



## House of Assembly

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Page 4541

### FLINDERS RANGES TOURISM

**The Hon. A. PICCOLO ( Light ) ( 14:35 ):** My question is to the Minister for Tourism. Can you provide an update to the house on tourism opportunities in the Flinders Ranges and outback?

**The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL ( Mawson—Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, Minister for Forests, Minister for Tourism, Minister for Recreation and Sport, Minister for Racing) (14:35):** I thank the member for Light for the question. Tourism in the Flinders and outback contributes \$280 million to the local economy and directly employs 1,400 people. It is a vitally important industry and one that we are happy to support as a state government. In fact, at the moment, people who are tuning in and watching television would have seen the advertisement that we are running with the young boy in

the back of the four-wheel drive being driven up to the Flinders Ranges, marvelling at the big blue sky, looking at those 560-million-year-old fossils that you can't see anywhere else in the world.

I guess it really brings home what many of us know already from our childhood experiences. It was almost a rite of passage to go to the Flinders Ranges on a school camp or with your parents for a holiday. It is a terrific place, and one where there is a tremendous spirit as well among those tourism operators. Also, the pastoralists out there realise that they play a really important role in tourism and the visitor economy.

In Leigh Creek, we met with a lot of pastoralists and tourism operators from around the area. It was terrific to have a forum there just to discuss a few of the ideas that we have. There are some concerns from people in the immediate vicinity of Leigh Creek with mining moving out of the town. We must remember that it was a company town run for the purposes, largely, of looking after the company's employees and not necessarily out there in the tourism industry.

With a wonderful asset, which has a supermarket, a great service station, a fantastic reservoir, swimming pool and sporting facilities, it would be a pity to waste all that. It would also be a great pity to waste the wonderful airstrip there that

can accommodate jets and larger planes that could bring people into the Flinders Ranges and outback area, and then have people disperse to other parts of the Flinders Ranges and outback.

One of the ideas that we put to people at the meeting was the fact that we might change the name of the Leigh Creek Airport to call it the Flinders Ranges or the outback airport so that we actually marry up the name of the airport with the area that we spend a lot of money promoting around Australia and internationally.

Trevor Wright, of course, is probably one of the best known tourism operators in South Australia. I was very fortunate to have a wonderful flight over Lake Eyre with Trevor. I spoke to him about the possibilities and he says that it is a really growing market, particularly with the lower price of fuel. They are seeing more people fly in or drive in and then want to go on a flying trip with him. He has 15 planes. He likes the idea and he says that we should really promote it through the trade magazines in the aviation industry, so that is something that we will work on.

I think what we need to do with Trevor, too, is make him a champion of South Australian tourism. I know down in Tasmania Robert Pennicott has won 12 or 14 national tourism awards. I asked Trevor whether he ever enters them and he says, no, he's too busy running

his business. I think we need to change that and work with operators like Trevor, and really help them to get onto the national stage. They are doing work that is of an international calibre and I think they should be recognised more than they have been in the past. We should be using him as one of our chief spruikers.

I also caught up with Laura Ragless at Beltana and had a look at their wonderful operation. Ross and Jane Fargher have been doing a tremendous job with the Prairie Hotel at Parachilna. Terence Coulthard has been very involved in Aboriginal tourism. The Pichi Richi volunteers do a tremendous job, and it was great to get out and have a look at their operation. When we were in Quorn, the member and the Minister for Regional Development turned the first sod on a wonderful new four-star accommodation that is being built by the Brown family. I want to thank Wendy, Rob and Sally for the tremendous work they do through Emily's Bistro: the best sausage rolls in Australia.