

REX AIRLINES — INTRASTATE AIR ROUTES

441. Ms M. BEARD to the Minister for Transport:

I have a supplementary question. Has the minister sought advice on whether Rex is fulfilling its contractual obligations under its deed of agreement with the government?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI replied:

Yes, and I continue to seek advice on its obligations. It is always easy to criticise, but we always have to worry about the longer term repercussions of what we do. In many instances, what we might want to do in the short term could have a longer term impact on the accessibility and affordability of air travel in Western Australia. We continue to work with all of them. There would not be one airline that has not disappointed or surprised me, but we continue to work with them to try to ride out the challenges. Our intrastate aviation market is something that we need to grow and support. I have always said that we can be compared with other places; for example, Queensland has far more flights available. That is why we are trying to underpin the Western Australian intrastate market with more activity through the capped airfare scheme. We have seen more activity and we will continue to provide support. The only way that we can continue to drive reliability, bigger aircraft and more services is by supporting the entire aviation market. That is what I am committed to. All our initiatives are about looking at the entire industry and asking how we can make that industry grow stronger. I want to be like other states and have a lot of aircraft in the air servicing our markets.

Mr P.J. Rundle interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Roe, you did not ask this question and we have already had a supplementary question. Minister, I will ask you to ignore that comment.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Sure.

People will have criticised every airline over the past six years. What should we do—just get rid of them and then wait while people say that there are no aircraft servicing their towns? Is that what members opposite want to do? That cannot be done, particularly in aviation. It is not like getting a bus. We have to get the aircraft, the pilots and the entire infrastructure. It is a sophisticated market. We have to continually support the entire industry. As I said, why have capped airfares? It is about two things: affordability and growing the market. Fundamentally, we have to have more people flying in Western Australia so that these flights can get momentum of their own. That is what has happened successfully in other parts of the nation.

We are working really constructively, and I continue to work constructively, because I support having a strong, reliable aviation market. That is why all the policies we have put in place, and will continue to put in place, are to drive a much more economic and active aviation market in Western Australia.