

**Division 25: Training and Workforce Development — International Education, \$29 267 000 —**

Ms M.M. Quirk, Chair.

Mr D.A. Templeman, Minister for International Education.

Mrs R. Brown, Director General, Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation.

Ms K. Ho, Director General, Department of Training and Workforce Development.

Ms L. Rodgers, Director General, Department of Education.

Ms S. Spencer, Deputy Director General, Strategy and International Education.

Mr A. King, Executive Director, Strategic Policy.

Mr R. Sansalone, Chief Financial Officer.

Mr B. Jolly, Executive Director, Service Delivery.

Ms J. Healy, Executive Director, School Curriculum and Standards Authority.

Mr R. Perera, Associate Director, International Education.

Ms R. Lee, Executive Director, Strategy and Policy.

Ms T. Widdicombe, Chief of Staff, Minister for International Education.

[Witnesses introduced.]

**The CHAIR:** The estimates committees will be reported by Hansard and the daily proof will be available online as soon as possible within two business days. The chair will allow as many questions as possible. Questions and answers should be short and to the point. Consideration is restricted to items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must relate to a page number, item or amount related to the current division, and members should preface their questions with those details. Some divisions are the responsibility of more than one minister. Ministers shall be examined only in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

A minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the minister to clearly indicate what information they agree to provide and will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by noon on Friday, 2 June 2023. If a minister suggests that a matter be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system to submit their questions.

I give the call to the member for Roe.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I refer to line item 6 on page 373 headed “Recruitment and Management of International Students”. I note that for the budget estimate for 2023–24 we are talking about \$29.2 million. It increases to \$31.9 million, \$35.9 million and \$37.5 million in the forward estimates. Can the minister explain why this figure increases so dramatically over the forward estimates?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I might ask the director general to make an initial comment.

**Ms K. Ho:** The increase in the forward estimates represents the growth in international student numbers as the sector recovers, so it represents the delivery of international education to a growing number of students.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Is there any way to quantify the projections of the number of students who tie in to those figures?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Do we have some figures now that will perhaps give some indications of where the growth patterns are? International student enrolments at TAFE colleges over a period has seen a recovery in the last budget. This budget shows a recovery of 1 650 students enrolled at TAFE colleges currently. That is projected to grow in the next financial year to 1 820, 2 000 in the following year and then incrementally up. We expect to reach our pre-COVID level by around 2025, and it is expected that the numbers will continue to grow from there.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Thank you, minister and director general. How many of those students will go to regional colleges?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** We might have some figures, or an indication, that I can give the member. This relates to a previous question when I began to outline the number of students who had received bursaries in the first semester. They are small numbers, initially. In semester 1, Bunbury currently has 10 students enrolled, Geraldton has six—I met all of them at Geraldton in January, from memory—Kalgoorlie has three and Broome has one. This is an area we wish to grow. A two-year pilot strategy was commenced in January this year. We are seeking to increase that number to around 2 000 over the next two years.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Thank you, minister. Does this present challenges to both our regional and metropolitan TAFE colleges with regard to the shortages of staff with appropriate language skills or who have issues with English as a second language? Is there a shortage of lectures at the moment out in the regions who can deal with these particular international students?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** My experience of the Geraldton cohort was that their command of English was outstanding, from memory. Some of the student cohort that is coming through and that we want to continue to build may have English as a second language strengths, although not as strong as others. Ultimately, the TAFE lecturers, in my experience, are very capable of responding to those needs. The director general might make a further comment on what might be considered if there are particular challenges. One of the really important things to note is that for a lot of our international students, English is a language they are learning, and learning rapidly. In many countries, it is the second language of that country, so they are usually already immersed in English.

I will ask the director general if she wants to make some additional comments.

**Ms K. Ho:** Often when the students present with English language needs, they will do the English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students beforehand to bring them up to a standard in which they can engage in and successfully complete the course. The courses that are being offered through the regional TAFE International Western Australia strategy have been particularly selected because the colleges have the capacity to deliver those courses. They are also targeting skills shortage areas so that those students can contribute to the local workforce.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Thank you. I have one more question before I hand over to the member for Cottesloe. What are the top three courses through TAFE that our international students actually apply for?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Is that in regional areas or in the metropolitan area?

