

## **PORTFOLIO REPORTS - STATE COUNCIL**

### **TERTIARY, TRADE AND TRAINING REPORT**

#### **Chandra Ridley – Portfolio Holder, March 2023**

There were 10 Regional Skills Summits held across Western Australia between August and December 2021. Feedback from these summits has led to the development of Regional Action Plans. These plans will be implemented by Regional Coordinating Committees (RCC's) to deliver practical actions that respond to a region's unique workforce needs.

RCC's are currently comprised of the relevant regional TAFE college, Regional Development Commission and Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and supported by the Department of Training and Workforce Development. The aim is to get more people onto jobs in regional areas and ensure the unique workforce needs of each region are met.

The State Government's Skills Summits in 2021 identified access to a driver's licence as a common barrier to employment as an apprentice. The Construction Training Fund (CTF) includes a \$1.3 million initiative to assist young people with gaining the experience and skills needed to obtain a driver's licence for entry into a construction trade apprenticeship.

The State Budget for 2022-23 was handed down in May. The McGowan Government is continuing to invest in TAFE and training to provide new opportunities for Western Australians to reskill and find work in local jobs throughout the State. There were record TAFE course enrolments in 2021 as a result of the "Lower Fees, Local Skills" initiative.

The 2022-23 State Budget funds initiatives to meet skill shortages, informed by ideas generated from the Perth and Regional Skills Summits. The \$76.5 million in training initiatives in the 2022-23 State Budget includes:

- \$38.4 million additional funding for Lower Fees, Local Skills initiative;
- \$11 million boost for defence industry's workforce;
- \$4.9 million in support for Collie workforce transition; and
- \$2.4 million to attract international students to the regions to help address skills shortages.

The McGowan Government also continues to roll out the TAFE capital works program, with \$216 million committed to deliver state-of-the-art facilities providing high-quality, industry-relevant training across the State.

The budget also included a \$14.3 million Construction Training Fund (CTF) which included \$4.5 million for a new tool rebate to support apprentices and trainees to purchase trade-related tools and safety equipment. Eligible apprentices will be able to claim up to \$500 each from the CTF for purchases made between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023.

Upon election in May, Labor made numerous promises regarding post compulsory education, including a \$1.2 billion 'Future made in Australia Skills Plan' to focus on closing the gap on key areas of skills shortages with new places at university and TAFE. They also promised to deliver up to 20,000 new university places.

Places will be prioritized for universities offering more opportunities for under-represented groups, including people in remote, regional and outer-suburban areas.

The \$4 million Geraldton creative industries' hub was officially opened on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2022 by Education and Training Minister Sue Ellery. The upgrade is part of the McGowan Government's investment in TAFE

infrastructure. The new facility will be used to deliver training for fashion and textiles, multimedia, photography, graphic design, jewellery making, pottery and glassmaking, ensuring students are learning in industry-standard facilities and graduating job ready.

Apprentice and traineeship numbers reached a record high of 47,700 in June 2022 surpassing 45,000 for the first time in a decade. Completions have also risen, with more than 10,300 people completing an apprenticeship or traineeship in 2021-22.

Apprenticeships with the most significant completion increases were mechanical fitters (up 71 percent), automotive electricians (up 70 percent), heavy mobile mechanics (up 46 percent) and heavy welding/fabricators (up 42 percent).

In September, the \$2 million upgrade of Central Regional TAFE's Northam Campus was officially opened. The upgraded facilities will help to meet the needs of industries in the Wheatbelt region – including metal fabrication and construction – by training students in industry-standard facilities to leave TAFE job ready.

Fee free TAFE courses have been introduced in 2023. All job ready skills sets will be fully fee-free in 2023. These skill sets contain units from nationally recognized vocational training and offer a great pathway to more skills' knowledge.

The eligibility criteria has been expanded so more people are able to access the free courses.