



Parliament of Western Australia
Legislative Council

Hon Stephen Dawson MLC
Member for Mining & Pastoral Region

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Hon Simon O'Brien MLC
Chairman
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

11 November 2013

Dear Mr O'Brien

PETITION No 17 – OPPOSING FEES FOR 457 VISA HOLDERS

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on Petition No 17 – Opposing Fees for 457 Visa Holders, which I tabled in the Legislative Council on 15 October 2013.

The Barnett Government's decision, announced in the 2013-2014 State Budget, to charge the students of 457 visa holders a \$4000 fee to attend a Western Australian public school was ill-conceived and unfair.

Over the past few months I have been contacted by a range of people from around Western Australia who have shared their personal stories about how this fee would negatively affect their families.

The State Government had actively encouraged families to move to Australia to take on jobs that Australians citizens could not take on, to help us with our mining boom, and to help regional communities that could not staff essential services or essential businesses.

Amongst the people who have raised their concerns with me were the Flanagan family who have five children. The husband (and father) works installing and maintaining overhead power lines. He gets paid \$77 000 a year. This is a single-income family. Three of these children are currently attending a state school, two are under school age at the moment however one is starting school next year.

As of January 2015, this family will be slugged \$4,000 for their first child to attend a public school and \$2,000 per child for a total of \$10,000 to send their four children to school. These new fees will be a substantial impost on this family and on many other families. I am worried about the consequences of this new policy.

These families moved to Australia in good faith. They made the decision to come here knowing that they would get paid a certain amount of money and that they should be able to live on that amount of money.

I believe this policy was made on the run, it did not take the consequences of what it might do for low-income families that will no longer be able to afford to send their children to public school.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Dawson', with a large, stylized initial 'S'.

Stephen Dawson MLC
Member for Mining & Pastoral