



Media Brief

Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union

82 Royal St East Perth WA 6004

9221 1055

www.cfmeuwa.com

Barnett government helps to create the skills shortage they seek to fix with a mass influx of foreign workers.

Gross mismanagement of WA state government apprentice scheme exposed.

- WA Auditor General points to negligent compliance failure
- Contractor's corrupting the tender system; failing to comply with government policy on apprenticeship numbers.
- Department of Treasury and Finance embroiled in dereliction of duty.
- State government ignores compliance and rules of its own apprentice training policy to aid its case for importing foreign workers
- WA kids missing out

In March 2010 the WA state government implemented a **new policy to ensure that there was a fixed quota of apprentices on all government contracted jobs.**

Training was considered to be vital to supplement WA's skills shortage. Concurrent with this new policy at the time, the state government led by Colin Barnett began lobbying to have WA classed as a regional centre so it could fast track and gain access to far more foreign workers than ever before. This has now been achieved.

WA already has the major proportion of foreign workers. **WA has 10 % of the national population and 20% of all foreign visa workers! A situation brought about by a lack of training over previous years.**

The government's new policy to ensure contractors employed a fixed quota of apprentices on all government building contracts was called **PRIORITY START**, operated through the Dept of Training and Workforce Development.

Below is a table which shows the quota requirement for apprentices to be employed on government agency projects.

Estimated Value of the Labour for a Contract	Minimum Apprentice Requirement
\$ 300 001 - \$ 1 million	1
\$ 1 000 001 - \$ 2 million	2
\$ 2 000 001 - \$ 3 million	3
\$ 3 000 001 - \$ 4 million	4
\$ 4 000 001 - \$ 5 million	5
\$ 5 000 001 - \$ 6 million	6

\$ 6 000 001 and above	Continuation of ratio*
------------------------	------------------------

* Projects with an estimated labour component in excess of \$6 million will be assessed on a project by project basis by the relevant Government Agency using the above ratios as a guide

The quota was also meant to be used by contractors as guide to submit how many apprentices they would be employing when forwarding tenders for state government projects.

Compliance of the PRIORITY START policy has been grossly mismanaged and has been nothing short of a total disaster with contractors not complying, little policing by the state government and government departments failing to adhere to the policy requirements.

Office of the Auditor General.

The CFMEU has been handed a letter from Colin Murphy, Auditor General, which details that **out of 58 government agency contracts sampled, an audit found that only 3 met the quota requirements of the government's policy.** The office stated that it was difficult to single out any good performance from any of the government agencies sampled.

They also reported that **the Department of Treasury and Finance failed to report any of their contracts to the Dept of Workforce and Training- of those 19 contracts, 6 also failed to meet other requirements** such as including the use of registered contractors and employing the correct number of apprentices.

Colin Barnett and the state government have failed WA kids (and those seeking older age apprenticeships) by ignoring compliance of their own their own policy.

To add insult to injury the government had been lobbying and has now been successful in opening the floodgates for foreign workers to enter WA in waves- a situation caused by the government's lack of commitment to provide training and apprenticeship opportunities for young kids. **The Barnett government has helped to create the skills shortage they seek to fix with foreign workers.**

In short, with the state government and its departments ignoring their own policy and failing to police its compliance, the government has sold out the future of our kids to the interests of mercenary foreign visa workers, who come here for 4 years, send all their money offshore and then disappear. Leaving the vicious cycle of the skills shortage to continue with little or no training and apprentice opportunities in place, to ensure WA has a permanent, locally based workforce for the years ahead.

The Barnett government has tried to keep the failure to comply with their own policy under wraps. They need to be held accountable and asked why on the one hand they have pushed for a mass influx of foreign workers while at the same time they have denied hundreds , if not thousands of young Western Australian's an opportunity to be employed as apprentices under PRIORITY START?

Further comment

**Kevin Reynolds
WA State Secretary CFMEU C&G
0417916743**

July 28th 2011