

TOURISM — MINISTER'S PERFORMANCE

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion

MS L. METTAM (Vasse) [3.01 pm] — without notice: I move —

That so much of standing orders be suspended so far as to enable the following motion to be moved forthwith —

That this house calls on the Minister for Tourism to justify his mismanagement of the tourism portfolio, and to correct the record on the number of international visitors to WA in the last quarter of 2017.

This really important issue goes to the integrity of this place and the importance of the opposition receiving accurate answers from the government during the brief opportunity on Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays of sitting weeks to ask ministers questions that not only relate to their portfolio, but also are of interest to all Western Australians, particularly on the tourism portfolio. On the back of some of the worst tourism figures we have seen in this state, it was important on 14 March to ask a question about the shocking statistics on international visitor numbers for WA. Unfortunately, the response we received from the Minister for Tourism —

Point of Order

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I understand that this is a motion to suspend standing orders, but the member is talking to her substantive motion rather than to the urgency.

The SPEAKER: No, she is talking to the urgency at the moment. I am sure she will get on to it. Continue with that, otherwise we will have to have another speaker.

Debate Resumed

Ms L. METTAM: The urgency of this motion and the importance of bringing it to the house is that a fair assumption can be made that this house has been misled. Even today when questions were asked on this matter, we received a range of answers. The specific point I raise is about a question I asked on 14 March about the freefall against national trends in international visitors numbers. It is worth noting that we received a drop of five per cent in international visitor spend here in Western Australia, against significant growth and booming numbers across the country in other states. South Australia had growth of 18 per cent, and Tasmania growth of 31 per cent. The minister stated —

The SPEAKER: Member, you are arguing your case at the moment. What we need is the urgency, please.

Ms L. METTAM: The urgency of this is to get some clarification and an explanation of the true situation from the minister. It is urgent because this goes to the heart of the integrity of this place.

Point of Order

Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE: There seems to be questions in and around urgency. I am looking at the standing orders, particularly order 2. There is no reference at all to the need for it to be urgent. All the member needs to do is provide her reasons for the suspension.

The SPEAKER: All substantive motions need to be on notice, because without notice you have to prove why you want to interrupt Parliament to do it.

Debate Resumed

Ms L. METTAM: Members are aware that in the lead-up to the last election both parties made tourism front and centre. It is a big part of the economy, it represents a \$10 billion industry to this state, and there is currently significant community concern about how the government is managing this portfolio. For the minister to come into this place and suggest that tourism numbers are increasing while there have been significant declines in some key markets is a significant issue. It goes to the heart of the concern raised in the community about machinery-of-government changes, the fact that the tourism portfolio has been relegated to playing a bit part in a mega-department, and the fact that the minister cannot answer questions on international education. That is a platform and policy area that the now minister highlighted as needing growth during the lead-up to the last election. During question time, the minister was unable to answer questions about the director general of his own department. It is extraordinary. It goes to the heart of the issue I am talking about today—that is, who is directing and leading tourism at the moment. Significant concern lies around international education because students are bypassing WA for other states, and one international student represents five visits. This \$20 billion industry has not had any growth, only decline, since the McGowan government changes to that policy. There is also concern that the CEO—the person meant to be leading tourism at a departmental level—has been doing that work only as one of many other roles. It has been a part-time position. I have said publicly that he has had an impossible task. Stephen Wood is an eminent professional with great experience in state development —

Ms Libby Mettam; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Speaker; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr David Templeman

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, I want to hear this, please. You are drifting back to your argument.

Ms L. METTAM: These are all concerns about the development of our state at the moment. Members of both sides agree on the importance of growing tourism. The Minister for Tourism said in this place that tourism numbers to this state increased by 52 417 when in fact there was a reduction of 19 800. I think that is fair justification and an argument for calling the minister to account, opening this issue up for debate, and ensuring that the integrity of this Parliament and what it represents is maintained. I find it extraordinary that the government will not support this motion.

When questions were asked to clarify the position in the upper house following the dud answer I received from the minister, who had stated that tourism —

Point of Order

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The member has twice been told how she is to address this issue. She is continuing to go on with a substantial argument contrary to your ruling, Mr Speaker. I would ask you to call her to order and ask her to address the issue at hand.

The SPEAKER: Member, you are drifting in and out. If you could just drift on the out.

