

TOURISM — CORAL COAST

347. Mr V.A. CATANIA to the Minister for Tourism:

I refer to the Minister for Tourism's recent visit with me to our coral coast region to visit tourism operators and local shires. Will the minister please update the house on the aspects of this trip that relate to tourism in the region?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

I thank the member for North West Central for the question; I enjoyed him taking me around the Shark Bay area. We were also accompanied by the Legislative Council member for Mining and Pastoral Region Hon Mark Lewis.

I am really pleased to say that the coral coast region is punching above its weight with regard to tourist visitation. The visitor survey for the 12 months to September 2013 showed that the region received 740 700 visitors. I am sure that is not news to the member for North West Central, but that is an increase of 6.5 per cent on the previous year, which means 44 900 additional visitors. The coral coast region includes the Monkey Mia precinct, and it is a region that the government is focusing on as part of our tourism strategy. We really want to see all the regions across Western Australia start to achieve figures like this so that we can achieve our target of doubling the value of tourism in Western Australia from \$6 billion, as it was in 2010, to \$12 billion by 2020.

The other thing about this scheme I would like to raise today is the fact that the Liberal–National government's commitment to regional events is part of the generation of visitor numbers to this area and, indeed, right across regional Western Australia. This program, which is jointly funded through royalties for regions and administered by Tourism WA, has resulted in a \$750 000 grants pool in the 2014–15 budget, which will enable us to hold up to 50 regional events. These events are great drivers for economic activity in our regional centres, and they are certainly creating an impetus for people to travel to various different regional towns across Western Australia, which in turn are certainly very welcoming of the tourists who are starting to engage in activities in those local communities.

There are lots of things to do on the coral coast. I think that the regional events program is a point of differentiation between the government and the Labor opposition, because we are certainly getting great recognition in regional areas that the events program is new and that under the previous Labor government there were no programs like it. People are starting to see the impacts of that in local jobs and dollars going into local businesses.

Another thing I would like to put on the record is that we visited Ocean Park Aquarium and the Monkey Mia dolphins. I was really pleased to see the contribution being made by Aspen Parks and Resorts. Aspen Parks and Resorts owns —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Albany, I call you to order for the first time. Maybe the minister will mention the great southern later.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: It might be of interest to members in the house that dolphins are seen as one of the most intelligent beings on the planet. Some of those opposite might do well to learn a bit from the dolphins at Monkey Mia!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I want to say that Aspen Parks and Resorts has invested \$1.8 million into the renovation of the restaurant and the facilities at the resort —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, I call you to order for the first time. Minister, can you wind it up, please.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: The member for North West Central has actually been integral in ensuring that there has been some capacity building in the infrastructure that supports the tourism development at Monkey Mia. A 150-kilolitre wastewater treatment plant has been installed at the Monkey Mia resort by Aspen Parks, and that is in addition to a capacity upgrade to the sewerage plant. Aspen is not only developing a really great tourism venture, it is also taking very seriously its responsibilities as the custodian and environmental manager of that pristine part of Western Australia by ensuring that the treatment of blackwater waste is being done appropriately. It is making sure that it is self-sufficient in its fresh water requirements, and it has moved that infrastructure away

from the tourism precinct to prevent infiltration of pollutants into the pristine Shark Bay area. Aspen Parks has done a really good job, and I am pleased to see that in a remote part of Western Australia such as Monkey Mia we can have a tourism resort that rivals any of the other international destinations that talk about how great their dolphins are. However, at Monkey Mia, people can come and stay at a top-class resort and have an experience with the dolphins.

Unlike those opposite, who bag out tourism in Western Australia, we on this side of the house talk up tourism. I am proud of Monkey Mia resort and what it has achieved.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Albany!