



## **PORTFOLIO REPORTS - STATE COUNCIL**

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

**Chandra Ridley – Portfolio Holder, March 2024**

#### **UNIVERSITY REVIEW**

In February 2023, the McGowan Government announced an independent review into Western Australia's public university sector. Reviewers will investigate what changes may help to better support the performance and financial sustainability of the States four public universities.

The university sector generates an estimated \$2 billion in economic activity and employs more than 10,000 people.

Even before the COVID pandemic, WA's university sector had become increasingly constrained due to declining Australian Government funding, low student growth and a reduced share of Commonwealth funded Competitive Research Grants.

WA's share of Australian Competitive Research Funding fell from 11 per cent in 2001 to 2.9 per cent in 2022. This was the largest decline of any other Australian State or Territory.

The review will be led by eminent individuals with significant experience in the university sector but no current affiliations with WA universities.

Terms of reference for the review include:

- Meet the state's current and future knowledge and skills needs.
- Increase student enrolments both domestically and internationally.
- Give students equitable access to a high-quality university education.
- Enhance students' experiences of attending university in WA.
- Ensure the financial sustainability of the sector.
- Increase WA's share of the Australian Competitive Research Fund.

#### **HEAVY VEHICLE DRIVER TRAINING**

Heavy vehicle driver training is being expanded to cover the Pilbara and Kimberley. The \$3.5 million expansion, building on the previous \$6.1 million investment, is expected to result in more truck drivers hitting the road.

It will support the North Regional TAFE to deliver training to around 350 participants in the Pilbara and Kimberley over a four-year period. It will also support the economy by addressing a need for heavy vehicle training in these areas.

Since February 2023, of the 552 participants enrolled at a TAFE College to undertake Heavy Vehicle Driving Operations programs, 282 had achieved Heavy Rigid, Heavy Combination or Multi Combination licenses. Around 30 per cent of these have been women.

#### **MAY 2023 BOOST FOR REGIONAL EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE**

The WA State Government has released an action plan to further support the early childhood education and care (ECEC) workforce in regional Western Australia. The Workforce Action Plan addresses nine recommended strategies put forward by the State Training Board's Regional Early Childhood Education and Care Report.



The State Training Board is the Government's chief advisory body on WA's training and workforce needs. Implementing new training opportunities to help build a pipeline of skilled childcare educators remains a key priority for the State Government. According to the ABS Labour Force Survey, as of February 2023, an estimated 14,600 Western Australians are employed as childcare workers or childcare managers. Over the past 12 months, the estimated number employed in these occupations has increased by 1,600.

Many of the initiatives put forward to support the training and development of skilled workers in early childhood education are already underway, including:

- Funding local government grants to help attract and retain childcare workers as part of the State Government's \$5.1 million election commitment to improve access to early childhood education and care in regional WA;
- Providing low-fee existing worker traineeships for key early childhood education and care qualifications to help the sector address the need to upskill its workforce;
- Introducing an Early Childhood Education and Care Job Ready program, which provides entry-level candidates with a pathway into traineeships and jobs in the industry.

Job Ready programs are a fresh approach to short course training that can lead to direct employment. Prepared in collaboration with Community Skills WA, the State Training Board's Regional Early Childhood Education and Care Report was informed by extensive consultation with the regional early childhood education and care sector.

The report and the State Government's Workforce Action Plan are available on the State Training Board's website: <https://www.stb.wa.gov.au>

### **JUNE 2023 REVIEW OF POST-SCHOOL OPTIONS FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS**

The Cook Government has launched a review of senior secondary school pathways in a bid to ensure all Western Australian students can reach their full potential through their post-school study, training or employment pursuits.

'Pathways to Post-School Success' is being led by the Department of Education in partnership with Catholic Education Western Australia and the Association of Independent Schools Western Australia.

Minister for Education, Hon. Dr Tony Buti, said the review would be spearheaded by a panel of education specialists, including principals and tertiary education leaders. A larger advisory committee, representing key stakeholder groups, will work with the advisory panel and provide direction for the review.

