

TAFEWA, RETENTION OF 15 TO 19-YEAR-OLDS IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

1267. Mr N.R. MARLBOROUGH to the Minister for Education and Training:

Will the minister advise the House of the role of TAFEWA in retaining 15 to 19-year-olds in education and training?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER replied:

I thank the member for Peel for the question. I acknowledge his involvement in a range of strategies and initiatives across Western Australia to improve the outcomes in training, for which he is being widely recognised. I therefore thank him very much for that.

I acknowledge that the Government has changed TAFE twice by bringing down the number of colleges to 12 and recently bringing them under the umbrella of TAFEWA. Applications to study with TAFEWA are on target to reach an all-time high. A record number of people have applied to study full-time courses that will commence next year. As at September, 14 500 people had applied to study at TAFEWA in the first semester of 2004, an 11.5 per cent increase in the past two years. The final number of applications will be higher, as they are still being accepted, and more than 4 000 additional applications are anticipated to be made. More than 10 000 applications received to date were from people aged 15 to 19. The Government, under the current Premier, has a strong focus on trying to more effectively engage people in that 15 to 19-year-old age group in education and training.

Currently, too many young people still miss out on sufficient educational skills acquisition through the training process. TAFEWA, with 50 campuses across Western Australia and more than 1 000 courses available, is hoping to create a more flexible and relevant system that meets their needs and, in turn, helps retain those 15 to 19-year-olds in education and training. In 2000 there were 18 359 total full-time study applications; and this year 23 637 - a 28 per cent increase. I believe that through a combination of TAFE and training, the initiatives being driven by members - such as the member for Peel - in the training area to upskill people already in the work force, and better engaging industry in the training processes, we are slowly starting to position ourselves for the future development of Western Australia in a way that should have been done five to 10 years ago. It is a significant achievement of this Government that it is now including industry as a willing partner in a much more dynamic way than previously. It is a shame that we do not get much support for our initiatives from those opposite, who are largely silent on this entire area of policy. They have no ideas, and no way of contributing to the debate that is going on -

Mr P.D. Omodei: How many TAFE students do you employ?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: That is about the level of contribution we get. In 16 years, either observing or taking part in question time, I have never seen a situation in which the Opposition has been able to muster only four people for the start of question time. That is indicative of the effort that the lazy Liberals put into their task as parliamentarians.

Point of Order

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The comments by the Minister for Education and Training have no relevance to the dorothy dix question that was asked on his behalf. I ask that the minister answer the question rather than attack us for no reason at all.

The SPEAKER: As is normal, one side of the House does not particularly like to hear the answer that is given. It is true that the minister should answer the question, and I am sure he is about to finish his answer.

Debate Resumed

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I have completed my answer.