids and makes sure that everyone is safe and comfortable and engaging in their learning experience. His door is always open to those in need. He does all this with incredible humility. He is a very quiet, humble and unassuming school principal, but he has great integrity and a good sense of humour and cares deeply for all his staff.

After 40 years in education, Paul is retiring this year. He has, unfortunately, been diagnosed with cancer, so it is really a terribly sad story. He is on leave at the moment, but the school will be having a dedicated graduation assembly for Paul on 8 December, which I am looking forward to going to so that I can express gratitude on behalf of the people of Mount Lawley and, in particular, the families in Coolbinia who have had the benefit of Paul’s expertise and passion at Coolbinia Primary School. He came to the primary school at a time of great change and great challenges and he really coalesced and unified the school community and got them heading in the same direction. Paul Westcott, thank you for everything. You will be greatly missed by the people of Coolbinia.

More happily, the principal at Mount Lawley Primary School, Sandra Martin, is also retiring, but not because of any health concerns. Sandra has earned her time in retirement. She has been at Mount Lawley Primary School for 21 years and has seen incredible changes. She was at the school in 2012 when it was, unfortunately, burnt as a result of arson. She was there when the school transitioned to become an independent public school. She has been a great deputy to a number of principals. Recently, when there was some uncertainty about the leadership at the school, Sandra really stepped up and took over that leadership role as the principal over the last couple of years. Sandra was at Parliament House a couple of weeks ago. We were able to host the year 6 leadership team. When I saw her at the school gates for the school pick-up a couple of days ago, I asked her whether it was true that she was retiring and she said it was and that part of the reason she was so keen to come up to Parliament House for the last time was that she got to enjoy the recognition of being in Parliament and being acknowledged during question time.

Again, on behalf of the P&C at Mount Lawley Primary School and the school board, I want to say thank you to Sandra for the incredible work she has done again during a time of leadership uncertainty at the school. She navigated COVID extraordinarily well, making sure that the community was advised and informed and aware of all the constraints and concerns, and she did it with great passion and commitment. Sandra, thank you for everything. I hope you get to enjoy greater success for your beloved West Coast Eagles in retirement. Thank you for the incredible contribution to public education in Western Australia generally, but more particularly for the long service that you have provided to the people of Mt Lawley. This evening we are talking about vocational education, but I wanted to place on the record my great gratitude to two educational leaders in the Mount Lawley electorate and thank them for the contribution they have made to our local community.

I turn next to the substantive bill. I want to start just by mentioning a terrific institution that we have in Mt Lawley, which is the North Metro TAFE Mt Lawley campus. The member for Mirrabooka already mentioned the managing director of North Metro TAFE, Michelle Hoad. I want to echo the member for Mirrabooka. Michelle is an incredibly passionate and dedicated managing director for North Metro TAFE. She mucks in. She rolls up her sleeves. She gets in and she makes sure that the service is provided, which is incredible.

Most of the other speakers have already talked about this, so I do not need to go into it in too much detail, but the role that TAFE plays in graduating students into critical areas of our economy cannot be understated. As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health, I look at some of the courses that are on offer at the Mt Lawley campus of North Metropolitan TAFE, such as a certificate III in hospital or health services pharmacy support. The certificate III in individual support (ageing) is free, the certificate III in individual support (disability) is free, the integrating mental health practice skill set is free, the certificate IV in mental health that is offered at the Mt Lawley campus is free, the diploma of mental health is half price, a diploma of nursing is free, a certificate III in pathology collection is half price, and the certificate IV in preparation for health and nursing studies is free. As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health, I know that the Minister for Health has a laser-like focus on the workforce challenges that we confront. These workforce challenges will only be ameliorated by our vocational education and training and university systems graduating enough students into these important roles to pick up the slack.

