

## TAFE COURSE FEES

### *Motion*

Resumed from 25 February on the following motion moved by Mr F.M. Logan —

That this house condemns the Barnett government for its massive increase in TAFE course fees and its sustained undermining of TAFE.

**MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Minister for Training and Workforce Development)** [5.11 pm]: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker, for the opportunity to continue my remarks on this motion with respect to TAFE fees and a range of other issues affecting the training sector in Western Australia that was brought before the house on Wednesday, 25 February in private members' business. Just to reiterate where the state government is coming from with this policy initiative, there were repeated and standard grievances raised as part of that debate that related to increases in fees, specifically with respect to the jump in fees when Future Skills WA was launched, projected further increases and a range of other issues on behalf of constituents on how fee increases have negatively impacted on them. I will take the opportunity to correct the record on some statements. Some of the statements about costs were accurate; however, in a number of instances it appears that there may have been incorrect information either recalled by the individuals or possibly provided to the individual by the TAFEs concerned.

Just to cover some of the issues, since the 1990s, generally speaking, fees for training within our institutes have not kept pace with increases in delivery costs, which has led to an increasingly unsustainable training system. Prior to Future Skills WA, the state on average subsidised around 93 per cent of the total cost of training, and even with the change to the fee structure, the state continues to heavily subsidise training to the tune of 80 per cent, on average, of the total cost of running the course. A number of measures have been put in place to assist students with meeting costs and they are available to students. Some of those initiatives are an annual course fee cap of \$410 per year, which is available to students who are of secondary school age in 2015. I will come back to that matter later when I address some of the concerns of individual constituents. There is a 50 per cent concession for eligible students on lower incomes and there is also a HECS-style loan for students studying diplomas and advanced diplomas through the VET-FEE HELP scheme. This means that there will be no upfront fees for those students who qualify for VET-FEE HELP and students do not need to make repayments until they earn over \$50 000 a year.

There were a range of constituent queries, so I have asked the department to look into specific constituent issues. I also encourage members to write to me regarding specific issues with their constituents that I perhaps do not manage to address appropriately in this response so I can then further interrogate any particular problems not addressed to their satisfaction or other specific issues that might arise around these individuals.

I will first speak to the member for Mandurah Cockburn's remarks regarding the granddaughter of one of his constituents, Joy Ware. The assertion was that Joy's granddaughter was required to pay her course fees upfront or she would be refused enrolment and the fees for her certificate II course were nearly \$3 000. We have had a look at this case and we have not been able to find information to identify the actual individual. I request that the member for Mandurah member for Cockburn provide contact details for this constituent so that we can provide assistance and look into the specific issues. Training providers can offer students enrolling in a state-funded course access to payment by instalments. I think it is highly unlikely that a TAFE would not have offered this option and would have refused enrolment, because they tend to bend over backwards to try to get those students across the line, get them enrolled in the colleges and obviously get them locked into training, because the TAFEs are really interested in ensuring that people are trained to industry standards and are actually working towards employment.

The member for Gosnells raised an issue about his constituent Jason. According to the member for Gosnells Jason tried to enrol in a certificate II in cabinet and furniture making at TAFE thinking it was a six-month course that would cost \$1 500, but he was then subsequently told that the course would cost \$3 000. I believe this information was incorrect. Jason was enrolled as a concession student in 2014 and paid \$1 254 in course fees and a further \$335 in resource and other fees—so about \$1 590 in total. The course fee for this pre-apprenticeship course in 2015 is \$1 488 for a non-concession student and \$744 for a concession student, and the total fee in 2015 for a non-concession student is around \$1 993 at Polytechnic West, so quite different from the \$3 000 that was quoted. It appears his constituent may have received some incorrect information and this does happen from time to time.

