

TOURISM — INTERNATIONAL VISITORS

941. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Tourism:

I refer to the minister's comments in March 2018 in which he tried to blame the previous government for issues in his portfolio, and I quote —

... if there is a failure in strategy for international tourism, it is entirely the responsibility of the campaigns that were conducted prior to that 12 months.

Will the minister now accept that the falling international numbers and spend are entirely due to his management of tourism campaigns over the last 12 to 18 months?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members! Members on my right!

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

He stung you, didn't he? He stung you!

I thank the member for her question. It is the "responsible" of this government? An interesting suggestion.

What I said in March this year was in relation to the launch of a two-year action plan.

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Vasse!

Mr P. PAPALIA: By March this year the government had recognised that the Tourism 2020 strategy written by the previous government—the only strategy in place that was written by the previous government—had failed, as identified by the Auditor General in his November 2017 report. We responded by asking Tourism WA to work with the Tourism Council Western Australia, the Australian Hotels Association and other parts of the industry in Western Australia to develop an immediate, two-year action plan to respond to growing visitor numbers from outside the state, because Western Australia was lagging.

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Vasse, I will not warn you again.

Mr P. PAPALIA: We had already delivered on our election promises of increasing funding and certainty of funding for destination marketing and events funding. This was about a more immediate response to filling hotel rooms, getting people out into the regions, and responding to cleaning up the mess that we inherited. That is what the two-year action plan is.

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

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

Mr P. PAPALIA: But the only strategy that is in place is the Tourism 2020 strategy. I have asked Tourism WA to go and work with industry to develop a new tourism strategy. We have an action plan that we are enacting; it started in March 2018. The statistics to which the member refers applied between March and June; there would not be a response to an initiative we enacted in our action plan in March on international visitor numbers in the three months between March and June. There has, however, been a change to interstate visitor numbers, because they are more immediate than international numbers. I notice that the opposition has had nothing to say about two consecutive quarters of growth in interstate visitor numbers. It has not noticed that there was double-digit growth in interstate visitor numbers the last time the National Visitor Survey was released. I also notice that it has said nothing about the four to five per cent increase in visitor spend in the last National Visitor Survey.

Mrs L.M. Harvey interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Scarborough, the minister is answering a question.

Mr P. PAPALIA: We are enacting an action plan and it is clearly working for interstate visitation. The numbers are growing and the spend is growing. We are going to double the number of cruise ship visitors next year as a consequence of our action to not only save cruising in Western Australia after the previous government almost lost it, but also double, in one year, the visitor numbers and port and ship visits. We have made regional air travel affordable for many destinations. People can now get affordable visitor air travel to Broome, Monkey Mia, Carnarvon, Albany and Esperance —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr P. PAPALIA: People can now get affordable flights, which is helping tourism, and we are working on other initiatives. We inherited a mess, but the biggest thing we can do to attract international visitors is to work towards the two-year action plan objective of making Western Australia the western gateway to Australia. This does not happen by accident.

I noticed yet another negative opinion piece by the opposition today.

Several members interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: No, the opposition —

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Vasse, please. You have asked the question, just wait for the answer.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The opposition has discovered international direct flights, having lost the direct flight to Japan in 2011 and having lost the direct Qantas flight between Perth and Singapore under the leadership of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. Having never tried to get a direct flight to Shanghai and having not known there was such a thing as direct flights to India, members opposite have discovered direct flights. The member for Vasse is now making the observation that it is all going to happen. It does not just happen, member. The only direct flights from China that the previous government achieved were three days a week from Guangzhou. That is a wonderful thing. We have got that up to five days. Melbourne has 14 direct flights a day. It did not just happen. That government went to China, it worked hard and it achieved direct flights from new source markets. That is what governments do to grow international visitor numbers. That is what we are doing.