

STATE ECONOMY — DIVERSIFICATION — INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

**493. Ms C.M. TONKIN to the Minister for International Education:**

I refer to the Cook Labor government's efforts to promote diversification of the Western Australian economy, including through growing our international education market.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how this government has implemented measures to support and grow the sector across the state?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how the sector has recovered following the worldwide impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:**

Thank you, Speaker, for the call and thank you, member, for the question. Before I begin, I am sure all of us in this place send our very best wishes to the Matildas for their game coming up against France. I am sure everyone will be very supportive of our magnificent national women's team. If members want to know where the Deputy Premier will be, she will be at the FIFA Fan Festival. She is a very frequent visitor there. She is down there all the time. I keep trying to find out where she is and she is down there, but it is great. Best wishes also to our team, member for Fremantle, against the West Coast Eagles on Sunday.

**Ms R. Saffioti:** My daughter is playing at half-time.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Well there you are.

**Mr P.J. Rundle:** Time's up!

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** The member is trying to put me off. I thank the member for Churchlands for her question.

- (1)–(2) This is a great story for Western Australia regarding international education. I am very proud of the Cook government's commitment and investment in international education over two budgets now that has delivered outstanding results. I go through them because it is very important that we report to the people of Western Australia the results of that investment. We know now that the sector is recovering very strongly post COVID-19. We know that in the year to date to May 2023, WA recorded 47 719 enrolments and just over 23 000 commencements, representing increases of 25 per cent and 50 per cent respectively. They are massive increases in that statistical data. In comparison, in May 2019, prior to COVID-19, we had 38 000 recorded enrolments and nearly 15 000 commencements.

I report also where Western Australia sits in the national picture in international education. Western Australia's growth in enrolments and commencements now has been much higher than our traditional competition in New South Wales and Victoria, which is a tremendous achievement by all those involved in the sector. When we compare those figures again in the year to date, May 2022 to May 2023, Western Australia recorded the highest growth in both commencements at 125 per cent and enrolments at 64 per cent of any state or territory. This is great news for Western Australia.

I acknowledge one of the former international students who is in fact a member of this place. My very good friend the member for Jandakot is a great example of investing in international students. They come here and they eventually make and grow businesses that employ people, as the member has done, and now he is a respected representative in this place. It is a tremendous thing.

I want to highlight, too, some of the comments that we are now attracting because of the investment in international education in Western Australia. I visited one of our providers for English language intensive courses for overseas students, ELICOS, and classes are full. There has been a great take-up of those classes. I quote Dirk Mulder, not from *The X Files*, from *The Koala*, which is an international education news publication —

WA leads pack in post-COVID return

This is in relation to international students. Look a bit more enthusiastic, please! This is an absolutely magnificent performance.

**Mr R.S. Love interjected.**

**The SPEAKER:** Minister, can I encourage you to stand in your place and remain there. Now I will take the point of order. If you can just sit for a moment, I will give you the call again.

*Point of Order*

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** This answer has been going on for a very long time and I really implore the minister to bring it to an end so we can get on with our next question.

**The SPEAKER:** I think the minister is going for the record for this whole session of Parliament at this point in time.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I did not realise that.

**The SPEAKER:** I ask you to draw your answer to a close.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I get criticised about sharing great news because it demonstrates that the opposition is constantly down on Western Australia. I became Minister for International Education and three weeks later, the opposition spokesperson moved a motion against me in private member's business attacking me for my lack of action—after three weeks!

**The SPEAKER:** Minister, you digress! Please give your answer.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** This is great news. I want to acknowledge that this work continues because of great buy in, buy out by our key stakeholders, the universities across the state, our ELICOS and TAFE providers and StudyPerth, which are all working hard to deliver a great story for Western Australia. It confirms that Western Australia really is the best place to be an international student. That is why we are growing our market share strongly, and we will keep on working hard to do that, despite them opposite.

**The SPEAKER:** Despite the time, I will call one last question for the opposition. This is the final question.