

PUBLIC TRANSPORT AUTHORITY — EMPLOYEES

3033. Hon Ken Travers to the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for Transport:

I refer to the Public Transport Authority's decision to employ workers from overseas to bolster inspections of overhead power wires on the train system, and I ask:

- (a) what steps did the Public Transport Authority take to recruit workers locally;
- (b) what training programs has the Public Transport Authority had in place to train and source workers locally;
- (c) what training programs do the Public Transport Authority propose to put in place to ensure a local supply of highly trained and skilled workers;
- (d) what actions have the Public Transport Authority taken to ensure all reports of defects on the train network are formalised in writing; and
- (e) on what date did these actions commence?

Hon Jim Chown replied:

- (a) The Public Transport Authority (PTA) regularly advertises vacant Overhead Catenary Maintainer (OCM) positions within Australia. Despite this, the PTA has faced ongoing difficulties attracting suitably qualified and experienced OCM staff. The PTA has been able to attract Trainees, who are then able to progress to Authorised and Nominated positions as they acquire competence. However, attracting Advanced and Seniors (the main workforce) is difficult.

In 2011, the PTA expanded its OCM position and began to recruit Trainee staff in anticipation of the Perth City Link (PCL) project. The intent was to increase the number of Trainees employed to backfill the release of more experienced OCM staff whose experience and expertise were required for the PCL project.

Whilst the PTA successfully recruited four Trainee Maintainers from the local employment market in April 2011, there were still eight vacant OCM positions in mid-2011.

- (b) The PTA has a structured programme which provides inexperienced people within WA with the opportunity to work through a structured pathway in order to achieve a qualification, being Certificate III ESI Rail Traction, which is the relevant qualification for an OCM. The new recruits start as a Trainee (Level 1) and progress through the pathway at a rate that is matched to their ability. Due to the high risk nature of the work, Trainees are not permitted to carry out activities for which they have not undertaken required theoretical and on the job training and been assessed as competent. An experienced buddy/mentor works with each of the Trainees to allow them to put into practice the theory they have learnt. This approach ensures the safety of all overhead staff and is in line with the legislative safe working requirements.
- (c) This year the PTA will commence the trial of an internal career development pathway designed to expand the number of entry points for PTA staff who display the aptitude and skills to enter into not only OCM work but other infrastructure maintenance work. This provides an alternative to the traditional occupational based Trainee. If successful, this will allow a more generic Trainee to be recruited who can then develop into the various infrastructure disciplines (including Signal Maintainers and Overhead Maintainers). They will still be required to complete any mandatory qualification training and on the job work to ensure there is no competency gap. There are a number of routes the individual can take. Each option is made up of structured training with the relevant qualification linked to each role. The pathway provides an opportunity to bring new local people into the PTA and grow them internally, thus ensuring we have the supply of highly trained and skilled workers required to ensure that transport services run smoothly.
- (d)–(e) The PTA has taken the following actions to improve its process to formally capture and record defects:
 - Re-briefing staff and making improvements to the processes used to populate the work management system. This action commenced in July 2014.
 - Development of a handbook which is issued to staff as a work instruction. This action commenced in December 2014.