

ABORIGINAL TOURISM

Grievance

MRS J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI (Kingsley) [9.56 am]: I seek leave to give my grievance from the table.

Leave granted.

Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI: My grievance today is to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and is about the availability of, and access to, experiences of Aboriginal heritage and culture in regional and metropolitan areas of our great state of Western Australia.

I was recently contacted by a local parent who wished to raise her concerns about the apparent lack of availability of places to experience local Aboriginal history and culture. She told the story of her family's recent visit to Kalbarri, and the tourism and information centre there, in search of Aboriginal history tourism experiences in the area. She and her family were very disappointed to learn that there was no information that the tourism centre could provide her with, other than to google the local Nanda people to see what could be found online. She discovered that there had been a recent ceremony on the foreshore in which the Nanda people were recognised as the native titleholders of the area. She noted that the tourism centre had many displays relating to the history since the arrival of Europeans to the area, but sadly no Aboriginal history.

She told me that she left Kalbarri feeling disappointed in the level of awareness being brought to pre-European history and was concerned that this situation is replicated across our state. She told me about the lovely signs in the new playground at Burswood explaining who the Aboriginal people were who lived there, their beliefs and stories. She said that it would be very nice to see that model replicated across many of the small towns in WA and for sites of importance to be preserved. Most importantly, she said the information could be available in tourism information centres should people wish to seek it out. She understands that regions need to prioritise the funds they have allocated to them; however, she thinks it is very important that we start to develop our understanding of the place we live in for the benefit of future generations.

Minister, I have to say that I agree with her. There appears to be a desire for access to Aboriginal history and culture in our tourism areas across the state not only from a history and learning point of view; it may also help to change the prejudice, beliefs and behaviours that unfortunately exist in pockets of our communities. Our state is full of wonderful natural places to visit that could so easily be enriched by complementary tourism opportunities that explore rich Aboriginal culture, the oldest living culture in the world. These unique experiences would add yet another dimension to our state's tourism offerings. When I travel, one of my favourite things to do is to learn more about local culture and history. It is the knowledge and experiences gained that form a lasting part of the memories of each place. I currently have a Japanese exchange student living with me, and one of the high points of her stay so far has been attending a Dreamtime experience tour at Elizabeth Quay. Her enthusiasm and desire to know more about local Aboriginal culture highlights the appetite for cultural tourism, interpretation and experiences in both the metropolitan area and regions of Western Australia.

As the minister may know, I am lucky enough to have part of the Yellagonga Regional Park located in my electorate of Kingsley. Many people from my community would like to see more interpretive signage highlighting the Aboriginal history and culture of the region in the park. Indeed, Yellagonga was the name of a local leader and elder who resided in the area at the time of colonial settlement. Tourism could play a bigger part in helping to educate visitors to major metropolitan and regional tourist areas by providing resources to learn about Aboriginal history and culture. I ask the minister to please consider how he may work with the Minister for Tourism to achieve this.

MR B.S. WYATT (Victoria Park — Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) [10.01 am]: I thank the member for Kingsley for her grievance, and her constituent. The opportunity for visitors to Western Australia to experience an Aboriginal cultural tourism offering is a very important and absolutely an accurate issue. The member for Kingsley noted that Yellagonga Regional Park, named after a local prominent leader, is in her electorate. That highlights that every electorate in Western Australia, I can guarantee members, will have a proud Aboriginal history; we just need to uncover it and celebrate it. I am disappointed at the member's constituent's experience in Kalbarri. Kalbarri has a very proud Aboriginal history; indeed, it is one that I would expect the tourism centre to celebrate. This is an issue that I will raise with the Minister for Tourism as well.

I want to highlight a couple of points. The member raised the fact that her constituent was disappointed. She went to Kalbarri and did not get the experience she wanted in respect of local Aboriginal history. That reflects the broader experience. A 2017–18 Tourism WA visitor research survey noted that 82 per cent of visitors to WA want to participate in an Aboriginal tourism experience, but only 26 per cent secured that experience. Clearly, somewhere along the way we are falling short in giving the offering that visitors want to experience. I note, by way of an aside, that that is despite the fact we have the likes of Noel Nannup and the McGuire

family—local Noongars—who have great tourism offerings. Perhaps we need to do more to make people aware of those offerings; we do not have to leave Perth and travel vast distances to experience Aboriginal culture or heritage.

I want to point out a couple of things that have been done. The government is supporting Aboriginal tourism through a number of programs. The member would have heard the Minister for Tourism talking about some of these, including Camping with Custodians; developing an Aboriginal Tourism Development Program; a regional Aboriginal events scheme; and importantly, as has been done for a long time now, funding for the peak body, the Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council, otherwise known as WAITOC. The Aboriginal Tourism Development Program was a fixed-term program, funded to the end of this financial year. That program also includes business development and marketing to be delivered in partnership between WAITOC and Tourism WA. Importantly, we want to develop this further. The government wants WA, unsurprisingly, to be the premier state to experience Aboriginal culture and tourism in Australia. That is why we are developing an Aboriginal tourism action plan to help us achieve this goal. That is very important. We have a lot of opportunity and a lot of product, but, clearly, we need to do more to marry up the product to the tourism demand. The Aboriginal tourism action plan will want to consolidate, obviously, the Camping with Custodians program, which the Minister for Tourism has been particularly vocal about. There are three new camping custodians, but we want to bring the total to five. These campgrounds deliver social and economic benefits in communities in regional WA, but also provide a cultural experience. Applications for the Aboriginal stream within the regional events scheme is important in increasing the product offering as well. Importantly, we also will be hosting the World Indigenous Tourism Summit in April 2020, just a year away, which is expected to attract hundreds of delegates from all over the world. I expect that will really lift the profile of Aboriginal tourism in Western Australia. Of course, the Australian Indigenous Tourism Conference is due to be held in WA in 2022.

I want to make a couple of final points. Clearly, the disconnect, or perhaps the fact that we have such a demand for a tourism product and not enough people experiencing it means that we need to ensure that that action plan being developed is targeted, specific and understands the products that we have. Hopefully members in this place went to *Boorna Waanginy* in Kings Park during the Perth Festival. This is the second year it has been offered. In my view, it was perhaps the most successful stand-out of the Perth Festival. Hundreds of thousands of people visited it over the four nights—including tourists—and that highlights that local people are desperate to have an Aboriginal cultural heritage experience. I hope that it becomes a permanent fixture as part of the Perth Festival, or even separate from the Perth Festival. It was something I took my daughters to. I suspect many people in this place went to *Boorna Waanginy*, and to the current *Desert River Sea: Portraits of the Kimberley* exhibition at the Art Gallery of Western Australia. Huge numbers of people are going through the Art Gallery experiencing Kimberley art. Not many people travel to the Kimberley; not many people get that opportunity. The exhibition, which has been six years in the making, is an exhibition of, in my view, global significance and is on display for free. People can just walk into the Art Gallery and see it. That highlights that people are desperate for that experience.

The member and her constituent are correct; we need to do more around marrying up the demand with what is currently being offered. I expect something will happen such as a cultural centre, which Western Australia is ideally focused on, and that was an important part of the Noongar settlement. That will hopefully be finalised in the not-too-distant future. Combining that with a national Indigenous gallery, where we can show not just the state collection, but also private collections and some of Australia's Aboriginal art collection here in Western Australia, will provide a focal point for future visitors as well. There is a huge opportunity that the state has taken some advantage of, but there is more opportunity to increase that. I thank the member, and ask her to please thank her constituent. I will raise this with the Minister for Tourism. I want to see Kalbarri also making the most of that offering because they have a proud and very sophisticated historical experience.