

TOURISM — DIRECT FLIGHTS

634. Ms H.M. BEAZLEY to the Minister for Tourism:

I refer to the Cook Labor government's efforts to build a strong and sustainable tourism industry.

Can the minister update the house on this government's efforts to secure more direct flights to Western Australia, including with important markets like Vietnam, and can the minister outline what this means for local jobs and communities, particularly in regional WA?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI replied:

I thank the member for the question.

From the outset, I have a couple of thank-yous. Thank you to the students from a school in the member for Scarborough's electorate who have made these beautiful bracelets. I thank the year 6 students of Yuluma Primary School for these beautiful R U OK? bracelets that we have all received, so thank you very much.

I have news hot off the press about WA's performance at the national tourism awards. The members for Mandurah and Murray–Wellington came up to me very excited this morning.

Mr D.A. Templeman: And the member for Dawesville.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The member for Dawesville as well.

Mr D.A. Templeman: She was so excited she has gone home!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: There was too much excitement for her to take, so she has headed home to celebrate.

Mandurah was crowned the nation's Top Tourism Town, recognised for its aquatic adventures, fine dining and entertainment and tourism experiences, as well as its accessibility to the capital city, being connected by a train line. Dwellingup took out the Tiny Tourism Town category, putting the Murray River region's swimming holes and world-class mountain bike trails on the map. In the member for Kimberley's electorate, WA-based Rosanna Angus took the Top Tour Guide Award for her work running Oolin Sunday Island Cultural Tours as well as on the board of the Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council. It was a big night at the awards. I congratulate all regional tourism operators.

On the question of direct flights, we know that the COVID-19 pandemic hit the worldwide aviation market very hard. Following the strong leadership of the previous Minister for Tourism, the now Premier, we have invested significantly in reconnecting WA to the rest of the world. The good news is that our aviation capacity is up to 92 per cent of pre-COVID levels and we are working to establish direct links around the world. Of course, we have seen the recommencement of direct flights to Rome. More recently, I had the great pleasure to announce that, from December, Vietnam Airlines will be flying into Perth. That new direct link will start on 7 December. I know the Vietnamese community has strongly supported and is very excited about this direct connection. Vietnam, with its growing middle class, is keen to expand its connections to the rest of the world. Of course, many people with Vietnamese ancestry would love to host their friends and families in Perth. I was very excited to work with Vietnam Airlines on that connection. In recent months, we also announced new connections into Auckland, Jakarta, Singapore and Tokyo. The first flight from Tokyo will happen soon. There is more work to be done. It is no secret that we want direct flights to India. The Indian connection in our caucus is very strong. We are very keen to work with Indian airlines to get a direct connection. We are also keen to recommence direct flights to China as well.

Direct flights will provide a more stable environment for our tourism industry by enabling more visitors to come to WA, and a bigger market for international education and international students. Parents are far more comfortable with putting their loved ones on a direct flight to Perth, so we understand that direct links will help the international education space. We are keen to keep working on this. The job is not finished. I am very excited about and very much value the connections we have made. I thank everyone, including the former tourism minister, who worked hard to secure and commit funding to get those connections around the world.