

ROTTNEST ISLAND — BOOKING SYSTEM

759. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Tourism:

I refer the minister to a PerthNow article published yesterday, which confirmed that the Rottnest accommodation booking website has not been working properly for 112 days. Will the minister explain why he continues to embarrass WA's tourism industry by failing to fix a simple accommodation booking website for Rottnest Island; and, will he confirm that this debacle is effectively wasting millions of taxpayers' dollars invested in marketing this place?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

I have to question the member's source and advise her to research a little more deeply before she starts quoting claims in Parliament. As the member is aware, on Monday, 10 September, following a version upgrade, the booking system went down but was then fully functional, with customers able to book Rottnest Island accommodation online through the rotnnestisland.com website. Subsequently, on Tuesday, 18 September, they opened bookings for December 2019 accommodation, thanks to the incredible job that has been done by all the people in not just Tourism WA but, more especially, the people at Rottnest Island and the Rottnest Island Authority. Michelle Reynolds, the CEO of the Rottnest Island Authority, deserves acknowledgment in this place. What an extraordinary job she has done. She has lifted visitor numbers to the island by 14 per cent for an entire 12 month-period in only eight months. She is supported incredibly, obviously, by the state government and its decision-making as opposed to the non-decisions before we got to office. On 18 September, the system was overwhelmed —

Point of Order

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I refer to standing order 157. The minister appears to be quoting from an official document. I ask him to table it.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I will give it to you, mate; it is a contentious issues briefing note so you can have it.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr P. PAPALIA: I will read it so the member for Dawesville does not have to worry about it —

... by the end of the day a total of 468 bookings had been taken from all sources compared with 414 bookings taken on the equivalent day the previous year.

- On Wednesday, 10 October —

This is the one I think the member and the erroneous article that she quoted from may be referring to. The bookings for January 2020 accommodation opened, and —

The online booking system did not function correctly on the day. Only 43 online bookings were received between 8.30 am and 8.30pm out of a total of 957 bookings made in total. Other bookings were made over the counter at the RIA Reception at E Shed, Fremantle and by phone. However, the RIA phone system was intermittently unstable during the day which created some frustration for customers. The RIA extended opening hours of both the E Shed Reception and the Call Centre to 8.00pm to take bookings from customers who had been unable to do so earlier in the day. From 8.30 am on Thursday 11 October, all systems were operating normally.

Those are the three interruptions referred to. I think the member claimed 120 days; that may have been some time ago in August and September. I point out that in July–August when there was a continued disruption on the heritage system that we inherited, there was a problem at that time. During July–August 2017, there were 2 833 bookings. In the period to which the member referred, the extended down time of the online system in July–August 2018, there were bookings 3 276, a 15 per cent increase in booking numbers. Whatever claims can be made about the heritage system that we inherited, which we have to deal with and fix, the claim that that has somehow impacted on visitor numbers and somehow reduced the effectiveness of advertising is not substantiated by the outcomes.