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Mr VALE (Tourism): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to make a statement on the changing face of tourism in the Northern Territory and to advise honourable members of the developments which have occurred following the implementation of the report 'Northern Territory Tourism - The Way Ahead'. Since I last addressed the House on this matter, much has changed and I do not propose to go into fine details on every point. I begin by saying that **this government has now achieved much of what it set out to do back in July.** As members are aware, when the implementation process began just over 4 months ago, this government was both hailed and condemned for its decision to take on the document 'The Way Ahead'. **An outspoken minority - and I emphasise 'minority' - claimed that tourism in the Territory would be 'dead in the water' and take years to recover. I am proud to report to members of this House that tourism in the Territory has done exactly the opposite. We have turned the corner and entered a new era of change. That change is occurring now. The so-called impossible is being achieved. We are appealing to the mass market.**

This is being achieved through an incredible effort by the restructured Northern Territory Tourist Commission. We are bringing people to the Territory in thousands at a time that was previously regarded in this part of the world as the quiet season for domestic tourism. These packages, which will continue through to next season, have given the Territory an appeal it has never had before. It is now easier to travel to the Territory because of the discounted air fares and low-cost accommodation. With these packages place and the mass advertising already started, the Territory is now within the reach of many more average Australians.

That attitude will continue to change with our major advertising campaign, starring national celebrity Daryl Somers, which will begin in February next year. In light of the recent comments made by the member for MacDonnell, I would like to place on record my utmost confidence in Daryl Somers, the Northern Territory Tourist Commission and its advertising agency Magnus Nankervis & Curl. Daryl Somers is held in extremely high

regard, not only in Australia but in New Zealand as well. He relates to the average person on the street and this is proven by the research carried out by Magnus Nankervis & Curl. Aside from any research, Daryl Somers' popularity is also proven by the success of his long-running show 'Hey, Hey It's Saturday'. It is one of the most popular light entertainment television programs in Australia and the special live show in Darwin earlier this year confirmed this success, achieving record ratings in all major

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capital cities around this country. With Mr Somers at the helm of our new advertising campaign, the Northern Territory will be welcomed into the homes of all Australians even more than it has in the past.

Mr Somers has just completed 10 days filming around the Territory's many tourism attractions, not only the major icons such as Ayers Rock and Kakadu. I believe that at least 2 shots taken during that filming will become classics. In one, a close-up suggests that Daryl Somers is in bed wearing pyjamas. The camera then pans out to reveal that, in actual fact, he is lying on a lilo in the middle of Katherine Gorge. The second shot shows Somers at a fishing spot with some fairly expensive gear. He reels in a little tiddler that should be thrown back because of its size. As he is doing that, a little Aboriginal, who is as black as the ace of spades, walks past with a fish about 3 ft long. The shot shows the look on Daryl Somers' face as he sees this young person.

We expect that the airline and accommodation packages that were announced last week alone will boost visitor nights to the Territory by up to 200 000 by March 1993. These packages cover the entire Territory and involve a number of properties and we have also tapped into Asia with a 10-night package to Darwin and Singapore. This package is an indication of where the new Northern Territory is headed. Now southern visitors will be able to fly with Ansett and spend 7 nights in tropical Darwin and 3 nights in Singapore from just \$899 including air fares and accommodation. What more could a holiday-maker ask for than 7 days touring and shopping in Darwin with an overseas content in the package?

An important point to note is that the add-on potential in tourism and sightseeing is enormous. Because people are arriving here so much more cheaply than in the past, they have more money in their pockets to spend in restaurants, on day tours in and around our cities, or on visiting places such as Kakadu, Katherine and Litchfield Park. This package is an Australian first in our push to become a gateway into Asia. It is important to note that it is again the Territory that is opening up Australia-Asia relations. One of the key recommendations contained in 'The Way Ahead' document was that Darwin should become a hub for services to and from Asia.

As well as this package, the airlines have announced 4 other special packages to Darwin and the Top End, and to Alice Springs and the Red Centre. These packages have add-ons to Katherine and Kakadu in the Top End, and to Kings Canyon and Ayers Rock in the Red Centre. Bookings that have been taken in the past 2 days are outstanding with the 5-

day Ansett package to Alice Springs generating approximately 3000 visitor nights already. The Top End and Singapore package is also on target. At this stage, it is too early to tell exact numbers but Singapore Airlines reports that it has been inundated with telephone calls. This follows the successful 4-day packages to Darwin a few weeks ago from both Ansett Australia and Australian Airlines. Ansett's 4000 seats and Australian's matching deal with 2000 seats generated an estimated 25 000 visitor nights to the Top End. I stress that that was during the quiet part of the season.

