



House of Assembly

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Skills for All

Mr PICCOLO (Light) (14:25): My question is to the Premier. How is the state positioned to respond to the skills demand arising from the growth of the mineral resources sector in South Australia?

The Hon. J.W. WEATHERILL (Cheltenham—Premier, Minister for State Development) (14:25): I thank the honourable member for his question. Can I say that one of the biggest challenges that we face as a state is the emerging skills shortages, not just in the state but indeed across Australia. It obviously is the product of a range of factors, but even on the precipice of the extraordinary mining boom we have defence industries that are also making extraordinary demands for skills, and this is a great challenge for us.

We responded in the election—shrieks of silence by those opposite. We responded with a package designed by the former premier and member for Ramsay, the Skills for All package of \$194 million to support 100,000 training places. This program was designed to deliver the skilled workers our economy needs and to ensure that South Australians benefit in our future prosperity. This was not just about meeting the needs of industry; it was making sure that the benefits of these industries flow to South Australians.

We know that the decisions that have been taken over the last nine or 10 years have created enormous opportunities, but whether those opportunities are realised to

the extent that they should be by South Australians, as opposed to people flying in and gaining these jobs, will depend on our capacity to rise to that challenge in terms of skills. This is an unprecedented package—\$194 million over six years.

The recently released Skills for All reforms outline the strategic direction that we are taking vocational education and training in South Australia. Skills for All aims to modernise and revitalise vocational education and training so that they are more responsive to the needs of students, business and industry, as well as being linked to our schools and universities. The reforms improve training accessibility and will simplify the arrangements through which all South Australians can increase their skills and employment prospects.

Training will be available to those without qualifications who are seeking new skills and opportunities and for existing workers who want to lift their skills with new technologies and improve their productivity. We are well positioned to respond to the demands that we know are emerging in our industries. The state government, in conjunction with industry, is implementing a number of industry-specific measures in the mining industry. The Industry Workforce Action Plan has been developed with the mining and resources sector and is being led by the Resources and Engineering Skills Alliance, key resource industry companies and major contractors in South Australia.

A draft workforce plan by BHP for its Olympic Dam expansion has also been developed, with input from the Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology. This was an essential part of the Olympic Dam arrangements, and I know that members have been briefed on it. The department is involved in a range of initiatives to assist the growth of the mining sector in South Australia, including support through the involvement of the Resources and Engineering Skills Alliance.

Just yesterday I had the great pleasure of opening the Cooperative Research Centre for deep exploration and drilling technologies training operation up at Brukunga. The disused mine really is proving to be an incredibly important addition to South Australia's skills acquisition for the mining industry. That particular mine now provides an

opportunity for new drilling techniques to be piloted. Those new drilling techniques will prove up more efficient ways of getting at the oil, which is becoming increasingly difficult to find.

We obviously have all the low hanging fruit in terms of accessing our mineralisation in this state. We now know that you have to go deeper to be able to find the sorts of mineral deposits that exist and, so, increasing the efficiency of our exploration techniques is at the heart of ensuring that we unlock the wealth that we know exists in South Australia. This particular facility is allowing companies to trial new techniques, and they will create the manufacturing businesses that will grow off the back of the mining industry. The mining services industry is the great growth sector that will piggyback off the mining industry.

At this site we are seeing a whole range of people gaining extra skills. They do it in an environment that is a Country Fire Service training ground, so during the week they are able to use the accommodation. It resembles camp accommodation in the mining industry, so they are able to replicate the conditions that exist on mine sites, which is very valuable to prove up those young people who might go on to take a place in the mining industry.

They have also made a real commitment to social inclusion: 24 long-term unemployed young people have been trained at that site. A large proportion of them are now working in the mining industry. That is our commitment: not only ensuring that the needs of the mining industry are met, but to ensure that all South Australians enjoy the benefit of this mining boom.