

YOUTH — UNEMPLOYMENT

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

I refer to this week's Australian Bureau of Statistics labour force release for July, which revealed a deteriorating Australian youth labour market—that is, for those aged 15 to 24 years—with both full-time and total jobs growth falling, and unemployment and underemployment rising, with the trend headline unemployment rate rising to 12 per cent.

- (1) Does the government concede that the youth labour market is weakening?
- (2) If so, why is it importing foreign workers and tens of thousands of international students with working rights?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1) The state government is creating job opportunities for young people in Western Australia. Initiatives for youth training and employment include the jobs and skills employer incentive; jobs and skills centres; the priority start program; freezing TAFE fees and introducing "Future jobs, future skills—Driving STEM skills in Western Australia"; and investing in job creating infrastructure. It should also be noted that statistics from the Australian Bureau of Statistics are based on a small sample, are an estimate, and are therefore volatile, even more so when looking at smaller sections of the population. I refer the member to Treasury's report from May 2019 entitled "Volatility in Monthly Labour Force Data".
- (2) The McGowan government's priority has been to maximise opportunities for Western Australian jobs. This is evident through a number of policies this government has implemented, such as replacing the WA skilled migration occupation list, enacting the Western Australian Jobs Act 2017 and commencing work on a local jobs bill. The government is also pursuing a number of policies to grow and diversify the state's economy and has recently released "Diversify WA", which identifies priority sectors to enable diversification and grow the economy, one of which is international education. Increasing our international student market will benefit the Western Australian economy and local jobs, with one job created for every three international students in WA's education system.