

ECONOMICS AND INDUSTRY STANDING COMMITTEE

**INQUIRY INTO WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S ECONOMIC
RELATIONSHIP WITH THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA**



**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
FRIDAY, 20 MARCH 2020**

SESSION FIVE

Members

**Ms J.J. Shaw (Chair)
Dr D.J. Honey
Mr Y. Mubarakai
Mr S.J. Price
Mr D.T. Redman**

Hearing commenced at 2.45 pm**Mr DAVID NORMAN****Senior Policy Adviser to the Vice-Chancellor, University of Western Australia, examined:****Professor KADAMBOT SIDDIQUE****Director, Institute of Agriculture, University of Western Australia, examined:**

The CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you for agreeing to appear before the committee today to provide evidence in relation to our inquiry into Western Australia's economic relationship with the Republic of India. My name is Jessica Shaw and I am chair of the Economics and Industry Standing Committee. I would like to introduce the other members of the committee: to my right is Yaz Mubarakai, member for Jandakot; to my left, deputy chair, Terry Redman, member for Warren–Blackwood; and David Honey, member for Cottesloe. Stephen Price, the member for Forrestfield, is an apology this afternoon.

It is important that you understand that any deliberate misleading of this committee may be regarded as a contempt of Parliament. Your evidence is protected by parliamentary privilege; however, this privilege does not apply to anything you might say outside of today's proceedings.

Before we begin with our questions, do you have any questions about your attendance here today?

The WITNESSES: No.

The CHAIR: David, would you like to make a brief opening statement?

Mr NORMAN: Yes, and it will be relatively brief. As I hope you know, the University of Western Australia's strategy through to 2030 is putting an increased focus on the Indian Ocean rim, so India, in particular, but also Indonesia and the east coast of Africa. Our university was established for the welfare and prosperity of the people of our state, and as we move on towards 2050 and beyond, we believe very strongly that the welfare and prosperity of the people of our state can only be maintained and built upon by increasing links in all areas with our Indian Ocean neighbour countries, including with India in particular. For our university, too, there is a significant focus on Indonesia and Africa, in particular east coast African countries.

There are two important things to remember with the university: firstly, we are created under acts of Parliament for the public good. So the way that we act and the things that we do will necessarily be different from the things that for-profits do. The complex layer that sits on top of and throughout that is that the nature of academic work is not a command and control system. I work directly with the vice-chancellor; the vice-chancellor cannot say to an academic, "You do this; you do that. You must focus on this; you must focus on that", because academic freedom permits academics to pursue their own academic interests to a great extent. So when we as a university decide that it is important for not just our institution but the state and country to increase our focus on India, or whatever country we might pick, we have a range of buttons, levers and tools to use to encourage people to do things. But we cannot say to anybody, "You must now start working with this university in that country." So there is quite a collaborative task for us, I guess, in increasing that engagement, which we are doing.

One of the ways in which we are doing it is that we have joined the national Australia–India Institute, which is based out of the University of Melbourne. We employ two young recent PhD graduates as research fellows in that institute to increase our research base. We are also working to increase the

amount of teaching that we are doing. You might have noticed in the university's submission to the inquiry that we talk also about cultural training for WA businesses. Doing business in India is not the same as doing business in China. As a state, we have taken our time—we pick our moments—I would say we are quite expert in doing business in China, but there is nowhere to go for the average person in the street or the average businessperson to understand contemporary India. We want to do our part not just through our full-degree training but also through short-course training and things, which we are aiming to introduce in January next year for the broader community.

That is all I would like to say. I am sure Siddique has some other comments to make. His main academic work is mostly toward strong long-term links into India.