One thing that I know the opposition parties will say throughout next year is that the McGowan and Cook Labor governments have had seven years in office to fix every problem that is on the horizon. However, this argument fundamentally misunderstands the effort needed to repair the legacy of destruction that we inherited when we were elected in 2017. When we look at the state of the finances, we see that we inherited an unprecedented debt and deficit disaster. When we look at the quality of our hospital system, we see that we had a children’s hospital that had asbestos in the ceiling and lead in the water. When we look at the workforce challenges we face, we see that we had a TAFE system that had been eviscerated and decimated, making it incredibly difficult for people to not only enrol in TAFE, but also progress through the TAFE courses and graduate. As the members for Collie–Preston and Mirrabooka have both said, on every metreage we were going backwards under the Liberal–National government. Now we have seen a complete turnaround. We have more people enrolling in TAFE, graduating from courses and

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doing apprenticeships. We want to build the economy and the state and tackle the skills shortages in health and education, and we cannot do it unless we have the training infrastructure in place. That is the difference between this Labor government and our predecessors. We inherited such a difficult set of circumstances that we are not even halfway through fixing the challenges that were left to us by the previous government. We have so much more work to do because of the state in which the previous government left the state of Western Australia. We are now in the process of adopting a whole-of-government approach that focuses on all those things.

The Minister for Housing; Homelessness is tackling the housing shortage that we are currently experiencing. He cannot address that without the tradies, plumbers, electricians, plasterers and carpenters that need to undertake their apprenticeships and TAFE and training courses. The Minister for Transport is building the transformational Metronet project. There is no way that project can be delivered without the civil construction workers, crane drivers, riggers and scaffolders who can deliver that set of infrastructure objectives, as they have with the projects that have already been completed. When we look at the health sector, we could never have addressed the challenges we are facing in health if we had allowed TAFE fees for nursing, enrolled nursing and all those other courses to stay at the elevated levels that the Liberal–National government had put them at. We needed to firstly fix the budget to create the capacity to invest in TAFE so that we can train the workers we need to put into the economy to generate that economic activity. This government recognises that issues like these cannot be siloed. Issues like these need to be the subject of a comprehensive approach. We need to invest in the creation of positions. We need to invest in infrastructure and training, and we need a dedicated and cohesive cabinet driving that agenda all the way through.

We can look at the record of the Cook and McGowan Labor governments on training. The Labor government froze TAFE fees immediately on coming into government to provide students with price certainty; slashed fees for 210 high-priority courses; partnered with the Albanese government to deliver the Free in '23 initiative, then extended this partnership over the next three years—that is, fee-free training for over 130 full qualifications and short courses; supported job ready programs to provide Western Australians with entry-level skills to take up jobs in high demand, including, as I have said, in construction, bricklaying, aged care, childcare, truck driving and drilling; and conducted a rapid review of skills and training workforce development to ensure that TAFE colleges can continue to quickly adapt and address the needs of industry as part of the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The government has done all that, but, in addition, it has made the largest ever infrastructure investment—\$243 million in a capital works program to significantly upgrade 14 TAFE campuses and create world-class learning facilities for students across the state. I was talking about Mt Lawley before and the emphasis that the Mt Lawley TAFE campus puts on the health sector. It has an incredible hospital simulation set-up. The students study in a virtual hospital environment. It is an amazing arrangement. We are graduating job-ready students out of this facility because of the investment that the then McGowan and now Cook Labor governments have made.

The government has invested \$25 million for modern TAFE equipment, reduced fees for existing worker traineeships and introduced the WA jobs and skills employer incentive. Here is a good one. I spoke earlier about the fact that we have two former secretaries of UnionsWA, two former members of the WA State Training Board—the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education and the Minister for Training—but this is not just about the union's role in the market or the economy; this is also about the employer's role in the economy.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr S.A. MILLMAN: The jobs and skills employer incentive provides assistance for small businesses to employ new entrant apprentices and trainees, replacing a tired scheme with loopholes that meant that big businesses avoided paying their share of payroll tax. We are supporting those elements of the economy. We are supporting small businesses to put on the trainees and apprentices that they need to grow their business and at the same time deliver a benefit back to the community of Western Australia. We have extended the construction and training fund levy to cover construction work in the mining sector, significantly increasing the support for apprentices, trainees and their employers. This workforce planning and whole-of-government approach means that we are taking the necessary steps to insulate ourselves from the skills shortages that are now flowing through as a legacy of the years of neglect under the former Liberal–National government.

Members opposite will say next year that we have had enough time to resolve every issue, but the trouble is that the problems they created for us through their negligence are manifesting now, and we are still resolving those issues. But the Liberal lies will be flying thick and fast. They will not let the facts get in the way of their narrative. They will say that we should have previously fixed all these problems. They will forget about COVID and the massive impact that had on the economy and say that everything should have been done. It will be a lazy campaign strategy, but mark my words—that is what they will say.

