

JOBS — SKILLED MIGRATION LIST

679. Hon CHARLES SMITH to the Leader of the House representing the Premier:

I refer to the ministerial statement dated 16 August 2018 relating to the state government's plan to introduce a graduate skilled migration list to allow foreign students completing postgraduate studies to stay and work in Western Australia upon graduation. I note that local unemployment, underemployment and labour underutilisation rates, particularly among younger Western Australians, remain high and there are no acute skills shortages requiring more foreign labour.

- (1) Why is the state government opening another pathway for foreign workers to enter WA and adding to the supply of labour in a weak market, thereby intensifying job competition and placing downward pressure on wages?
- (2) Why has the state government abandoned its election commitment to put locals first and maximise employment opportunities for Western Australians?
- (3) Is this policy change a tacit admission that local universities cannot compete in their own right and need the added incentive of residency upon graduation to attract foreign students?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

I note that under this state government, 35 000 new jobs have been created and the Western Australian skilled migration list has been reduced from 178 occupations in 2016 to 18 positions in 2017, which remains unchanged.

- (1) The state-nominated migration program is an existing migration program, not an additional one. The SNMP is a capped program—the caps are set by the commonwealth government—and the nomination of high-achieving university graduates will be managed within that existing cap.
- (2) The member is incorrect. As I just noted, the reduced skilled migration list for WA remains unchanged.
- (3) Other states have adjusted their state migration policy settings to attract the best and brightest international students to study at universities by providing a pathway for eligible high-performing university graduates, and the market for international students is highly competitive. I note that the government's announcement has been publicly welcomed by organisations such as the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia and StudyPerth, as well as Curtin University.