

Question on Notice

No. 1497

Asked on 29 November 2006

Mrs Reilly asked the Minister for Education and Training and Minister for the Arts (Mr Welford):

QUESTION:

Will he advise if the Commonwealth Government's new Australian Technical Colleges, particularly one located on the Gold Coast, have commenced operation and if they are addressing the skills shortage or simply duplicating existing vocational education programs?

ANSWER:

Australian Technical Colleges are another example of the Commonwealth Government duplicating state effort. The Commonwealth Government would do better to work with states and territories when considering developing new training initiatives.

The current Australian Technical Colleges in Gladstone and on the Gold Coast began operating in 2006. The other two of the four Australian Technical Colleges promised for Queensland, in North Brisbane and Townsville, are planning to commence in 2007.

Numbers remain low in Gladstone and the Gold Coast. It is noted that the Senate Estimates Hearing in November 2006 disclosed there were then 39 and 29 students respectively. Not all students are in apprenticeships, whereas the intention of the Commonwealth was to increase numbers in trades training at Certificate III level. Generally, across Australia, these colleges have been much slower to start than promised by the Commonwealth Minister, and enrolment numbers must be very disappointing to her.

In contrast, Queensland continues to lead the nation in the uptake of school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, having nearly 7000 commencements in 2005, and about 45 per cent of the nation's commencements in each of the March and June quarters in 2006.

The Senior Phase of Learning, of the Queensland Government's *Education and Training Reforms for the Future*, has young people choosing vocational education and training pathways often while still in school. Students entering Year 11 in 2007 will have their vocational training, including school-based apprenticeships, spelt out on their Queensland Certificate of Education.

The Queensland Government has further committed to support industry-based training through the establishment of five School Industry Trade Centres across the State, including at the Gold Coast. These are being modelled on the success of centres such as the Gladstone Schools Engineering Centre. Training will occur within an industry context, in partnership with key industries experiencing skill shortages.

In other words the Queensland Government already does what the Australian Technical Colleges are being created to do, and much more. And Queensland's focus is on all people, not just a few.

The Queensland share of the large amounts of Commonwealth funding committed to Australian Technical Colleges – more than \$456m nationally over five years – could be more effectively spent on existing school and vocational training systems.

The Queensland Government will continue to address skills shortages, including doubling the numbers of school-based apprenticeships and traineeships over the next three years.