

ROTTNEST ISLAND AUTHORITY, AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Mr R.F. JOHNSON to the Minister for Tourism:

I refer the minister to the Auditor General's report released today on the Rottnest Island Authority, which states that without urgent attention, the IRA -

A government member: It's not the IRA.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Is that what I said? It says that without urgent attention the RIA will be left with little choice but to reconsider public access and uses of the island. The report also recommends the immediate implementation of a five-year capital works program.

- (1) Is the minister aware that the report found that there is a backlog of urgent remedial repair and maintenance work, a need to upgrade and replace infrastructure elements and refurbish or replace accommodation?
- (2) Will the minister concede that his Government's failure to deliver on its election promises to properly fund accommodation upgrades and its decision to slash funding to the authority have simply made this situation worse?
- (3) Will the minister now take the urgent action required rather than simply appointing another task force?
- (4) Will the minister guarantee that there will be no reduction in public access to the island?

Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:

- (1)-(4) Firstly, I commend the Auditor General for his report. For the very first time, the Auditor General has gone a stage further than he normally does and has provided the Rottnest Island Authority and the Government with a two-phased approach, which complements the task force process that was put in place last weekend. I met with the island board over a month ago, and last weekend I looked at all the infrastructure on the island. I invite the opposition tourism spokesperson to visit the island, to go through the same process as I did and to work alongside the Government in this regard, because the Auditor General quite clearly states that this is not a matter just for government -

Mr R.F. Johnson: Can I use the air charter or the ferry charter?

Mr R.C. KUCERA: I will arrange a visit to the island for the member for Hillarys, so he can look at the infrastructure and the neglect -

Mr R.F. Johnson: I will be over there as soon as Parliament rises, but I know I will not be able to talk to anybody without your permission.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: I am very pleased that the opposition spokesperson on tourism welcomes the opportunity to visit Rottnest Island, because I urge everybody to go there. It is still a magnificent place for a holiday.

The issue is that, under the surface, as was pointed out quite properly by the Auditor General, there are neglected infrastructure problems at Rottnest that go back some three decades. When I receive the report from the task force in April, the Government will move towards putting in place a proper and sensible management plan that will sustain the island into the future. To get back to the specific questions, the answer to the first question is yes. The answer to the second question is absolutely no. The answer to the third and fourth questions is that the task force will deal with those issues and present the Government and the Parliament with a clear direction for the sustainability of what is one of the iconic places in this State. Unlike the previous Government, we have recognised the urgent needs of Rottnest Island. The urgency of this matter is such that in discussions with the Office of the Auditor General we have guaranteed contingency issues should something break. However, the long-term sustainability of the island is dependent upon the implementation of a proper and managed business plan.