

STATE ECONOMY — MIGRATION

**460. Mrs L.M. O'MALLEY to the Premier:**

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's efforts in delivering one of the strongest economies in the world. Can the Premier outline to the house how the government is working to attract more skilled workers to Western Australia and meet the needs of industry?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

I thank the member for the question.

Western Australia has one of the strongest, if not the strongest, economies in the world. We have had strong management of the pandemic and avoided the long lockdowns that were experienced in other states and countries around the world. That is one of the things that has contributed to the extraordinary economic performance of Western Australia over the course of the last few years.

Australian Bureau of Statistics data released last month showed a record level of interstate migration into Western Australia between 2020 and 2021. We saw net interstate migration of 11 423 people. In comparison, New South Wales lost over 50 000 residents and Victoria lost over 30 000 residents. The two states that have had significant interstate migration into them were Western Australia and Queensland. In the final months of 2021, we had our largest ever quarterly interstate migration inflow into Western Australia. That is a sign of Western Australia's success over the course of the last few years—in fact, over the course of this government being in office.

On top of that, we recently analysed the cost of living differences between Western Australia, Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. That showed that the cost of living in Western Australia is significantly lower, particularly the cost of housing. If people are on an average or below average income, or even an above average income, the cost of buying a house in Western Australia is less than half the cost in New South Wales. There are huge advantages in moving to Western Australia, plus very high, by national standards, average yearly earnings.

Last month, we launched a new skilled migrant employment register to attract workers to key industries. It allows employers to connect with skilled migrants, easily see the pipeline of potential new workers, and support skilled migrants settling in Western Australia. It also allows migrants to indicate where they prefer to work in Western Australia, and what their skills and desires are. We have also added six more building and construction occupations to the Western Australian skilled migration occupation list. This includes building and engineering technicians, surveyors, roof tilers, project builders and building inspectors. We are advocating strongly to allow for more of these people to come to Western Australia during our time of need.

On top of that, we are investing more in TAFE. I recall that under the last government, TAFE fees were increased by up to 500 per cent in a whole range of courses, and that priced it out of reach of many ordinary families across Western Australia. We have dropped fees significantly for over 130 or so TAFE courses, some by more than 70 per cent. That has seen, between May 2020 and May 2022, building and construction apprenticeship commencements increasing by more than 150 per cent, while electrical apprenticeship commencements have nearly doubled. We are doing everything we can to ensure that Western Australians can take advantage of the extraordinary economic performance of our state.

*Visitors — Osborne Park RSL*

**The SPEAKER:** I acknowledge in my gallery some guests of the member for Balcatta from Osborne Park RSL.