

TOURISM WHITE PAPER

1320. Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN to the Minister for Tourism:

Will the minister please provide the House with further details on the tourism white paper released by the federal Government last week?

Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question. Like all people who care about tourism in Australia, I was pleased to hear the Prime Minister's announcement last week of a \$235 million so-called injection into tourism. However, it is a somewhat belated recognition of how important the industry is to the broader economy. As I said last week, the devil is always in the detail. This is the case with the announcement. The Government supports the amalgamation of the national tourism bodies that will form Tourism Australia. The Government also supports the move away from focusing on specific icons - such as the rock, the bridge and the reef, as they referred to in the white paper - towards marketing whole areas, particularly the wildflower region, the goldfields and old-growth forest in Western Australia. The Government also supports the improved focus on research and the plan to develop a new indigenous tourism program. However, it is unclear at this stage how funding will apply to that. I am awaiting further advice. I will write to federal Minister Hockey about how the improved focus on research will be funded.

There is no rationale given for the creation of a national events body. As we all know, bidding for events is highly competitive between the States. Quite frankly, I am a little concerned that if the genesis of events is moved to the eastern States, it is likely that Western Australia will compete on a very uneven playing field. I need to know that we are not simply creating another level of bureaucracy at the national level to deliver what this State can already deliver.

I will also ask Minister Hockey to match this State Government's \$3.25 million investment in regional tourism. There is nothing in the white paper to show a move away from a centralised process. As suggested by the draft tourism paper, Western Australia is the only State to move from a large number of zones to five key zones. When I met Minister Hockey in Canberra earlier this year he gave a clear indication that there would be a degree of reward for the State for moving that way. So far, nothing indicates to me that that is the case. In fact, I am rather concerned that one of the comments is that it will be a competitive pool, which again can place us at a disadvantage. Importantly, there also is no detail in the paper on how the State will access that \$235 million. At this stage, there is no machinery that appears to be in the plan. It may very well be that that will come out in the ether, but we need to ensure that we are not left behind when it comes to the enormous pressure that is placed on the marketing of tourism throughout this nation. I will write to Minister Hockey this week, and, in due course when I receive answers, I will apprise the House.