

GOURMET ESCAPE

621. Ms J.J. SHAW to the Minister for Tourism:

I refer to this government's bold and astute decision to expand the Gourmet Escape.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how this new event will benefit Western Australia's food and wine producers, including those in the Swan Valley?
- (2) What has been the response to this decision by leading figures in the hospitality industry?
- (3) Can the minister advise whether he is aware of anyone who does not support this event?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

- (1)–(3) I thank the member for her question, because she has a deep and abiding interest in the expanded Gourmet Escape event, and I am sure she is a supporter.

It is true that only a week ago we announced not that there would be an expanded—a much bigger and boosted—gourmet event for Western Australia; we announced the proponent. I announced the other bit about eight months ago. It has been in the public domain for some eight months that we have looked at the Margaret River Gourmet Escape, as we are looking at all events, to determine whether the taxpayer money spent on that event is driving visitor numbers to the state from outside Western Australia. It was clear that it was not.

Mr D.T. Redman interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am speaking to the member for Warren–Blackwood, because I know that he has a great interest in the Margaret River region.

The Gourmet Escape has done a great job in boosting and elevating the brand of the Margaret River region and its produce. That is a true and reasonable observation. However, for the scale of taxpayer investment, it was not driving visitor numbers from outside the state. We asked Tourism WA to analyse what could be done to drive visitor numbers and whether this is the event to retain or whether it needed to change. Tourism WA went to market and sought advice from proponents with capacity in this field. A panel incorporating expertise from within Tourism WA and the hospitality sector, both inside and outside Western Australia, assessed all the proponents' submissions and determined that ING's submission was the best. That submission proposed an expanded event that will, for the first time, give the state the opportunity to market a gourmet event in Western Australia to people around the globe. It will be a 10-day bracket that we can sell to people coming to this part of the world from anywhere around the globe to experience multiple events. The event will begin in the Swan Valley with the Swan Valley Gourmet Escape. It will incorporate an entire week of events around the Perth region.

Mrs A.K. Hayden: Perth hills?

Mr P. PAPALIA: It will include the Perth hills and, potentially, any other satellite events with the capacity to be world-class and meet the requirements of this event. The event will end in Margaret River with the current Margaret River Gourmet Escape almost replicated, with identical capacity and focus. The Swan Valley component will have a more rustic approach, to focus on its strengths. The Margaret River component will be very similar to what it is now for the premium end of the market. In between those two events will be a new event—that is, the world gourmet symposium. For the first time we will be attracting trade and players in the industry from all around the world to not only hear about cutting-edge advances in the field of culinary tourism and the culinary world, but also enable our local producers to have a world platform on which to sell their wares.

Were there any observations or comments? There were. The Australian Hotels Association of Western Australia put out a media release entitled “Bigger, Better, More Inclusive WA Gourmet Escape”, which states —

The Australian Hotels Association (WA) welcomes today's announcement of an expanded and refreshed WA Gourmet Escape, which will improve and elevate the original event by leveraging the Margaret River brand for the benefit of other regions in WA.

It goes on, effusively supporting it.

The SPEAKER: Minister!

Mr P. PAPALIA: Interestingly, the foremost culinary journalist in the state, Rob Broadfield, also has an opinion piece entitled “Bigger Gourmet Escape food festival will be good for Margaret River”. In reference to some disparaging comments, he said —

By our reckoning, the opposite is the case. Expanding the event to cover the Swan Valley and the Perth hospitality and hotels community is a welcome maturity of the event which brings with it a range of much

needed synergies for tourism stakeholders in Western Australia beyond that which could be delivered by the somewhat boutique nature of the original Margaret River event.

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Vasse!

Mr P. PAPALIA: He also says—I am just finishing, Mr Speaker.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members! I am sure the minister is getting to the end.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I will truncate it. He said —

The bigger, better Western Australian Gourmet Escape —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am quoting Mr Broadfield.

Mrs L.M. Harvey interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Scarborough!

Mr P. PAPALIA: He said —

The bigger, better Western Australian Gourmet Escape will be a winner. The State Government should be congratulated.

The member for Swan Hills asked —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members! Minister.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The member for Swan Hills asked whether anyone did not like the event.

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Vasse, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Mr Speaker, I am quoting from Mr Broadfield's piece, which is online right now and can be read.

I was asked whether there were any other views and whether anyone was against a bigger, boosted, more expansive event. There is one person.

Several members interjected.

Point of Order

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Mr Speaker, I am really keen to hear about the Swan Valley. Maybe members opposite are not. They are drowning out the minister, so I cannot hear about our opportunities.

Mr S.K. L'Estrange interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Churchlands, I call you to order for the first time. I will hear points of order in silence.

Minister, just remember that you are only one of the ministers. There are other ministers who might not get a question up if you take too long.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am sure that plenty of people across Western Australia are interested in the Gourmet Escape. Last Friday, when I was in Margaret River meeting with representatives from the City of Busselton, the Shire of Augusta–Margaret River, Australia's South West, the South West Development Commission, the Augusta–Margaret River Tourism Association, the Margaret River Wines Association, Burch Family Wines, Voyager Estate, Leeuwin Estate and Vasse Felix and hearing about their enthusiasm for the new event, somebody was in Perth attacking it and saying that we should not have a new Western Australian Gourmet Escape. That was the opposition shadow Minister for Tourism. Fortunately, when it comes to opinions about any events, including the Gourmet Escape, I prefer to listen to those people who are well informed.