



Speech by

Hon. Margaret Keech

MEMBER FOR ALBERT

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Tourism in India

Hon. MM KEECH (Albert—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading, Wine Industry Development and Women) (10.09 am): When it comes to attracting more high yield international visitors to Queensland, India offers important opportunities. Last week I led a highly successful tourism trade mission to India. Accompanying me were Tourism Queensland CEO, Ian Mitchell, Gold Coast Tourism CEO, Pavan Bhatia, Tourism Tropical North Queensland CEO, Rob Giason, and 25 tourism operators from around Queensland.

In addition, I was accompanied by the Hon. Mike Ahern AO, the special trade representative for India. I support Premier Peter Beattie's comments yesterday in this House about the incredible work that Mike is doing not only in India but also in the Middle East. In addition, I was accompanied by David Belham, the Queensland trade commissioner, who added significantly to the success of the mission.

The Beattie government is serious about doing business in India. We are determined to grow India from an emerging market to a major international market. Queensland welcomed 23,300 Indians last year. We want to dramatically boost that figure. There is enormous potential, particularly in the student, honeymoon and business tourism segments. If the response to our presence from Indian travel agents is any indication, Queensland can become the Australian destination of choice for Indians.

To do that, we need to increase air capacity into Queensland. To that end, I met with Qantas, Indian, Jet and Singapore airlines while in India. While the talks went very well indeed, I have no illusions about the difficulty involved in getting the airlines to fly into Queensland. Typically, Indian tourists to Queensland fly through the Asian hubs of Singapore, Hong Kong, Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur. The challenge for the government is getting those airlines to continue to fly down to Queensland. In addition we have significant problems with the delay in delivery of A380 super jumbo jets.

Considering India has a population of well over one billion people and Queensland is experiencing unprecedented visitor growth from the market, the time is right to start working with airlines and the Indian tourism industry to increase direct access to and from Queensland.

Our trade mission was a big hit with local travel agents. They were very impressed by the number of operators there, by the quality of our product and by our diversity. Queensland now has a dedicated tourism office in Mumbai and our staff will be working closely with the local industry to grow the market.

More international visitors to Queensland mean more jobs. My Indian tourism trade mission made it very clear that the Beattie government realises the importance of the Indian market and that we are very serious about making inroads.