

Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs

# Skilling Australia

## For Jobs

**Skilling Australia** commits the Coalition to further equipping Australians, particularly young people, with skills needed to build a stronger economy and to secure Australia's future.

## Skilling Australia

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## **Executive Summary**

Ensuring our young people and workforce are properly skilled is an important part of the Coalition's plan for job growth and a stronger Australia.

The Coalition's policy of expanding places in vocational education and training for school leavers, mature aged people and those already in the workforce, is building a well trained workforce for a stronger Australia.

The Coalition is on track to achieve a record 200,000 new apprenticeships by the end of this year.

The Liberal and National Parties are committed to boosting skills and opportunities in rural and regional Australia, particularly in trades and occupations experiencing skill shortages.

The Coalition will provide \$91.5 million over four years to boost new apprenticeships in rural and regional small businesses.

## **Labor's Record**

Labor gutted Australia's vocational education and training system in its thirteen years of government:

- Labor's highly regulated and tightly controlled industry training system was designed for their union mates, rather than apprentices and jobs, discouraging businesses from taking on young people and lifting

workplace skills.

- Labor ran down Australia's apprenticeship system, stripping opportunities for real work experience and training for our young people.
- Labor preferred a merry-go-round of short-term expensive and wasteful training programmes designed to manipulate the unemployment statistics rather than train young people to maximise their employment opportunities.
- Under Labor, the number of apprentices and trainees in training fell to a nine year low of 131,100 in 1994.
- Labor neglected the vocational education and training needs of the 70 per cent of young Australians who do not go from school to university.
- Labor made it virtually impossible for small business and young people to obtain information about vocational education and training. Employers and young people got the run-around from a range of government agencies.

## **Highlights of the Government's Achievements**

### **A New Apprenticeships**

The Coalition has reinvigorated the traineeship and apprenticeship system, with the number of people in training reaching a record high of 183,800 in early 1998 and is on target to reach 200,000 by the end of 1998. The Coalition:

- launched the New Apprenticeships system on 1 January 1998;
- reached an historic national agreement with states and territories on a new National Training Framework to improve the quality and flexibility of the training system;

- made existing apprenticeships and traineeships more flexible to meet the needs of employers and New Apprentices;
- streamlined regulation and expanded training opportunities in areas of rapid job growth, including in new areas such as agriculture, sport, tourism and multimedia;
- promoted choice in training providers;
- provided 200 New Apprenticeships Centres - 'one stop shops' across Australia which simplify access to apprenticeship and traineeship support for employers and job seekers; and
- provided over \$43 million over two years for the New Apprenticeships Access Programme to assist people who need preliminary training before they can successfully participate in a New Apprenticeship.

## **B Vocational Education and Training in Schools**

The Coalition has provided over \$200 million over four years to support vocational education in schools. This has led to a four fold increase in Year 11 and 12 students participating in vocational education and training in schools, from 26,000 in 1995 to 114,000 in 1998. The Coalition has:

- introduced the New Apprenticeships scheme of school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, which combine part-time employment and part-time attendance at school. There are already an estimated 1,000 young people currently undertaking school-based New Apprenticeships;
- provided \$80 million over four years for the Australian Student Traineeship Foundation to help school students learn skills relevant to the workplace in local small businesses. The number of students enrolled in Foundation-supported programmes has grown from 18,000 in 1996 to 38,000 in 1997;

- provided \$13.6 million during 1998/9 for the Jobs Pathway Programme, which assists students about to leave school find jobs. Around 24,000 school leavers at over 1,400 senior secondary schools are participating; and
- provided \$3.4 million over 1996/7 and 1998/9 for Enterprise Education in schools to promote a learning culture that enables young people to identify, create, initiate and manage a small business.

## **C Group Training Companies**

Group Training Companies are major employers of New Apprentices in Australia - currently employing around 28,000 New Apprentices - some 14 per cent of all apprentices and trainees. Many Group Training Companies operate in non-metropolitan Australia and assist small and medium sized rural and regional businesses to provide employment and training opportunities for young people. The Coalition has:

- provided \$16 million to Group Training Companies in 1998/9 to expand opportunities for small and medium sized enterprises to employ apprentices and trainees; and
- provided \$30 million in loan guarantees for Group Training Companies to further assist them to increase the number of apprentices and trainees.

## **new apprenticeships for the future**

### **Regional Skill Shortages Incentive**

The Coalition believes that governments need to keep working to improve the supply of skilled workers in rural and regional Australia. The shortage of skilled apprentices in rural and regional Australia is recognised throughout our nation, as well as the business community (Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, *Northern Australia Skills Shortage Report, 1997*).

The Coalition will provide \$91.5 million over four years to boost

much needed training in rural and regional Australia. A regional skills shortage incentive payment of \$1,000 will be provided to employers of New Apprentices in defined trades and occupations experiencing skill shortages in non-metropolitan areas. This incentive will be paid as a progression payment.

This initiative will strengthen the skills base in regional and rural Australia thereby supporting local communities, business and regional jobs growth.

Commencing on 1 January 1999, this initiative will support up to 30,000 New Apprenticeships in rural and regional small businesses.

*Authorised by L. Crosby, Liberal Party of Australia, Corner Blackall & Macquarie Sts, Barton, ACT, 2600*