

TOURISM — DOMESTIC VISITORS

643. Mrs L.M. O'MALLEY to the Minister for Tourism:

I firstly acknowledge the staff and students from the gifted and talented program at Melville Senior High School who are in the public gallery today.

I refer to the challenges facing WA's domestic tourism industry and the strong competition from nearby destinations in Asia and the Pacific region. What is the government doing to attract more visitors to our iconic local attractions, particularly Rottneest Island?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

I thank the member for her question. In advance of answering, on behalf of the member for Cannington, I acknowledge—although they have left, it will still get on the *Hansard*—the staff and students from St Norbert College in Queens Park.

Member, that is a good question. I understand —

Dr M.D. Nahan: Are you going to sell the naming rights to Rottneest?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I could not afford it!

It is a good question, member! I am aware that tourism is attracting a little comment today, particularly, I understand, the naming of the stadium. We have heard suggestions that there is some angst around —

Ms R. Saffioti: Doom!

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes.

There is angst around taxpayers having a windfall in the form of many, many tens of millions of dollars that they will not have to find to fill the gap that was left by the previous government. That is thanks to a sponsorship deal, and is a wonderful thing.

In regards to what we have been doing, the member may have noticed that on the weekend the Premier and I attended the launch of the third ferry service to Rottneest Island. The member talked about Rottneest in particular. That is an interesting topic. The third ferry service is being provided by SeaLink. SeaLink is a huge national company with links to 3 000 marketing agents around the world. The good thing about SeaLink coming on board, apart from the obvious increase in berths, is the additional trips to the island, which amount to 700 000 additional seats on a ferry that we can market to international markets, as well as local people and interstate visitors. That is an incredible increase. Last year, a total of 645 000 people visited the island. Potentially, we have double the capacity. That is an incredible increase and a wonderful opportunity to market Western Australia around the world, particularly to the Asian region, and to be able to say that we have the capacity and we can meet that demand if we can grow it. That is a great thing. As soon as SeaLink arrived, it drove down the price of tickets by 30 per cent. That is another good thing that we can employ in marketing to Asia because Malaysia and Singapore already represent the second and third greatest source of visitation to the state. They are very comfortable coming down here for a weekend. They can do it easily because of direct flights. We can market to them, "Get out to Rottneest; it's a good place to visit."

I understand that someone made a comment this morning about the naming rights of Perth Stadium being sold. I am disappointed that he is not here, but the former Premier made the claim, which I have to respond to, that Western Australia is falling off the table—falling off the map. He said that it brings tears to his eyes to observe that. He was asked by Geoff Hutchison: where is the evidence of Western Australia falling off the map? His response was, "Do you read much about WA in the national news or globally?" I do. Recently, we made a one-day trip to Singapore, which included a media announcement organised by government media advisers, which resulted in significant coverage in Singapore. In relation to Rottneest Island, we got on the front page of *The Business Times*. It linked to an inside story, with a big picture of a quokka, and the headline "Western Australia puts out welcome mat for S'pore, Malaysia, China". People can read about Western Australia in Singapore under this government. That was one publication. There were a number of publications—about five or six in total. Media Monitors put the value of that free publicity at \$101 886. People can read about Western Australia in the media under this government. I read in "Inside Cover" that people were reading about Western Australia in Switzerland recently as a result of my very poor attempt to get a selfie with a quokka! Nevertheless, people were able to read about that.

The observation I would finally like to make with respect to reading about Western Australia is that under our government, the news is good. We are promoting the fact that there is capacity—we have affordable, high-quality hotels and now is the time to visit. Under our government, that is the message about Western Australia. Unfortunately, we could not read about Western Australia under the previous government. There were a lot of global stories but most of them revolved around the former member for Vasse, and none of them were complimentary.