[2.50 pm]

Prof. SIDDIQUE: Thank you, David, I will be very brief. I think the main point is that Australian universities—not only in Western Australia—if you look at the total amount of output, let us say for example, the scientific publications that come in per year, we, in Australia, are only contributing at the most two to three per cent of the papers published. That is not only the criteria, but I am just giving you an example. So, 97 to 98 per cent of it is done elsewhere. What is specific is that if you want to grow, if you want to solve some of the wicked problems in the world, whether it is climate change, food security, water security or a global pandemic such as coronavirus, we have to work with other researchers and other universities in the world. Traditionally, we have been working with Europe and the United States; that is fine, we will continue to do that. But if you look at the current trend, China just surpassed the United States in terms of scientific outputs, as expected. India is lagging behind, but within the next 20 years—10, 15 to 20 years—India will be up there. For a small country like Australia, and I say small, not in geographical terms but in terms of population, we are punching beyond our weight and it is so important that we need to look at countries such as China, India, Indonesia—in the region—and move forward. It is so important that we have to focus on those countries, not only in higher education, but also on all aspects in relation to business, culture and so on. I will stop there.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. In your experience, what are the most effective strategies for building those international links and those collaborative relationships, and what can a state government do to support those efforts? Because our inquiries—we need to come up with a series of recommendations about steps the state government can take. I think everybody recognises the opportunity, but we would like to be able to make some practical recommendations about what the state can do to facilitate the sort of networking that you are talking about, Professor Siddique.

Prof. SIDDIQUE: That is a very good question. Let us take one step or a few steps back and look at Western Australia's partnership, for example, with Japan, one of our oldest partners. Or take a more recent partner, China—for more than 20 years. All those things were really facilitated and targeted by the state governments, or it was the government of the day. The relationship with Japan is so strong. We started from scratch, and we have a very strong relationship now with Japan, a mature relationship in business, in defence, in education and so on. It is a good example where the government can facilitate, not always in terms of money, but in terms of strategic positioning and building that relationship further. Then of course, once you have that kind of thing, others line up. For example, me, as an academic here, I know what the state government's policy towards India is. If it is more favourable, immediately I start lining up with my strategies to make sure that that is communicated to the government, and other schemes like cultural exchanges, funding schemes, all those things then build up and when we look back in five years' time, we can see some real traction and real benefits.

In summary, it is the government's wish and strategy to help us, the universities, business, the local government et cetera, to work with their counterparts, in this case with India, and we can do it. We have done that, for example, with China. The Zhejiang–WA relationship is a wonderful relationship. I remember visiting Zhejiang—my first visit was in 2004. The sister-state relationship is excellent, particularly in agriculture and other areas. The state government first started—I think it was Hendy Cowan, then Deputy Premier, who first started the Western Australian trade office in Mumbai. It was a very bold decision at that time. Although we have slipped in subsequent years from India, I think that was a very good initiative still continuing in India.

In summary, giving the right signal, then people will line up, then of course there are funding opportunities, joint programs, ministerial visits, business visits, educational visits to do. We also have to look at the Western Australia consortia. Let us take, for example, Curtin is going and doing work, ECU is doing—UWA, Murdoch. I do not think we have come together in terms of working like, if you like, the California system—UC Davis, UC Berkley. These are independent universities, but they call the Californian system—that kind of system, we probably need to create specifically targeted for India, and then say, “Okay, UWA has got a certain strength, Murdoch has a strength.” We will not come together all at the same time. But that kind of approach is not there. People get confused when they go to India. All the key private schools, they want to have education—vocational training. I do not believe we have done that. UWA is selfish, Curtin is selfish. They will go and do their work, whereas the Western Australian government has got a bigger shoulder with the whole aspect of Western Australia. Perhaps I have given some indirect information, but I can go to specifics later on.

Mr NORMAN: I might say, I might join in too at this point. Siddique has talked about, you know, when there are opportunities, then people line up behind them, but the order in which people line up is important to understand. When we look at the sister-state relationship in Andhra Pradesh—we could equally look at the sister-state relationship with East Java—nothing is happening. Nothing is happening from a university perspective and one of the reasons nothing is happening is because the order in which people are lining up is not working. All of this, in the end, relates to money. University research—for every dollar of competitive research money we win, we need to find another \$1.20 from somewhere, so we need international students or industry money or whatever it is. We cannot just decide we are going to do research in Andhra Pradesh, for example, because we have no funding to do it. In Zhejiang, in China, where it works, historically, is because China had money for research and so the government could come in, the government could connect us with universities and we could start working with them. If the government tries to do the same in India, there is no money to support the research relationship and so nothing happens. If StudyPerth, for example, brings us an inbound group of vice chancellors from universities in any place you might pick in the world, because it makes sense for them and because it ticks boxes for them in terms of bringing people in to connect to us, those connections cannot work unless they have money to do the research, because we do not. The whole way that the federal government has set up the research funding model here requires us to find additional money from somewhere else.

