

SOUTH WEST INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY — ELECTRICAL APPRENTICESHIPS

21. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Training and Workforce Development:

I refer to media reports and constituent information that the South West Institute of Technology has not been able to find a lecturer for the first-year electrical apprentices who were set to begin classes this month and that the South West Institute of Technology has advised that 48 first-year electrical apprenticeship classes have been indefinitely postponed for this term at Bunbury. Can the parliamentary secretary advise the following —

- (1) What action has been taken to secure a lecturer at the South West Institute of Technology so that electrical apprentices are not forced to travel hundreds of kilometres to undertake their technical education as part of their training?
- (2) Is the parliamentary secretary aware that some south west first-year apprentices have been told that they can undertake their TAFE training in Karratha if they wish; and does he consider that to be acceptable?
- (3) Will the government intervene to ensure that these apprentices have access to courses in their local area?

Mr M.J. COWPER replied:

- (1)–(3) I thank the member for his well-known interest in local jobs in the south west. I am pleased to provide the following information. The South West Institute of Technology and the Western Australian government recognise the importance of providing young Western Australians with training opportunities. That is why we have acted decisively to meet the growing demand for electrical lecturers. The South West Institute of Technology has successfully recruited two new electrical lecturers, who will commence their induction program next week, and has a further two candidates scheduled for interviews this week. The South West Institute of Technology has continued to advertise in the local papers. It is aware that the situation is urgent. The institute has also taken media opportunities and used local industry networks to attract the attention of local electricians to encourage them to perhaps take advantage of a change in career opportunities and lecture this next generation of electricians in the south west.

Difficulties in meeting demand are a clear signal that the expansion of the resources sector in Western Australia is gathering speed, which is leading to the increased demand for specialist skilled labour. To address the issues in the south west, the South West Institute of Technology has negotiated for these young trainees to be provided places at other apprentice centres and is looking at all options to further respond to local employers. While the recruitment of new electrical lecturers is being finalised, the South West Institute of Technology has arranged for every apprentice to undergo training. Twenty-five first-year apprentices attended the brand-new facilities at Pinjarra last week under an arrangement with Polytechnic West. Members may have heard me rant on about that one as it is a fantastic new facility. Two apprentices have taken up places at the College of Electrical Training at Jandakot in the interim and five apprentices have been included in a workplace training partnership with BHP on the Worsley project. Arrangements have been made to deal with the apprentices in the short term. The apprentice training centre at the Balga campus of Polytechnic West has also been made available for people to use.

The notion of going to Karratha was perhaps taken out of context. If by chance apprentices go to Karratha, maybe they could be accommodated, but certainly no-one would expect anyone who attends the south west campus to have to travel that far. I recognise the member's interest in this very important area of training. I want to remind members of this house that through the royalties for regions funding this government has allocated \$110.6 million across the next four years to develop skills and training facilities and initiatives specifically in regional Western Australia. This year \$40.2 million has been allocated and some of that money will go to the South West Institute of Technology, the Pinjarra Polytechnic West, and right up to the Kimberley. It is a great initiative by this government.