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Both.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I recall that in Geraldton the courses included aged care, hospitality and tourism, and aquaculture. I remember very vividly a young woman highlighting —

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Did the minister go down there to freshen up his crayfish supply?

[8.10 pm]

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** If they could have, they would have. In terms of enrolments, the overall top 10 courses for 2023 are: certificate III in commercial cookery, advanced diploma of engineering, certificate III in carpentry, diploma of civil and structural engineering, diploma of nursing, advanced diploma of civil and structural engineering, certificate III in light vehicle mechanical technology, certificate III in early childhood education and care, certificate IV in community services and diploma of hospitality management. Does the member want the application figures for 2023?

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Yes.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** The top 10 courses in terms of applications are: diploma of nursing, followed by diploma of hospitality management, diploma of early childhood education and care, diploma of community services, diploma of business, certificate III in commercial cookery, certificate III in individual supports—that includes ageing, home and community care—advanced diploma of engineering technology (electrical), diploma of automotive technology and certificate III in carpentry. As the member can see, all those courses are high-demand career pathways.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** It has been put to me by a number of people—I know it is not a novel view—that in fact growth in TAFE certificates may be one of the principal areas for growth in international students. What activity is TAFE undertaking in relation to marketing its certificate programs to international students?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** In previous questions we have highlighted that the strategy to grow student numbers in the international sector with regard to TAFE is an important part of TAFE's work. I can highlight that TAFE International Western Australia continues to work with the various agencies, including the director general's Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation, to promote the state government recovery initiatives as part of the Reconnect WA package. Regional managers are promoting WA TAFE colleges and government schools to potential students through in-country visits and virtual education exhibitions, agent training sessions, seminars, webinars and student counselling sessions. In a broader context, Western Australia recently hosted the International Consultants for Education and Fairs conference that brought together agents and a range of sector participants from in-market countries at which TAFE had a promotional role.

TIWA recommenced travel in July. In the last six months, its recruitment managers have continued to visit nine countries or regions that include Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, Europe, Thailand, India and Mauritius. These are in-market efforts by TIWA, and 20 regional trips may be required throughout the year to further expand opportunities in African countries as well as countries like Indonesia, the Philippines, Japan and Korea. A number of those are developing countries and there is no doubt that the skills training from a TAFE course offering in Western Australia is very highly sought.

Again, I really want to pay tribute to our TAFE institutions in terms of their quality of training. TAFE is increasing in its reputation internationally and that is why TAFE's focus will be to continue to grow that pipeline of students. It is an exciting time for TAFE.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Is TAFE looking to partner with overseas institutions to provide those TAFE courses offshore or is the focus purely on bringing students to Western Australia to train at TAFE?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I will let the director general answer that question more specifically. My understanding is that both of those aspects occur currently. Countries like India, Bangladesh and others are particularly looking for vocational courses such as those I have listed. Western Australia has a strong reputation and we are increasingly becoming the place of choice. I will ask the director general to comment further on the member's question.

**Ms K. Ho:** I can confirm that TAFE colleges have offshore commercial partnerships with overseas educational institutions. A number of very successful longstanding partnerships are in place. For example, South Metropolitan TAFE has been partnering with the Charles Telfair Campus in Mauritius to deliver accredited Australian vocational education and training qualifications such as the diploma of early childhood education and care and also training its trainers and lecturers in a certificate IV in training and assessment. That is an example of a partnership that was put in place pre COVID. Some of that pipeline of offshore work was disrupted during the COVID pandemic and the colleges are reconnecting and re-engaging with potential offshore partners.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** In relation to those programs, what is the cost of delivering or managing those partnerships offshore and what income is received for those services?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I am happy for the director general to respond.

**Ms K. Ho:** All those partnerships have different costs depending on the size, scope and services being provided by the colleges. The colleges operate under a set of ministerial guidelines for those partnerships, which means that they need to have robust business cases and to be covering all costs on a commercial basis.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I refer to page 375 of budget paper No 2 and service 3, "Skilled Migration, Including Overseas Qualification Assessment". The total cost of service shown has almost tripled in the current year rising from a budget of \$1.98 million to the expected almost \$6 million. Staffing numbers have more than doubled from the previous year when there were nine FTEs —

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Sorry, member. The member is referring to an item that falls within the Minister for Training's responsibility, not mine.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** That is outside the minister's remit, is it?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Yes.

**The appropriation was recommended.**

[8.20 pm]