

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2004-2005 SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: 2

Output Group: 2.3 – Assistance for skills and career development

DEST Question No. E333_05

Senator Crossin provided in writing.

Question:

Given that the first of these colleges is hoped to be operational by 2006, and the normal apprentice course runs for 4 years, the first trades qualified people from these colleges will not enter the workforce until 2010 at the earliest. What is planned in the meantime to alleviate the national skills shortage?

Answer:

Addressing Skills Shortages

In this term of office, the government will focus on meeting skills shortages, particularly in the traditional trades. In addition to the Technical Colleges, 11 other commitments are being implemented to encourage greater participation in occupations suffering skills shortage:

- o Providing a tool kit worth up to \$800 to New Apprentices starting out in skills shortage occupations;
- o Extending eligibility for Youth Allowance and Austudy for over 25s to New Apprentices;
- o Expanding recognition for employers who have contributed 25% or more of a New Apprentice's training with a share of the incentive completion payment;
- o Expanding employer access to incentives for New Apprentices (15-20 years old) who have attained vocational qualifications after school;
- o Establishing the Institute for Trade Skill Excellence to provide industry comment and support for quality, national VET arrangements including New Apprenticeships;
- o Extending access to Living Away From Home Allowance for third year New Apprentices who have moved away from home to take up or remain in a New Apprenticeship;
- o Introducing Commonwealth Trade Learning Scholarships of \$500 each for New Apprentices successfully completing first and second year in skills shortage trades;
- o Providing pre-vocational training in trades for up to 4,500 people through group training;
- o Providing an additional 4,000 School-based New Apprenticeships managed through group training;
- o Amending the Workplace Relations Act 1996 to remove industrial relations barriers to School-based and part-time New Apprenticeships; and
- o Providing an additional 5,000 New Apprenticeships Access Programme places in industries and regions experiencing skills shortages.

These initiatives complement existing strategies, including the New Apprenticeships Incentives Programme and the National Skills Shortages Strategy. The latter was launched

in April 2004 to build on the work of the former National Industry Skills Initiative, to provide a comprehensive approach to tackling skills shortages, particularly in the traditional trades.

The National Skills Shortages Strategy is looking at fresh approaches to New Apprenticeships in key skills shortage industries, such as shorter apprenticeships and specialised apprenticeship pathways in industries such as building and construction. It is also looking at skills shortages on a regional basis, involving local communities which are facing skills shortages as a result of the introduction of new industries or the departure of existing industries.