**Ms S.F. McGurk:** Do you understand that that is \$2 000 for a pre-apprenticeship with no guarantee of an apprenticeship after that—so no guarantee of a position after that pre-apprenticeship. That is an enormous amount for people to fork out.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Once people engage in those pre-apprenticeship courses, we have a very good record of locking those people into apprenticeships that will then lead to employment, and that is the whole point of pre-apprenticeship courses.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** I did not say 100 per cent. I said a significant number of those students in pre-apprenticeship courses will go on —

**Mr M.P. Murray:** That is 25 per cent who have to pay the fee and do not get anything back.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** That is 75 per cent who do go on to further education or further training—not necessarily into apprenticeships. Some of them go on to other training pathways. I will request that the member for Gosnells give us the contact details of that particular student or that Jason contacts the TAFE directly so we can ensure he gets the right information. Sometimes the way the courses are structured is confusing and people look at courses and do not understand that the fee listed is for the entirety of the course and things like that. I am not suggesting that that happened in this case, but I encourage the member for Gosnells to ask his constituent Jason to contact the relevant TAFE, or even my office or the Department of Training and Workforce Development, and we can work through these issues with him.

One of the other issues the member for Gosnells raised, which is being addressed—it is known to my Department of Training and Workforce Development, which is engaging with TAFEs on the matter—is that of his constituent called Lauren Adams who is enrolled in a certificate III in education support, which now costs \$2 740 for a six-month course compared to \$600 previously. That was a significant rise. However, it was asserted that Lauren had missed out on getting out the concession for students under 18 years of age by three months. When she enrolled in January, she was 17 years and nine months of age, but she had to be 17 years and six months or younger to be eligible for the under-18 concession. The way the \$410 fee cap works is that it should apply to students who have started schooling at a later age than usual or repeated a year—basically students who would be eligible to be in school for that year. The Department of Training and Workforce Development has been reviewing this matter and has advised TAFEs to confirm students' details with their schools prior to their enrolment to ensure that they would be treated as any other year 12 student would be, regardless of their age. Should they be eligible for a year 12 placement in high school, they would then be eligible for the \$410 fee cap on their courses. We will be contacting the member for Gosnells and asking if that individual could get in contact with us so that we could advise her directly, or even via the member's office.

The member for Cockburn raised a number of issues about course fee caps and fee increases. One of the issues raised was that the maximum cap of \$2 000 per semester on fees paid by apprentices for their courses is being removed. The \$2 500 cap is gone as of this year. The \$2 500 course fee cap was introduced in 2014 and is applied annually per course not per semester. That fee cap was removed in 2015, but there is a little bit of confusion about whether it applied per semester or per year. The member also claimed that a person studying a certificate IV in mental health at the West Coast Institute would have originally paid just over \$600, but in 2015 would pay \$2 800. Our contact with the West Coast Institute revealed that the approximate fees for a certificate IV in mental health at the West Coast Institute would cost a non-concession student \$2 057 in 2015. That includes a resource fee of \$212.

There was also some talk about the childcare industry and the requirement of a minimum qualification to work in the childcare industry—in this case, the minimum qualification is a diploma. The minimum qualification to work in the childcare industry is currently a certificate III level. The approximate course fee for a certificate III in child care is around \$2 500. With respect to diploma level qualifications, there is the diploma of early childhood education and care. That is typically delivered over two years and attracts an annual course fee of \$4 933 in 2015. The total course fee for the full qualification is approximately \$10 000. I think it is important to note that all of those course fees were previously funded by the federal government that has now withdrawn its funding for those programs. They are delivered at a cost. People who engage in those diploma level qualifications are eligible for VET FEE-HELP. I caveat that we are keeping a watching brief on these fees to ensure that people are enrolling in priority occupations that form the basis of the Future Skills WA policy implementation and that we are not seeing any unintended consequences in enrolments and other things as a result of the introduction of the increases in some of the fees. We also note that all of these courses in the priority occupation areas are funded—and will continue to be funded—by the state government to the tune of up to 80 per cent as an average.