For the information of members, I lay on the table an advertisement for 3 more package deals that appeared in Melbourne's Herald Sun on 17 November 1992: Alice Springs - 5 nights for \$499; Darwin - 5 nights from \$559; Alice Springs and Darwin - 4 nights in both towns for \$668. I might add that, in most cases where Ansett or Australian has brought out a package deal like this, it has been matched and promoted by the opposing airline almost immediately. Of course, that does not include Ansett's Singapore deal. I should make the point also that all of these specials,

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although initiated by the Tourist Commission, have been arranged by the airlines themselves. I urge operators and accommodation houses throughout the Territory to negotiate with the airlines for a slice of the pie.

The airlines now recognise the Northern Territory as a competitive destination, with flights now coming not only during the peak season but all year round. That means that we have achieved a 12-month seasonal push for holiday-makers to visit the Northern Territory. This is in line with the recommendations in the Kennedy document which recommended, among other things, that we should move from spending 35% of the total \$20m budget on marketing and 65% on administrative costs to spending at least 50% of the budget on marketing. Obviously, much of this money is being spent on marketing.

Television advertising highlighting the new price offer deals started on the weekend. This will be followed up in late February by our winter campaign which has less focus on price. In conjunction with the television advertising, a consumer sales promotion has been launched nationally through a magazine insert in the southern press. Three million of these brochures have been printed and will appear in all major weekend newspapers around Australia in the coming weeks. More than a million brochures were sent out at the weekend and there are 3 further insert dates proposed. These include Sydney and Perth this Sunday, Brisbane and Melbourne on 29 November, and a final run in Sydney on 6 December. This promotion will highlight the price-driven products to the consumer and offer incentives for holiday-makers to book early. Incentives will be offered also to consumers to inquire about these offers via a 0055 number. These packages have met with an overwhelming response with 7000 phone calls being received on the 0055 number in the first day of the campaign - and that was on a Sunday. Not only will this be a professional facility at the fingertips of the consumer, but it will generate an excellent database of holiday prospects in the Territory for future use by the commission.

That brings me to 2 of the most exciting initiatives undertaken by the Tourist Commission - the Territory Club and NT Stations. The Territory Club is a new campaign designed to provide incentives for those travel agents who are preferred NT product retailers. This club allows Australia-wide participation and has quickly become a success with more than 1100 members already signed up. The 1100 travel consultants who will be working for us should be compared with the 5 interstate bureaus which we had operating out of the capital cities. We are now covering a greater area of the Australian land mass in both rural and urban Australia. The figure of 1100 is more than double what the commission was aiming for by the end of this calendar year. The agents who have become members of the Territory Club are encouraged to constantly call a 008 number and improve the level of Northern Territory product knowledge. The agents will be urged also to reach for the telephone and dial a 008 number whenever they have an inquiry or booking involving the Northern Territory. The commission will continue with familiarisation visits by travel agents in the Territory.

The other concept is the NT Stations. The Northern Territory Tourist Commission will commence negotiations soon with travel agents nationally to secure a network of Northern Territory expert agencies. These outlets will perform many of the tasks that the old tourist bureau network performed - that is, expert advice, window displays, bookings etc. However, it is anticipated that they will be spread on a much wider scale, from capital cities to regional centres throughout the entire country. At this stage, the commission is aiming at a select number of agents and is hoping for between 40 to 50 to become involved. That is 10 times the number of

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bureaus we had in the past at a greatly reduced cost to the Northern Territory Tourist Commission. Compared with the former bureau network of only 5, the new NT Stations concept has enormous potential.

As well as these initiatives, the commission's 008 number and the NT Holiday Reservations Centre are experiencing great success. The Reservations Centre is open from 7 am to 7 pm, Monday to Saturday, and is under the control of Operations Manager, Ms Wendy Hills. Ms Hills is a former operations manager for Contiki, based in Sydney, and therefore she brings much experience to the job. There are now 14 consultants and 5 data input operators employed at the centre. The ticketing service that is currently provided will continue at least until April 1993 when it will be examined by the commission to assess its future. The average number of daily incoming calls for October was 350 - 43% of those calls were from agents and 57% were from the general public. The total number of agent calls for October was 2340 and the total number of actual bookings in the same period was 370. This is an increase of 60 bookings from the previous month. There were some early teething problems with the computer response times which have now been rectified.