It is worth thinking about then in terms of what can the WA government be doing to support this. I think it could be doing a lot more to support businesses, because if we had a greater amount of bilateral trade between here and India, whether it is Andhra Pradesh or elsewhere—you have got WA businesses in there—as soon as you have got WA businesses operating, they have got problems that need fixing. They have got problems they need dealing with, and at that point, they need academic research to help them with it. They have got training needs for their staff, there is training needs for local staff, there is training needs for people who go out there. So, at that point, there is something where—and that is sort of lining up where we start to line up with the needs of those

people. That is an important distinction to make, that we need government to understand that government is not the same as industry, industry is not the same as universities. None of it is the same, and the things which work for one part of that sort of triumvirate are different from what works for the other. By giving us links of universities which we already work with, or which we already know about, does not help us and in fact often it does the opposite. One of the difficulties we have internally in the way of transfer of the university, or we say to somebody, “Hey, why don’t you work with this university?”, is that they are already busy doing something else; it is an opportunity cost for the individual academic. For someone like Siddique, I know I can go to him and he will pick up on things in India, because he is that kind of person, but it is not the case throughout, because staff are already doing research. And they are doing research where there is money. As Siddique said, traditionally they are doing research with the leading universities in North America and in Europe, increasingly now with China. If we want universities to engage more with Indian universities, it has to be in an area either like Siddique’s, in agriculture, where there has historically been funding to support the Indian population, or in areas where there is, ideally, Australian business that has issues which it wants dealing with, or Indian business with which we can engage.

[3.00 pm]

In that sense, the Mumbai office has been really, really good. The Mumbai office has people in it. When I worked with Jamal Qureshi, who is the education person there, who is very, very good, and I showed him the WA government’s plans for diversification of our economy, and I said, “We’d like to figure out, as a university, how we could support the state government in links in these areas and these areas”, straightaway he reeled off a list of Indian companies that work in this area and that area aligned with what the state government wants to do to expand our economy. I think there is more that can be done in a strategic way with the state government to identify areas, to support business in areas where we want to diversify our economy and our exports and to see how universities can link into that rather than just saying, “Hey, universities, we’ve found a university; why don’t you work with them?”

Mr D.T. REDMAN: One thing that is making the committee a little bit anxious is the fact that we have got this COVID-19 running now. Things were going really dandy in December last year when we were talking about the engagement with India and all the things that could or should be done to make that work. In your commentary, David, you mentioned the importance of the dollar as one of the drivers. In Siddique’s commentary, he talked about the necessity for collaboration in objectives, and probably historically there have been collaborative challenges in Western Australian universities to work together for a goal. First, can you give us any context about what the issues we are talking about might be through the filter of COVID-19 and how behaviour may well change? One of those might be that for the students you attract, you probably want to have a bit more resource behind them than you might otherwise have; and, secondly, in that context is the importance of strong collaborative relationships between Western Australian universities to achieve the state’s objectives.

Mr NORMAN: Maybe I will deal with the second one first. At the beginning I said that the problem with universities is that academics have their own individual objectives, so we have said, as a university—and we have arrived at this through a result of discussion and board consultation across the university—that the Indian Ocean is where we are going to focus our attention. But that does not mean that we will, because people will still chase where the research money is, so one way to look at universities, it is artisans working inside a university rather than employees working for a university. For a university to create a strategy and to align everything really, really quite difficult. If you then expect universities to align for a state objective, I question how realistic that is. It is just a complicated matter. It is difficult to know what the state wants. If it is state objectives in terms of