There were claims that the course fees over a two-year period for a diploma of early childhood education and care could go as high as \$14 000 or \$15 000. The indicative course fee rate for 2017 for those courses is \$10 475; significantly less than the estimation of \$14 000 to \$15 000. As I said, we are keeping a watching brief on these fees and enrolments and VET FEE-HELP is available to students, and they do not need to pay a cent for that course until they are earning \$50 000 or more. The member for Cockburn also claimed that the construction industry training courses at Bunbury TAFE will be closed. We have been contact with the South West Institute of Technology and it has advised that there are a number of trade areas where apprenticeship enrolments are very low and expensive to run on a per-student basis. SWIT is working on an

alternative delivery model and making sure that this alternative model for that apprenticeship training will be acceptable to industry and also be viable to operate that training program. I think we all agree that the training sector needs to be sustainable into the future and that we need to ensure that the training prioritises those areas where we know there is going to be a future demand for jobs and where we know the growth is going to be in particular industry sectors. We therefore know that the government's investment of a minimum of 80 per cent in subsidising those training courses is going into training people for employment, and that employment then contributes to the economy.

Another aspect that I need to address with the member for Cockburn is, and I quote from *Hansard* —

The Department of Training and Workforce Development, in its “State Training Plan 2014–2017”, determined through an econometric modelling exercise—that is, a desktop theoretical modelling exercise—how much funding should go into the budget of state training providers for the period 2014 to 2017. That was based on the belief by the department of training that there would not be an increase in demand for apprentices in the construction industry over the time of the “State Training Plan 2014–2017”.

That proposition was put into the econometric model, and what came out was a significant cut to construction industry training across the state training providers.

I think we need to put this modelling in context. The state training plan shows a slight decrease in relativity for construction trades workers, and by slight I mean it goes from 6.4 per cent to 6.2 per cent. This is a decrease in relativity against other occupational groups. That reflects a range of indicators and forecasts provided to the Department of Training and Workforce Development. The department liaises with and pulls information from a range of very credible third-party sources that also provide information to other government agencies and other states —

**Mr M.P. Murray:** Minister, a serious interjection: is there any study done about before the event? Did you make a decision not go down that path because it is too expensive?

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** No. Future Skills WA came out of a range of policy initiatives around trying to channel the apprenticeships and the traineeships and students into the priority areas where the modelling tells us the jobs are going to come from. A range of courses was being offered by the institutes that the government was also subsidising, and we are using the government subsidisation of courses as a lever to propel students into the areas of priority. There are 60 priority areas that have been identified by the Australian government that are included as part of our strategy. It is actually designed around effective training that is relevant to industry, and the competencies are relevant to industry and accepted by industry. We do that in consultation with industry and also looking at the modelling to see which areas of the economy we expect that the employment is going to come from. It is quite complex modelling, but when we look at the figures, that policy leader of the heaviest subsidisation of the priority areas and less subsidisation of the non-priority areas has meant an uptake of students. I might caveat that these are preliminary figures, but there has been an uptake of students going into those areas of priority training where we want them.

**Mr M.P. Murray:** Which is the point I am making. So they are going into the course for financial considerations not because that is their chosen job.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** The member for Collie–Preston makes a good point because this is the state government and the taxpayers of Western Australia who are putting money into supporting students through a training program and apprenticeship program. We want to make sure that that is actually money well spent and leads to employment so that those students can then be part of our economic future and be contributing to the state and to the Australian economy as a whole. If students want to take up courses that are of interest to them but do not lead to employment, the question is should the taxpayer be funding those programs. I put it to the member that I do not think that is a desirable outcome.

