

TOURISM — OVERSEAS INVESTMENT — PROPERTY TAX

50. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Tourism:

I refer to the government's commitment to promote tourism opportunities by growing the international knowledge economy. What advice has the minister sought about the impact of the tax on foreign home buyers on developing this critical sector?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

I thank the member for the question. We went to the election with a commitment to increase funding and support to Study Perth as a mechanism for growing international student numbers in Western Australia. We recognise that international students represent a key element of the tourism market. We had to increase funding, and go to the election with a plan to support Study Perth because for eight and a half years international student numbers were ignored as a component of the tourism sector by the previous government. From a high point in the order of a 12 per cent share of the international student market under the previous Labor government, under the Barnett government, that deteriorated to a low of a seven per cent share of the international student market in Australia. The previous government oversaw a collapse in the number of international students coming to Western Australia while other states experienced a boom. Under the previous government, people were flying over Western Australia to go to Victoria, which has on its numberplates "The Education State". Meanwhile, the previous government failed to focus at all on tourism, let alone the international student component of it. That is a key element of the tourism sector. I agree that it is a vital and key element of the tourism sector. People come to Western Australia to study because we have high-quality institutions. We are currently going to work on marketing ourselves more to make up that lost ground that the Liberal government unfortunately inflicted upon the state. In the end, the reason people will come here is that they know about Western Australia and they know what we have to offer. The reason that there is a loss, and that we have experienced such a significant loss in international student numbers, is entirely down to the Liberal government's failure to respond. The Liberal government sat on its hands and cruised through the boom letting the mining sector do the work for it.

Mrs L.M. Harvey interjected.

The SPEAKER: Deputy Leader of the Opposition, chat, chat, chat. I call you to order for the first time.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The Liberal government let the mining sector do the work for it and expected that to go on forever and, as we have heard, everything would be hunky-dory. It did no work to diversify the economy and tourism was a victim of that failure to act.