

TOURIST DESTINATIONS IN THE SOUTH WEST

Grievance

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie - Parliamentary Secretary) [9.56 am]: My grievance today is to the Minister for Tourism; Small Business; Sport and Recreation; Peel and the South West. Today I grieve to highlight the changes in tourist destinations within the south west where there has been quite a change. Some would call it a sea change to a tree change. Many shires up on the scarp are getting on with the job and promoting their areas for “alternative tourists” who do not want to be sandblasted on a beach. There is the Bibbulmun Track. There is the Mundabiddi cycle trail, which was opened in the middle of the year. I can see the number of people coming to my town by the number of cyclists who have lunch across from my office. A change is certainly occurring. However, I want to highlight the need of the tourism industry to get on board and help the shires promote these alternative tourist destinations in the south west.

When people talk about going south, the first thing they think about is going to Margaret River, Dunsborough or Walpole. That is not a bad thing and I do not criticise those areas. However, I foresee another niche in the tourism market for people to stop off along the way at places such as the Ferguson Valley, which is just out from Bunbury, close to Dardanup and Burekup and over the ridge from Collie. It is a wonderful spot. The Wellington mills are there, which some would say are a relic of the past. There is Gnomesville, which is a unique and quaint area started by the locals at a roundabout and which now attracts thousands of people a year. In fact, it needs funding as it is causing a traffic problem. On the way to Gnomesville are vineyards, and associated cafes are springing up there. As I said, the Ferguson Valley is something special.

Over the ridge in my area is the exciting Collie lake project, which is a lake that has been formed out of an old mining area. It is a very sustainable area that has been rehabilitated. It is 2.5 kilometres long, 75 metres deep in the centre and one kilometre wide. A fair bit of work has been done in that area and it will attract people with ski boats, jet skis and alternative water sports - probably some of the more noisy ones that are not welcome on the Swan River and on the foreshore of Bunbury and other areas. The town's economy could get a real boost if the Collie lake project were promoted properly. It is about a year away from coming to fruition. Wesfarmers Coal Ltd has worked very hard to make sure that when it hands back the area to the Government, the environment will be okay and there will be no major cost to the Government along the way. Anyone who visits the area can see the beautiful blue water. The immediate question is what to do with it. The minister recently talked about the problem of some alternative sports being located in the city. We would certainly welcome those sports in Collie. For example, for water skiing there is Logue Brook Dam when it is full. Harvey Dam and all those other places offer more passive-type recreation, such as walking. The people who visit the area are not the yuppie-type campers who sniff the wine rather than drink it or people who tend to gravitate towards the coast and have much better bodies than I have.

My request through this grievance is that the minister take note of that change. The advertisements promoting the south west and Western Australia are great, but I feel at times they lack a bit of the inland component. People inland have worked very hard to attract visitors. We need just a little acknowledgment from Tourism Western Australia and the minister in order to highlight the fact that there are alternatives to being jammed in on the coast.

World events have certainly changed people's views about where they should holiday. This has been most noticeable over the past school holidays in the areas of Collie, Waroona and other such places. People who previously would not stay are now staying for two and three days because they feel safe and comfortable. We need to highlight that. With petrol prices increasing to \$1.20 and \$1.30 a litre, people are looking for a nearer destination because it helps their budget. They are looking at cheaper destinations. Bush camps at \$10 a day are very affordable for most families. The kids love them. They can run riot and go to bed when the sun goes down. Some of them take their pushbikes and go for a ride.

I hope that as a result of this grievance the minister will pick up on the issues and so promote inland towns. A year ago the Shire of Collie had a promotion at the Perth Royal Show the results of which were almost instant. The weekend after that promotion more people travelled to Collie. Therefore, promotions produce results.

MR R.C. KUCERA (Yokine - Minister for Tourism) [10.05 am]: I thank the member for Collie for his grievance on the promotion of Collie and the tourism industry in that area. The member for Collie is quite right, there has been a major sea change in the way that people are approaching Western Australia as a destination.