**Mr M.P. Murray:** I understand that. But as a person who has come through the TAFE system, what happens is that people do not always get it right. Also, as the circle goes around, there may be a shortage here or there, so we have to change the circle. Time and again in my 50-odd years, I have seen that happen. The reaction is always too slow—I am not talking about this government; I am talking overall—and the time taken to train is too slow, and then another cycle is coming through. It is very dangerous to just do it by design, I suppose.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** The member for Collie–Preston has raised an important point. The challenge in the modelling and the challenge in any policy lever of government is to put in place a system that is flexible and that can respond in time to feed into the peaks and troughs of the cycles. We know from the boom-bust pattern in the mining industry that industries have a natural cycle. The art is in trying to predict where the numbers need to be to make sure that we are filling the places and feeding the needs of industry as it goes into the upswing.

In trying to determine where the demand will come from for construction trade workers and other occupational groups, the modelling that we use is consistent with that in the Chamber of Minerals and Energy's recent growth outlook. The chamber forecasts in its growth outlook a decrease in the need for construction workers in the resource industry due to moderation in the pipeline of major projects. In addition, the state training plan noted that although data sources and industry intelligence suggest that conditions in residential construction are improving, the demand for skilled construction workers from residential building was likely to be offset over the coming years by the ending of construction works on major resource projects. Under Future Skills, we guarantee a training subsidy for all apprenticeships, including construction trade apprenticeships.

Western Australia has a very robust training system, and we have a pretty good record, because 50 per cent of the people who do pre-apprenticeships go on to become full apprentices. It takes three years to train an apprentice. However, trying to pull the policy triggers and get apprentices into a cycle, and trying to predict three years ahead of time when that cycle will take off, is a big challenge for the government and for our training institutions, and also for industry. Therefore, industry has been consulted as part of our plan. We are also liaising closely with our industry consultative bodies to ensure that we respond to their needs and that they engage with the econometric modelling and take advantage of the other reports and information that are available through the different sources used by the Department of Training and Workforce Development. We are trying to predict as accurately as we can where we need to put our apprenticeship and traineeship effort so that in three years' time we can respond appropriately to the needs of industry. However, unfortunately, it is not an exact science. We therefore need to review our plan regularly to ensure that it remains current.

The member for Albany raised some issues about course fees and diploma courses. I think it is pretty important that I address a couple of those issues. One of the comments made was that by 2017, it will be more expensive per student hour to be enrolled in a certificate course than in a diploma course. The indicative course fee rate for general industry training is \$6.05 per nominal hour and is higher than the fee for a diploma and advanced diploma at \$6.02 per nominal hour. But, at a 3c difference, it is sitting at around the same cost of delivery. There was also a claim that the 20 per cent loan fee is applied to VET FEE-HELP loans for government-subsidised training. I want to make it clear that students who are doing government-subsidised training do not pay the 20 per cent VET FEE-HELP loan fee.

**Mr P.B. Watson:** I do not think I mentioned that.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** I think it was part of the dialogue, and it was included in some of the things the member was saying, so I wanted to make sure that is on the record.

The diploma and advanced diploma course enrolments are charged at the diploma and advanced diploma course fee rates. That is regardless of whether the course is included in the priority industry qualifications list. The diploma in conservation and land management and the diploma in horticulture have strong enrolment numbers. But it is important to note that the enrolments are charged at the diploma and advanced diploma course fee rates regardless of whether the course is on the PIQL.

The member for Albany raised some issues around the diploma of early childhood education and care, which I addressed earlier. The member also raised some issues around the Great Southern Institute of Technology. The Great Southern Institute of Technology will be dropping a number of courses because of lack of student enrolments. Colleges sometimes struggle to attract students to courses, and they have to respond to that. It is very expensive to deliver these courses.

**Mr P.B. Watson:** Excuse me for interjecting, but for a lot of courses that is because people cannot afford to do them.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** The colleges also need to have a cohort of students to make engagement in the course an enjoyable experience for the students. However, in the same context, courses also need to be sustainably delivered by the lecturers and the institutes.

