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**Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
Perth, Western Australia
October 2011**

Australian Senate
Parliament House, Canberra

13 March 2012



Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting

Senator CASH (Western Australia) (20.02): I rise tonight to speak in relation to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, or CHOGM, a biennial summit meeting of the Heads of Government from all Commonwealth Nations, which was held in Perth, Western Australia, in October 2011.

Last year I had the opportunity to meet with Mr Bradley Woods, the CEO of the Australian Hotels Association (Western Australia) in relation to hospitality and tourism in WA, which became the focus of the world with CHOGM. Mr Woods briefed me on how the WA hospitality industry rose to the challenge of this lifetime occasion and tonight I would like to pay tribute to those who were involved in this significant event from the AHA(WA) perspective. In doing so, I thank Mr Woods for providing me with the relevant information in relation to those who were involved.

The Australian Hotels Association (Western Australia) worked closely with Commonwealth and state government agencies and the City of Perth to ensure that CHOGM delegates received world-class accommodation, hospitality, entertainment and extraordinary tourism experiences during their stay in Western Australia. It played a pivotal role in the logistics for hotel accommodation of CHOGM, as well as developing an innovative and free customer service program which incorporated a business recognition campaign with online customer service training.

From the outset, as soon as the event was announced the AHA(WA) worked with the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet at federal level in the coordination and securing of accommodation rooms for all visitors. AHA(WA) worked closely with the WA state government CHOGM Taskforce in the planning stages, and also in the implementation leading up to the event. The branding and marketing of CHOGM was reinforced by AHA(WA) and its members at AHA(WA) events and courses, and at various broader networking opportunities.

The AHA(WA) was a key stakeholder on the CHOGM marketing implementation working group facilitated by Tourism WA. It developed and implemented the free online WA Service with a Smile Customer Service Training program which enabled over 7,000 participants to be accredited as having completed the course in the lead-up to CHOGM. The customer service program was launched in August 2011 by the Premier of Western Australia, Colin Barnett.

The WA Service with a Smile Customer Training program was made available 24/7 online, in addition to some accommodation hotels delivering a classroom-style training session for all staff. WA Service with a Smile served as an industry recognition and marketing tool, recognising and promoting existing customer service training and initiatives that had already been implemented at various properties, and for that work to be recognised in an industry-wide program. As a direct result of the AHA(WA)'s WA Service with a Smile program, Western Australia's hotel and hospitality industry was praised by CHOGM leaders and delegates who visited Perth on the level of service and hospitality offered during what is renowned as a high-profile international event.

The AHA(WA) was instrumental in providing behind-the-scenes support to the state government as well as to the hospitality industry over the course of CHOGM. It also ensured that hotel accommodation was available and that providers were kept regularly and appropriately informed in the wake of the grounding of the Qantas planes during the exit period of CHOGM delegates.

This would be recognised by many people as a very difficult time for the many interstate and overseas visitors who were travelling in WA. But in speaking with the CEO of AHA(WA), Bradley Woods, I was advised that a prompt and professional response ensured that the strength of WA's customer service brand was left intact following this decision by Qantas.



Significant contributions were also made by the general managers of the four official CHOGM hotels to ensure that the respective events and accommodation needs were met to the highest standards. In that regard I recognise Mr Bruce Doig of the Duxton Hotel Perth, Mr Adam Myott of the Hyatt Regency Perth, Mr David Constantine of the Parmelia Hilton Perth and Grant Raubenheimer of the Pan Pacific Perth.

From all of the feedback I received following CHOGM, high-quality service and professionalism was demonstrated at all keystone events and corresponding venues during CHOGM. These included the CHOGM main event at the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre, Her Majesty's banquet dinner at the Pan Pacific Perth Hotel, the CHOGM leaders' retreat at the state reception centre, the Commonwealth Business Forum at the Burswood Entertainment Complex, the Commonwealth People's Forum at the Parmelia Hilton and the Commonwealth Youth Forum at the Esplanade Hotel.

CHOGM brought international recognition to Perth, Western Australia, with media coverage in Africa, the Caribbean, North America, Europe and Asia.

The Big Aussie Barbecue was televised live nationally and internationally in more than 50 countries across the world, with audiences in the tens of millions.

While the economic benefits to Perth from CHOGM have been significant, the overwhelming benefits that come from the exposure of being on the world stage are fundamental. Thanks to CHOGM Perth's reputation as one of the most beautiful cities in the world has been the focus of articles in overseas newspapers as varied as the *Ottawa Citizen*, the *Business Daily Africa* and the *Trinidad and Tobago Express* and seen on television networks such as ABC1, BBC World News and Australian print and electronic networks.

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting has left for Perth and Western Australia a legacy of unprecedented international attention that will benefit the state and our hospitality industry for years to come.

The professional work and dedication of the AHA(WA) staff made a significant contribution to the success of CHOGM. In particular I would like to thank Chief Executive Officer Bradley Woods, who was kind enough to brief me on the importance of CHOGM to Western Australia; Deputy CEO Paul Brockschlager; Events and Accommodation Division Manager Sarah O'Connor; Communications Manager Marina Telling; Membership and Training Manager Michael Andrew; and Executive Assistant Patricia Clark. Without these people and their considerable time and effort that they put in, the event of CHOGM would not have been the success that it was.

Ends.