our view of the welfare and prosperity of the people and the need to increase trade and investment, for example, which obviously this committee is about, it is ways of looking to make things connect and align, rather than the state setting an objective and expecting universities to fall in line any more than businesses would fall in line, because although we are established under a state act, we are not an arm of the WA state government. It is complicated. I think we need to be realistic. When we are asked to do things through the sister-state relationships for the good of the state, we need to be able to manage that within our own finances and the constraints that I mentioned over resources and research. The other thing to be really, really careful about is the focus constantly falls back to student recruitment. That is good and it pays for the research and it pays to keep things going and it creates lifelong links between Australians and Indians and people from other countries, but it is increasingly seen by the countries from which we get students as extractive. We are taking them, we are taking their money, we are churning out graduates, we are sending them back, and we need to make the relationship that we have as a university and as a state and a country with India much more than just recruiting students. It needs to be those lifelong links and it needs to be investment both ways and so on and so on. I am sure Siddique will have a lot more to say about the research, but that is a point I want to make really, really strongly, that it keeps falling back to the however many billion-dollar export industry, and that looks bad from the countries from which we are getting these students. It is not the way that other countries approach it. Other countries invest in country and have government support that goes beyond shaking hands and having meetings. It goes to underwriting business investment and strategies that do more than just verbally encourage engagement. My sense is that as a state, the government needs to do more to get business engagement in the states and India and a lot more will follow from that. and also Indian investment in WA.

Prof. SIDDIQUE: Looking at a different angle, the Victorian government and, to some extent, New South Wales and I think Queensland are more successful in India, so we need to look at that in all aspects. Let us take higher education. The consistent investment by the universities, for example—take Deakin University, 25, nearly 28 years of investment. In 1994 they invested. They have 22 staff working in New Delhi; Deakin University has got an office. One hundred and fifty PhD students from Australia are positioned in India, working with the industry. Take Monash as an example. They made a deal with IIT Mumbai, which is one of the best Institutes of Technology; 250 PhD students, and nearly 150 have completed. They do a program, so they will spend some time at Monash campus and then in India. It is an excellent example. The University of Queensland last year came on board. They went and tied up with IIT New Delhi, which is a very famous IIT. Their ambition is to have 300 PhD students for the next five or six years, meaning 50 PhD students. It is not all from government of those states; that is why I differ to some extent with David, but we do not want to have an argument here. The university has taken the bold step in building that relationship with India. Western Australian universities, including my university, have been slack. Somehow there was a phobia or lag to have a relationship with India, whereas with China we did so much. I spent 15 or 20 years with China, so do not think that I do not love China as well, but we have overdone it and we have not taken India that seriously. Of course, the government has got a role to play, but a lot of this money came from the university. The vice chancellors had the backbone to go out and invest it. It is creative accounting; it is not really money up-front because if Indian students finish their degree in Australia, the federal government gives some money. That money has reduced. It used to be \$85 000 when a PhD student finished; now it has gone down to probably \$45 000 or \$50 000, but still there is some money. The universities like Queensland and Monash decided to up-front invest that, and there are some very clever students.

[3.10 pm]

So we have a role to play as well. The state's role, again, I think is at the higher level relationship, showing business development, educational development, schools and vocational training. I think a lot of academics will line up—for example, Australia–India strategic research funding. I have been one of those lucky ones; for the last six rounds we have got funding. Let us say the state government will say that for every Australia–India strategic research fund you bring to Western Australia, it will put in X amount of money. Whoever; it does not matter—Curtin or Murdoch or UWA, or together, we will put in some money. So that money multiplies. To some extent, everybody is right, but the government of India is putting in a lot more money to develop the collaboration between Australia and India. For example, every dollar we get for the Australia–India strategic research fund, the government of India puts in exactly the same money. So the money spent by the government of India goes to Indian researchers; the money spent by the Australian government goes to Australian researchers. Then they have programs like the GYAN program they started, where Australian academics can go and spend one month or up to six months and they will fully fund those academics. Not as many people have been taken up from Western Australia as perhaps eastern Australia has taken up—bigger states and bigger involvement and so on.

India used to be behind but now they are coming forward, so the state has got the capacity to look at what is available, what the state can bring and then facilitate that process and have a fresh approach. In the next five years or 10 years, we must make rapid progress; otherwise, it will be all talk. Yes, some other projects like Andhra Pradesh, the sister-state relationship failed, because the Chief Minister has been moved out of the new government that came in, so the governments of the day can sometimes shorten the push they do.

