

# Scheme goes bust

By MARK PHILLIPS,  
industrial reporter

THE future of another group of more than 120 apprentices has been thrown into doubt after the collapse of their group training scheme.

Hospitality Group Training Victoria was placed in liquidation on Thursday after the State Government withdrew funding of \$500,000 because of the organisation's shaky future.

It is the second government-funded group training scheme to go bust in the past week.

Liquidator Wayne Benton said 124 apprentice chefs were stood down.

The HGT liquidation follows last Thursday's appointment of administrators to the Building Industry Group Scheme.

Some 210 apprentice carpenters, bricklayers and plasterers have been made redundant by the collapse of BIGS under insurmountable debts incurred through alleged mismanagement.

But the Minister for Post-compulsory Education, Training and Employment, Lynne Kosky, said she was confident the financial crisis in group training would be limited to those two schemes.

Mr Benton said HGT could no longer trade itself out of debts of about \$350,000, including a \$150,000 tax bill.

All 124 apprentice chefs had been stood down, but he was confident they would be able to continue their training with another organisation.

But chef Ashley Wilson said he feared he might



**Taking to the streets:** apprentices march on the Master Builders Association's city offices yesterday. Picture: DAVID CAIRD

not be able to complete his apprenticeship.

"Apparently they're trying to find us another school to go to, but it's going to be hard to get into another school for this year," he said.

But there were brighter prospects yesterday for the 210 building apprentices retrenched after the collapse of BIGS, with jobs found for 100 of them.

Martin Kingham, state

secretary of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, said the apprentices had been placed with individual employers.

Hundreds of building workers blocked city traffic yesterday in a march to save the apprentices' jobs.

Mr Kingham said the union would meet the Master Builders Association tomorrow about transferring the BIGS apprentices to the MBA's

group training scheme. He blamed a last-minute MBA backdown on a similar merger of the two schemes last week for the ultimate collapse of BIGS.

The State Government provides \$4.7 million a year to group training companies who provide about 8000 apprentices statewide.

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