

TOURIST ICONS

**266. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for Tourism:**

Is the minister aware of federal government plans to sell off the domain names for Western Australia's tourist icons?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

I thank the member for Collie-Wellington for the question and acknowledge that he is an excellent advocate for his constituency and the tourism benefits of his area. The Gallop government is putting enormous effort into the tourism industry. We have lifted the budget of the Western Australian Tourism Commission to levels unheard of in former conservative administrations. We have now put in additional funding - in addition to our election commitments - of \$9.4 million in direct marketing expenditure. That will go into the eastern states - the local market - and around the world. We have a vision to make Western Australia this nation's premier tourism state. Therefore, imagine our surprise when we found out that the Howard government is planning to sell off the domain names of individual communities. The Howard Government is responsible for the allocation of domain names through the .au Domain Administration - auDA - under the control of the commonwealth. The Howard government has decided to allow individual businesses to buy the rights to use geographic domain names that end in .net.au or .com.au. Names such as Broome.com.au, Bunbury.com.au or Albany.com.au will be able to be sold off to individual businesses. Therefore, interstate or overseas people who type in that Internet address on their browser could be sent to a completely inappropriate web site. Local communities will lose control over those individual names, which is especially bad for regional communities throughout Western Australia. The government recently made an enormous effort in various parts of the state, one of which was Kalgoorlie. The government recently announced \$200 000 in additional marketing expenditure for the regional tourism organisation based in Kalgoorlie. Therefore, \$200 000 additional dollars are available to market that area to Western Australia and elsewhere. That money will mean a lot to that community. It is about time the Howard government recognised that its actions with domain names will damage all the efforts the state government is making to ensure that communities can market themselves around Australia and around the world.