How many scholarships are we going to give Indian students? For example, if you attract six bright Indian students to Western Australia to do a PhD in any university, let us put some scholarships there by the government, matched by the university. The Forrest scholarships, for example, come to all universities. Let us say the government came and said, “If you attract one or two Indian students through a quality process, the government is going to put some money into it.” It is not about the government forking out all the money. We need backing of the existing system or the school; for example, if you get 10 fully funded students coming from India to work in a school, the government can say, “We will provide some support on that.” It is not just for UWA or for a specific school. The WA government can bring the right politicians from India—for example, the human resource or education minister. That will have some relationship; otherwise, we will continue to talk.

Dr D.J. HONEY: One of the areas that has been raised a number of times is some potential for agribusiness in India. When we spoke with the relevant state department, I guess their view was an equivocal view in that perhaps there is not such a large opportunity. I am not quoting them exactly, but to some degree dramatically improving agricultural production in India could end up with Indian exporters competing with Australian exporters. I was interested, given your knowledge and insight, do you see significant opportunity in agribusiness between India and Australia?

Prof. SIDDIQUE: Yes, I do. It is a \$US400 billion industry in India and it still accounts for a significant proportion of the employment—47 per cent of the employment. If you look at all this, India is at a crossroad. Reaching 1.3 billion people, there is not going to be enough food for all—number one. There is declining productivity, like in Australia. The climate change is threatening rapidly. Soils are really tired in India. There are around probably 150 million small farmers, meaning they have less than 0.1 hectares. So how is India going to transform into production, into productivity? The supermarket revolution is so huge in India, we cannot even imagine it. Everywhere supermarkets are coming, so there is a huge demand for products. At the same time, there is significant wastage of food at the farmer level and also during the cold storage transportation—so bulk storage and

handling technology, supply chain logistics. Food safety is another issue. In other words, Australia is seen as a very good, clean, green production system. They ask, “How do you manage that?” We can have sort of technological collaboration, but, more importantly, value adding, where Indian companies invest and then export. From India there is a lot of export going on to Africa and the Middle East [inaudible]. I see that a partnership, not just like an aid program, and then in business and then you get a share of that profit too. I do not think Australia is going to supply food for India because we do not produce a lot of food. In a very good year, we produce about 45 million tonnes of grain. In a very good year—the whole summer and winter grain in Australia. Last year, India had 282 million tonnes of grain. So at the higher end of the market, for example, the wine revolution is going to happen in India. It happened in China, but we have not really seriously gone to the Indian market. That is something that Indians will take a huge amount of and India is not in a good position to produce quality wines. There are some, like China; they are not. There are areas where Australian agribusiness could get in. The seafood industry is very large in India, but again, the whole modernisation of the seafood industry from production level all the way to export level is at a slow pace.

In summary, our role will be into the higher end of the modernisation of Indian agriculture, including ICT, bioenergy production systems, soil improvement, logistic bulk handling technology and value adding. A lot of products are wasted in India, whether it is tomatoes, cucumbers or mangoes. It comes in bulk and then is wasted. Private industry is coming rapidly in India. Hendy Cowan established the Western Australian trade office at that time; it is all government. Now, if you go into an IT park or a technology park, you think you are in a better place than in Australia. Go to the private universities [inaudible]. I was there three weeks ago. I met a university; there is an institute of technology. The millionaires are establishing large top universities in collaboration with Harvard, Yale and so on. So the government of India is going to liberalise the higher education system. When I was with the Australian education minister last year, he was saying that Australia is very keen to develop and build an onshore and offshore partnership in higher education. That is the kind of thing where Australia can do quality, quality, quality; it is not about the bulk. There is tremendous potential to have a partnership with the right group—for example, modernisation of the abattoir. The meat is still slaughtered like in Indonesia, but with the crisis with the coronavirus, many other things are coming. The government has built a plan and said, “This is going to happen as the world evolves—food poisoning and like what happened in China.” Let us hope it does not happen, but that is where things are all going to be modernised.