We introduced the enterprise training program, providing up to \$200 000 for each employer to upskill workers in social assistance and the allied health sector, supporting growing demand in the aged care and disability sector. One thing we have noticed when we have been doing the workforce round tables that the Minister for Health has

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instituted to address the challenges we are facing in the health workforce is that the transferable nature of skills between the aged-care, disability and health sectors means that particularly in remote and regional communities, we often have people moving between those sectors. Anything that we do to assist growing demand in the aged-care and disability sectors naturally has a corollary benefit for our health workforce. We have invested \$5.1 million to support the introduction of a new apprenticeship pathway in the civil construction sector. As I said before, that is entirely appropriate and necessary for our massive Metronet build. We have delivered a one-off \$2 000 apprentice completion grant. This is a really important initiative. Like all of us, apprentices have a lot going on in their lives. I have spoken to constituents in Mount Lawley who were not able to complete their apprenticeships because they had a lot going on. By providing this incentive, when the going gets tough and when people are in the last six or 12 months of their apprenticeship and they need to know there is light at the end of the tunnel, this \$2 000 apprentice completion grant or the \$500 tool allowance might seem like small things but they make a material difference. They motivate people to get to the finish line, graduate from their courses and become contributing members of the community.

Is there any wonder that employment participation is so high in Western Australia and unemployment is so low? We have the \$1.3 million driver's licence training program, the women in non-traditional trades scholarship, the apprenticeship and traineeship re-engagement incentive to support apprentices and trainees whose training contract was terminated or cancelled during the COVID pandemic, and the Metronet Trade Training Centre. Here is a really important one: there is \$20 million in defence workforce initiatives to build a pipeline of skilled workers to upcoming Defence Force projects and ensure a pipeline of skilled professional and paraprofessional workers for this priority sector.

When I am speaking to stakeholders in health, they say it would be great if they could start a particular program, project or pilot. I say that that sounds like a great thing to do, but if we start it, will we have the workers to deliver the service? It is all very well to say that something is a great thing to do, but will we have the workers to deliver the service? When we bid as a state or private industry in Western Australia, as we will, and when we build for defence contracting work, we need to know that we have the workers capable of fulfilling that requirement. There is no point bidding for the work and getting the contract if we do not have the workers to do the work. We have funded \$29 million in defence workforce incentives to build a pipeline of skilled workers to support upcoming defence projects. This will become a material part of the Western Australian economy in the months and years ahead as hundreds of workers from the United States and the United Kingdom come to Western Australia as part of the AUKUS arrangement. It will have a significant economic impact in the southern suburbs.

There are heaps of programs. The \$5.5 million job reconnect program will tap into underutilised workers, including older workers to get back into the workforce, easing skill shortages in industries such as construction, hospitality and health. There is no point talking about the new \$6.3 million training facility in Collie because the member for Collie–Preston covered that brilliantly. As the member said, we are the party for the regions. The government has invested \$2.5 million to increase the travel and training allowance for regional apprentices who are required to travel long distances for their training. The member for Central Wheatbelt likes to say that people in the regions do not expect everything that people in the metropolitan area get. But we are doing what we can to equalise that. We are doing what we can to make sure that trainees and apprentices in the regions have the ability to access the travel and accommodation allowance so that they can travel the distances needed to get the skills and experience they need to complete their apprenticeships.

We have expanded the early childhood education and care job-ready program. When we look at the Albanese government's commitment to child care and increasing access to child care, we know that if we are going to be able to discharge our obligation to the people of Western Australia and say, "We have the provision of child care", we will need these workers trained. Where are we training them? We are training them in Albany, Bunbury, Geraldton, Karratha, Kununurra, Mandurah, Northam, Perth and Broome—right across Western Australia—to make sure that we have the trained early childhood education and childcare workforce in place to match a federal government investment in this growing sector.

While I am speaking about the federal government, under the historic five-year national skills agreement, the Albanese government unlocked \$1.3 billion in funding to build the skills and prosperity of Western Australia and grow the skilled workforce in Western Australia, including in defence industries, the care sector, clean energy transition, as the member for Collie–Preston spoke about, and digital and technology. When we look at the challenges that we are confronting in that arena, we can see that building a readymade workforce with skills and experience in digital and technology will also be imperative, particularly as we try to maintain Western Australia as a leading economy within the Australian context and also within the global context.

