

METRONET — PROJECTS — TRAINING AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

**32. MR S.J. PRICE to the Minister Assisting the Minister for Training and Workforce Development:**

I refer to the Cook Labor government's commitment to providing quality training opportunities for all Western Australians.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how the extension of the Whiteman Park tramline to the new Metronet Malaga station will provide hands-on training opportunities for students at North Metropolitan TAFE in Midland?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how this opportunity is building a pipeline of skilled workers for the rail industry?

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister Assisting the Minister for Training and Workforce Development.

**Ms H.M. BEAZLEY replied:**

- (1)–(2) Thank you, Speaker, and I acknowledge that that is a mouthful! I thank the member for Forrestfield for my first question in Parliament as a minister. I acknowledge the member's longstanding commitment to Western Australian workers and training our future workforce.

The announcement on Sunday by the Premier and Deputy Premier; Minister of Transport to extend the Whiteman Park tramline to the new Metronet Whiteman Park train station was fantastic for Whiteman Park, for North Metropolitan TAFE, current and future students, and our local rail industry. I thank and congratulate them both. As the Deputy Premier said yesterday, the project will connect the old with the new. As Minister Assisting the Minister for Training and Workforce Development, I could not be prouder of the partnership between Metronet and North Metropolitan TAFE on this project. That partnership will see two cohorts of TAFE students involved in the project, a trainee program for proponents involved with the delivery of the Whiteman Park station and an entry-level pathway program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students preparing for careers in rail. Students in the Koomba Birdal Big Spark Program will learn trackside work skills, including onsite safety and maintenance. Rail industry TAFE students will receive hands-on training, including with a purpose-built rail welding truck. The students will work onsite constructing the rail, supervised by North Metropolitan TAFE's experienced rail lecturers. All students will also have exposure to and contact with future employers working on Metronet. Our local rail industry will benefit from trainees who will have the practical, hands-on skills to successfully transition to a rail infrastructure work crew.

The Cook government understands the transformative role of training and education. We know that it improves lives. That is why we are committed to building partnerships like this one between Metronet and our North Metro TAFE. It is why we have boosted access to quality education with fee-free and low-fee TAFE courses and invested massively in our TAFE campuses across the state. As all here know, the WA Labor government has prioritised creating local skills and jobs. As the Premier mentioned yesterday, for nearly a century we have built and maintained nearly all the rail rolling stock and train engines in the Midland workshops. Sadly, under the Liberal–National government of the day, they were decimated, and that government, as we all know, ripped the heart out of that workforce community and closed the Midland workshops in the 1990s. The government of those opposite was the death of railcar manufacturing in WA, and this Labor government has brought it back to life. As we all know, under the last Liberal–National government, TAFE fees were hiked by over 500 per cent, course enrolments plummeted, and the number of student enrolments crashed. Under our WA Labor government, our TAFEs and their role in supporting local jobs and industries are tracking—do not pardon the pun; it is there intentionally!—one way, and that is up. There are now more than 130 fee-free courses at TAFE, and student enrolments are growing. Last year there were almost 39 500 enrolments in fee-free TAFE courses. Enrolments for 2024 are still being finalised; however, there have been a record number of applications to study fee-free courses in 2024. The Cook government's investment in fee-free TAFE training is supporting thousands of Western Australian students to kick off their training in 2024 and prepare for the workforce of the future.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Cottesloe with the last question.