

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 17 November 2009

DEPARTMENT OF TRAINING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT — DR RUTH SHEAN

**Dr M.D. NAHAN to the Premier:**

People in my electorate are keen to access first-class training and build their skills so that they can take advantage of job opportunities that lie ahead as the state's economy continues to grow. Will the Premier provide the house with an update of what the government is doing in the area of training and workforce development?

**Mr C.J. BARNETT replied:**

I thank the member for the question. The member for Riverton has been an observer and commentator on the Western Australian economy for a long time. He would know better than most the challenges that always occur with strong growth in this state. All going well, Western Australia can look forward to perhaps 20 years of strong economic growth. That will put significant demands on both workforce numbers and particularly skilled and trained areas. I acknowledge the work that was done by the previous government that was heading in that direction, but the point I would make is that much more will need to be done. Although the focus might be on some of the major resource projects, other training needs are spread throughout our economy. It is for that reason that this government, as it were, split the previous Department of Education and Training to create a stand-alone and specialist Department of Training and Workforce Development, which came into operation at the end of October. I am pleased to be able to inform the house that this morning, following the selection process, the Public Sector Commissioner has announced that Dr Ruth Shean will be the inaugural director general of the new Department of Training and Workforce Development. Ruth Shean is known to members on both sides of the house. She has a distinguished background in the public sector, being a former acting director general of the Department for Community Development and also the Department for Child Protection, and a former director general of the Disability Services Commission. The direction the government is taking is to give special attention to training, and so that the existing TAFE sector is not seen as providing similar training in a whole lot of different locations, to take it from a broad training structure to specialist centres and institutes of training so that we will have, for example, a specialist tourism centre or institute and we will have other areas in engineering, the building trades and some of the emerging technical occupations. Part of the overall objective is not only to meet the needs of this economy, but also to raise the standing of training and skills in the eyes of young people. To do that I think the time now is to move beyond what has been a long-established TAFE system and to take it forward. I have absolute confidence in both the minister and Dr Ruth Shean to leave what I hope will be a significant and positive transformation of training in Western Australia.