



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Federation Chamber**

**BILLS**

**Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2015-2016**

**Consideration in Detail**

**SPEECH**

**Wednesday, 17 June 2015**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

---

## SPEECH

**Date** Wednesday, 17 June 2015  
**Page** 6750  
**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Ryan, Joanne, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** No  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Ms RYAN** (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (17:15): I know I am going to disappoint the minister because my question is going to be around apprenticeships and not schools and STEM. I know he will be disappointed about that. As well as school education, I am very passionate about apprenticeships, the history of apprenticeships and how they came to be, what they mean on the ground and what the community understands them to mean. In Lalor there are around 3,800 apprentices—that was last year's figure, so I hope there are still 3,800 apprentices on the ground in Lalor.

Those young people's understanding of an apprenticeship is that they sign up and are indentured into an apprenticeship where they learn a trade while working. They form an agreement with their employer that they will be trained by that employer, and subsequently get training from other organisations where that is required. For their part, they then work a 48-hour week or a 38-hour week, depending on their EBA, of course. Some work overtime and are paid for that. They see that as a long-term historical contract and that is what apprenticeships are about.

Many of them have some questions for this government. Many of them want to know why suddenly that contract is no longer the way this government perceives apprenticeships. This government perceives that to complete that apprenticeship they might like to, as we have heard many times, take out a loan that would allow them to complete an apprenticeship that is actually them working for lower wages in a contract with an employer who says, 'Because I am paying you lower wages, I will provide you with training.' But now that seems to have gone by the by.

I went with the shadow minister last year to meet with some apprentices on site at a large building site in my electorate. We met with a dozen to 15 apprentices. It was a terrific day. It was terrific to spend some time with some young people. There were some girls amongst the apprentices as well. It was really, really good. Most of them, admittedly, on this building site were electrical apprentices and plumbing apprentices—the licensed apprentices, if you like, from licensed trades. Unfortunately, there was only one apprentice carpenter on this huge job site with 3,000 employees. He had done a transfer in his third year into commercial out of domestic. He shared with us that there were actually 400 457 visa workers on the site doing the carpentry and the panelling, so he was a little disappointed to be the only carpentry apprentice.

We had a long chat to them and we talked to them about their apprenticeships. We talked to them about their training. We talked to them about the costs of their training. The biggest takeaway from that meeting was their disappointment that they were not going to get the Tools For Your Trade program. One young apprentice, who was in his first year, verging on his second, was really disappointed because he had sat down and set out a plan across his apprenticeship in terms of what tools he would purchase. He and his employer had worked out what he would need across those years and how that expenditure would roll out. He was incredibly disappointed, and pretty much outraged, at the thought that now he was going to take on a personal loan to fulfil work requirements that he thought should be delivered another way, and he was accustomed to having it delivered through that loan program.

My questions to the minister are around exactly that. Of course there was much excitement about this loan program. There was much excitement about all of these apprentices who were going to go and buy that car so they could get that apprenticeship—because we all know that workplaces want 18-year olds and they want them to be licensed. So the question which has obviously been apparent all the way through this is: how many have taken out loans under your new program, what percentage does that represent in terms of apprentices on the ground and have you had any feedback on the cuts to the Tools for Your Trade program?