

TOURISM — DIRECT FLIGHTS — SHANGHAI-PERTH

1110. Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE to the Minister for Tourism:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to boosting the state's tourism businesses and creating tourism jobs through its unprecedented efforts to secure more direct flights to Western Australia. Can the minister outline to the house how the direct flights between Shanghai and Perth will help attract more Chinese holiday-makers to WA over the summer period, and, in doing so, help grow the WA economy?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

I thank the member for Thornlie for his enthusiastic support of tourism—and why would he not support tourism? The biggest number of people from outside the state in history are coming to Western Australia, and they are spending more than ever before since we launched our —

Ms L. Mettam interjected

The SPEAKER: Member for Vasse! You now have three.

Mr P. PAPALIA: She is on three!

Several members interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: According to Tourism Research Australia, the largest number of out-of-state visitors in history are coming to Western Australia, and they are spending more than ever before in history. Most interestingly, we have had the biggest number of international visitor holiday-makers in history. In the 12 months to June, 506 000 people came from overseas to Western Australia. That is a fantastic outcome, but we want more. That is why last Tuesday I was very pleased to attend an event at the new Ritz-Carlton, Perth with the Premier, Minister Tinley, the Treasurer, business luminaries from Western Australia, and the Western Australian Chinese community, to celebrate, acknowledge and promote the first trial of China Eastern Airlines flights between Shanghai and Perth, commencing on 15 January. I would like to take the opportunity to encourage every member of Parliament, if they can, to consider flying on these flights during this trial. We need those flights to work so that we can convince China Eastern to roll on into regular flights post the trial. We do not want it to stop; we want it to keep going. It is a trial over Chinese New Year. It will boost numbers. It will be invaluable. People will come to this state, and they will get into our cafes, bars, hotels and restaurants, and they will get out to the regions, and they will grow jobs. But we want it to work so that we can be connected to Shanghai, a city of 29 million people, surrounded by cities of 10 million people. This is a huge new market, like a whole new country. We currently have only one direct flight between Perth and China—from Guangzhou. That is wonderful, and I am very thankful to China Southern Airlines for those flights. But if we can get China Eastern to continue these flights from Shanghai on a regular basis, it would be a great coup.

I have a bit of information. The flights will start on 15 January, three times a week, providing around 7 000 seats to and from Perth. The flights will depart Shanghai at 20 past midnight and arrive in Perth at 9.50 am. The return leg from Perth will depart at 11.50 am and arrive in Shanghai at 9.10 pm.

Mr V.A. Catania: How much?

Mr P. PAPALIA: What does the member mean?

Mr V.A. Catania: What is the cost?

The SPEAKER: It is more than you can afford, member for North West Central. You are on three calls, by the way, but I am not throwing you out on the last day.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I want to explain to the National Party that we do not subsidise flights. We market the route. We give money to the inbound tour operators to get people on the plane so that they will come here—unlike some other proposals around chartering aircraft. That is not what it is. This is an effort to grow awareness in Shanghai of our market, and then get people on these flights and encourage China Eastern to continue the flights. We are spending \$1 million extra this year on marketing Western Australia in Shanghai, in an effort to grow awareness in Shanghai and surrounds and get that market to lift.

The Chinese market has grown substantially in recent years, thanks to our efforts, with 14 per cent growth in the last 12 months, and 66 700 Chinese visitors to Western Australia. The interesting thing about it is that that is under-performing as a proportion of the national market; we do not get our per capita share, yet the Chinese are our biggest spenders. They are about fifth in terms of numbers, but they are our biggest spenders. If we can get the numbers up, it will be a massive boost to all of Western Australia. I cannot believe that anyone, even someone as shallow and inane as the member for North West Central, would criticise this effort. I would encourage him to get on the plane and fly to Shanghai. He can go online and book it.

Mr V.A. Catania: Do you know how much it costs per flight?

The SPEAKER: Member for North West Central, you are on three. I can organise a one-way ticket for you.

Mr P. PAPALIA: They had promotional deals, but I think those have gone. It was about \$500 return.

Several members interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am not their salesman! I am just trying to encourage members to make the flights work. I thought the member meant how much it cost the government. I did not realise that is what the member meant. I will find out and get back to him.

Several members interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: If the member for North West Central promises not to come back, I will pay for the flight going over!