



Sharon Grierson MP
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SKILLS CRISIS: GOVERNMENT MUST ACT NOW, NOT IN 2011

Member for Newcastle Sharon Grierson said today the Government's casual approach to the skills crisis will mean even fewer opportunities for young people in our region.

The Hunter was missing from the list of regions, announced today, where 12 Howard Government technical colleges will begin operating in 2006 or 2007.

This means that, even if a college begins operating in the Hunter by 2008, the earliest we will see any skilled graduates is in the year 2011. In the meantime, our young people, already suffering from an unemployment rate of around 30%, will continue to be denied the opportunities they need.

And to plug the gaps, the Government will continue to increase the skilled migration rate. Since 1997, it has imported 178,000 extra skilled migrants but has turned away more than 270,000 Australians from TAFE since 1998.

This casual approach contrasts with Labor's clear commitment to train Australians first, and train them now.

Labor has proposed a \$2,000 Trade Completion Bonus to combat the Howard Government's shocking record of keeping young people in apprenticeships. We have also developed a Trades Apprenticeship School Incentive Scheme to increase funding to schools that offer school-based traditional apprenticeships.

In the absence of any new skilled graduates from its technical colleges until 2011, I call on the Government to provide a clear plan to equip young people in the Hunter with the skills they need to find employment.

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