[3.20 pm]

Dr D.J. HONEY: So it would be selfish from our perspective. Is there something more that we can do or government can do to encourage those niche opportunities? Do you think that that is already in hand and the programs that government has are working effectively, or do you think we need to change the way we are doing it or improve it?

Prof. SIDDIQUE: I think we have to have a more proactive approach. Nowadays, information is available and people can travel. And involve a private industry partnership in terms of food and food industry. Research and development in higher education—it is okay. We can do that. They are already covered. But if you really want to get onto the food industry, we have to get to the private group. You know that Netherlands is doing extremely well there. The French are doing well. The United States are doing well in the food industry. The government could commission someone to look at the whole food industry and what areas Western Australia can be involved. Of course, we have to work with the government of the day, but the government is liberalising and the Modi government is accelerating that liberalisation process. It is all unleashed now. They cannot go backwards. They will never be going backwards. Private industry, private education, private

airlines—private everything is happening there, even giving energy to the private world, water supply to the private world, like what we have here. The modernisation is happening. We need to carve our presence and show that friendship. Why people like me have got in the door is that we have been working with them for the last 20 years—more than 20 years. Some of the people who worked with me are now higher up in the system. If I take it forward and say, “Look, take care of this or take care of that thing”, they will do it. The same has exactly happened. The personal relationship is important. The university to university relationship is important. We blame India for the bureaucracy, but I tell you that our bureaucracy, including my own institution, it is so hard to do something. For example, there is an agreement at the moment—they would know that—it is the first ever agreement between 36 research institutions that have got university status and a joint PhD program. We started about two years ago. Everything is there. There was some delay. Now it has been delayed here. It will be the first ever between UWA and any Indian institution, where we will have a joint PhD program. They register there and they come here for at least one year. Then, when they finish, it will be a joint program. But I have been waiting two and a half years. Of course, some delay has been from the Indian side—the Ministry of External Affairs has to clear it—then they were waiting for the election. But now, the ministry of internal affairs at UWA has to clear it. I am sorry to say that, but I am happy to say it in front of everyone. That is the kind of problem—we just have to get there, board a flight, do the thing and sometimes it does not work in every country. We have 100 000 Indian-origin people now in Western Australia—I thought it was only 70 000. The other night there was a dinner and the Indian high commissioner who visited here said at the dinner that there are 100 000. Of that, 80 000 are in Perth and the rest, 20 000, are in regional WA. [inaudible]

The CHAIR: This is probably a question for Mr Norman. We understand that UWA has been developing an internationalisation strategy and that you anticipate releasing it later this year. Can you just give us an overview of that process and the sorts of things that you are including in the strategy? I suppose that everything is in a state of flux right now, but perhaps can you give us a bit of insight into the work that you have been doing on that?

Mr NORMAN: We already do have an internationalisation strategy. We also have country and region strategies, including one for South Asia. These things already exist. We are working on a new iteration of it, because five years has passed since we created those things. What we look at with those things is where we want to be in 20 years. That fits into where we want to be as an institution, but also, as I said at the beginning, our obligation to the state and the people of the state is that we look at 10-year goals, five-year goals and what immediate actions we need to do to get through that. Everything Siddique said is correct about the university’s historical unwillingness to invest in a big way. It is a conservative institution and it does not do the things that others do. It does not have the spare cash that a university like the university of Monash or UNSW or Sydney or Melbourne do, each of which takes in more money for international students than our entire operating budget, so we are limited in what we can do. We are also limited, as Siddique correctly says, in the conservatism of UWA as an institution and of our governing body as a unit. I do not know where our current iteration of the strategy is going to end up, but the previous one was extremely limited. Siddique and I worked on it—I was the author of it and Siddique and I worked with others on it. We were constantly limited by the institution’s unwillingness to invest in a big way.

