



26 March 2014

MEDIA RELEASE

Mathematics should be compulsory for HSC

The Committee on Economic Development has recommended that mathematics be made a compulsory subject for the Higher School Certificate, in its report on skill shortages which was tabled today.

“Chief among our recommendations for addressing skill shortages is that mathematics should be a compulsory subject in senior high school,” said Committee Chair, Mr David Elliott MP.

“If we learned anything from this inquiry it is that employers want staff who have basic skills, and that people with basic skills find employment more easily. Everyone we spoke with sang the praises of education and training that emphasises skills and work readiness.”

Another key recommendation of the Committee is for the Government to consider ways to attract more young people to undertake apprenticeships with the introduction of financial incentives to encourage completion of apprenticeship studies.

“The Committee received evidence of the gap in trade skills across many regions in NSW. The Committee is hopeful that by recommending changes to apprenticeship training this will help fill those gaps and provide a career pathway for many young people,” Mr Elliott said.

The Committee on Economic Development inquired into skill shortages in NSW including the value of skilled migration and the needs of particular industries, professions and regions.

“The Committee heard from a wide range of stakeholders including employers and employees, trainers and educators, miners, hoteliers, tourist operators, small businesses, international traders, local councils, migrant advocates, professional bodies and government departments,” said Mr Elliott.

“The Committee also travelled to country NSW to make sure the regions had input as well as the big end of town,” Mr Elliott said.

The Committee heard support for skilled migration as a vital tool for addressing skill needs in the short term, and has recommended greater flexibility in a number of visa categories to ensure employers and visa holders can make the most of seasonal employment opportunities.

“The strength of the mining industry is placing pressure on employers in agriculture and other regional industries where wages are lower and work patterns more variable,” said Mr Elliott.

“Mining is not the problem, but just a very strong competitor at the moment. It is vital for the future of regional economies that employers and employees have flexibility.”



The Committee also recommended:

- The development of formal mentoring programs across workplaces to replace week long work experience
- Improved skills auditing
- The establishment of a centre for regional statistics and research
- Competency-based apprenticeship training
- The introduction of an international apprenticeship scheme
- Maximising regional training opportunities
- Automatic recognition of trade qualifications for entry to university courses

A copy of the report can be downloaded from www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/economicdevelopment.

Media contact: Mr David Elliott MP ph 0414 778 858