Debate Resumed

Ms L. METTAM: Following the question that was asked on 14 March in the Legislative Assembly —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: You're dealing with the substance.

The SPEAKER: Member, you have to deal with the urgency.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, please!

Ms L. METTAM: The urgency of this motion is very clear. The urgency regards the significance of tourism and the significance of seeing tourism grow in Western Australia.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members on my right!

Ms L. METTAM: There has been significant concern regarding the sacking of Stephen Wood from the role of CEO from the mega-department. His axing last week, according to the Premier, was a result of the government's dissatisfaction with the way the tourism portfolio was being managed. Clearly, this is exactly the wrong response to the worst set of figures that this state has seen. Can I suggest that if the issue is the management of the tourism portfolio, the government is pointing to the wrong person. When we look at many of the things that this government has celebrated in this portfolio in recent times, it has taken a lot of credit for some of the initiatives undertaken by the previous government, whether it is the 14 direct flights per week between Perth and London or other initiatives. The reason this is an important motion and the reason this motion is so urgent to debate is that it goes back to the minister's control of his own department. We have seen the result of that. Of great concern are the machinery-of-government changes that have taken place, the bungling of the tourism portfolio, the bureaucracy, the sacking of Stephen Wood, the sale of the naming rights to Perth Stadium, and missing that whole opportunity for events commentators and sports commentators to promote Perth and a range of other issues. I encourage the government to support the urgency of this motion. I think it is of great concern to not only the people of this place, but also what this house represents and the tourism industry in Western Australia. I look forward to my colleagues also supporting this urgency motion.

MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.13 pm]: I rise in support of the motion to suspend standing orders. I think it is disgraceful that the argument those opposite are putting to us about why we should not suspend standing orders is that it is a Tuesday. Apparently on Tuesdays we are supposed to debate a matter of public interest. The standing orders do not dictate which day of sitting a matter of public interest or the suspension of standing orders need occur.

The SPEAKER: Member, you are not talking to the motion.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I will articulately prosecute the reason for the suspension and why it is important.

Several members interjected.

Ms Libby Mettam; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Speaker; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr David Templeman

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Last week in this place, the Minister for Tourism answered —

Several members interjected.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Government members do not want to hear this because they are trying to support their weak minister. If they would just listen to a matter that is of interest to people in our community, particularly in light of the tourism portfolio today: my understanding is that Etihad Airways has pulled out of Western Australia. Etihad is leaving. One of the major international airlines is going. That is a matter of urgency for the tourism portfolio. This minister cannot come in here and tell the truth. That is why we want to suspend standing orders.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Members can make assertions about people's conduct but they cannot say that they are not telling the truth. They can say they are misleading et cetera but not —

Several members interjected.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I withdraw.

Debate Resumed

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I will highlight the issue and the reason that the opposition has asked to suspend standing orders today and has sought the cooperation of the government. The minister came in here to give —

A member interjected.

Point of Order

Mr W.R. MARMION: The Minister for Transport is not able to interject out of her chair.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Nedlands. I bet you were good at primary school! Minister for Transport, I call you to order for the first time.

Debate Resumed

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: A brief ministerial statement was given by the Minister for Tourism to this Parliament and in it the minister said that because of his actions—the \$2 million visiting friends and relatives campaign—an increase in the numbers of visitors occurred. That is 52 417 additional visitors to this state as a result of his \$2 million visiting friends and relatives campaign.

The SPEAKER: Member, you are arguing your case.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Then there was a response —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Tourism, I call you to order for the first time.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: There was a response in the other place in which the minister very politely provided us with a draft brief ministerial statement that actually said very clearly —

The SPEAKER: Member, you are arguing your case; you are not arguing the urgency.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I am getting to the reason for the suspension. I am trying to highlight that the minister has given a response in this place and made an assertion about an increase in tourism numbers and then in the other place has tabled a brief ministerial statement that clearly said during the booking period 52 417 bookings were made. That is not an increase; that is a total number. That is a mistruth that has been promulgated in this place. The minister reinforced his position several times when he was questioned by the shadow Minister for Tourism and he backed up his data. We know for a fact that international visitor numbers to Western Australia have been in freefall; notably because of a stark backdrop in the fall-off of the number of international student numbers to Western Australia, which is a result of decisions of this government. Members can ask anybody in tourism; I cannot believe this Minister for Tourism thinks international student numbers are not part of his portfolio. Everyone knows that for every international student who comes to Western Australia, there is a value add—their families visit Western Australia. Their families visit and take them on trips. They will visit several times a year.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen!