The review will explore whether current pathway options are effectively preparing students for the full range of further study, training and work options available to them. A key outcome will be to investigate whether current certification and university entry requirements assist students to make the best study choices as well as identify the barriers to students being able to access equitable pathways. The review is scheduled to conclude early 2024.

### **FEE FREE TRAINING**

All Job Ready short course skill sets will continue to be fee-free for 2024. There are over 130 free training courses available.

### **MURESK EXPANSION**

A new specialist Agriculture Machinery Training Centre was opened at the Muresk Institute in Northam in September 2023. This centre modernises and expands the facilities at Muresk enabling apprentices to complete a Certificate III in Agricultural Mechanical Technology through Central Regional TAFE. Once trained, qualified technicians will service all types of agricultural machinery across WA's broadacre farming industry.



A new \$800,000 shearing shed was also completed at Muresk providing students with high quality training in wool handling and shearing.

Two state-of-the-art combine harvester simulators have also been delivered by the State Government with a range of other machinery options to offer a realistic farming experience in a training environment.

### **DENTAL FACILITY**

In August 2023, the Minister for Training and Workforce Development, Hon. Simone McGurk, opened a \$2.6 million dental training facility at North Metropolitan (NM) TAFE's Leederville Campus. The facility will provide access to training and on-site services for dental students and train more work-ready graduates for the industry. Skilled dental workers are in high demand in Western Australia.

The new facility has approximately triple the space for students.

From 2024 NM TAFE will be offering one day a week courses for secondary students to obtain a Certificate III and IV in Dental Laboratory Assisting.

### **FEE-FREE TRAINING AVAILABLE TO HELP WOMEN INTO THE WORKFORCE IN 2024**

The Certificate I in New Opportunities for Women (NOW) course has been added to the fee-free list for 2024. This course has been developed specifically to help Western Australian women who have been out of paid employment for a long period or who are considering VET pathways - to refresh and boost their skills to be job-ready.

The program provides participants with the opportunity to explore various career options, build self-confidence and gain the necessary foundation skills to progress to other VET courses or take up entry-level jobs.

NOW is open to women of all ages and backgrounds and can be accessed either full or part time with flexible training hours to suit women with family responsibilities. Special provisions have also been made to fully subsidise the resource fees associated with the course providing equal access to all Western Australian women.

### **SCHOLARSHIPS FOR WOMEN**

In November 2023, the State Government announced that starting from 2024, it will provide 400 TAFE scholarships for women with a one-off payment of \$5,000. Applications opened for Women in Non-Traditional Trades Scholarship (WiNTT), a program to help women break down stereotypes and train for their dream career.

The WiNTT program is part of the Cook Government's \$3 million four-year investment to help reduce barriers to training and support increased workforce participation in traditionally male-dominated industries such as building and construction, automotive and electrical and engineering and mining.

There are currently around 2,500 women enrolled in courses eligible for the program - less than 12 per cent - and it is hoped the WiNTT scholarship will help drive increased participation. Scholarship recipients will benefit from tailored mentoring and support services to help them to complete their qualifications and successfully transition into a career in their chosen industry.

### **TWO WESTERN AUSTRALIANS NAMED NATIONAL WINNERS AT AUSTRALIAN TRAINING AWARDS IN 2023**

Now in its 30<sup>th</sup> year, the Australian Training Awards reward and recognize apprentices, trainees, VET students, teachers, practitioners, employers and training providers from around Australia.



Amy Hunt was the worthy winner of Australian Apprentice of the Year, 2023. She is the only woman and youngest cable joiner on her worksite. She credits her training experience with enhancing her leadership and communication skills. She was drawn to the fast-changing environment of the power industry and was inspired by her father and brother to enter a trade.

Craigie's Holly Gudsell was named Australian VET Teacher/Trainer of the Year, 2023. A teaching position in a remote aboriginal community near Fitzroy Crossing was the catalyst for a change in career direction for Holly as she discovered an interest in Aboriginal education. While lecturing in Education Support at North Metropolitan TAFE Holly was approached to develop and deliver a new program for the Department of Education to upskill Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Officers (AIEO) across Perth Metropolitan schools.

She delivered a '*mixed mode*' course that successfully supported Aboriginal students through Certificate III and IV in School Based Education Support (SBES).