If I may, I will first give an indication of the investment that we have made in Collie purely aimed at increasing its popularity as a destination. In 2002-03 some 87 per cent of visitors to the region came from Western Australia. Collie and the Ferguson Valley are very much destinations for Western Australians. Some eight per cent of visitors were from interstate and a growing number, indeed up to five per cent now, were from overseas. Visitors to the region totalled 2 138 000, staying a total of 7.7 million bed nights. That translates to jobs, and

more importantly jobs for young people. Young people are very much engaged in tourism. It means that youngsters who live in the regions can stay in the regions, work in the regions and develop their whole career paths in the regions based on an industry that is running just third to agriculture in earning export dollars for the State.

We understand that centres such as Collie are very special. That is why in the past three years we have invested over \$500 000 in the Collie entrance tourism precinct. I compliment the member for Collie, and indeed the member for Bunbury, for their support for the development of the whole of that area. I was very pleased this morning to read the article in *The West Australian* on the City of Bunbury's twenty-fifth anniversary. It was an advertising feature in which the Bunbury chief executive officer, Greg Trevaskis, said -

Don't take my word for it, look at the statistics and what others are saying about Bunbury at the moment . . .

Bunbury is a very good story in the making.

Linked to Bunbury is Collie. Motor sport is growing in the world and certainly in this State. Money has been invested in the motorplex at Collie. In the past 12 months I have had the pleasure of presenting some \$148 000 in community sporting and recreation facilities funding to the Collie motorplex. The Mandurah-Collie touring map has also been put in place. A fantastic team of people led by a very good little Welshman, Taffy, has done a tremendous job in restoring the Collie historic railway station, which I had the honour of opening this year. Again, the State contributed \$149 000 to that project.

Turning to water sports, Wesfarmers is working with the Department of Conservation and Land Management and the people of Collie, driven by a local member whose energy is amazing. They have come up with a project called the five lake project. They have already identified a lake and named it the Kepwari Lake, after the local Aboriginal group in that area. What a stunning development this is likely to be. The Gravity Games were held at the weekend. They brought together some of the most extreme and exciting water sports we have ever seen. I spent quite a deal of time with the 30 000 young people of Perth who came to the event, which was put on at McCallum Park. The competitors came from every corner of the earth to compete in some of the most exciting and futuristic sports that we are likely to see, all of which are related to water. They included events like wake boarding, water skiing and kite surfing. Two weeks before that I had the privilege of travelling to Margaret River to see the tow-in surfing. I must say that the people doing that are crazy.

The main attraction of sports in Collie is open access to uncluttered water where people can see exciting and amazing sports. The linking of the motorplex with over two and a half kilometres of potentially free water is an amazing synergy that will eventually put Collie on the map as the Australian capital of motor sports and motor water sports. We have the potential to develop something that is world class. I must compliment the coalmining companies in that area for their vision and foresight in developing the economy by taking resources out of that area, the support they give to the miners and the people of Collie, and also for their vision for the youth of this State in producing something that has the capacity to be amazing.

Yesterday I was able to launch a new promotional program for Western Australia called The Real Thing. I must take my hat off to a real Western Australian boy from Subiaco, Johnny Young, who came along to help us launch the program at the Maritime Museum. Seeing the rushes of that promotional campaign makes the hair on the back of our neck stand up. I realise why people see Western Australia as a unique tourism area. I take up a point that the member for Collie made about the pressure on the organisers of these sports. On Sunday when I was talking to the organisers of the games on the Swan River, they spoke of the increasing pressure on their sports because of the clash between their sports and traditional water sports. That will make Collie a very desirable place. The focus must be on water sports in that area. We will be working with the member for Collie and all the water sports associations to make sure that we promote that area.

In the past three and a half years of this Government some \$75 million of regional investment funding has gone to the regions of this State. A very large proportion of that went into the south west, particularly linked with the development of Collie. Thanks to the foresight of Premier Gallop and the Treasurer, \$80 million will be committed over the next four years of government to make sure that these regional investments can be developed. Linking that with The Real Thing program that we brought in yesterday and the capacity to fund the kinds of projects for which the member for Collie is a fantastic advocate, I see nothing but a sparkling future for Collie and the water sports programs there, coupled with the magnificent Ferguson Valley. I thank the member for raising this grievance. He has my absolute assurance that in the next term of government it will be one of the major areas of promotion of this State.