

REGIONAL SPONSORED MIGRATION SCHEME — INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

**300. Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE to the Minister for Small Business:**

Before I ask my question can I welcome, on behalf of the very good member for Dawesville, the staff and students of South Halls Head Primary School in the gallery today. Welcome.

Minister, on 24 June the Premier announced the government's policy to remove Perth from the regional sponsored migration scheme. What impact has this had on international student visas lodged for study in Western Australia?

**Mr P. PAPALIA replied:**

I thank the member for his question. The thing that had an impact on international students and on tourism generally was the Barnett government's inaction prior to us taking office. We took responsibility for government following the election in March. If there had been any drop-off in international student visa applications, according to migrant —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members, if you ask a question, you might not like the answer, but that is the one you are getting.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** According to migration consultants, who make their living by selling their services to people who come to Western Australia as migrants, you would have to question —

**Mr D.C. Nalder** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Bateman, I call you to order for the first time.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** You would have to question the veracity of the claims that are made by those individuals. Beyond that, you would also have to question the claims that have been made that there has been a significant drop-off subsequent to the Premier's announcement, when we are talking about international students. International students should be coming to Western Australia to study. People who come for work under a visa in the scheme that the member referred to would be a different category of person, and if they were coming here as a student, and going and claiming benefits in the form of employment, then that would be an inappropriate use of that visa, and we would have to question why they were coming here. The truth is, in relation to international students, that under the Barnett government the proportion of international students coming to Western Australia, of the total in the nation, dropped from 12 per cent to less than seven per cent, and that is a disaster, as a consequence of the former government's inaction.