Then that gets back to Terry’s question about COVID-19. Our ability to invest in anything in a big way is going to be delayed by COVID-19. It is going to be delayed because, first, there is less money now, and there is a risk with domestic students, who are also faced with a deadline with the date at which their HECS liability starts, which is the end of the month. So there is a chance also that domestic students will pull back in the face of online teaching rather than face-to-face. It is not just

the hit we are getting now but it is the whole pipeline—our inability to recruit overseas, it is people's anxiety, it is the lack of money that other people have across the world. My guess is that we will be delayed. We have an interim vice-chancellor at the moment. We are looking forward to having our new, ongoing, full-time vice-chancellor from the middle of July—Amit Chakma, who is originally from Bangladesh. We are anticipating and hoping that the Indian Ocean region focus will increase and that our strategy will continue. We are going to be delayed by COVID-19, as is everybody else, but we are not stopping. For whatever period it might be—six months or whatever—and the recovery afterwards, it does not take away the logic and the necessity of our university and our state engaging better and more fully with India and other countries in the region. I do not think we are going back to a world with borders that nobody crosses. It is unsustainable. I do not think that is the nature of the disease we are facing, but it will delay us for sure.

Prof. SIDDIQUE: I have a couple of additional points. One is that a lot of the research collaboration in the postgraduate program will continue. It is not going to be destructive, because people are already working and writing the papers and so on. I expect the delay will be temporary. But in terms of UWA or any other university, we probably will not match with the eastern states' universities, for example, that were just mentioned. The 2019 income from international students for Sydney university was \$1 billion—not \$1 million; \$1 billion. That is the entire budget of the University of Western Australia. Melbourne university had an income of \$850 million in that particular year. Who has to be blamed? At UWA, I have been as a student around here for a long time—it may be time to move on. Our international student number—the magic number, percentage—is still 20 per cent. That is the same strategy at the time Alan Robson developed it. We have a very good international strategy, as David said, that both of us put so much effort into. A new person will come and find that it is not going to fundamentally change. What is needed is: is our strategy working? We have three people, for example, employed by the university in India. One is a quite senior manager based in Pune, and there are two junior-level female staff based in New Delhi. Last month, when we had the incoming Indian high commissioner, which has still not been announced, to India—who is that? You all know; the Australian high commissioner. Our number, I was very shocked to see, was 325 students at UWA. That is 23 PhD students that people working in India, people like us, bring. The rest are the ones doing their masters and so on. Curtin may be sitting around close to 2 000 and ECU may be 1 500. Of course, the fee structure is different. Many other things have been funding that.

If the university wants to grow, we need to have a strategy and we need to actively work. We have done the same in China. The Chinese student number at UWA will be probably close to 2 000-plus at the moment. There is potential for that to grow. It is not because India has poor students; there are plenty of good students. There is also an image problem for Western Australia. All of them go to Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. When you go to India, many people do not know about Western Australia. They only know it because of the cricket. They get confused with the University of Western Australia. Once I was in a university and the vice-chancellor said, "We just had some of your colleagues over here." I said, "No-one comes from UWA without my knowledge." They were from the university of western Sydney; they think it is all the same. We have an image problem about Western Australia and Perth in India. Although it is changing, tourists mostly go the eastern states and students mostly go to the eastern states. They know of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, and less so Adelaide and Perth. The government has that role to play to promote various events—when everything is settled—and various delegations coming to Western Australia. They are some of the things that will help us to promote Perth and Western Australia and how beautiful the state is and how attractive it is here et cetera. Then, of course, there is the perennial problem about the lack of direct flights and the cost of coming from the eastern states to Perth, if they are coming over.

If they take a package to Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, and add Perth to that, it costs a lot of money. Researchers will come to that area and then I have to fork out money to bring them here. It can be quite expensive—\$1 200 or so. Accommodation is not a problem, but they are some of the issues.

The CHAIR: That is wonderful. We are unfortunately out of time but thank you so much; that was very informative. I will proceed to close today's hearing. Thank you for your evidence before the committee today. A transcript of this hearing will be emailed to you for correction of minor errors. Any such corrections must be made and the transcript returned within 10 working days of the date of the email attached to the transcript. If the transcript is not returned within this period, it will be deemed to be correct. New material cannot be added via these corrections and the sense of your evidence cannot be altered. Should you wish to provide additional information or elaborate on particular points, please include a supplementary submission for the committee's consideration when you return your corrected transcript of evidence. Thank you so much. That was wonderful.

Hearing concluded at 3.32 pm
