

CHINA, EDUCATION AND TRAINING SECTORS

1242. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for Education and Training:

Will the minister advise what efforts are being made within the education and training sectors to further Western Australia's engagement with China?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER replied:

I thank the member for Collie for the question and for his advocacy for education in his electorate. I would also like to acknowledge the presence in the public gallery of students from John Calvin School in Albany.

There is a vast potential, which has been recognised over some time, for the development of educational services as a trade between Western Australia and China. Efforts have been made intermittently over a period to maximise the benefit of that trade. I believe it is now fair to say that that effort is being stepped up, and the reward for some of the activities that were undertaken a couple of years ago are now starting to flow through. In universities in Western Australia, 1 240 students from China are enrolled in fields of study, including commerce, information technology, education, engineering and health.

There is an equally interesting development with the delivery of services to China. Edith Cowan University has developed a range of programs and partnerships to further forge strong links with Chinese institutions, including bilingual Master of Business Administration and Master of Education programs delivered by ECU to Chinese universities; research partnerships; and agreements with Chinese institutions, which will increase ECU's profile in China. The University of Western Australia is keen to expand its academic connections with China via a number of memorandums of understanding. The arts faculty at UWA sends its Chinese language students to several Chinese universities for language immersion programs. It also has a range of research connections with Chinese academics in science, engineering, economics, the arts, humanities and social sciences.

At secondary school level, 19 Chinese students are now enrolled in the secondary school program in Western Australia. Canning and Tuart Colleges have a combined enrolment of 175 students from China. The Western Australian economy benefits directly as a result of course fees and accommodation costs worth \$20 000 per annum for each student. Given the economic growth in and the population of China, it is an almost unlimited market. I have been speaking today to the Vice-Chancellor of Murdoch University about this very issue. An agreement is currently being drafted to enable the delivery of the first English enrichment course in China. It is scheduled to begin in March 2004. Interest has been expressed by a further eight schools in China. It is proposed that the course will be delivered by WA teachers and administered through Canning College.

The Curriculum Council of Western Australia and the department are currently discussing potential arrangements for the delivery of the years 11 and 12 curriculum at four school sites in China. One of those schools is located in Hangzhou, Western Australia's sister state. There is a range of other initiatives involving the delivery of vocational education in China, as well as access to it in Western Australia.

Apart from the huge landmark developments such as Gorgon and the other trade areas, I believe there is massive potential for the development of education services between this State and China. Because of Western Australia's historical trade links with China and South East Asia, it is well placed to capitalise on its dealings with Chinese students for the benefit of both Western Australia and China. I expect the speedy development of that potential in the future.