

STATE BUDGET 2023–24 — TOURISM

318. Ms H.M. BEAZLEY to the Minister for Tourism:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government’s tourism strategy to attract visitors to Western Australia.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house what the record investment of \$173 million in last week’s budget will mean for the WA tourism industry?
- (2) Can the minister update the house on how the facilitation of exclusive major events in WA is providing significant economic and social benefits for all Western Australians?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I would like to thank the member for the question; it is a very important one.

- (1)–(2) Tourism is an important part of our efforts to diversify the Western Australian economy and provide great local jobs for people throughout this state. Yesterday, I had the opportunity to join the member for Kalgoorlie at the Perth Airport WA Regional Tourism Conference in Kalgoorlie, hosted by the Tourism Council Western Australia, at which we were able to talk about our respect for and great appreciation of the resilience of the tourism industry in taking us through the most difficult period in our lives—that is, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our record \$173 million budget for tourism is about continuing to stand by the industry in not only the good times, but also the bad to make sure that it gets through these difficult times and now can move forward together to really get this industry going once again.

I am very proud to say that we had a total visitor spend for 2022—effectively, we are talking about April to December 2022 after the borders opened in March—of \$14 billion. I want to contrast that with pre-COVID numbers when we had the highest record number of total visitor spend of \$13.5 billion, so half a billion dollars more than our highest season ever.

Mr P. Papalia: A better minister.

Mr R.H. COOK: I stand on the shoulders of other great tourism ministers.

We are immensely proud of the industry and the work that it is doing, but I am also immensely proud of the McGowan government’s effort and its \$173 million record budget for tourism, which stands in stark contrast with the total budget for tourism spending in 2015–16, which was just \$89 million. We are putting in the hard work to make sure that we can stand by this industry once again.

Of course, an important part of that is continuing to attract world-class events because we know that world-class events drive visitors to Western Australia and that in turn leads to people spending in our pubs, clubs, cafes and hotels. They support the hospitality and tourism industry and continue to encourage people to get out into Western Australia—to “Wander Out Yonder” and “Discover a Place Like No Other” in the dreamlike state of Western Australia. Of that \$14 billion spend, \$6.8 billion was spent in regional Western Australia, so almost half. That is a huge boom for the regions. These events play an important part in increasing our standard of living in Western Australia. They make Perth in particular, but our regions also, a great place to visit, live, work and play. We know that, if we can continue to grow events like High Voltage, a great event that was held last weekend that saw over 40 000 people go into Fremantle and see the member for Fremantle and rock around the streets of Fremantle just enjoying everything AC/DC.

There has been a lot of excitement this week around Coldplay, who will be performing at Optus Stadium in November—a really exciting opportunity for everyone. We know that the Ed Sheeran concert had about 70 000 attendees at Optus Stadium. We will fill that stadium twice over. The delightful part of that is that over 70 per cent of the tickets were sold to people in Western Australia, so people in WA get to enjoy it as well, although, sadly, not the member for Collie–Preston. I saw her sitting down yesterday on her phone, in the queue, prior to Parliament starting. She had a mere 200 000 people ahead of her in the queue. I am sorry that your patience was not rewarded, member for Collie–Preston. I saw a tweet from Jakarta today when one punter expressed dismay that they had half a million people ahead of them in the queue, so these things are all relative. I can also dispel the vicious rumour going through the community at the moment that the Leader of the House will be performing a duet with Chris Martin. That will not take place. We want to create world-class tourism event experiences. Sadly, the Leader of the House will not be able to add to the quality of the performance. These are great events.

Government members: Harsh!

Mr R.H. COOK: Harsh?

These are important events. We will welcome tens of thousands of people to Western Australia as a result of Coldplay coming to Western Australia as part of its Asian tour. I think we will see many international acts contemplating Western Australia as an exclusive event opportunity as part of their Asian tour in the future. Coldplay will be in Jakarta before coming to us and then they will move from Perth to Singapore. It is a great opportunity for

Western Australia and it is a great opportunity for Western Australians to continue to see great world-class events happening in Western Australia. It is a great opportunity for the tourism and hospitality industry as we drive visitation to our state and really create a great economic boom for WA.