Ms Libby Mettam; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Speaker; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr David Templeman

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: This government has made decisions about the regional sponsored migration scheme that has seen our international student numbers freefall. That has fed into a significant drop in the number of international visitors to this state. This minister came in here and said the opposite!

The SPEAKER: Member, you are getting away from the urgency. You are putting your case. It is very simple: put the urgency and I will let you keep speaking.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I am arguing for the suspension because \$2 million is what this minister said he spent on a marketing campaign that caused an additional 52 000 people to come to this state, which is incorrect information. The actual figures that have been released show that from December 2016 to December 2017, 2.2 million fewer nights have been paid for by international tourists to Western Australia. That is 2.2 million fewer nights spent in WA by international visitors over the past year. That is a significant issue in the tourism portfolio and a reason to suspend standing orders. The value of that spend is \$130 million—\$130 million less being spent in Western Australia by international students. That is what this minister has overseen on his watch. When we peg it back to what happened with international student numbers when this government made the stupid decision to take Western Australia off the regional sponsored migration scheme, what did we see? We saw in April 2017 a 25 per cent reduction in the number of students coming to Western Australia. On its watch this government has overseen a reduction of six per cent in international student numbers, when the rest of Australia has seen an increase of seven per cent. That means our reduction has been 13 per cent as a result of this government's decision to take Western Australia out of the regional sponsored migration scheme. Every other state in Australia is getting skilled visa nominations.

The SPEAKER: You will continue to argue your case. What you want to refer to is the urgency of this, and I will not warn you again. This debate is about the urgency; it is not the debate on the substantive motion. You are talking about the issues that you would be talking about if you were having the debate.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Thank you for your ruling, Mr Speaker, but the reason for this motion to suspend standing orders is that this minister is living in la-la land. He is saying that he does not need to monitor international student numbers because international student numbers are apparently not part of the tourism pie in Western Australia. He says he does not need to know what his director general was paid out when he was sacked because he could not manage a megadepartment—a megadepartment that Tourism Western Australia was folded into. As a result of that, there was nobody in charge while this minister is jetsetting around the world. Who is the scapegoat for this minister's travel itinerary? Mr Stephen Wood is the scapegoat. He has lost his job because this minister has been jetsetting around the world not paying attention—not paying attention while Tourism got swallowed up in a megadepartment. That is why we want to suspend standing orders, Mr Speaker.

I understand why the leader of opposition business does not see the urgency on this.

Ms S.F. McGurk: Leader of government business.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: The leader of government business, excuse me, has said that this is not urgent because the government's priorities on the schedule of the Parliament today are urgent. Let us just have a look at the record of urgency—this government's idea of urgency. The no body, no parole laws languished in the upper house. We were told the legislation was urgent when it was in this place, but when it got to the other place, the leader of business in the other place did not even prioritise it to get through the Parliament by the end of last year. It is the same with the lifting of the statute of limitations for civil liability. We have agreed with that.

Point of Order

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The matter before the house is the urgency of this motion, no other motion, so I think the member is straying from the terms of debate.

Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE: The member is clearly articulating exactly the aspect of urgency by comparing what she believes the government finds urgent with the urgency of this motion. It is completely in order.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Are you dissenting from the point of order?

The SPEAKER: I have not made a ruling yet. It is a point of order because the member for Scarborough is talking about something that is going to the upper house. What we are talking about here is the urgency of this suspension of standing orders. I think I have been very, very lenient with you, member.

Debate Resumed

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Mr Speaker, I am going to wind up, but I am trying to illustrate to this chamber that the opposition in this chamber has a different idea of what urgency is. We think urgency is \$130 million less being

Ms Libby Mettam; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Speaker; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr David Templeman

spent in Western Australia as a result of the decline in international tourism visitors to Western Australia. We think that zero skilled migration visas being issued to students to come to Western Australia is an urgent matter that needs to be addressed by this government. We know that every piece of legislation that the government has listed as its priorities for this week, which it says is urgent and for which we have to sit late to get it through, will not pass through both houses of Parliament because of the mismanagement in the other place. It cannot pass. No legislation can pass through this place —

The SPEAKER: Member, I am going to have to sit you down. I have given you plenty of opportunity.

