

TOURISM — DIRECT FLIGHTS — BROOME

468. Mr K.J.J. MICHEL to the Minister for Tourism:

Can the minister update the house on how the McGowan Labor government is delivering on its commitment to support regional tourism and ensure that flights to the regions are affordable for visitors; and, in particular, how it has been able to encourage more visitors to Broome?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

I thank the member for his question and his effective advocacy on behalf of the Pilbara. It is a relief to see such advocacy in contrast with the previous incumbent of that seat.

It is a pleasure to talk about what the McGowan government is doing for regional Western Australia—both for communities to provide them with some relief from the appallingly high cost of flights they encounter and also to boost tourism opportunities for the regions. That is something that was completely neglected for eight and a half years by the National Party and the Liberal Party in government.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr P. PAPALIA: For eight and a half years —

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Vasse, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr P. PAPALIA: For eight and a half years the National Party and the Liberal Party wasted billions of dollars of taxpayers' money in the regions on projects that did nothing. Let us cast our minds back to the Kimberley. We recently enabled people of Broome and the wider Kimberley to access affordable flights. For the first time in more than a decade they are able to fly to Perth for under \$200 and fly return for under \$400. This is an incredibly significant support mechanism for the people of the Kimberley. We should compare that with the actions of the National Party during its eight and a half years in government. Through a portfolio that it controlled entirely, without any business case, it committed \$320 million of taxpayers' money to a project that built a road and a drain—and the drain leaked! No permanent jobs were created as a consequence of that \$320 million. It was over \$1 billion of taxpayers' money when the federal money contributed at the behest of the National Party of Western Australia is counted. And what was the outcome? What could have been done for remote Aboriginal housing for half a billion dollars? What could have been done for tourism in the regions for half a billion dollars? For half a billion dollars, what could have been done for flights to Broome and for local residents to be able to fly back to Perth? But that money was not spent on any of those things. That money was spent on an absolute vanity project in the Kimberley that resulted in nothing—no return for the people of Western Australia. Taxpayers got no permanent jobs out of it. All they got was a road and a leaky drain. That is what people should remember as they contemplate the Minister for Transport's announcement yesterday of, for the first time, affordable flights to Monkey Mia and Carnarvon in the member for North West Central's seat. It is incredible that in the eight and a half years of sitting on the government's backbench, that member was unable to deliver for his constituency. The day after it was announced that the coral coast had a 36 per cent increase in tourism in 2017 under the McGowan government, he had the gall to get the workplace experience kid in the office to get a text and write a sign on a bit of white corflute claiming that he was responsible for the change. He had obviously heard that we were going to announce affordable flights yesterday, so he tried to take responsibility on the Friday before. It is pathetic!

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister!

Mr P. PAPALIA: I echo the Minister for Transport's words. We cannot believe a word this member says. Behind him is a public record of a decade or more of failing to tell the truth. He cannot be believed!

Point of Order

Mr V.A. CATANIA: This is intimidation by the other side over an allegation that has been made.

The SPEAKER: If you want an answer on that, it is not a point of order.