

CORONAVIRUS — REGIONAL TOURISM — GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

257. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Tourism:

When will the government announce a financial support package tailored for those businesses in the north of the state that are missing their peak tourist season and are likely to be without income for the next 12 months?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

Mr Speaker, I thank you for the call, and I thank the member for her question. I have to say at the outset—I have said this many times in recent weeks—that the pain being felt within the small business community of Western Australia, particularly in tourism businesses, is absolutely acute, and the government is very sympathetic to the scale of the impact on people in these businesses and the nature of the stress they are enduring. Everything the government is doing is focused on providing the best possible outcome for those people. The best thing we can do is, as fast as possible, to return this state to the new normal—the COVID-19 world of normal—in the most effective fashion, in the safest fashion possible. That is what the government is focused on; that is what we have been working on. Members have heard many ministers today, led by the Premier, indicating all the efforts that have been made towards ensuring that we get back to the best possible state we can in the new circumstances—the new normal. That is no less true of tourism. As the Minister for Tourism, I am very focused on trying to provide opportunities for tourism businesses.

I am certain that the defence of our hard borders is a key contributor to us being able to open up our intrastate borders in due course. A key date is 18 May, but beyond that, subject to how things go and health advice, we will look towards being able to open up more opportunities for tourism businesses in the regions, and we should see an opportunity the likes of which we have never seen for intrastate tourism. Normally, intrastate tourism contributes around 80 per cent of the state's tourism revenues and visitor numbers anyway, but this could be a very special moment for those businesses. However, it is undeniable that some parts of the state will be potentially impacted for longer than others. The biosecurity regions or zones enacted by the federal government are likely to be in place for some time; as a consequence, protections afforded to remote Aboriginal communities will be maintained, but that will have a negative impact on tourism. We are aware of that and we are working to see what we can do to help those businesses.