

CORONAVIRUS — GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

**103. Ms J.J. SHAW to the Premier:**

Before I begin, can I welcome the Mundaring seniors group on behalf of the member for Kalamunda and also on my own behalf. I know there are constituents of Swan Hills amongst the group.

I refer to the state government's response to COVID-19. Can the Premier outline to the house how the state government is working with both the commonwealth and industry in addressing the impact of COVID-19 on the community and the wider economy?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

I thank the member for Swan Hills for the question. Coronavirus, COVID-19, poses a challenge for the entire nation. That is why we are working cooperatively with the federal government and, indeed, I am working cooperatively with the Prime Minister. From a health perspective, the Department of Health has been working tirelessly with its national and international counterparts to prepare Western Australia for the likelihood of this virus becoming more widespread. We are also responding to the potential economic impacts that will also require a close and coordinated effort with the commonwealth. Indeed, on Friday, I will be attending the Council of Australian Governments in Sydney, where I will continue to put a range of measures to the commonwealth government that it could adopt. To date, the Prime Minister has kept me informed as the situation has unfolded, and I had a long conversation with him on Saturday morning. I would like to thank him for his cooperation and communication. It has allowed the state to respond quickly.

Within two days of the commonwealth implementing its travel ban on China on 1 February, we were able to convene a series of roundtable meetings with industry. On 3 February, we met with representatives of the tourism sector; separately, international education; and separately, the resources, agriculture and energy sectors for major roundtables in ministers' offices.

Following those meetings, we launched a major tourism support package later that week or early the following week of \$13 million, funding that will allow us to conduct one of the biggest intrastate—inside Western Australia—tourism campaigns in the state's history. If Western Australians take just one-quarter of their usual overseas or interstate holidays in WA instead, it will mean more than half a million trips taken in WA worth \$250 million to the state's economy. Over coming weeks, we will announce some travel offers with airlines and travel companies that will focus on deals to attract people to Western Australia. Obviously, Western Australia is disadvantaged compared with other states. It is far easier to travel from Victoria to New South Wales or Queensland than it is to come across the country, and I think that is something the commonwealth needs to take into account in any tourism campaigns it launches.

I would like to note the comments of Evan Hall from the Tourism Council of Western Australia who said —

“Western Australia has moved quicker than other States to respond to the coronavirus travel ban and secure new marketing deals to support the industry.

I would like to note what Chris Rodwell from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia said —

It is a positive step, demonstrating that the government understands the impact of coronavirus on WA business.

We have also been in close contact with the Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia, and, indeed, I will meet with it tomorrow.

On 6 February, I relayed the feedback I received from industry to the Prime Minister. I wrote regarding quarantine measures in ports, support for the WA tourism industry and visa renewals and extensions for international students. The commonwealth has responded positively to some of those issues. It is encouraging to note that the commonwealth government is preparing an economic stimulus package. It is said that part of that could be infrastructure projects. The state government has once again put forward the \$900 million regional road safety program, and the minister and I have written to the Prime Minister again today about that matter, asking for a funding partnership. That would see 17 400 kilometres of highways and main roads upgraded with safety measures across the state. The work could start immediately. Obviously, it would create hundreds and potentially thousands of jobs. This is a time for calmness, for considered responses and for all levels of government to work cooperatively together.