

TOURISM — PERFORMANCE

268. Mr F.A. ALBAN to the Minister for Tourism:

Tourism is an important industry in my electorate and across the state. Can the minister please update the house on how Western Australia is performing as a tourist destination?

Dr K.D. HAMES replied:

I thank the member for the question—a very important one it is too, to look at how tourism is going in this state and how the numbers are stacking up.

As the member knows, we put a huge effort into improving the number of tourists coming to Western Australia, particularly with things like the events scheme, which had \$10 million of royalties for regions funding to spend throughout the regional areas of Western Australia. There has been a significant increase in spending also in the metropolitan area to promote some fantastic new events that we have seen recently in this state, and that has resulted in improved visitor numbers.

The other area I was particularly focusing on was not just getting people from overseas or interstate to Western Australia, but also on getting the roughly 1.6 million of us in the metropolitan area, who tend to sit on our backsides, to go out and see the rest of Western Australia. The figures for intrastate visitors—that is, to Perth—indicate an 11.5 per cent increase in spend, a 6.4 per cent increase in numbers and a 6.8 per cent increase in nights spent. Overall holiday visitor growth to Western Australia to see what we have to offer has increased by 8.4 per cent, or 182 000 extra visitors.

Our interstate visitor number grew by 6.5 per cent, which is ahead of the national average of 2.1 per cent, and equates to an additional 19 000 tourists compared with the previous year. I have to say, though, that number comes off a higher level a few years back, and we will have to work hard to build those numbers back up again; hence our commitment during the election campaign for increased funding that will go to marketing particularly in the eastern states. Part of that is the “1001 Extraordinary Experiences” campaign that we are rolling out to increase those numbers.

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Our international visitor numbers are probably slightly more varied. Our numbers have gone up three per cent, but that is less than the national average of 4.9 per cent. Our leisure visitors have contracted by 0.7 per cent, and our business numbers have contracted by 2.4 per cent, but at the same time visiting friends and relatives has gone up 7.3 per cent, so they have balanced each other out. One of the reasons may be that the previously high Australian dollar made it difficult. Offsetting that, there has been a significant increase in the amount of time people stay and, from that, a significant increase in the amount of money those people spend. Although our leisure visitors are down 0.7 per cent, the average number of nights they stay is up from 23 to 27, and their average spend is up 16 per cent, meaning those international visitors are spending an additional \$93 million. The business sector, which is down 2.4 per cent and does not look good on the surface, has increased its average stay from 15 nights to 22 nights, and its spend is up a massive 33.9 per cent, which is an additional \$90 million. As a state government we will continue to work hard to make sure we continue to grow those numbers. We are outdoing the other states, and I am confident we will continue to do so.