



Sharon Grierson MP
Federal Member for Newcastle

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GOVERNMENT SHAMED INTO ACTION ON SKILLS CRISIS

Federal Member for Newcastle Sharon Grierson today welcomed the Howard Government's long overdue admission that it had created a massive skills crisis.

"After ten long years, the Howard Government has been shamed into action," Ms Grierson said.

"Skills are critical to the increasingly diverse and technologically advanced economy of the Hunter. One of the manufacturers I met with recently told me they would put on 100 skilled workers tomorrow if he could find them. Another engineering firm said it recently advertised 5 engineering positions and received not one application."

"The Government must provide a fair share to Newcastle University of the new engineering positions announced today."

"As a member of the Parliamentary Economics Committee, I have been at hearing after hearing where the Reserve Bank has warned that the skills crisis was contributing to inflation and interest rate hikes."

"Meanwhile, the number of unemployed people in Newcastle jumped from 4.5% to 6.9% between July and August this year and the teenage unemployment rate went up to 25.5%, according to the latest ABS data."

"Young people in particular need skills to find work - Labor has had policy in this area for over a year. Why has it taken the Government so long to catch up?"

Labor's Skills Blueprint commits us to:

- ensuring traditional trades apprentices don't face upfront TAFE fees,
- paying a \$2,000 bonus to encourage apprentices to finish their training,
- establishing 4,000 extra school-based apprenticeships,
- establishing specific Trade Schools for Year 11 and 12 students, and
- establishing a Trades Taster program so Year 9 and 10 students can try a trade.

"Labor has had a package of skills policies on the table for over a year. Instead of turning 300,000 young Australians away from TAFE and watching while 40% of apprentices dropped out of their training, the Howard Government could have just asked us."

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