**Mr P.B. Watson:** I understand that. But people in the metropolitan area can go from one college to another. For people in Albany, the next closest college is in Bunbury, or Perth, so they cannot do the course. The high schools have a link-up with other areas. Albany Senior High School does some of its courses in conjunction with Mt Barker and Denmark and other areas. I cannot see why TAFE cannot do the same thing so that people will not have to send their kids to Perth.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** It is important to look at the range of courses that the institutes are offering. There is a diploma of sustainability, a certificate III in laboratory skills and a certificate IV in environmental monitoring and technology. Although a particular college may not get the student numbers that would warrant the delivery of those specific courses, there may be a range of similar courses to which we can direct students who have an interest in a specific occupational area. Those students could then go into a course that the majority would see as relevant to their area of interest, and also into courses that are part of our priority training areas. We are seeing

strong enrolments in GSIT in courses that are similar to the ones that have been dropped due to lack of student numbers. So, there is a flow through, and often there is also some overlap in the delivery of certain courses in particular subject areas.

The member for Midland claimed that arts courses are no longer being run at the Midland campus of Polytechnic West. I would like to cover off on that. A certificate IV diploma and advanced diploma in applied environmental arts was offered at the Midland campus of Polytechnic West in 2013. Those courses were discontinued in 2014 because of declining student demand over the previous few years. Also, the accreditation of those courses expired in May 2013, and that means that they can no longer be delivered by training providers. When people see fee rises, the immediate assumption is that those fee rises are the reason courses are no longer being delivered. Sometimes a range of factors go into the decision-making of the various training providers in institutes that lead to the decision of councils and managing directors to no longer provide that course. It is not necessarily always to do with course fees; sometimes it is to do with the interest, or local economies and a range of other issues.

The member for Mandurah raised a number of issues. One issue related to students being given no warning of course fee increases and some students being forced to discontinue their courses. I am reluctant to invite any interjections while the member for Mandurah is not in his seat—I do not think the member will find this controversial—but to cover off on that: the new fee structure was announced on 22 August 2013. That provided time for students enrolling in semester 1, 2014, to understand the new fees. All students who enrolled —

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** If the minister reads my speech she will find that I said that many students were shocked, when they went to enrol, about the costs they were facing. That was what I said. Even then, most of them, until they turned up to enrol, were not aware of the vast differences in fee structures. That was the point I made.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** I understand that. That is one of the vexing issues in the cohort of students we are dealing with. Often, young people do not necessarily make their decision about the program or the course they are going to enrol in until a very short time before enrolment. Notwithstanding the fact there was ample notification given, the very nature of young people is that they do not necessarily spend a lot of time preparing for their enrolment and doing the preparatory work with respect to fees—even simple things like transport; how they will get to the institute. Part of the reason Future Skills WA has been constructed in the way that it has is that students will often think they are interested in a particular area—which is great—but we really want to train students in an area that we know will lead to employment. Ultimately, once they are employed, they can return to the training institutes and complete additional programs in areas that are of interest to them. Value-adding to an educational curriculum vitae is a fantastic thing. I would encourage anybody to take that on and consider it. All training is good training, as far as I am concerned, but when it comes to state-subsidised training it really needs to be prioritised in the areas that will allow people to go into the workplace and contribute to the economic future of the state.

I return to the fee structure announcement on 22 August 2013. That provided time for students enrolling in semester 1, 2014, to understand the new fees. All students who enrolled before semester 1, 2014, were given access to course fee maintenance for any units undertaken in 2014 to ensure students were not disadvantaged if they had enrolled under a previous fee structure. The government has been working with students. We want them to stay in the system. The institutes are doing whatever they can to assist students who may be having some issues with paying fees et cetera. Payment by instalments is offered to students. A wide range of students take advantage of that. Those programs are run through individual TAFEs.

An assertion was made by the member for Mandurah that course enrolments had dropped by 26 per cent. That was probably based on Minister Hames' statements in Parliament on the reduction in general industry training for the July period. That might be where that figure came from. I quoted later in the debate that course enrolments declined approximately four per cent overall and course enrolments in priority-industry training increased by nine per cent. Those are preliminary figures. I am reluctant to put out figures that have not been validated. The 2014 data is still not validated. It takes a little assessment and analysis before we are prepared to put figures out into the marketplace, to ensure that it accurately reflects the state of training in this state.

