

TOURISM — INTERNATIONAL VISITORS

214. Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE to the Minister for Tourism:

I refer to the latest international tourism figures, which show a record number of visitors coming to Western Australia for a holiday. Can the minister outline to the house why Western Australia's tourism industry should be encouraged by these figures, and advise the house how the McGowan Labor government is driving efforts to attract more visitors to WA, support the tourism sector, and create more jobs in the industry?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

I thank the member for his question. It is very encouraging to see the Tourism Research Australia statistics about international visitors coming to Western Australia for holidays. We lead the nation with 12.6 per cent growth, compared with the national average —

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Vasse!

Mr P. PAPALIA: Compared with the average growth across the nation of 5.8 per cent, it is more than double.

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Vasse, if you want to ask a question, get up. Do not answer someone else's question.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is almost double. It is 12 times more than Queensland's growth of one per cent. It is more than double Victoria's growth of 6.2 per cent. It is about four times New South Wales growth, which is 3.3 per cent. These are very encouraging numbers, which show that our international market is growing at the fastest rate in the country. These figures come hot on the heels of the National Visitor Survey statistics, which showed that interstate holiday numbers were growing at 21.4 per cent. People are flooding across the Nullarbor to visit Western Australia for a holiday. Both those things are good. Why is it encouraging? Let us look at what those figures represent.

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Vasse, please. That is your last warning. I have given you three.

Mr P. PAPALIA: These international visitor statistics are for the 12 months to December 2018. It is the first time we have a view of statistics that are post-2017. What happened in 2017?

Mr W.J. Johnston: A change of government!

Mr P. PAPALIA: A wonderful change of government! As a consequence, the McGowan government took on the burden of eight and a half years of neglect of the tourism sector and was confronted with a lot of challenges. The previous government had lost the Margaret River Pro, so we had to save the Margaret River Pro. No sooner had we done that than we learnt that we were going to lose cruise shipping as a consequence of the previous government's neglect, so we had to save cruise shipping. Seven years before, the previous government had closed the eastern states marketing office, so we had to reopen that. Most importantly, we inherited the previous government's Tourism 2020 strategy, which was extant all through 2017. Near the end of 2017 we were told by the Auditor General that it was not working and was a waste of time because it was written at a different time. We tasked Tourism Western Australia to work with industry to create a new plan—a two-year action plan—which was finally launched in March last year. Within three months of the launch, interstate numbers started to grow. Within nine months, we have seen the highest rate of international visitor growth for holiday-makers in the country. We can be encouraged. I have a message to the opposition and a message to the state: there is always more to do. We acknowledge that there is always more to do, we have a plan and it is working.