In the time that I have, I want to finish by saying that this government is committed to all the pieces that make up the puzzle. That means not only fixing the state budget, fixing the finances, driving job creation and job growth and participation in the employment market, but also diversifying the economy so that people have opportunities

to move into different endeavours. We do not know what the jobs of tomorrow will look like. The workforce is changing dramatically. People who are training as nurses or teachers today might last five or 10 years in health or education before they transition to other fields. By having a well-resourced, well-funded and well-endowed vocational education training system, we can create flexibility in the market so that our workforce is responsive to changing demands and requirements. If we undermine that, all we do is undermine the economic wellbeing of the state of Western Australia. TAFE cannot be eviscerated in the way that it was by the former Liberal–National government without there being a significant consequence for the economy of Western Australia.

If people want to know which party is the party that supports health, it is the Labor Party. The party that supports education is the Labor Party. If people want to know which party supports the regions, it is also the Labor Party because of the investment that we put into the regions. If people want to know which party supports small business, it is also the Labor Party. If they want to know which party supports sound financial management, it is the Labor Party. If people want to know which party supports diversifying the economy and making sure the economy delivers for all Western Australians, it is the Labor Party. People should not be distracted by the arguments that will be advanced next year by the Nationals WA. We have a plan. The plan is working. We need to continue to implement that plan to remedy the legacy of neglect that we were left by the Liberal–National government. We will continue to work assiduously for the benefit of the Western Australian community up until and hopefully beyond the 2025 election. I commend the minister and her advisers for this outstanding legislation and for all the work that she has done in the vocational education and training sector, which is a testament to a long career, all the way back to the WA State Training Board and her time as a union official. I commend the bill to the house.

MR D.A.E. SCAIFE (Cockburn) [6.28 pm]: I feel like I should be throwing in a set of steak knives in my contribution as the member for Mount Lawley has treated us to a laundry list of the government’s list of commitments and achievements in the area of TAFE and training. The sentiment of what the member for Mount Lawley has said is true: this government is just doing so much to resource TAFEs and ensure that people from all walks of life have access to good quality training that not only benefits them, but also benefits our whole state.

In speaking on the Vocational Education and Training Amendment Bill 2023, I want to reflect on some of the positive impacts that the government’s reforms and commitments have had on my community in Cockburn. The many programs and funding initiatives that the member for Mount Lawley referred to have an impact across the whole state. Every member in this chamber would be able to tell a story about someone who made the decision to retrain or would know of a young person seeking to embark on that next stage in their life. They have been assisted in one way or another by either better access to TAFE courses because of our fee-free or reduced fee initiatives or through the availability of high-quality equipment at our TAFEs, so that they could learn on state-of-the-art equipment and technology. It might also be that they have taken advantage of our services, like the Jobs and Skills Centres, to help them find direction in life.

I want to reflect on the experience of Lakeland Senior High School, which is in the member for Willagee’s electorate but its intake area covers much of my electorate. I acknowledge the work of Lakeland Senior High School in vocational education and training. Lakeland Senior High School recently won the 2023 Milwaukee and MPA Skills School Construction Industry Engagement Award. It stood out amongst the finalist schools due to its holistic approach to helping students find opportunities in the construction sector. The school integrates work experience, including in health and safety, into the curriculum and provides students with real-world experience. An example of that is that students conduct safety audits at the school as part of their course, so they have to put that practical health and safety assessment process into practice. I think that is really fantastic. The school’s approach to vocational training in the construction skills space has improved attendance rates amongst its students and increased apprenticeship and traineeship commitments. I really congratulate Lakeland Senior High School for that. It is a fantastic school in my electorate; it is really on the up. The message I want to give today is that Lakeland Senior High School is on the march. This school already does great things, and we can tell that because it has just won the School Construction Industry Engagement Award for 2023.