An opposition member interjected.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** That is usually released—it is either one or two quarters after the end of the year. I would need to check that. Up until this point I have not been the Minister for Training and Workforce Development when that data has been released. I understand that it would usually be released around midyear. I probably need to get back to the member about that.

In my contribution last week I addressed some of the issues raised by the member for Kimberley. The member raised a number of issues with respect to Aboriginal training in the Kimberley. The government has a very strong commitment to try to bring Aboriginal people into employment. It has put significant investment into training facilities in the Kimberley. It is important to provide the right kind of mentoring environment to Aboriginal people, particularly people who may have been living in remote towns for a period before they came into the

training system. We are very cognisant of that fact. We are trying to work with agencies from the not-for-profit sector to ensure we support those students to get them the best possible outcomes to lead to employment. It is a space that I feel very passionate about. I work with the Minister for Indigenous Affairs on some of those issues to ensure we do everything that we can to bring Aboriginal people through the training pathway.

I acknowledge that in regional and remote areas the challenge is in the jobs situation. That is one area that we engage in in remote communities and regional areas, to ensure that we are doing the best we can. Another policy that was announced only last week was an increase in the travel and accommodation allowances for students in remote areas. Part of the increase in those allowances also applies to lecturers. Sometimes the sustainability of the regional and remote campuses is linked into their ability to retain full-time lecturing staff, for example. It may be that we work with those institutes to look at the programs they need to offer and use that travel scheme to fly a lecturer to deliver particular course content. That assists the institute in remaining sustainable in delivering course content without necessarily retaining a full-time employee as part of it. There are opportunities for colleges in regional areas to partner with some of the colleges in the metropolitan area, and using some economies of scale in partnerships that way, to deliver a wider range of programs. That is a conversation that we are engaging in with the department; around buddies, if you like, in trying to deliver a broad suite of courses across the state.

**Mr P.B. Watson:** Do they not already do it?

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** They do, but do they do it as effectively as they possibly could? Are they doing it as well as they could? I think we can always improve the delivery of courses in those areas. That is something that I feel quite passionate about; I am a bit of a country girl myself.

When we look at course enrolments and industry cycles, there are always ebbs and flows with course enrolments. Quite often apprentice and trainee enrolments will follow industry trends. Our challenge is to try to have the enrolments ahead of the industry trend. That is why we do the economic modelling and engage with all these other organisations to try to get the best data we can so that we can respond to that as a government and ensure that we are channelling students into the areas that we need them. I have just received some information from my adviser that the fully validated data on enrolments for 2014 will be available at the end of March, so it is the end of the first quarter. It will be interesting.

Training is a really exciting space to be in as a minister. I was at the West Coast Institute awards night on, I think, Monday—the nights all blend into one in this place—but it was very exciting to see some of the students and acknowledge some of their achievements. One of the students who received an award at West Coast Institute of TAFE was actually a Broome local who has been training at West Coast Institute in human services delivery and has been through her program. It is a really good achievement and a very exciting outcome. One particular individual is a foster mother of eight children who has gone back into the training sector. She figured that as her twin boys are now eight years old, it was time for her to re-enter the workplace. I can only imagine how difficult it must be for a person to take that step. What an amazing woman, being a mother to eight children—she is a grandmother to seven! I think she is my age; she might have been a little younger—she is a little ahead of me with her progress on that! But she is a huge contributor to the community, and she has now undertaken training in a sector where she has a great personal story to tell, being a foster mother and a foster carer. She has a great understanding of the needs of the area she is going into, and clearly a passion for it. She has already been contributing to it, and now she is trained in that area. I expect she will have a long line of employers who want to snap her up and get cracking and get her out into the workplace.

