

REGIONAL AIRFARES

**298. Mr K.J.J. MICHEL to the Minister for Tourism:**

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's record of making flights to our regional tourism destinations more affordable. Can the minister update the house on how securing cheaper airfares to Exmouth delivers on this government's commitment of attracting more visitors to WA, thus supporting regional tourism businesses and creating more jobs?

**Mr P. PAPALIA replied:**

I thank the member for the question, which he was given short notice of. I am very pleased to respond to his question regarding affordable flights to Exmouth, the announcement of which was made only this morning. It comes hot on the heels of confirmation, only a little over a week ago, in the international visitor statistics data from Tourism Research Australia that Western Australia is leading the nation in the growth of international holiday-makers. Western Australia has had double the national average growth in the number of international holiday-makers. More international holiday-makers are coming to Western Australia than ever before.

**Ms L. Mettam** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Vasse!

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** There has been magnificent growth. I know the opposition would prefer bad news. I know members opposite do not like tourism. They talk it down at every opportunity.

**Mr A. Krsticevic:** Rubbish! Rubbish!

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** But this is the case: Western Australia is leading the nation.

**Mr A. Krsticevic:** Rubbish! Tell the truth.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Carine, I heard you the first, second and third time about the rubbish, but I will call you to order only once.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The interstate numbers will be coming soon. I am sure they will be excellent as well. Interstate holiday-makers are learning how wonderful Western Australia is, now that there is a new government in town.

The announcement this morning was about a partnership with Qantas, which follows another great initiative in which we partnered with Qantas—the Broome affordable flight initiative. That 12-month trial began in August last year with a view to demonstrating to Qantas and other airlines that this is a market that is not being met. That is working incredibly well. Nineteen thousand tickets have been sold. There is an 80 per cent loading on those flights. We have had confirmation from Qantas that its leisure market has grown by 18 per cent over the duration of the trial to date. Qantas is very supportive of it; it thinks it is an incredibly valuable contribution. That has enabled Qantas to look at the Exmouth request from this government. There was nothing in eight and a half years from the National Party and the Liberal Party, other than them watching as regional airfares soared beyond the reach of normal people. They took no action at all. We have done nothing but take action ever since we took office. We are now able to say to people in Perth that they can get a \$169 one-way ticket, and there is \$180 off the return airfare for weekend flights, Friday to Monday, to Exmouth.

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Armadale!

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** There are two World Heritage sites there, the Ningaloo Reef, Monkey Mia and Shell Beach. There is a magnificent opportunity to swim with turtles, manta rays and whale sharks. In August, people can swim with whales, as the Premier and I did. It is a unique opportunity right on our doorstep, and it is now affordable for Western Australians and international and interstate visitors. Coincidentally, it provides locals with the opportunity to get an easier way down to Perth and back. We also announced, and brought to the attention of the public, that, for the first time, people will not be hit with a \$1 000 drop-off fee if they want to rent a car in Perth, drop it off in Exmouth and then fly back to Perth. They now will not be hit with an additional \$1 000, above and beyond the rental fee. We have done a deal with Avis. That fee has now been reduced to \$250, or \$150 if people are going the other way. It is an incredible opportunity for the coral coast. What have we done for the coral coast? Who is the member there? What did he ever do in eight and a half years in government? We have taken Chris Hemsworth and Matt Damon to his electorate! We have affordable flights to Monkey Mia, Carnarvon and Exmouth. We have done more for that electorate than has ever been done by any government in the history of Western Australia, whilst that member opposite snoozed down here in Perth! It is extraordinary that they would even contemplate calling him the local member. We are doing what the Liberals and Nationals never did. People can get affordable flights to Albany, Esperance, Monkey Mia, Carnarvon, Exmouth and Broome. This is another great initiative. We are looking to help other places all over the state.