In acknowledging the efforts of Lakeland Senior High School, I want to acknowledge that its ability to win that award was assisted by the embedding of a career practitioner at the school. The member for Collie–Preston spoke about our initiative to place 70 career practitioners at schools across the state. Lakeland Senior High School is one of those schools. Mrs Suzanne White, the career practitioner at Lakeland Senior High School, has been a key person in driving engagement with vocational education and training and getting students involved in things like construction skills training. I acknowledge Suzanne White for her efforts as the career practitioner. I also acknowledge the efforts of this state government, which takes a holistic approach to training. It is not just about having new equipment for TAFEs; it is also about having things like career practitioners in our high schools so that students have access to somebody who can guide them and give them information about the great opportunities out there in vocational education and training. I congratulate Lakeland Senior High School for winning that award and acknowledge the

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efforts of its principal, Cathy Baron; deputy principals Simon Dober and Natasha Tempest; and career practitioner, Suzanne White. Of course, I also congratulate all the students who contributed towards the school winning that award.

I will reflect on something that several members spoke about—that is, obviously, the Barnett government’s terrible record on TAFE and training. Its training policy can only be described as an act of vandalism. The Barnett government basically took the approach of destroying access to our TAFE system. It wanted access to TAFE to be the domain only of people who were wealthy. It cut training places for critical skilled areas or made them so expensive that they were out of the reach of most people. I will reflect on that by going over some of the comments that ministers in the previous Barnett government made to justify their vandalism of the training sector. I was not here at that time, but after reading some of the articles from that period, I really feel for the current Minister for Training and other members of this place who were here and must have had to listen to complete nonsense from Barnett government ministers as they defended what I have called an act of vandalism in training. I will quote from an article published on 9 November 2013 by News Corp titled “Health, aged care, nursing trainees suffer funding blow in Perth TAFE fee hike”. Hon Terry Redman, the then Minister for Training and Workforce Development, was quoted in the article. It states —

He said the Priority Industry Qualifications List would be reviewed annually and said nursing, aged care and trade apprenticeships were not on the 2014 list because the industry had “deemed there to be no shortage of workers in these areas this year”.

That was a preposterous statement. As if one judges what courses one needs based on the demand in a particular year! Courses may take a number of years to complete. It was just nonsense. Governments have to look at economic forecasts of what the demand for a skill set will be in future years to decide what should be on the priority industry qualifications list. It was a completely ridiculous comment from the then minister. The reality is that we are paying the price for the short-sightedness of the minister and government of that time. Can members imagine if we had had a minister in 2013–14 who had not believed that nursing, aged-care and trade apprenticeships were not priorities? It is amazing to think that the previous government thought those industries would not be priority industries. Plainly, we had an ageing population and the National Disability Insurance Scheme was coming online at that time. We also know that we are in a boom and bust economy, particularly here in Western Australia; yet, Hon Terry Redman said that nursing, aged-care and trade apprenticeships were not priorities. That was completely mad, because we need a pipeline of skills for the future.

The second article that I want to quote from and dissect was published in *The West Australian* on 8 December 2014 and titled “High fees, cut funds ‘attack’ TAFE”. There is a quote in the article from the then Premier, Colin Barnett, who said —

“The TAFE system is primarily funded by the State Government,” ...

That is a statement of the obvious, one would have thought! Most people would know that the TAFE system is primarily funded by the state government. He went on to say —

“There has been a rise in fees and while the percentage increases look high, I think the rate of recovery in fees is less than 20 per cent of the cost of providing the course.”

This exposes the ideological attack on training that the member for Mount Lawley referred to. The Barnett government thought that the mandate of the state government should be to recover the cost of people undertaking training. It did not understand that the role of the state government is to get an economic dividend for the state from having a better educated and better skilled workforce. That is the economic dividend that the state government needs to pursue through its training system. It should not be concerned about whether it is recovering the costs and balancing the books when it comes to training, because we reap other dividends in the future. We would be reaping those dividends right now if the Barnett government had not fumbled things back in 2013–14 and so on. The other ridiculous thing about that statement was the Premier’s words “while the percentage increases look high”. Yes, they looked high; they were in excess of 500 per cent. That was high by anybody’s standards. I just think that that sort of glib remark from the former Premier exposed the ideological attack on training by the former government.

The last article I want to quote from is by Hayley Roman, published on 9 August 2015 and titled “Restore TAFE funding to stop soaring fees and falling enrolments, WA teacher’s union says”. This is really the strangest quote of all of them. It is a quote from the then Minister for Training and Workforce Development, Liza Harvey, who is reported to have said —

“What we did was have a look at the level of subsidisation that the Government was providing to the TAFE students,” ...

