

Thursday 26 May 2011 - Part 1

TOURISM - HOTEL OCCUPANCY RATES

[11.12 a.m.]

Mr BROOKS (Question) - Mr Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality. Minister, despite repeated concerns from the Tasmanian Liberals, the occupancy rates for hotels and motels on the north-west have continued to crash every month for the last six months. This continuous slide is devastating for areas such as Smithton. Minister, whilst we all know you prefer the south, why haven't you or your predecessor done anything to address regional dispersal and the occupancy rate destruction you and your lame-duck Labor-Greens colleagues have created?

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BACON - I thank the member for his question and, in fact, I am travelling to the north-west coast and will be in Smithton next week. I look forward to that very much, Mr Brooks, and to a warm reception as well, so thanks for your support.

Government members laughing.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr Brooks - Is that your first time?

Mr BACON - I have been to the north-west coast many times. I will be in Launceston the week after and I look forward to a really warm reception there.

Mr Brooks - Right, so you haven't been to Smithton before.

Mr BACON - I have been to Smithton many times, Mr Brooks, thank you very much.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BACON - Mr Speaker, the recent THA report and occupancy figures confirm what other industry reports and individual tourism operators are saying, which is that regions and tourism businesses throughout the State are experiencing mixed fortunes. Occupancy rates for the State as a whole at March 2011 were 83 per cent, which is a similar level to March 2010.

Mr Brooks - What about the north-west?

Mr BACON - In the three months from January to March 2011 the overall occupancy level for the State increased by 1.3 per cent to 82.5 per cent compared to the same period last year. Overall for the 12 months to March 2011 the THA reported no change in occupancy compared to the previous year.

Mr Brooks - Mr Speaker, the question was about regional dispersal.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BACON - Mr Speaker, the overall the monthly, quarterly and annual figures for the State also showed a total increase in room rates and yields. However, the latest THA figures also show that, while the south of the State showed strong growth, north and north-west coast accommodation providers found the going much tougher, especially in March. Even though the latest figures showed a drop of around 5 per cent in the region's occupancy rate in March, they also showed that the average annual occupancy for the north-west region fell by just under 1 per cent and the northern region by just over 1 per cent. These results continue to confirm that some parts of the State have done better while other areas have not performed as well. Feedback coming from a number of regional tourism operators and organisations indicate that throughout all regions some tourism businesses have done better than their previous year, while others are finding it much tougher to generate business.

Mr Brooks *interjecting*.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BACON - It also suggests that some businesses, especially attractions and tours, appear to be holding up much better than the accommodation providers in the same areas. For example, some feedback suggests that many visitors are still travelling into regional areas such as Stanley to experience the local attractions but they do not appear to be staying overnight, as they used to do.

The State Government will continue to work with tourism organisations such as the THA, the TICT, regional tourism associations and individual businesses throughout the State to discuss their circumstances and explore business development and marketing solutions. I look forward to being in the north-west coast next week.