

LIQUOR LAWS — SMALL BAR REFORMS

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

I wish everyone a happy Valentine's Day. I can feel the love in the air!

I refer to the importance of the vibrant hospitality industry to our tourism sector and the nanny-state attitude of the previous Liberal–National government in refusing to recognise the tourism values of small bars and restaurants. Can the minister outline to the house how our landmark liquor licensing reforms will ensure that Western Australia has a tourism-friendly hospitality sector?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

I would like to begin by wishing the member for Perth a happy Valentine's Day, too, in return.

Several members interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am a sensitive ex-military guy!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I am sure you will get to the question!

Mr S.K. L'Estrange: A most ineffective minister here.

Mr P. PAPALIA: You would be an expert on ineffective ministers, mate!

Several members interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Apart from the forty thousand million dollars' worth of debt we inherited from the previous Liberal–National government, there was a complete disaster in tourism. Our tourism sector —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members! Member for Vasse, just calm down.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Sadly, our tourism sector was dismally lagging at the time of the election in March last year. Although there had been double-digit annual growth of 19 per cent and, in some cases, over 20 per cent in other jurisdictions—even Tasmania had, I think, 22 per cent growth in one year—we were lagging around the three per cent annual growth mark. The failure of the previous government's strategy and the failure of it to enact the strategy it had articulated was identified by the Auditor General on 30 November last year, when he released a media statement entitled "Auditor General finds that tourist numbers are not growing enough to meet targets". Among other things, he said —

Growth in international and interstate visitors has been insufficient ...

... Tourism missed opportunities because it did not pick up on underperformance quickly and effectively re-prioritise initiatives to attract more visitors.

... engagement with government agencies and industry partners was not always effective.

He concluded his media statement with —

In the short term Tourism will need to deliver priority initiatives that have been delayed and longer term it needs to be well positioned to deliver in the challenging market it operates in.

We are delivering on some of the initiatives that were delayed. In 2013 there was a bipartisan parliamentary inquiry into liquor licensing and the Liquor Control Act. It made a number of recommendations, many of which will be accommodated in the amendment to the act that we will introduce in Parliament next week. Some of the things we will deliver to the tourism and hospitality sector next week were not even identified in that investigation; they have subsequently come to light because we engaged with the sector. For the last 12 months almost, staff from the Department of Racing, Gaming and Liquor, in collaboration with people in my office, have engaged with all stakeholders right across the sector—the full spectrum, from those who would liberalise entirely at one end to those who would engage in harm minimisation as a priority at the other end. They will all be accommodated. There will be a lot in this amendment bill, as the shadow minister knows because he has already been introduced to it in a quick briefing, but he will get more in due course. This will be focused on growing tourism. It will enable significantly reduced onerous obligations on people who would create new venues.

Mr D.C. Nalder: Like what?

Mr P. PAPALIA: One of the very significant changes that we announced today is that venues like sporting clubs or small bars, for instance, that represent a low-risk environment will be removed from the public interest assessment process, therefore preventing the ridiculous onerous opposition that agencies like the police have engaged in in the past. Unnecessary obligations have been placed on applicants for small bars that do not represent

a threat, like the one the member for Perth identified last week; the entire state recognised the stupidity of the opposition to that bar getting its licence. Those things will be dealt with, we will repair the damage that has been done, we will grow tourism in Western Australia, we will offer huge opportunity for small businesses and we will fix the damage and mess that the former government created.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Have you finished, members over here? Had a little shout? Okay.