The concerns of the smaller operators in the Northern Territory are also being addressed by the commission working with the Australian Federation of Travel Agents. AFTA has

advised us that its 2100 members welcome the opportunity to work closely with the Northern Territory Tourist Commission on its restructuring process. It supports in principle the recommendations contained in 'The Way Ahead' document and has foreshadowed long-term success.

The new Managing Director of the Northern Territory Tourist Commission, Mr Ian Mitchell - he is here today and I welcome him on his first visit to the Assembly - and his staff have met with operators throughout the Territory to discuss details of the recently-announced airline packages and other relevant issues. These packages are being run by the airlines and the industry should be negotiating with these bodies to be included in any new packages. Mr Mitchell will be holding further discussions with operators in all regions to outline the Northern Territory Tourist Commission's advertising campaign and to provide an update on the commission's activities.

On the international scene, offices of the NT Tourist Commission remain open and operating in Frankfurt, Tokyo, Los Angeles and Singapore. I have requested the Northern Territory Tourist Commission Board to conduct a full review of the international marketplace to determine the future of these international offices. The Northern Territory government's faith in the implementation of 'The Way Ahead' document attracted considerable controversy, but it is now beginning to rewrite the rule book on the way all tourist commissions should be structured, funded and operated. At the meeting of ASCOT in Sydney in late October, the ATC, states and territories voted unanimously to endorse a new direction for Australia overseas. At this point, it is fair to say that there is not a state or territory that is not reviewing its commitment to overseas offices. They quite freely admit that they were set up at a time when the ATC was unprofessional and underfunded and were based on a mistrust of the Commonwealth.

The Australian Tourist Commission provided a discussion paper at the ASCOT meeting on the future cooperative opportunities for overseas product distribution and marketing. The proposal still needs extensive discussion between the states, territories and the ATC before any recommendations are placed before the Tourism Ministers Council. The proposal is for the establishment of a company or cooperative at arms length from the Australian Tourist Commission and possibly called Partnership Australia. The ATC is

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keen to improve the development and distribution of Australian product overseas and, secondly, to improve the integrated approach overseas. Partnership Australia will be considered at the next Northern Territory Tourist Commission Board meeting which will be held in Katherine this weekend. Recently, the ATC announced the opening of an overseas office in Jakarta. I should point out that the opening of that office was at the instigation of the Northern Territory Tourist Commission and its then interim Chairman, Mr Jeff Weigh.

In relation to the Australian Tourist Commission and marketing, the Chairman of the Australian Tourist Commission, John Haddad, was very complimentary about the 1991

Arafura Sports Festival that was held here. He indicated that the ATC would take on a 4-year program concentrating on scenic tours around Australia in the first year and on major sporting events, including the Arafura Sports Festival, in the second year.

The current stage of the tourism restructure is best highlighted by the final meeting of the implementation team last week. That final meeting marked the completion of the interim period of the restructure of the Tourist Commission. The new Tourist Commission is now in full swing with many of the changes having occurred already. We now have a new path to follow. The job of continuing down that path is firmly in the hands of the new Northern Territory Tourist Commission. I urge all members of the industry, and indeed members of this parliament, to work closely with that commission as it moves into the next stage of tourism in the Territory. The 11 members of the board, with Chairman John Rowe heading the team, are an incredibly professional body. I have every faith that it will truly represent the interests of tourism in the Territory. It has a responsibility to return the Territory to the top of the mantle in Australian tourism. It will be a job with many hurdles along the way, but one that I am sure will give each one of the 11 members on the board a great sense of pride and achievement.

I pay tribute to the former members of the Northern Territory Tourist Commission Board and its staff around the Territory, around Australia and overseas for the excellent job they did for the Territory during the 1980s. I take this opportunity also to pay tribute to each member of the new Northern Territory Tourist Commission Board and to pass on my personal best wishes to them in their future deliberations. The full board membership is now: John Rowe, Chairman; Barry Buchholz - from central Australia and one of the 2 ministerial nominees - Deputy Chairman; Ian Mitchell, Managing Director; Rick Murray representing the Darwin Region Tourism Association; Werner Sarny representing the Katherine Region Tourist Association; Karen Sheldon representing the Tennant Creek Regional Tourism Association; Dave Bennett representing the Central Australian Tourism Industry Association which includes both Alice Springs and Ayers Rock; Wayne Kirkpatrick of Ayers Rock Resort Corporation; Matti Urvett from the Conservation Commission; Richard Ryan nominated by the NT University; and Ron Archer, the other ministerial appointment, representing QUF. As the appointment of representatives from the Territory's 4 regional tourism associations demonstrates, Cabinet made a deliberate decision to include a broad cross-section of the tourism industry.

