

ROTTNEST ISLAND

Statement by Minister for Tourism

MR R.C. KUCERA (Yokine - Minister for Tourism) [2.07 pm]: Mr Speaker, members will know that the Gallop Government has committed an additional \$20 million for Rottnest Island to ensure the long-term financial viability and sustainability of the island with a blueprint and vision for the future. However, members may not have heard of some of the excellent recommendations put forward by the Rottnest Island Taskforce, which did a thorough, detailed and insightful assessment under its chairman, Mr Alex Allan. The 108-page report contained 103 recommendations and I commend it to anyone with an interest in the island. Many of the important recommendations did not get covered in the weekend media and I would like to tell the House about some of them now.

To induce greater competition and help reduce travel costs, the ferry services to and from the island will be put out to tender. Old Transperth buses operating as tourist transport will be replaced with smaller, more appropriate buses that better suit the island's particular road system. The State Government has committed \$1 million immediately to help with heritage restoration works, including the restoration of the Governor's residence, built in 1861. A task force recommendation, agreed to by the State Government, is for a closer working relationship between the Rottnest Island Authority and the Rottnest Island Foundation to attract more grant funding for heritage and environmental works. The State Government will match the funding raised by the foundation for these works up to \$250 000 a year. Upgrading the island's museum will provide an education centre for visitors about the environment, history and maritime significance of the island. A past link between the island and the Western Australian Museum has been allowed to falter and there are possible benefits from forging a relationship with the Maritime Museum at Fremantle.

The introduction of a Rottnest smart card would allow greater freedom for visitors to use a swipe payment system at all island tourist, vending and business spots instead of a designated ticketing system for individual use from set allocation points.

Members will have heard of the much-needed infrastructure improvements. These include upgrades to water and power systems; improvements to accommodation facilities; and plans to provide more accommodation, including a low-impact, eco-tourism development. However, let me make it clear that the first priority will be to fix the existing accommodation before any moves are made to expand it. The task force was formed in the first place to assess the infrastructure needs of the island and to provide a list of priorities. This Government will follow the blueprint for the long-term future of Rottnest. These changes will bring about a new ethos on the island; one aimed firmly at providing quality service to tourists at a destination focused on tourism.

Over coming weeks a cultural change will be evident on the island, beginning with changes to management style and proficiency. Placing Rottnest on a more commercial footing will ensure that it becomes more self-sufficient - something I am sure the Opposition will be willing to support - and that taxpayers are not continually asked to provide a financial bail out.