

MIGRATION

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

I refer to the December 2018 Council of Australian Governments meeting attended by the Premier and to the subsequent Treasurers' meeting this month, which focused on population growth and planning.

- (1) Can the state government publicly confirm that it expects another 190 000 migrants to come to Western Australia over the next four years, as outlined in the 2018–19 budget, and that it committed to this large intake at the COAG meetings?
- (2) How does the state government intend to finance and build a Hobart-worth of new infrastructure in less than four years to accommodate all the new arrivals?
- (3) Given the weak labour market in WA, why did the state government not use the COAG meetings to call for lower levels of immigration in order to improve local job prospects and wages?
- (4) Does the state government concede that the cost of such rapid, immigration-fuelled population growth is likely to be borne by existing residents through greater congestion, crush-loaded services and infrastructure, reduced urban amenity, higher housing costs and lower wages?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

Part (4) on my copy of the question included three additional words. After the words “lower wages”, it reads “and cultural disruption”, so the answer has been prepared with those words. I do not know whether there is a difference from what Hon Charles Smith lodged.

- (1) The state did not make any specific commitments at the COAG meeting. The 2018–19 *Government Mid-year Financial Projections Statement* assumes that net international and interstate migration to Western Australia combined will be around 85 000 persons over the four years to 2021–22.
- (2) State government infrastructure spending is projected to total \$21.5 billion over the four years from 2018–19 to 2021–22 to cater for a growing economy and population.
- (3) The government has not made any commitment or decision on migration or population matters. This will be considered through the Treasurers' forum, which is responsible for developing a framework for national population and planning in Australia. Over the forward estimates, growth in the domestic economy is expected to return to its long-run average. This will result in rising demand for labour and better opportunities for people living in Western Australia.
- (4) The government is confident that the forecast population increases will be well catered for by the government's plans for the provision of infrastructure and services for the benefit of all Western Australians. The proposed establishment of Infrastructure WA will provide a long-term strategy that identifies the right infrastructure to be built at the right time to support economic growth, population growth and job creation.