I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the man whose report has become the blueprint for the many changes that have now occurred within the Northern Territory, Mr Jim Kennedy, and also to be critical of a certain small section of the industry who directed very personal attacks at Jim Kennedy and Jeff Weigh. They owe both those men an apology. 'The Way Ahead' document prepared by Mr Kennedy is now in the spotlight in many other

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states in Australia. I have learnt in the past week that New South Wales is planning to conduct a review into its tourist commission along the same lines as the review by Jim

Kennedy. When this report was released, I said that it would not be long before other states followed our lead. The New South Wales example now stands as proof that 'The Way Ahead' document has become a benchmark for the rest of Australia to follow.

The full extent of the restructure of the Northern Territory Commission would not have been realised had it not been for the efforts of 2 other important people - interim Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Jeff Weigh, and interim Director of Marketing, David Catterall. Their teamwork since the implementation process first began is demonstrated by the results that the Territory is now starting to see. Jeff Weigh has now stepped down from his role and, unfortunately, has taken ill since and is to undergo surgery shortly. On behalf of myself and all other members of the Assembly who have met Mr Weigh, I wish him a speedy recovery. David Catterall is still part of the NTTC team and will play an integral role in the continued success of the commission before the new Director of Marketing takes up his position.

I must say that it gives me great personal pride to report to the House, just 4 months after heading down this road, that nearly all of the pieces of the jigsaw have fallen into place. To have a tourism strategy set in place and working before December is an achievement beyond the wildest dreams of many in the industry. At this point, I cannot ignore the attitude of the outspoken Judases when the government took on this massive task. They said that we were destined for failure. They simply had no faith that this government had realised that times were changing in the tourism industry, not only in Australia but in the rest of the world. This government understood and realised that there was a need for change in the Territory and we embarked on a course to make that change possible. There have been numerous operators who have already realised this potential and are now reaping the benefits of this new era. There has also been a slow but steady recognition by certain members of the opposition that we are actually heading in the right direction, and I must congratulate them for their willingness to pay tribute to the government for our moves. In particular, I pay tribute to the member for Millner for his almost continuing support in the implementation of this document.

We have seen more ups and downs in the past few months in the tourism industry than a Himalayan tour guide sees in a lifetime. I am happy to say that the only direction that tourism is taking now is up, due largely to the efforts of this government in instigating massive change. As I said earlier, that change has occurred and it is now up to all of those in the industry to follow that course into the new era of tourism in the Northern Territory. I received a fax the other day from a Northern Territory operator that sums up what has been achieved in tourism in the past 4 months. It reads: 'At present, the tourism industry has all the bounce of 1987 and it's very nice to have it like that'. I urge honourable members to reflect on that statement and its reference to the boom of 1987. If this is how the tourism industry is feeling at present, we are in for a momentous period in the future.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr PARISH (Millner): Mr Deputy Speaker, it gives me some pleasure to rise to comment on the minister's statement. The Chief Minister has announced that there will be a

ministerial reshuffle after these sittings and, of course, only the Chief Minister knows what the results of that will be. In case this turns out to have been the swan song of the Minister for

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Tourism, I would like to place on record my appreciation for his efforts since I have been the shadow spokesman. The minister has taken great pains to ensure that I am kept informed about developments in the tourism industry, to consult and to take on board some of the opposition's ideas on many occasions. It is a useful model of what can be achieved with goodwill on both sides. In the face of considerable criticism from many perhaps ill-informed sectors of the industry, it took a big man to take on board and implement some of the fairly trenchant criticisms of the past that are contained in the Kennedy Report. I pay tribute to the minister for that. If the worst is to happen, it will be ancient history by the time this House sits again, and that is why I place that on record.

I would like to add my voice to the minister's thanks to Jeff Weigh, in particular, and to Mr Catterall. I was the recipient of a considerable number of poisonous phone calls, if I can call them that, from people in the industry spreading quite vile material about Mr Weigh, including conspiracy theories about his being a plant for Queensland, stories of conflicts of interest with Taylor Byrne and a series of other matters which I believe would have churned the stomach of any reasonable person. As far as I am concerned, Mr Weigh did an excellent job under great pressure and in the face of extensive and often unfair criticism. He deserves the thanks of all Territorians, and I join the minister in wishing him a speedy recovery from his illness.