

MINISTER FOR CULTURE AND THE ARTS — SINGAPORE, MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA VISIT

Statement by Minister for Culture and the Arts

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Minister for Culture and the Arts) [9.04 am]: I rise to inform the house of my recent visit to South-East Asia. The program took me to Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. The purpose of the visit was to explore opportunities, foster links and promote interest in an Asia arts festival from our South-East Asian counterparts. The McGowan government made an election commitment to diversify the Western Australian economy through the support of the creative industries. It also committed to improve the economic growth of WA companies trading with Asia by investigating the hosting of an Asian arts festival to run concurrently with a trade and investment show and an annual dialogue with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. The program involved meetings and visits with ministers, government departments, museums, art galleries, peak cultural bodies, studios, and artists. In Singapore I met with the Minister for Culture, Community and Youth, the National Arts Council, the Singapore Film Commission and the Singapore Chinese Orchestra. I visited the National Gallery Singapore, the National Museum of Singapore, the Esplanade theatre and Gillman Barracks. I also met with a number of creative industries practitioners. On Anzac Day I attended a very moving dawn service at the Kranji War Memorial cemetery in Singapore where I laid a wreath on behalf of the Western Australian government.

In Malaysia, I met CENDANA—the Cultural Economy Development Agency—the Australian High Commission and the University of Malaya’s cultural and arts department. I visited Sunway College, the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia, the Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre and I had discussions with a number of private art gallery, creative industry space and performing arts centre operators. The highlight of the trip was the visit to the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia. The visit and overview provided by Dr Heba, the head curator, left me with a greater appreciation of Islamic art and culture and the Malaysian context. I would commend to members a visit to this museum.

In Indonesia I met with the Vice Governor of Surabaya; the Director General of Culture; BEKRAF—Indonesia’s creative industries economic development agency; the Australian Deputy Ambassador; and the Australian Consul General in Surabaya. I visited Komunitas Salihara, a multidisciplinary performing arts centre; the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Nusantara; Sekolah Tinggi Kesenian Wilwatika, Surabaya’s performing arts college; and the East Java arts centre to view cultural dance performances.

The visit confirmed a great deal of interest at government, cultural institutions and performer levels for an Asian arts festival in Western Australia. While the visit highlighted Western Australia’s economic ties with South-East Asia, it also highlighted the need for stronger cultural ties to underpin those business transactions. Through the arts people can come to better understand the culture of trading partners, which in turn strengthens their business arrangements. The visit also identified the many opportunities in this area that were being lost by the state. The opportunity exists to raise Perth’s profile as a cultural capital of the Indian Ocean, South-East Asian region. If successful, this would improve our position as a destination for international students. As a result of the visit, I have asked my department to investigate initiatives to increase the culture and arts sector’s engagement with South-East Asia to improve cultural ties that not only bring our countries closer, but also underpin our economic objectives and create more jobs. Finally, I would like to thank all the people who I met with for their time and openness to discuss opportunities for greater engagement with Western Australia. I would also like to thank the Western Australian government offices in Singapore and Jakarta for their assistance in putting together a very comprehensive program and arranging meetings.