

MINISTER FOR TOURISM — CHINA VISIT

Statement by Minister for Tourism

MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Tourism) [2.04 pm]: Between 27 and 31 August 2017, I travelled to China and Singapore on my first official overseas visit. China is a critical market for Western Australia. It is our largest trade partner in business and exports, and our second-largest market for international education, with a significant inbound visitor market. The Australian tourism ministers' meeting in Beijing, chaired by the federal Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, recognised the 2017 China–Australia Year of Tourism. As WA Minister for Tourism, it was a vital opportunity to promote our state to key stakeholders in the tourism industry as a first point of entry for students, business and leisure visitors, emphasising our high quality, affordable accommodation and myriad amazing experiences all in the same time zone. It was a great opportunity to highlight to Minister Steven Ciobo and Tourism Australia that our nation extends beyond the Nullarbor and their marketing needs to begin to reflect that.

This government is committed to increasing direct air access to WA for international visitors—the western gateway to Australia. In Guangzhou, I met with senior airline officials from China Southern Airlines to reinforce our ongoing partnership. Following our meeting, I now look forward to the commencement of the airline's fifth service a week to Perth, and I am working towards daily services. Singapore's importance to Western Australia as a tourism market was reinforced during my visit, too. More than 100 000 visitors from Singapore come to WA each year. This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the first Singapore Airlines flight to Perth, and I took this opportunity to highlight our desire to increase direct flights into Perth with senior airline officials. Perth is a long weekend getaway with affordable holiday options available for Singaporeans. To encourage consideration of Perth as a short-stay destination, I launched the Perth Racing Masters series 2017 with Perth Racing's chairman and managing director. The event was hosted by His Excellency Australian High Commissioner to Singapore Mr Bruce Gosper. Our biggest annual horseracing festival attracts international thoroughbreds to compete in Perth over three weekends, on 25 November, 2 December and 9 December.

I was honoured to attend the Margaret River fiftieth anniversary dinner organised by the Margaret River Wine Association to celebrate 50 years of commercial winemaking in the region. WA food and wine is a big drawcard for international visitors and I congratulate the association for this milestone. This government remains committed to working cooperatively with China and Singapore, and to continuing to grow our relationships.