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Peter Collier
Minister for Energy; Training

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Plan to transform State's training system

Portfolio: Training

Training Minister Peter Collier today unveiled a \$47.4million blueprint that will transform the future of the State's training system.

'Training WA: Planning for the future 2009-2018' outlines a series of targeted initiatives to ensure the skills needs of industry are met and to give individuals greater access to training.

Mr Collier said through this plan, the State Government was making an immediate investment to help minimise the impact of the current economic downturn while also reforming the training system for the medium to long term.

"We need a flexible and innovative training system to position Western Australia for future employment demands," he said.

"This plan is based on increasing training participation and skills development by assisting people to make the transition into employment while also increasing the skills of the existing workforce in line with regional and industry requirements.

"Targeted initiatives will support enterprises to develop their workforces and will provide additional training opportunities for Western Australians."

A major part of the plan includes a \$17.6million commitment to provide course fee exemptions for unemployed people to undertake a publicly-funded vocational education and training qualification.

This will start on July 1, 2009, and will apply for up to 12 months from the start of the qualification.

"Over the next three years, we will guarantee those who are unemployed a training place with course fee exemptions for their training courses," the Minister said.

"This will ensure that people in the greatest need will be able to maximise their skills and employment opportunities."

In addition, the State Government has endorsed the National Partnership Agreement with the Commonwealth Government for the Productivity Places Program, securing further training places for WA over the next four years.

Mr Collier said up to 74,000 new places would be available for job seekers and existing workers, with more than 900 qualifications, ranging from Certificate II to Diploma, being available under this program.

“This program is significant for WA as it will help alleviate skills shortages and support individuals and enterprises with additional training opportunities during the economic downturn,” he said.

The blueprint also targets Aboriginal training, with initiatives that aim to more than triple the participation rate in employment-related training, to 30,000 by 2012, while regional communities will be supported with the introduction of almost 50 additional courses at Certificate III and above by 2012.

The Minister said in addition, competition for public funds within the training provider market would be increased to 50 per cent by 2012.

“This will give TAFE colleges greater independence to compete effectively in an open training market, ensuring we have a vibrant and diverse training market,” he said.

Other key initiatives outlined in Training WA, funds for which have been provided through this year’s State Budget, include:

- \$10.6million to introduce a rebate on workers’ compensation premiums for employers of first year Certificate III and above apprentices and trainees
- \$4.1million for career development services and additional Employment Directions Network Funding
- \$755,000 to provide 50 per cent fee concessions for Recognition of Prior Learning and free recognition services for those who are unemployed
- \$1.6million to establish a team to facilitate Recognition of Prior Learning
- \$630,000 for a critical support unit for employers and employees
- \$4.1million to position training in Western Australia and inform the community of the huge array of opportunities training can offer
- \$5.7million to provide additional foundation training
- \$2.1million to support small business.

Mr Collier unveiled ‘Training WA’ at St John of God Hospital at Subiaco, where he met Chelsea Wootton, a trainee enrolled nurse who is completing the pilot Diploma of Nursing Program.

This is a partnership between the hospital and Challenger TAFE.

“Major hospitals employ a wide range of skilled people and St John of God has a strong training ethos and values its highly skilled workforce,” he said.

“More than ever, we need a training system and training institutions that provide the flexibility and capacity to meet the needs of industry and employers, and to ensure that individuals have the skills to make the most of their job and career opportunities.

“We need to invest in training to increase our long term productivity and ensure the skills needs of industry are met into the future.”

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