

Question on Notice

No. 524

Asked on Wednesday 19 April 2006

MR ROWELL ASKED THE MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND MINISTER FOR SPORT (MR BARTON)—

QUESTION

With reference to the new training and assessment instruments currently being developed by the Department of Employment and Training for prescribed occupations in the operation of load shifting equipment including forklifts, excavators and other plant and as under the proposed new units of competency, trainees will be required to undergo 40 hours formal training in addition to 40 hours workplace training in order to be eligible for a licence to operate a forklift which will result in massive cost increases for persons wanting to obtain a forklift licence—

- (1) Why has no proper or meaningful industry consultation occurred during the development of these new training and licensing requirements?
- (2) Why is the Government taking such an impractical, expensive and cumbersome approach to training in these basic occupational skills areas which is totally contrary to its recently announced Queensland Skills Plan?
- (3) What action will the Government take to ensure that the problems raised by registered training organisations with the proposed training materials are adequately addressed before any changes are implemented?

ANSWER

- (1) As an interim step in line with the national transition, from 1 January 2006 Queensland commenced transitioning the training and assessment for prescribed occupations to the vocational education and training (VET) sector.

Moving the assessment for prescribed occupations from accredited assessors to registered training organisations followed over two years industry consultation through both national and state forums. In 2005, this included the Department of Industrial Relations releasing a Regulatory Impact Statement in Queensland seeking public comment on options for Queensland's proposed assessment framework. The assessment framework introduced on 1 January 2006 reflects the proposals given support in the public consultation processes.

Further the training courses conducted by registered training organisations under this new assessment framework were developed by Course

Development Advisory Committees comprised of representatives of key industry stakeholders. These representatives, including accredited assessors who conduct assessments under the previous assessment framework, endorsed the suitability of these courses.

- (2) The new system is consistent with both the Queensland Skills Plan and the approach to training and assessing prescribed occupations that is being progressed nationally.

Licensing prescribed occupations is not aimed at providing “training in basic occupational skill areas”, rather it is aimed at ensuring that operators of high risk equipment meet a minimum set of safety standards which demonstrate they can operate equipment safely and without supervision at a workplace.

The new system does not alter an applicant’s options for training in a prescribed occupation. An applicant will be able to be trained either on-the-job or by undertaking a training course. Where an applicant is trained under a course, to make them job ready they must undertake supervised training, and to ensure they are job safe this training must be consolidated with on-the-job experience. As with the previous assessment system, a registered training organisation is able to vary the level and hours of training to cater for different levels of experience and competence, or the speed that an applicant is able to acquire the required knowledge and competency on the equipment.

Further flexibility is provided in completing the on-the-job component, an imperative for unemployed applicants. These applicants may access at a minimal cost vocational placement programs or self-arranged worksite placement, which also supports job creation. Alternatively, where available, applicants may utilise a registered training organisation’s facilities. The departments of Industrial Relations and Employment and Training will work with key industry associations to encourage the availability of vocational placements.

- (3) The licensing frameworks for prescribed occupations in all States adopt a National Standard for licensing persons performing high risk work. As a result it is a national assessment instrument that forms the basis for determining an applicant’s competency.

The Department of Industrial Relations and the Department of Employment and Training remain committed to working with registered training organisations and accredited providers in implementing the changed assessment framework, and to working with the Commonwealth and other States to ensure a robust and quality training and assessment framework for prescribed occupations.