

TOURISM — ACTION PLAN

335. Mr M. HUGHES to the Minister for Tourism:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to support tourism businesses and create more jobs in the sector.

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Vasse!

Mr M. HUGHES: I ask —

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how the initiatives of this government, including its two-year action plan, have led to a record number of people visiting Western Australia?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house whether he is aware of anyone who has made bizarre or misleading claims about these figures?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

I thank the member for his question and for his interest in and support for tourism. I have been up to his electorate a couple of times, as he knows, to talk to tourism advocates in the hills. He is a great champion of tourism right across the state, but particularly within his electorate.

- (1)–(2) I can talk about the success of the two-year action plan that was launched in March 2018 because Tourism Research Australia updated its stats only a couple of weeks ago. I have to explain how the stats work. They come out quarterly, but they are not a quarterly barometer of performance over the past three months; they are a report of the previous 12 months to the date of compilation. They come out quarterly but they are also a quarter late. Interestingly, a couple of weeks ago, for the first time we saw what happened in tourism in Western Australia in 2018. Until that time, we had been burdened with the baggage of our inheritance from the previous government—its dismal neglect of tourism that resulted in a downward spiral in 2017. The previous government's tourism portfolio had bad structure, a bad budget and a bad strategy, and we did not get rid of that until Labor took office and launched its action plan in March 2018.

In 2018 we had the biggest tourism visitor numbers to Western Australia in history, and that was confirmed by the stats only a couple of weeks ago—the largest number of visitors to Western Australia in history. But there have been some bizarre claims. Only this week the member for Bateman —

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I have laminated it so that the member for Bateman over there can read his negative, carping headline. I will just give one quote of the member for Bateman talking about our tourism policies in an opinion piece in yesterday's *The West Australian* —

These policies have decimated international tourist numbers ...

That is an interesting observation.

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Vasse, I call you to order for the second time.

Mr P. PAPALIA: In 2018, we had the highest number of visitors to Western Australia in history. Our growth in the number of international holiday-makers is double the national average; we lead the nation in international holiday-maker growth, at 12.6 per cent. Of course, the member for Bateman is not the only one. There was a lot of choice, I must say. I had to go through and separate the wheat from the chaff, and there were a lot of different options, but in 2018 the member for Vasse took the record. She wrote so many opinion pieces that I think she may be responsible for some of the redundancies at *The West*. Real journalists were driven out of their job as a consequence of her free work! There were dozens, but I have chosen three. Members may recall this Liberal Party press release by the member for Vasse from 24 April 2018—bearing in mind that in 2018 Western Australia had its biggest visitor numbers in history. Apparently, sharks were killing tourism. The heading was “Sharks a real threat to our tourism industry”, but there was an interesting quote regarding Margaret River —

The Margaret River region's reputation as a surfing mecca is now in tatters, and hardest hit are the numerous small businesses throughout the South West.

That is an interesting claim, because we have now secured the Margaret River Pro for this year and a further two years, with an option for a third year, so the World Surf League is quite happy about Margaret River. We also

know that in 2018, WA's south west, where Margaret River is located, saw the number of interstate visitors increase by 53.1 per cent.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Vasse, I call you to order for the third time.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Contradictory and controversial, I know, but it confirms one thing: the member for Vasse does not know much about numbers.

On 30 January 2019, another article by the member for Vasse appeared in *The West Australian*, headed, "State must deliver on WA's tourism potential".

Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup: Why is it laminated?

Mr P. PAPALIA: That is so members over there can read it without me having to hold it up. Apparently, according to this article —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister! Members, can I advise you that when we have a matter of public interest, we have to finish by 10 to four, so the longer the question goes, the fewer questions there will be.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Apparently, according to the article —

On taking office in 2017 the McGowan Government inherited a vibrant State with a growing tourism industry ...

Quite the opposite, actually. It was spiralling because of the previous government's neglect and failure. In 2018, when we kicked in our two-year action plan, it resulted in the biggest numbers in history.

I like this last one; it is from 8 August 2018 and is headed, "WA tourism needs its own identity to thrive". Members may recall that this article is an attack on the machinery-of-government changes—apparently because the structure was so good under the previous government!

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Vasse, do you realise you are on three?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The quote I want to read refers to the departure from the department of one of the senior public servants, and it states —

Including the latest casualty, the State has lost a wealth of experience and knowledge, and the destabilising impact this will have on the department and the uncertainty it creates should not be downplayed.

The SPEAKER: Minister, can you wrap this up?

Mr P. PAPALIA: We have the biggest numbers in history. That was the consequence. The structure resulted in the biggest numbers in history.

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Member, there is always more to be done, but we have a two-year action plan and it is working. The opposition has a two-year action plan—to be negative —

The SPEAKER: Your own ministers will miss out on a question.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is to be negative, carping and to talk down the Western Australian tourism industry. Fortunately, as with most things the opposition has done recently, that two-year action plan is a complete and utter failure.