



**GARY HIGGINS**  
**OPPOSITION LEADER**

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## **Tourism losing altitude**

The Northern Territory tourism industry will never return to its golden days if the answers provided in today's Estimates Hearings are anything to go by.

Leader of the Opposition, Gary Higgins said that in Estimates this afternoon, the Tourism Minister was unable to answer a simple question, as to why, on the back of an investment of \$103 million, the budget papers indicate a decline in tourist numbers.

"Secondly, when questioned about a \$2 million allocation for China Southern Airlines\* (who don't fly to the Northern Territory) the Minister expected Territorians to believe her answer which was it was a mere mistake in the budget papers, telling Territorians instead it should say \$1 million and should say Chinese airlines. The Minister was unable to name the airlines either.

"Territorians still don't know where this ever changing amount is going and to whom it is being paid to.

"This so-called open and transparent government also have no plan to tell Territorians of passenger figures for the Donghai Airlines flights to and from Darwin, claiming seat numbers are commercial in confidence.

"One has to question how Territorians can trust Labor on actually delivering the promised 30,000 Chinese visitors by 2020, if they won't reveal the passenger figures.

Further questions also remain in relation to the \$10.85 million global marketing spend, of which only \$3.4 million could be accounted for.

Estimates were told that co-operative marketing monies were not being paid to airlines but to third parties who could not be named for commercial reasons.

The Minister was then asked about pursuit of inbound tourism from India, where she was unable to advise how she was activating the market beyond wraps on buses in Mumbai. She could not name any airlines that the government is engaging with in the Indian market, or advise how people could fly to the Territory from India, despite there being \$5 million of Territory taxpayer dollars allocated for marketing activities in China and India.

"The Minister failed to name any tangible works being done to improve accessibility to Kakadu and extending the period of visitation. What is required is an investment in infrastructure within the Park.

"A simple solution as well, for which NTG has responsibility, would be raising and weather-proofing the Arnhem Highway.

"It was an absolute embarrassment of how little this Minister actually knew," said Mr Higgins.

**ENDS**

*\* This is referenced in Budget paper 3, page 205*

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