

MINISTER FOR TOURISM — INDIA VISIT

Statement by Minister for Tourism

MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Tourism) [9.16 am]: I wish to inform the house that I led a mission to India in late October, for the second time in the past few months. The purpose of this follow-up visit was to continue discussions with airlines in Mumbai and New Delhi about direct flights between India and Perth. I led representatives from Perth Airport, Tourism Western Australia and Tourism Australia, and staff of the Government of Western Australia Office in Mumbai, who assisted with meetings and arrangements in-market.

We took the opportunity to raise Western Australia's profile as a tourism destination, present business cases to the airlines and strengthen relationships with key stakeholders. In addition to meetings with airline executives and the Minister of State for Civil Aviation, Honourable Jayant Sinha, I had roundtable discussions with education agents and leading travel wholesalers and travel agents. I also briefed local print and online media on the Western Australian government's commitment to establish direct air services to Perth, which resulted in media coverage of our visit in five national newspapers and 33 online publications. Media reports highlighted this commitment and the marketing initiatives that will be undertaken by Tourism Western Australia to grow demand for Perth and Western Australia within India's growing middle class.

Tourism WA will be investing considerably more of its marketing funds to increase knowledge about our state in a market in which there is limited awareness. Initial promotional activities include travel packages through Thomas Cook so that Indians can watch their cricket team play Australia in the first-ever test match at Optus Stadium. Tourism WA has also appointed a marketing representative, who will be based in Mumbai, to engage with media, trade and international students and pursue other opportunities.

India is already a fast growing market for Western Australia, with the number of visitors increasing by 38 per cent from the year ending December 2015 to the same period in 2017. Many Indian carriers have been permitted to fly on international routes and there is an opportunity for new direct flights between India and Australia. We are working to capitalise on this opportunity. The Western Australian government is serious about growing the number of visitors travelling to Western Australia from India. WA has much to offer them, whether they are visiting for business, education or leisure. Perth boasts some of the best and most affordable hotels in Australia and is the perfect launching pad to visit our spectacular regions. I am hopeful of a positive response to the business cases we presented.

I take this opportunity to sincerely thank Australia's High Commissioner to India, Ms Harinder Sidhu, for her invaluable assistance in arranging meetings with senior officials, as well as Mr Peter Baldwin, Commissioner of the Western Australian Trade Office in India, and his team for the excellent organisation of all aspects of my visit.