

RECONNECT WA

427. Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI to the Premier:

Before I ask my question, on behalf of my colleague the member for Southern River, I acknowledge the student councillors from Caladenia Primary School who are in the public gallery today.

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's \$195 million Reconnect WA package to attract more tourists, workers and students to Western Australia. Can the Premier outline to the house how the upcoming Reconnect WA mission to Italy, the UK, Ireland and Qatar will help to promote Western Australia, attract skilled workers to the state and diversify our economy?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I thank the member for Kingsley for the question.

The government is putting a huge amount of effort into diversifying our economy and recovering from the COVID period in particular with our \$195 million Reconnect WA package. Prior to COVID, of course, we had record tourism visitation. We had secured direct flights from a range of overseas destinations and we were investing in international education, and now we are going back into that field very, very heavily.

I will be joining the first direct flight to Italy on Saturday as part of our Reconnect Western Australia mission. This will be the first time in nearly three years that I have been overseas to promote Western Australia. The first direct flight, Perth to Rome, will be the first-ever direct flight between Australia and mainland Europe for commercial purposes. It is off the back of the direct Perth–London flights, which recommenced recently and which Qantas has said has been its most successful route ever. The Western Australian government has marketed and promoted the new Perth to Rome flight and return. I am confident, and we will work with Qantas to make it a round service. Indeed, we are working as part of our Reconnect package on other international flights.

Whilst in Europe, I will be hosting a series of tourism round tables with wholesalers, distributors and partners. I will be meeting with key energy players who invest in Western Australia and a range of large infrastructure builders who are engaged in projects in Western Australia. As Treasurer, I will be meeting with banks, financial investors and the financial industry about the Western Australian financial situation, which is, of course, the strongest in Australia. The demand for our bonds is very strong and I will be able to speak to those investors, as indeed the Treasurer normally does after each and every budget.

In relation to skills, I will be going to Ireland to promote opportunities to move to Western Australia to undertake work in our state, particularly in construction, mining, health care, hospitality and tourism. We have a record number of jobs available. As we know, it is a very tight labour market, and a lot of businesses, and indeed hospitals, are looking for additional staff. Ireland has always been a ready-made location to look for people who want to come to Western Australia to live and fill some of these positions.

Whilst in Ireland, I will be having a meeting with the President of Ireland, Michael Higgins, who came out here a few years ago. He has been re-elected to that role, and I look forward to seeing President Higgins again. I will be having a meeting with the Prime Minister of Ireland, Hon Micheál Martin, as well. This will be a very productive set of events to promote Western Australia and ensure that we continue on the pathway of being the strongest economy in Australia and probably the world.

Distinguished Visitor — Nick Catania

The SPEAKER: Before I give the call to the member for Roe, I would like to acknowledge my good friend the former member for Balcatta, Nick Catania, in the Speaker's gallery today, and also all the other guests who are here today, presumably for the valedictory of the member for North West Central.