“We determined that our best effort and highest level of subsidisation should go into our priority skills area, so we’ve had a 6 per cent increase in enrolments in the priority skills areas.

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Remember, of course, that the priority skills areas apparently did not include nursing, trades or the like, but put that aside. She went on to say —

“And those are areas of training that we know lead to employment.”

It continues —

Ms Harvey said the Government had simultaneously reduced funding to some of the more “recreational-style” TAFE courses.

“There were some courses in TAFE like bonsai and horticulture and those sort of things ... the State Government is not going to put a funding priority around programs that are not leading to employment,” she said.

Mr J.N. Carey: What is wrong with bonsai?

Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: I agree with the minister: what is wrong with bonsai? But let us be really plain about this: the Barnett government was not increasing fees or cutting funding for bonsai courses; it was cutting funding and increasing fees for things like the diploma of building and construction, the advanced diploma of engineering technology—electrical and, of course, famously, the diploma of nursing, which ended up costing around \$10 000, but under our government is now free. I cannot imagine having to sit through this kind of nonsense. I imagine the former government trotted out the same lines in the chamber as well. It is flimsy. Referring to horticulture and bonsai courses while simultaneously cutting nursing and construction skills qualifications almost trivialises the issue. It trivialises the issue of trade training and the economic future of the state. It is an absolute shame.

I am very lucky though to be part of a government fixing up the mess left by the Barnett government. This bill is a very small part of addressing some issues around the State Training Board’s jurisdiction. It sits within a broader suite of policies such as those for our jobs and skills centres. I took a friend of mine to the Rockingham centre recently because he had lost his job, and he had a great experience there getting lots of information about how to navigate trades training and get a job. There is our \$25 million investment in state-of-the-art equipment in TAFEs. For example, the Munster campus of South Metropolitan TAFE in my electorate does amazing work in oil and gas and remote operations, and it needs to have the latest equipment. That extra funding from the state government allows venues across the state to make sure that cutting-edge technology and equipment is available to our students, whether it is in nursing, automotive industries or oil and gas, as it is at the Munster campus of South Metropolitan TAFE in my electorate. We have done so much. We have such a commitment to this issue. I commend the minister for the energy she has brought to this portfolio as the new minister, and I commend this bill to the house.

MS S.F. MCGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Training) [6.43 pm] — in reply: I thank all members who have made a contribution to the Vocational Education and Training Amendment Bill 2023. I will wrap up by reiterating the objectives of these amendments and respond to some of the comments made.

These are largely technical amendments. If I caught all the contributions, it was probably that of the member for Roe that addressed some of those amendments. In essence, they will provide for an effective appeal mechanism for people affected by decisions of the Training Accreditation Council and the proper delegation of the functions of the chief executive of the Department of Training and Workforce Development under part 7 of the Vocational Education and Training Act and the associated regulations made for the purposes of that part of the act. These amendments were supported by recommendations from the last statutory review of the VET act, which was tabled in Parliament in March 2019.

The first proposed amendment relates to the scope of appeals against decisions of the council, as outlined in section 58G(2) of the VET act. The council, in making decisions about the registration of providers, takes consideration of the commonwealth Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2015. These are the registered training organisation standards. The judgement made by the WA Supreme Court of Appeal in 2021 ruled that the word “standards” is not in scope of existing section 58G(2) of the act. This means that the vast majority of the council’s decisions are not appealable, which essentially denies a person’s right to appeal and does not align with the principles of natural justice. Clause 4 of the bill will amend the wording of section 58G(2) to enable a person to appeal against a decision of the council if it made an error in applying or failed to apply guidelines or criteria issued by the minister under section 13, including standards and guidelines that the council is required to apply.

Clause 5 of the bill will make a consequential amendment to section 58C. This amendment is the result of new wording proposed for section 58G(2). Section 58C is currently limited to council decisions made as a result of processing an application made to the council. Amended section 58C will extend the application of this section to decisions made by the council of its own initiative. Amended section 58C will also provide for criteria to be prescribed in relation to what the council must apply when making a decision. This is in addition to the existing provision of prescribing criteria that the council may or must take into account.

