

HANSARD 18 MAY 2011

QUESTION

TOURISM — CHINA

270. Dr M.D. NAHAN to the Minister for Tourism:

We know that the local tourism industry is doing it tough and facing a number of challenges, including the high Australian dollar. Therefore, I was very pleased to read that the minister had secured an agreement with a Chinese airline to commence direct flights to Western Australia. Is there more that the minister is able to tell the house about the successful outcome of his recent trip to China?

Dr K.D. HAMES replied:

I thank the member for the question. It is true that Western Australia has a very important and strong relationship with China. I am sure that many members will have seen the figures that show that 70 per cent of exports to China come from Western Australia. Western Australia's exports to China are worth \$41 billion compared with \$90 billion worth of exports from the whole of the United States. We export half the amount that the US exports. Lots of tourists from China will now have the ability to come to Western Australia. Lots of Chinese tourists come to Australia but they go to the other states; Western Australia gets only between three and four per cent of the total number of Chinese tourists who come to Australia. As Deputy Premier, I often get to meet some of the delegations from China and I form very good relationships with people from all its provinces.

Recently, when I went to China, I initially went to our sister state. In case people have forgotten, we have had a sister state relationship with Zhejiang province for almost 25 years. I went to Hangzhou, Beijing, Shanghai and then down to Guangzhou in Guangdong province. We met a lot of tourism operators, and we had an excellent response from people who were going to be doing "famils", or familiarisations, in Western Australia in the next few months to look at what Western Australia has to offer. I am looking at going back in September with a group of our outbound tourism operators to do the same thing in China, because of course we want to have two-way movements. The greatest part of the visit was going to Guangzhou with Mr Tan from China Southern Airlines and signing a memorandum that will fairly certainly lead to China starting direct flights from Guangzhou to Perth later this year. Of course, tourists do not just come from Guangdong province to Perth; they come from all over China. China Southern is one of the biggest and best airlines in China and has excellent linkages throughout the rest of China. We are confident that, with our twin strategies of working with tourism operators and with the airline, a lot of tourists will come to Western Australia.

Mr J.N. Hyde: How many flights a week?

Dr K.D. HAMES: There will be three flights a week to start with. It has required some subsidy from the state government. The state government has put in some money, as has Tourism Australia and Perth Airport. Of course, the airline is also putting in funds for a major tourism strategy.

We have funds that members will see in our state budget tomorrow. I might wait until after the budget tomorrow to talk about it, otherwise I will be in strife with the Treasurer. We will put in extra funds to make sure that works properly. While I was away we also stopped in Singapore and again in Indonesia for the final of the Perth to Indonesia yacht race. Of course a former Labor Party member was there, Bob Kucera—he was one of the contestants who —

Mr J.N. Hyde: Did he win?

Dr K.D. HAMES: No. He took two weeks to get there as opposed to one week! He certainly enjoyed himself. They had a great time.

There are a lot of tourism opportunities. The Australian dollar is high. We have a lot to offer in Western Australia. There are a lot of things people are happy to do. Tourism operators will sell those new opportunities to see the wonderful things that Western Australia has to offer. It is a big step forward. I think other direct flights from other places are still to be announced. As a state, we will work hard to make sure we support the tourism industry. It is critical to have a very strong tourism industry to try to ensure those who do not benefit from the mining boom benefit from other sources of income.