

POLICE — RECRUITMENT — UK AND IRELAND

115. Ms C.M. TONKIN to the Minister for Police:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's efforts to attract skilled workers to Western Australia. Can the minister update the house on the outcome of his mission to the UK to attract skilled workers from the UK and Ireland to WA?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

I thank the member for her question and for her interest in the task of attracting skilled workers to Western Australia.

It was a successful mission. I will not go too deeply into it—people will probably be relieved that my answer will be quite brief—because we are still compiling the outcomes of the applications and the visits to the various sites and all the media cut-through that we had in the UK and Ireland. However, I will give a brief summary. We departed on 24 February and returned on 7 March. Essentially, every day we were moving from one city to another and in each city we took a team of people with us. The mission comprised a team from the Western Australia Police Force, including Deputy Commissioner Kylie Whiteley with a team of five other officers, four of whom were expatriate police officers who had come to Western Australia and had trodden the same path a decade or more ago. They were able to convey information directly to police officers who were applying to come to Western Australia. We also had Stephen Moir from the Motor Trade Association of Western Australia with us. He brought with him a migration agent, who was very helpful in advising people—mechanics and the like—who were applying to come to Australia to work in that industry. We had a representative of the Australian Hotels Association (WA) talking about the hospitality sector.

The trip was very successful. We held a range of fora. We also had the odd activation in sites like pubs to get attention and enable people to come. Those were incredibly successful in getting attention, so we cut through a lot of media. I will give members an indication of the response. When we went to Edinburgh to hold one of those little pub activations, two people—one had driven and one had caught a train—came from Newcastle to attend that pub activation and hear from us directly. When we think about the UK, it is not a great distance for us but for them, that is a significant journey. It was replicated when we did one in London. People came from Liverpool. A pregnant woman and her partner drove from Liverpool to hear from us directly about coming to Western Australia. When we went to Dublin, people drove down from Belfast just to find out information at the event. That was a police information session. It was incredibly successful.

It is quite sobering. I have to say that when we go to the UK, it is sobering to see how comparatively well off and attractive Western Australia is. It is a little sad to witness what is happening in the UK and Ireland at the moment, particularly the UK. The cost of living is easily very much higher than we confront. Their energy bills are well and truly over double what we confront, and they are going up all the time. On the day I departed, public transport costs went up 5.8 per cent, and they were already expensive. We can get around our entire city for \$5 maximum with our two-zone fare. Over there, it is as much as £10 one way, and going north all the time. That is a really significant cost that they confront.

Western Australia is a very attractive place. Tens of thousands of applications have been made. I will talk more when I give a thorough report on the outcomes, which we should know shortly. Members can rest assured that Western Australia is an incredibly attractive place. The message we conveyed was very simple, not a hard sell: the cost of living is lower, wages are higher and the weather is magnificent! That was a pretty easy sell.

The SPEAKER: I give the call to the Leader of the Liberal Party with the last question.