Point of Order

Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE: Mr Speaker, just for some clarification, you have just shut down the debate on the member.

The SPEAKER: No, I warned her four times and then I said that was enough. I have been very lenient. I warned her four times. I could have sat her down two times ago, and it is my decision to make.

Question to be Put

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Mines and Petroleum) [3.24 pm]: Under standing order 106, I move —

That the question be now put.

Division

Question put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (37)

Ms L.L. Baker	Mr D.J. Kelly	Mr S.J. Price	Mr D.A. Templeman
Dr A.D. Buti	Mr F.M. Logan	Mr D.T. Punch	Mr P.C. Tinley
Mr J.N. Carey	Mr M. McGowan	Mr J.R. Quigley	Mr B. Urban
Mr R.H. Cook	Ms S.F. McGurk	Ms M.M. Quirk	Mr R.R. Whitby
Ms J. Farrer	Mr K.J.J. Michel	Mrs M.H. Roberts	Ms S.E. Winton
Mr M.J. Folkard	Mr S.A. Millman	Ms R. Saffioti	Mr B.S. Wyatt
Ms E. Hamilton	Mr Y. Mubarakai	Ms A. Sanderson	Mr D.R. Michael (<i>Teller</i>)
Mr T.J. Healy	Mr M.P. Murray	Ms J.J. Shaw	
Mr M. Hughes	Mrs L.M. O'Malley	Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski	
Mr W.J. Johnston	Mr P. Papalia	Mr C.J. Tallentire	

Noes (16)

Mr I.C. Blayney	Dr D.J. Honey	Mr S.K. L'Estrange	Mr D.C. Nalder
Mr V.A. Catania	Mr P. Katsambanis	Mr W.R. Marmion	Mr K. O'Donnell
Ms M.J. Davies	Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup	Mr J.E. McGrath	Mr P.J. Rundle
Mrs L.M. Harvey	Mr A. Krsticevic	Dr M.D. Nahan	Ms L. Mettam (<i>Teller</i>)

Pairs

Mrs R.M.J. Clarke	Mr D.T. Redman
Ms J.M. Freeman	Mr R.S. Love

Question thus passed.

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion Resumed

The SPEAKER: Members, as this is a motion without notice to suspend standing orders, it will need an absolute majority in order to succeed. If I hear a dissenting voice, I will be required to divide the Assembly.

Division

Question put and a division taken with the following result —

Extract from *Hansard*
[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 10 April 2018]
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Ms Libby Mettam; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Speaker; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr David Templeman

Ayes (16)

Mr I.C. Blayney	Dr D.J. Honey	Mr S.K. L'Estrange	Mr D.C. Nalder
Mr V.A. Catania	Mr P. Katsambanis	Mr W.R. Marmion	Mr K. O'Donnell
Ms M.J. Davies	Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup	Mr J.E. McGrath	Mr P.J. Rundle
Mrs L.M. Harvey	Mr A. Krsticevic	Dr M.D. Nahan	Ms L. Mettam (<i>Teller</i>)

Noes (38)

Ms L.L. Baker	Mr D.J. Kelly	Mr S.J. Price	Mr C.J. Tallentire
Dr A.D. Buti	Mr F.M. Logan	Mr D.T. Punch	Mr D.A. Templeman
Mr J.N. Carey	Mr M. McGowan	Mr J.R. Quigley	Mr P.C. Tinley
Mr R.H. Cook	Ms S.F. McGurk	Ms M.M. Quirk	Mr B. Urban
Ms J. Farrer	Mr K.J.J. Michel	Mrs M.H. Roberts	Mr R.R. Whitby
Mr M.J. Folkard	Mr S.A. Millman	Ms C.M. Rowe	Ms S.E. Winton
Ms E. Hamilton	Mr Y. Mubarakai	Ms R. Saffioti	Mr B.S. Wyatt
Mr T.J. Healy	Mr M.P. Murray	Ms A. Sanderson	Mr D.R. Michael (<i>Teller</i>)
Mr M. Hughes	Mrs L.M. O'Malley	Ms J.J. Shaw	
Mr W.J. Johnston	Mr P. Papalia	Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski	

Pairs

Mr D.T. Redman	Mrs R.M.J. Clarke
Mr R.S. Love	Ms J.M. Freeman

Absolute majority not achieved; question thus negatived.