

TOURISM ELECTION POLICY

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

I refer the minister to the Australian Labor Party tourism election policy, which states -

Labor will . . . ensure that \$14 million is allocated over four years to upgrade and repair holiday accommodation units and settlement areas on Rottnest . . .

- (1) How does the minister intend to fund the accommodation upgrades outlined in the Rottnest Island management plan, released earlier this year, when the capital works funding for tourism facilities was cut by nearly 50 per cent in last week's budget?
- (2) Is the minister further aware that capital works funding for the construction and maintenance of Rottnest Island tourism facilities has been slashed by 72 per cent since the election of his Government?
- (3) Will the minister now concede that this Government has no intention of honouring its commitment to improving standards of accommodation and facilities at this popular Western Australian tourism destination?

Mr C.M. BROWN replied:

I thank the member for Hillarys for the question.

- (1)-(3) I want to correct a couple of things. First, the member referred to the funding proposals under the Rottnest Island management plan. The Rottnest Island management plan is a management plan for the next five years, not the next two years. Therefore, when looking at the forward projections, people need to understand the distinction between two years and five years. I appreciate that for some people that is challenging. Secondly, during the time of the former coalition Government the Rottnest Island Authority was forced to borrow \$4.5 million, but during our time in government the Rottnest Island Authority has not entered into any further debt. The former Government claimed that it injected that enormous amount of money into the Rottnest Island Authority. In fact, an examination of the books shows that the Rottnest Island Authority was required to borrow that money, which we have been repaying. Thirdly, the election commitment that we made related to both funding commitments from the consolidated fund and the internal generation of revenue by the Rottnest Island Authority. The Rottnest Island Authority has recently brought down a new management plan that will enable it to increase the revenue from Rottnest Island and thereby contribute from its operations to that part of the funding. The budget for this year indicates that additional funding has been made available in the out years for maintenance and the upgrading of accommodation on Rottnest Island. I reject any notion that there is a 72 per cent cut; there is no 72 per cent cut.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Look at the figures! The budget figures show that!

Mr C.M. BROWN: I have looked at the figures. I suggest the member get a calculator. If he buys three packets of Wheaties, he can get one for nothing; we can even give him some directions on how to work it. If the member can get a 72 per cent cut out of the budget for Rottnest, he can actually argue that the health budget has gone down by \$300 million this year. The member is simply wrong.

Mr R.F. Johnson interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr C.M. BROWN: I appreciate that the member for Hillarys is new at the job. He had to take over. There was a bit of a vacuum - a bit of a dead loss - from the Opposition in this area previously. Members may recall that the Opposition released a media statement that it would go after the Minister for the Environment and Heritage and the Minister for Tourism. I am pleased about the question. This is the second question I have had from the member for Hillarys since that time. I hope there are a few more, because the last one was a dud, and the member is not improving much.