

TOURISM — ETIHAD AIRWAYS — PERTH–ABU DHABI — DAILY FLIGHTS

252. Hon COLIN TINCKNELL to the minister representing the Minister for Tourism:

The government recently announced direct flights from Perth to London, highlighting the importance of building Perth's profile as an entry point into Australia. Disappointingly, it was reported this morning in *The West Australian* that Etihad Airways will cease its daily service to Perth, effective 1 October.

- (1) Has the government spoken to Etihad Airways or taken any steps to try to prevent this daily service from concluding?
- (2) If yes to (1), what steps or action have been taken?
- (3) If not, does the government have any such intentions to do so in an effort to preserve this important travel route to the Middle East?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question. The following information has been provided to me by the Minister for Tourism.

- (1)–(3) Naturally we are disappointed with this decision by Etihad Airways to withdraw its daily service between Perth and Abu Dhabi, which I am advised had not been anticipated nor mentioned in recent discussions Tourism Western Australia has had with the airline. No approach had been made to the government for additional marketing support on the route. Once verbally advised on 9 April 2018, both Tourism Australia and Tourism Western Australia asked Etihad whether there was anything that could be done to change its decision, such as further marketing support. The airline indicated it would not change the decision, which was made for commercial reasons as part of its global network review. It is not just Perth being affected but destinations around the world—to date, Etihad has announced Ho Chi Minh City, Edinburgh and Perth as affected cities.

Reductions in aviation capacity are never good. However, it is important to remember that Etihad is one of three airlines servicing Western Australia through the Middle East. Qatar also services Perth, and will upgrade its aircraft to A380s next month. This represents an increase of more than 1 000 seats a week. Perth is still well connected via the Middle East to the United Kingdom and European markets, with multiple airlines operating flights over their connecting hubs, including Middle East carriers Emirates and Qatar, as well as Qantas' new direct flights from the UK and numerous other carriers via Asian hubs, such as Singapore Airlines, Malaysia Airlines, Cathay Pacific Airways and China Southern Airlines.