

CORONAVIRUS — STATE ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN — TAFE

674. Mrs R.M.J. CLARKE to the Premier:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's \$5.5 billion recovery plan, which includes an unprecedented investment in TAFE and training.

Can the Premier update the house on how this government's investment is helping those Western Australians affected by the economic impacts of COVID-19, to retrain and reskill particularly those in the Peel region?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I thank the member for Murray–Wellington for the question. Our recovery plan relies very heavily on a record investment in TAFE across Western Australia. We have put in place a significant reduction in TAFE fees, unlike the previous government, which put up TAFE fees by up to 500 per cent for ordinary Western Australians who want to go to TAFE. We launched our lower fees, local skills policy late last year for 34 high-priority courses. We followed up with a further 39 higher priority courses in July this year as part of our recovery plan. That saw many course fees cut by up to 72 per cent across Western Australia. It means that it will be far easier for some workers displaced or some people wanting to retrain. At some of the TAFE colleges, particularly the one in Albany that I visited, I met people undergoing a nursing qualification, who were very excited and had a role, because fees were far more affordable.

We have seen a huge surge in the number of enrolments in those priority courses; they have increased by more than 20 per cent since we have put in place these changes, which is a record increase. Across regional WA, there has been a massive increase in enrolments. In the Peel region, enrolments are up by 278 students, and this complements our \$9.17 million investment in Mandurah TAFE. In the great southern, enrolments are up by 422 students and that complements our \$17 million investment in the trades workshop at Albany South Regional TAFE. In the south west, enrolments are up by 372 students. Obviously, some of our investments in TAFE down there will work well as a consequence. We have seen strong growth in certificate III courses across a range of areas—electrotechnology, electricians, early childhood education care, civil construction plant operations and hospitality, with thousands of additional students enrolling in those courses. Our investment in infrastructure and in making fees more affordable will pay long-term dividends for Western Australia. Making sure that Western Australians can access TAFE is a very important part of our state's recovery from COVID. This government is getting on and doing it with hundreds of millions of dollars of additional investment in TAFE infrastructure and making courses more affordable. What is more, the Labor Party is the only party that supports TAFE in Western Australia. The record shows that this government, compared with the last government, has put far more effort into TAFE.