



WA government devastate the International Student market

Premier Mark McGowan's decision to close Perth from being part of the RSMS visa program was bad enough. But now even worse, Western Australia has sponsored not one international student in the first 5 months of this program year through the state migration plan. This total lack of support for the WA International Student market has had the predicted disastrous effect on new student numbers into the state over the last 7 months.

Whilst the rest of Australia has grown an impressive 8% in the 7 months to October 2017, Western Australia has nosedived. Every one of those months we have been well below the national growth figure for International Student visa applications. Overall we have dropped 7% in total from the same period last financial year, and a massive 15% compared to the other States.

The main two decisions the WA government made sent a clear signal that international students were not welcome. First they closed the RSMS visa program for the Perth metropolitan area. This was a process where a company had to prove to our own state government they were unable to fill a position from the local labour market and so needed to sponsor a skilled person for the position.

The second decision was to drop almost every occupation from the WA state migration plan. This program only sponsored 200 people per year anyhow and was insignificant in terms of a migration program nationally of around 200,000 people per year. But the message it sent to international students was clear, WA was closed and was not going to provide incentives to study here.

Not surprisingly students have voted with their feet and flocked to Eastern state colleges and universities that DO support them through their respective state migration plans.

Skilled visa Nominations from State/Territory Governments this financial year up to 30/11/2017

1410	South Australia
1034	Victoria
954	NSW
659	Queensland
472	Tasmania
223	ACT
217	Northern Territory
0	Western Australia

Let's put some real dollars to how much this has hurt WA so far. The average student through education and living costs contributes \$148,900 to our economy. If we had experienced the same growth as the rest of the country we would have had an extra 1,777 students applying to study in Western Australia from overseas this last 6 months alone. That is already a \$265 million loss to our economy.

In terms of fulltime WA jobs, the international student industry employs 10,000 fulltime West Australians. A 15% drop from where we should have been in student applications is clearly going to cost us hundreds if not close to 1000 jobs eventually.

The WA government has taken an isolated politically motivated view not to provide incentives for students to study here. The decision to close the RSMS program was mainly around just 200 trade jobs to appease the unions, the other RSMS visa places were used for professional jobs that other visas would have been available for anyhow. The decision to effectively close the WA state migration plan was related to just another 200 jobs annually.

The potential visa applicants in most cases already had the work rights to take up these jobs, it just gave them the added bonus of a permanent visa. So it actually was not costing WA workers anything by keeping these state programs open as an attraction to study here.

Research has shown for every skilled migrant who comes to live in Australia, their skill, production capacity and overall economic worth creates 1.6 jobs for our economy. Other states know that and they are all competing for these cashed up international students.

In fact Premier McGowan knows the economic value of students in WA. This was direct from his facebook page in January 2017 ..

“ ..International students are important to our local economy. For every three international students that study here, a new job is created for a local Western Australian.”

By his own figures, given we are 1800 new students down on the growth experienced by the rest of Australia, that has already cost us 600 fulltime jobs as well as \$265 million from our state economy.

The only loser here from Premier McGowan’s decision has been the WA economy and WA workers. The big winner is the Eastern States who are happy to revel in our sorrow and welcome these disenchanting international students with open arms.

Typical comments from international students to us include :

***Alphonsia** - The future is really scary now despite the hard work you do in this country as an international student... A big advice to family n friends back India: Better move to any other country than investing your hard earned money here on studies and other type of visas. Enough of our money we have wasted in this country and at the end what are we getting- only discrimination!*

***Bryan** – Was planning to consider WA but this has helped me a lot*

Colleges and other educational institutions have made it clear in meetings with the premier that they are suffering. Yet still nothing has been done to arrest this alarming slide. The main factor attracting international students is visa outcomes. Whilst WA continues to have its head in the sand and gives no state sponsorships, the eastern states colleges and universities rub their hands in glee.

No wonder our budget is in such a mess and the international education industry in WA crying out for some leadership.

Steven O’Neil
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