

MINISTER FOR TOURISM — INDIA VISIT

Statement by Minister for Tourism

MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Tourism) [2.08 pm]: I wish to inform the house that I led a mission to India last week to continue negotiations with several airlines on the establishment of direct flights between India and Perth. This was my third trip to the subcontinent since August last year, and I was joined by Team Perth representatives from Perth Airport and Tourism Western Australia, and staff of the government of Western Australia office in Mumbai. We met with Air India and low-cost carrier SpiceJet in Delhi, and Jet Airways in Mumbai. My visit was also used to develop business relationships with key stakeholders in the Indian travel trade, including MakeMy Trip, the biggest outbound travel agent in India, and the Centre for Asia Pacific Aviation India. My meeting with MakeMy Trip was focused on including the Western Australian tourism product on its digital platform. Launched in 2015, MakeMy Trip offers online transactions coupled with great value prices, which is revolutionising the way Indians research and purchase travel services. This visit followed months of negotiations with Indian airlines and government representatives on the opportunity and support package presented by the Western Australian government. I was encouraged by the positive engagement from the airlines about the opportunity to include Perth as a destination in their respective route networks. Negotiations with Air India's new chairman and managing director, Mr Ashwani Lohani, were very frank and productive, and are progressing.

India is the fastest growing aviation market in the world and Western Australia is achieving visitor growth from India of 13.2 per cent on the back of very little marketing activity. The main hurdle for Western Australia is that we have not had a presence in India from a tourism perspective.

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Vasse, what have you got to do with India?

Mr P. PAPALIA: During my visit I confirmed how other states have established footholds in the Indian market and we are lagging through lack of prior effort. Negotiations with airlines to establish new routes are complex and lengthy, and these visits are important in demonstrating the McGowan government's —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, do you want the minister to start again, or just be quiet so that we can hear the end bit?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Negotiations with airlines to establish new routes are complex and lengthy, and these visits are important in demonstrating the McGowan government's commitment to securing direct flights from India as a key tourism market for Western Australia. Since my last visit, we have appointed an in-market representative from Tourism Western Australia, who is raising awareness of Perth and Western Australia in India. The agency's messaging is focused on promoting Perth as Australia's Western gateway, and the closest Australian city to India and Asia. Western Australia is being positioned as a year-round, safe, family-friendly and romantic destination with unique wildlife, remarkable nature, extraordinary beaches and coastline, and exciting world-class culinary experiences. I thank Tourism Australia and Australia's High Commissioner to India for their ongoing support and assistance to advance our work to secure direct flights.