

CORONAVIRUS — TOURISM INDUSTRY — RECOVERY PACKAGE

273. Mr D.T. PUNCH to the Minister for Tourism:

I refer to the devastating impact COVID-19 has had on WA's tourism industry. Can the minister outline to the house how the McGowan government's multimillion-dollar tourism recovery package will support those small tourism businesses and operators that have been impacted by COVID-19 and, in particular, those businesses that are based in parts of our state where travel bans are more restrictive than they are in other places?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

I thank the member for Bunbury for his question and his support for the Western Australian tourism industry.

As I said in this place yesterday, the government has acknowledged from the very start of the COVID crisis that the tourism sector has been probably the most impacted industry and stands, in many cases, to be the longest impacted with respect to moving out of the restrictions imposed to respond to COVID.

This morning, I was very heartened to join the Premier for his announcement of a \$14.4 million recovery package to support our tourism industry, which has been so severely impacted. It has two funding programs. The first is the tourism recovery fund, with \$10.4 million in cash grants available for up to 1 600 small businesses across the state with annual taxable wages of less than \$1 million. They are those businesses that were not the beneficiaries of some of the other government initiatives that have been rolled out already to support small business. The \$6 500 will provide immediate support for eligible tourism operators, including accommodation, attraction, tour and transport businesses.

The second funding program is a \$4 million tourism business survival grants fund and it will be available for those operators dealing with exceptionally difficult circumstances. It provides grants ranging between \$25 000 and \$100 000 per business. It is very focused, naturally and understandably, on those parts of the state that are likely to be impacted by the COVID response for the longest time. That includes those tourism operators in the north and in parts of the Pilbara and goldfields who are very likely to be restricted in their ability to access the Perth market for a time. They confront challenges associated with hibernating their business; supporting their infrastructure; fees for licensing, insurance and the like; and also supporting their employees until the seasonal market is reopened.

As part of the application process, businesses will need to submit a recovery plan to outline how the funding will be used and, importantly, demonstrate their ability to pivot towards the new market, which in the near term will be Western Australians holidaying in WA. It is focused on the intrastate market. They need to meet other obligations. I urge small businesses in the tourism sector across the state to go to the industry page of the Tourism WA website and follow the prompts. We are here to help. It has taken time to get this ready. It is a robust program and is focused on giving support where it is most needed.