

CHINA — TOURISM — DIRECT FLIGHTS

680. Mr J.N. CAREY to the Minister for Tourism:

I refer to this government's commitment to securing a bigger share of tourists from China and Japan and the recent agreement struck with the massive Chinese online retail travel company Ctrip. How will this deal help Western Australia secure more tourists from China and can the minister update the house on discussions with airlines such as China Eastern Airlines regarding direct flights to Perth?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

I thank the member for the question. It is true that we are deeply committed to growing the share of visitors from China and Japan. There is a reason for that, member. It is because of the neglect suffered at the hands of the previous government. Western Australia is by far the state receiving the least benefit from those two sources of visitors. In the 12 months to June this year, Western Australia received 51 100 Chinese tourists, or thereabouts, of a national share of 1.16 million. That is the equivalent of about 4.4 per cent. Japan sent us 26 200 or so visitors of a national share of 391 200. That is around 6.7 per cent.

The reason is the neglect of the previous government.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warren–Blackwood!

Mr P. PAPALIA: The previous government sat back and cruised through the boom and, as a consequence, we saw visitation plummet.

The SPEAKER: Minister, through the Chair, please. You will not have interjections if you talk through the Chair.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Our share of visitation plummeted under the previous government. We heard things such as the last time a Western Australian tourism minister visited Guangzhou, where the only aircraft in China flies directly —

The SPEAKER: Minister, through the Chair. If you talk through the Chair, there will not be interjections and you can get your message across. If you keep doing it, I will sit you down.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Thanks, Mr Speaker. I was addressing the backbench, which is not interjecting.

The last time a Western Australian tourism minister visited the site of the home of the only Chinese airline to visit Western Australia and fly directly to Western Australia was in 2011. The last time a tourism minister visited Japan was in 2012. We do not have direct flights from Japan; we have not since 2011. It is essential that we grow visitation from China and Japan. Ctrip is the biggest online travel agency in China. It will now be marketing thanks to a memorandum of understanding witnessed by the Premier and me while we were on our visit. It will now market Western Australia; and, if we manage to get direct flights from China Eastern Airlines, of course visitation will grow. Ctrip will grow awareness of the state, and that is a good thing.