The student of the year at West Coast Institute was a young lady called Emma Grant. Emma is sensational. She was a qualified teacher, if I recall correctly, who decided that her vocation was in early childhood education so she has gone back through the training sector to increase her skills base in that early childhood space. The member for Kimberley might be the recipient of her enthusiasm and passion because she wants to go into regional Western Australia and deal with early childhood education and make sure that our children in regional WA get the very best of early childhood education and the very best skill set they could possibly have to ensure that they can move through our economy and have the very best opportunities afforded to them. It was a really inspiring evening. Some employers who had been very proactive in the training space were awarded. It is not always easy for employers to take on trainees and apprentices; they actually cost more money at the beginning than they ever deliver. There is a cost to productivity in taking on apprentices and trainees, but the employers do it out of a love of their industry and out of a love of being involved in the lives of those people who take on the apprenticeships and traineeships. They are willing to bear the cost of that investment in a young person because it is so inspiring for them when those young people graduate; the finalists who were awarded included plasterers and electricians. One fellow went through the university system and has a Bachelor of Commerce, and he later decided that food was his passion. He is now working at one of the eateries in Perth as a chef after going through the training course at West Coast Institute of TAFE. The TAFE has formed really good partnerships with some of the best eateries in town to ensure that its apprentices are getting exposure to the best menus and working with

chefs who are at the forefront of the creativity in the food space. A really interesting collection of people are involved in the training space, from the lecturers, who received some awards as well, right through to the students and the employers who engage in the space, and of course sitting behind that are our training institutes and the Department of Training and Workforce Development. We are all really working together under the banner of Future Skills WA to try to ensure that we get those apprentices, trainees and students moving into training that leads to employment to contribute to the future benefit of all Western Australians and the future economy of the state.

I hope I have responded to the concerns raised by members in this place. I expect that training is going to be one of those topics that will continue to engage debate in this place. I will be keeping a watching brief on the effect of the fees and making sure that Future Skills WA is achieving the policy initiative of government. Also, I will be keeping a very close eye on any unintended consequences that may emerge. Another factor sitting out there is the half-year cohort. A lower number of students have been graduating through the school system, which will then obviously result in a lower number of students moving through the training system. We need to have a look at the impact that will have on not only the sustainability of the training sector, but also the ability for us to provide skills into the workplace. That is one of the other areas of interest that the government is keeping a very close watch on.

In conclusion, I would like to thank members for their contribution to the debate. It has been really interesting to hear the views of people with regard to training. I look forward to continuing to engage as Minister for Training and Workforce Development and ensuring we have a sustainable, contemporary training sector that is relevant to industry and provides industry competency.

**MS S.F. MCGURK (Fremantle)** [5.57 pm]: I wanted to make a contribution to this motion as well. I am not sure I will get much time, and I think after dinner we will be seeking to adjourn this debate, but I will commence some comments on things with which I have had some involvement.

I was a member of the State Training Board for more than four years and participated in some of the debate, along with the state government and employers, sitting around the State Training Board table; I was representing UnionsWA, of course. I think this is an interesting time for the vocational training sector, and the minister addressed a number of issues in her response. One issue is that at the same time as the entitlement model was being adopted in Western Australia through the state government's manifestation called Future Skills WA in 2014, the TAFE system was being burdened with quite significant funding cuts and staff reductions, including a policy decision of this state government to embark on some very significant fee increases. Members who spoke before me have outlined those increases and given practical examples, and the minister gave the example of a diploma in child care costing about \$10 000; there have been enormous fee increases. There has been the coming together of the adoption in Western Australia of the entitlement model, the cuts to TAFE budgets across the state, about 200 redundancies announced in the midyear review for the state training providers in Western Australia, and at the same time massive fee increases for people undergoing TAFE courses in Western Australia. I will leave my comments for a later time, but I seek leave to continue my remarks at a later stage.

[Leave granted for the member's speech to be continued at a later sitting.]

Debate thus adjourned.

*Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm*