

TOURISM — DIRECT FLIGHTS

Statement by Minister for Tourism

MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Tourism) [2.05 pm]: I wish to inform the house of a mission I led to India, China and Japan last week as part of the ongoing efforts to establish new direct flights from key markets. In India, I was joined by representatives from Perth Airport and staff from the government of Western Australia office in Mumbai. During our one-day visit, we met with the new Minister of State for Civil Aviation, Mr Hardeep Singh Puri; Vistara airlines' chief strategy officer, Mr Vinod Kannan; and Air India's chair and managing director, Mr Ashwani Lohani. We also met with MakeMyTrip, the biggest outbound travel agent in India. The airline meetings were very productive, particularly with Vistara, which is increasingly becoming regarded as a high-quality international carrier. As members may be aware, we have already established a dedicated in-market tourism officer in Mumbai and we are now investing in marketing to promote our great state. Our efforts are starting to pay off with increased visitor numbers. This strengthens the case for a direct flight; however, there is still much work to do.

In China, I met with Mr Luo Lai Jun, executive vice president of China Southern Airlines, to discuss a daily service from Guangzhou to Perth. I also met with the president of China Eastern Airlines, Li Yangmin, regarding a direct service from Shanghai. Both meetings were positive. To further support the push for direct flights, I met with both the Guangdong and Shanghai departments of culture and tourism. I also hosted a tourism industry function in Guangzhou with some of Western Australia's key distribution partners in China. I would like to acknowledge and thank our new Chinese Consul General in Perth, Madam Dong Zhihua, for her great assistance in arranging some of the key meetings in China.

In Tokyo, I took part in various media activities to create awareness of the new All Nippon Airways direct flights to Perth and to promote WA as an appealing tourism destination. These included a train trip to Shinagawa station, where billboards featured WA imagery; hosting a special lunch for 90 Japanese media outlets at the Australian embassy; visiting the headquarters of the largest Japanese travel agent—in Shinjuku—for a Perth promotion; and addressing a large gathering of senior Japanese business figures at the Australian ambassador's residence. The trip culminated with an official role in the departure ceremony at Narita International Airport for the inaugural ANA flight to Perth.