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Clause 7 of the bill outlines the transition provisions for appeals that have not yet been determined at the time of the commencement of the amendment act. Amended sections 58G(2) and 58C will apply to an appeal that commenced on or after the commencement day of the amendment act or an appeal that commenced before the commencement day but not determined before that day.

The second amendment relates to the proper delegation of functions of the chief executive of the department in relation to the registration of administration of training contracts under part 7 of the VET act. These functions are largely administrative in nature and performed in large volume. For this reason, it is not practical for the chief executive to personally carry out these administrative functions, and they are typically delegated to the Department of Training and Workforce Development or department officers.

Regulation 35 of the Vocational Education and Training (General) Regulations 2009 currently provides for the chief executive to delegate functions. However, there is currently no provision in the act to support such delegations. Clause 6 of the bill will insert new section 60J at the beginning of division 4 of part 7 of the VET act to provide for delegation of the chief executive's functions under part 7 or regulations made for the purposes of this part. Section 60J will come into effect after regulation 35 is removed from the VET regulations through a regulatory amendment process after the passing of this amendment bill. These amendments are needed to enable a person's right to appeal and provide for the effective administration of the apprenticeship system.

During briefings, it was asked why the state government was progressing only two of the 11 recommendations from the statutory review of the VET act tabled in Parliament in 2019, as I mentioned previously. There have been a number of significant national skills sector reforms and reviews over the last few years with potential implications for the VET act. We have only recently signed the new five-year National Skills Agreement, and it is more appropriate to re-examine previous recommendations in the context of this new agreement, noting that the next statutory review of the act is due to commence in 2024.

The two matters before the Parliament relate to the operational processes and not the broader intent of the act. Therefore, it is appropriate that we move to resolve these operational aspects now and consider any substantive changes following the next statutory review.

It has been queried who could make an appeal. It has also been queried who can make an appeal to the State Training Board under the amendments and whether this appeal process was available only to RTOs. It was clarified that although a person who wishes to make an appeal is not limited to registered training organisations, in practice, it is unlikely that anyone other than an RTO or call-signer will lodge an appeal in relation to decisions of the Training Accreditation Council.

I am glad to see such strong support for the amendment bill across the chamber. I know that it is getting late, but I want to mention a couple of things that were raised during the debate, and I thank those who contributed to it. We heard from a number of members, including Acting Speaker (Ms A.E. Kent), who talked about the strategic importance of vocational education in Kalgoorlie and in the goldfields and the associated industries in her electorate. These benefits are obvious for not only the mining-related skills and the associated industries that support the mining industry, but also the other occupations and businesses that our community needs to thrive, whether it is in the health sector, the care sector, the early education sector and the like.

Similarly, the member for Collie–Preston acknowledged the importance of the VET training system in her electorate. Who better in this place to do that, apart from the member for Scarborough who has a VET qualification and probably is the only person with a trade qualification in this chamber, although I think the member for Pilbara might have a trade qualification as well. As the former vocational training coordinator and deputy principal of her high school before entering Parliament, the member for Collie–Preston is well placed to understand how the VET system interacts with her local high school students, her local high school and her local community. The changes that we are seeing in Collie in particular is a textbook case of a community in transition from fossil fuel mining activities and the generation of fossil-fuelled electricity at Collie to a new, cleaner industry. The member has been very committed to making sure that there is a just transition for her community and she is focused on it, as the Labor government has been since coming to office in 2017. The VET system, including the jobs and skills training centre in the middle of town, has been crucial in mapping the individuals who will be impacted by the closure of mines and the transition away from coal-fired energy in the state electricity generators in Collie. The government's attention has been bespoke and focused through the South Regional TAFE and the jobs and skills centres to make sure that each and every person has their own plan in place and that the necessary resources are applied to understand what their options are.

We heard from the member for Roe, who talked about the energy transition clause. He understood the complexity of that and I appreciate some of the comments that he made. Despite himself, he was quite generous by saying that TAFEs are heading in the right direction. He also acknowledged that it is good to see that the young people of Western Australia have access to options, including flexible learning opportunities. Later in his contribution, he

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had to concede that he did not want to dwell on the coalition's record on vocational training in government. He is a bit too honest despite himself. I appreciate the member for Roe's comments, because he is correct; the opposition would not want to focus on its record. It really got it wrong. A number of our members highlighted that point in their contributions.

