

Question on Notice
No. 987
Asked on 1 September 2004

MS MALE asked the Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development (Ms Keech)—

QUESTION:

Will she advise what her department is doing to ensure the viability of the backpacker tourism industry?

ANSWER:

I thank the honourable member for her interest in the tourism industry.

My department, through Tourism Queensland, provides a wide range of support to Queensland's backpacker sector. This includes the development of work plans to guide the sector's future growth, the expansion of airline access to Queensland and working closely with Backpacking Queensland and Tourism Australia on important marketing initiatives.

In response to industry concerns about the state of the backpacker sector, I convened a Backpacker Industry Forum in June 2004 to discuss the key issues impacting Queensland's backpacker market. A key outcome was the formation of a joint industry/government working group to develop a broad backpacker industry work plan for Queensland. In addition to an overall work plan, specific work plans are currently being developed to address key issues and actions identified as having a significant impact on backpacking in Queensland. These are Industry Standards and Accreditation; Compliance and Regulatory Issues; Access, Marketing and Industry Profitability; and Communication, Public Relations and Governance.

The Queensland Government continues to lobby airlines to add Queensland to their networks or to boost current service levels. This will make it easier for international visitors, including backpackers, to fly directly to Queensland. There has been a 20 per cent increase in international seat capacity to Queensland, or an extra 10,500 seats between April and October 2004. There are now 255 flights and 63,300 seats per week into Queensland.

Tourism Queensland provides a range of additional support for the backpacking market, working closely with Backpacking Queensland. This partnership involves Backpacking Queensland representing the State at key backpacker expos including the Backpackers Expo in Sydney and Melbourne, and Independent Travellers World in the United Kingdom. Marketing activity focuses on promoting Queensland at Sydney backpacker establishments through advertising campaigns. Sydney is targeted as approximately 80 per cent of backpackers enter the country through Sydney. This marketing activity encourages backpackers to travel north to Queensland. Tourism Queensland also works with Tourism Australia to promote the backpacking and 'soft adventure' market internationally. Key initiatives include featuring Queensland attractions in key publications and a media familiarisation program for journalists.

In conjunction with the Queensland Tourism Industry Council, Tourism Queensland is currently undertaking research into the impact on the tourism distribution system of escalating commissions charged by some retailers and consolidators in the tourism industry through undertaking a Tourism Distribution Trends Study. The study will address the general distribution systems for day tours and attractions and similar products and services that visitors would normally purchase in a destination or pre-purchase as part of a package holiday (excluding transport services and accommodation). One priority issue for the study will be the impact on the backpacking industry. The study is expected to be completed by December 2004.

This broad range of initiatives will help to foster the future growth and development of Queensland's backpacker market.