

REGIONAL SPONSORED MIGRATION SCHEME — INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

**553. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Tourism:**

I refer to Austrade figures that highlight international education student enrolments in Western Australia have fallen by 8.2 per cent in the year to May 2018 while enrolments in the rest of Australia have increased by six per cent over the same period. Can the minister confirm that today's announcement is nothing more than tinkering at the edges and will have no material impact on reversing the damage caused by his government's decision to remove Perth from the regional sponsored migration scheme?

**Mr P. PAPALIA replied:**

I am confronted again with a question outside my portfolio. Nevertheless, when we took office in March last year we knew there had been great neglect of the entire tourism sector, including international students. If members want to know the single biggest thing we can do to drive up international students numbers in Western Australia, look towards the aviation sector. If we look at who is represented in the biggest numbers in other states that are experiencing far greater growth than ourselves, where do those students come from predominantly? Which are the biggest sources of international students?

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Undoubtedly, and later during the matter of public interest we will be able to respond in more fulsome detail; nevertheless, I can tell members right now that India and China are at the top of the list. What was done by the previous Barnett government in eight and a half years to focus on growing visitor numbers from India and China, regardless of whether they were students or tourists? What was done? Nothing.

**Mrs A.K. Hayden** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Darling Range!

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Nothing was done, because members of the previous government were so important, sitting back, benefiting from the rivers of royalties. No effort was put into trying to grow new tourism and international student markets, whereas everywhere else where they were not benefiting from the rivers of royalties they put in an effort. In Victoria, the biggest market for international students is China, very closely followed by India. In Western Australia it is reversed, so India is slightly bigger than China. Let us look at the states that are benefiting the most, the ones with the biggest numbers. Let us look at Victoria. Victoria is known as the education state—that is its biggest source of revenue.

**Ms L. Mettam** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Vasse!

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** We have one airline flying directly from China—China Southern Airlines. Thanks to our efforts it is now five days a week. When we took over from the previous government it was three days a week. Melbourne, Victoria, has 14 flights a day direct from China.

**Mrs A.K. Hayden** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** I can hear a lot of noise from this corner here, member for Darling Range. We have a much more respectful house down here. I call you to order for the first time.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, for drawing my attention to the member for Darling Range, I appreciate her interjection; I was missing it. Melbourne has 14 flights a day. When the member for Darling Range was the parliamentary secretary for eight and a half years, spending all her time in the courtyard —

**Mrs A.K. Hayden** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Darling Range, I call you to order for the second time.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** She was spending all her time in the courtyard drinking cocktails with the Liberal Party donors. When she was doing that as her focus on tourism, other states were getting direct flights.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** As a consequence, Melbourne has 14 direct flights a day from China, Sydney has a dozen, and then there is the Gold Coast, Brisbane and Cairns. We are behind the curve.

**Ms L. Mettam** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Vasse, you do not have to shout; you have a supplementary question.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** She has to shout to get over me. The other source is India, as I indicated. Where does Air India fly direct to in Australia? Sydney and Melbourne. Why does it do that? It is because New South Wales, in particular, tried for four years to get a direct flight across the line, and it got it. It was an effort put in whilst members of the previous government sat on their backsides enjoying being important and enjoying the benefits of the rivers of royalty. No effort was put into international students or tourism and we are trying to make up for that and clean up the mess.