

INTERREGIONAL FLIGHT NETWORK

321. Mr K.J.J. MICHEL to the Minister for Transport:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's efforts to make regional Western Australia an even more vibrant and attractive place to live.

- (1) Can the minister update the house on this government's initiatives to support regional aviation, including the interregional flight network?
- (2) Can the minister advise how the launch of a new airline today complements these efforts?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI replied:

I thank the member for Pilbara for that question.

- (1)–(2) Today, the Deputy Premier, the member for Geraldton, the member for Pilbara, and, of course, the member for Broome—Kimberley; I am sorry about that. I was thinking about where we were flying to. That is what confused me! Aviair launched a new airline. Nexus Airlines was today announced as the new airline servicing Western Australia. It is an interregional airline and very much has the support of the state government, both from my portfolio in the area of transport and, of course, in the Deputy Premier's tourism portfolio. Creating a more accessible and affordable regional aviation network has been a key priority of this government, and we are delivering. Today, together with the announcement of the new airline, we will have new interregional routes that will support people living and working in regional WA. Connections from Geraldton into the Kimberley and the Pilbara will be supported financially by the state government. Some \$4 million has been allocated for the new routes connecting Geraldton into the Pilbara and the Kimberley. That is on top of other support that we have already extended to support interregional flights. We will see a new daily flight from Geraldton to Perth in the morning, and it will fly back later that day. This will support Geraldton residents to access Perth and it will support Geraldton businesspeople who want to make the daily commute to Perth but do not want to stay away from their families overnight. We are again supporting the strong resources industries through the Pilbara. The interconnecting flights will mean people can now fly from not only Perth into our regional ports, but also within regional WA. I congratulate the Aviair team for its passion and dedication for getting this new airline up. The planes are bigger; they are 76-seat planes, up from the nine-seat planes. That is a massive increase in capacity. We see investment from the state, whether it is these new flights or the flights to Broome, Derby, across the Kimberley and the north west. We are very much supporting regional aviation.

I was able to highlight this morning the success of the regional airfare zone cap scheme that has seen over 100 000 airfares sold under that scheme. That is far greater than we anticipated. Of course, this new Geraldton–Perth flight will have access to the new capped scheme. When I announced it this morning, I was talking about the new regional airfare zone cap scheme and someone shouted out from the audience, "Great work! Great initiative!" I looked around. I thought it was the member for Kimberley, but it was not. I thought it was the member for Geraldton, but it was not. I thought it was the member for Pilbara, but it was not. But there was the former member for Pilbara Brendon Grylls in the audience who shouted out, "Great work! Great initiative!" It completely broke my train of thought, as members can imagine. First of all, I did not know he was there. Secondly, there we were, and he led a round of applause from the entire audience.

Our regional airfare zone cap scheme is the first in the nation. It guarantees affordable prices for regional residents. I am very proud that we have delivered this initiative. It is a world-leading program to support regional Western Australia. I am glad that at least someone in the National Party, even though he is a past member, actually acknowledges and understands what this Labor government is doing for regional WA.