

RENDEZVOUS OBSERVATION CITY HOTEL — PLANNING APPROVAL

887. Mrs L.M. HARVEY to the Minister for Planning:

Some time ago the owners of the Rendezvous Observation City Hotel had an appeal with the State Administrative Tribunal over a rejection of their development application by the Western Australian Planning Commission. These delays are leading to a fair amount of uncertainty in planning for the area. Can the minister please update the house on what he is doing to address this situation?

Mr J.H.D. DAY replied:

I thank the member for Scarborough for the question and I know this is an issue in which she has had an interest, certainly at least since her election last year and presumably prior to that. The history of this matter is that the owners of the Rendezvous Observation City Hotel made a development application in September 2007 for conversion of the existing hotel building to permanent residential apartments. There also would have been a smaller number of short-stay accommodation units built on the site but the essential point is that the existing 17-storey hotel would have been converted under that application to permanent residential accommodation. That of course raised major concerns within the tourism sector. The Minister for Tourism has raised the issue with me. I think it was of concern to the previous government as well, and quite understandably. The application was refused, there was an appeal to the State Administrative Tribunal and the appeal was called in by the previous Minister for Planning and Infrastructure but referred back to the tribunal for a recommendation and the matter has remained with the administrative tribunal since then. The tribunal has had difficulty in resolving the issue mainly because the City of Stirling's planning scheme No 2 has been under review with town planning scheme No 3 being prepared and finalised.

I am pleased to say that the City of Stirling's local planning scheme No 3 was considered by the Western Australian Planning Commission in September of this year and has been delivered to me for a decision. The planning commission's view, which I share, is that the Observation City Hotel site is a regionally significant and prime tourism site within the vicinity of Scarborough Beach and that it is important to protect the tourism purposes of the hotel. Therefore, I have made a decision that the City of Stirling's local planning scheme No 3 should include a significant modification to what was proposed. Certainly, the City of Stirling was providing for a degree of protection for the site for tourism purposes but I think the degree of protection needs to be increased. Therefore, I have requested on the advice of the planning commission for a special control area for Scarborough to be incorporated into the planning scheme, which would have the effect of restricting the use of the existing 17-storey building to hotel tourism purposes and in the event that the existing building is demolished in the future that any new building on that site would be required to have no more than 25 per cent of the dwelling units allowed for permanent residential accommodation so that 75 per cent of the units would be retained for tourism purposes. That does not prevent some new development occurring on the site, which would allow for permanent residential purposes, but the important point is that the existing Observation City Hotel site, while the building is as it is currently, will be retained for tourism purposes, and in the event that the particular site is redeveloped, then no more than 25 per cent would be allowed for permanent residential accommodation. Therefore, I think that provides a very strong degree of protection for tourism purposes. It provides a strong degree of clarity for the owners of the site and it will ensure that Scarborough is provided with sufficient hotel rooms, or at least a significant number of hotel rooms, bearing in mind that it is a very important location for tourism purposes. The modification will now be advertised by the City of Stirling and members of the public will have the opportunity to comment; however, it is a very clear indication of the government's view about the importance of the site for tourism purposes.