

TOURISM — DIRECT FLIGHTS

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

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's record investment in tourism and its two-year action plan to grow WA's tourism industry and create more tourism jobs. Can the minister update the house on how this government is implementing this plan and driving efforts to attract more direct flights to WA?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

I thank the member for her question and for her interest in and support for tourism in Western Australia.

At the outset, on behalf of the Minister for Youth, I acknowledge some of his guests in the public gallery and welcome the students and staff from Bunbury Catholic College, Peter Moyes Anglican Community School and Perth College Anglican School for Girls. I hope you have a good day.

We have a two-year action plan developed by industry and the tourism sector in Western Australia with Tourism WA. As a key element of that, we have focused on establishing Western Australia as the western gateway to the nation. To that end, it was really exciting recently to announce that the state government has created a partnership worth \$30 million to create an aviation fund—a partnership between Tourism WA and Perth Airport to attract new airline routes into Perth and grow our reputation as a western gateway. This fund will be used to encourage airlines to fly to WA through marketing support, airport incentives and other measures. We will employ that Team Perth approach when we meet and negotiate with airlines and seek opportunities to grow aviation routes to Western Australia.

I am also pleased to acknowledge that Tourism Australia is supportive of this focus and uses the same language, as does the federal minister now when referring to the objective of WA becoming the western gateway. As part of that process, we are engaged with a number of airlines. We are in discussions with China Southern Airlines to extend their flights to seven days a week; with China Eastern Airlines to try to establish a direct route from Shanghai to Perth; with both Japanese airlines with a view to getting one of them to fly to Perth; and, of course, with India. I recently went to India. That shows us how hard this task is going to be. We are coming from way back in the field. Very little effort was put into developing new aviation routes during the boom. We are now trying to make up for lost time in India. I met with six airlines in India, with the state Minister of Civil Aviation and with senior executives from six airlines. India is the fastest growing aviation market in the world. Fifty million Indians flew domestically last year and 10 million flew internationally. The domestic market is growing at a rate of 23 per cent per annum and I am told that the international market is growing at a faster rate. Everyone in the world has been beating a path to India to try to establish new routes to their home countries, but not Western Australia.

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: When we went there, I was the very first state government representative to meet with aviation players to try to talk about establishing new routes—the first one in Western Australia's recent memory. If His Excellency Richard Court had gone, I would believe that because he is a good supporter of getting direct flights from Japan and he is working closely with the state government's efforts to make WA the western gateway, so I would believe that perhaps he went before me. However, when we went, one of the key indicators for how little effort had been made was the sum total of knowledge of Western Australia among the senior aviation executives.

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Vasse!

Mr P. PAPALIA: When asked what they knew about Western Australia, the one thing they all said consistently, apart from the member for Jandakot being quite famous—I am sure they know the member for Pilbara too—was that the WACA has a bouncy wicket. That is about the extent of it. That is how little they knew. We need to get out there and work on it. I am very happy that we have this \$30 million aviation fund. I have called on both sides of federal politics to contribute to our aviation fund. I want millions of dollars for Western Australian taxpayers to help our tourism industry to get new fights. I now expect, and I call upon, the state opposition to adopt a less whingeing, complaining and negative approach and, instead, demand that both sides of federal politics join us in demanding —

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

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

Mr P. PAPALIA: — millions of dollar to contribute to the Western Australian aviation fund.