The member for Roe talked about what he described as the paperwork requirements for people in trades who have undertaken a certificate IV in training and accreditation. That is the formal qualification needed to be a TAFE lecturer, apart from having technical skills in an area. These are quite important qualifications that we do not walk away from lightly. It is difficult for people who have technical skills in trade or other areas they teach to embark on their TAE—their cert IV—but it is very important. When people come into our TAFE system, they are supported a lot so they can get on and do their training, but I do not back away from the need for people to have those formal qualifications in teaching, learning and assessment, because we need people who are not only technically skilled, but also have the skills to impart that knowledge to a level that means our students will be competent. We have such a good high-quality vocational training system because we will not back away from requiring both those elements.

The member for Mirrabooka said she was proud of Balga TAFE in the heart of her electorate. The investment we are making to that college is really remarkable. The investment in upgrades for that TAFE and its equipment has totalled more than \$45 million, which is great.

I thank the member for Mount Lawley for his contribution. His contributions are always very considered. He made the point that we had so much to do because of the legacy of the coalition government that we took over from in 2017. Like the training system, the effects are not always immediately apparent. It can sometimes take time for the effects to wash through the system. Training apprentices is a three or four-year exercise. We have to think about down the track as well as about our immediate needs. That is something the previous government was incapable of doing. The repair work that we are doing now continues. He acknowledged the work of his local high school, as did the member for Cockburn. They understand the importance of the career practitioners in high schools. The member for Cockburn was also able to pull out some figures of the Barnett government's record on TAFE and its inability to understand the investment this represents in our economy. Our best natural asset is our people.

I am very conscious of the time, so I will not dwell on this, but I want to acknowledge a couple of important demonstrations of what we are doing. A couple of weeks ago, the Australian Training Awards were held in Hobart. Two WA women took out the top awards at the ceremony. Amy Hunt from Kingsley was named apprentice of the year. She is the only woman and the youngest cable jointer at her worksite, which, of course, is Western Power. She did not really get the accolades she deserves, but everyone here should feel very proud of Amy. I know that the Minister for Energy was really chuffed to see that. Craigie's Holly Gudsell was named Australian VET teacher/trainer of the year. A teaching position in a remote Aboriginal community in Fitzroy Crossing was the catalyst for Holly's change of career. She discovered an interest in Aboriginal education. She has done some work overseas and is now delivering programs for the Department of Education to upskill Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander officers across the Perth metropolitan schools.

There is so much more that I could demonstrate, including the numbers of enrolments in vocational training and completions, which are all up. We are working on not only getting people in, but also tailoring specific programs, which we heard about from members in their contributions, to make sure that we are targeting the areas of need, such as the skilled career taster programs that a number of members talked about in their local high schools. We heard about the incredible opportunities that some of the students in Collie have had through the career taster program. The job-ready programs are short and sharp entry-level programs that are available, and I have met young people whose lives have been changed by them. We are putting in place regional incentives for lecturers or students to make sure that we really understand what is required in our regions. We are doing all that work in vocational education and training. TAFE is the cornerstone of that, although I absolutely acknowledge the work of private providers in the system. They all mean that we have a vocational training system in Western Australia at the moment that is in rude health. It is really going very well. There is more to do—no doubt about it—but we have a solid foundation in our TAFEs, our Department of Training and Workforce Development and our robust regulatory system. I must say that not all states and jurisdictions have that. I was in the United Kingdom a couple of months ago, and it is not in this position. It is very envious of the strong system that we are building here in Western Australia.

With those remarks, I commend the bill to the house.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

[Leave granted to proceed forthwith to third reading.]

Third Reading

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 28 November 2023]

p6667b-6685a

Ms Alison Kent; Ms Jodie Hanns; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Meredith Hammat; Mr Simon Millman; Mr David Scaife; Ms Simone McGurk

Bill read a third time, on motion by **Ms S.F. McGurk (Minister for Training)**, and transmitted to the Council.

House adjourned at 7.02 pm

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 28 November 2023]

p6667b-6685a

Ms Alison Kent; Ms Jodie Hanns; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Meredith Hammat; Mr Simon Millman; Mr David Scaife; Ms Simone McGurk
