

ROTTNEST ISLAND — TOURISM

**1028. Ms E. HAMILTON to the Minister for Tourism:**

I refer to the McGowan government's unprecedented commitment to growing the state's tourism industry and creating jobs in the sector. Can the minister update the house on how this government is attracting more visitors to Rottnest Island and improving the visitor experience, something the previous Liberal–National government failed to deliver in eight and a half years?

**Mr P. PAPALIA replied:**

I thank the member for her interest in tourism and her support of this important sector. Last Saturday, I was fortunate enough to go to Rottnest Island and attend the inaugural Seafood Saturday festival. It was an extraordinary event that coincided with the launch of the summer season.

**Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup:** That's right; you were holding up a crayfish!

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Dawesville, you might be able to hold crayfish because you might be going home early. I call you to order for the first time.

**Mr P.C. Tinley** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Minister for Housing, I call you to order for the first time.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** We also coincidentally launched the summer season, but that first-ever event drew 3 000 visitors to the island on the day.

**Ms L. Mettam** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Vasse!

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** There was a mix of ticketed events and free activities. Not surprisingly, there was plenty of seafood on the menus of island businesses, including, Mr Speaker, Albany oysters, local fish, octopus, squid and the iconic western rock lobster. The event included catch-and-cook crayfish boat tours; fishing clinics with the Minister for Fisheries, who was a big drawcard—apparently, there was some former footballer called Mark LeCras there as well, but I think the minister was the drawcard!—a seafood degustation dinner; a seafood beach barbecue; sunset tours; long-table lunches; a beach bonfire with Aboriginal storytelling and live music; and a live cooking station. I want to congratulate the Rottnest Island Authority, the executive and all the businesses, including the ferry operators, that supported Seafood Saturday. During the event—this was really exciting—as the Minister for Small Business, I also took the opportunity to launch eight new small businesses on the island.

**Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** You will be going somewhere in a minute.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** There was an extraordinary amount of activity on the island. It has not escaped anyone's observation that nothing much happened on Rottnest Island for a long time. Whilst we were out there, I took the opportunity to have a quick look at Pinky's Beach Eco Village resort, the first infrastructure development on Rottnest Island in 30 years. After waiting for four years for approval from the former government, it was approved only when we took office. We had a quick look around the hotel, because that will become a resort next year. That project has been waiting for seven years for approval.

The eight businesses that we launched will add to the excitement of, and opportunity for, a diversity of activity on the island. They are all in keeping with the ethos of Rottnest Island. That thing that people love about Rottnest is still there; it is just being added to and improved.

**Ms S.F. McGurk** interjected.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The local member was invited, but she had something else to do!

Visitors to Rottnest will now be able to enjoy a catch-and-cook crayfish tour aboard Rottnest cruises; glass-bottom kayaks with Inspiration Outdoors; sunset eco and whale-watching tours with Charter 1; boat hire with Boating West; subsea scooter hire from Seabob; undersea helmet walks, scuba dives and snorkel tours with Ningaloo Reef Dreaming; and a new food van called Lexi's on Rotto at Wadjemup lighthouse. For the first time ever, when people get out to the west end of the island on their pushie, they will be able to stop and have a coffee or a drink and some good food from a gourmet van. There is also a business that hires shade and beach accessories, so people do not have to take a bucket and spade for their kids; they can hire everything at the Basin. These new offerings will suit a range of visitor preferences and budgets. They cover the lot, from the low end all the way to the high end for people who want to pay a little more for a bigger experience. They will enhance the visitor experience during what we predict will be the island's biggest ever summer.

For information, despite some of the negativity members may have heard around booking systems and the opportunistic claptrap that was stated about some of the issues around that unfortunate incident at the jetty, there was record visitation to the island every month of the low season. July, August and September had double-digit growth above the figure from 12 months earlier. In October, it was 9.5 per cent or something like that. They are extraordinary numbers. We have grown visitor numbers in the last 12 months. From June to June, visitor numbers to Rottnest grew by 14 per cent. Despite all the negativity on the other side of the chamber and despite the Liberal Party talking down Rottnest and tourism, we grew visitor numbers to Rottnest by 14 per cent. It is not just locals. About 15 per cent of the visitors to Rottnest are international visitors. Actually, I do not think that is accurate. I think it is a larger proportion based on the number I saw on the boat the other day. I urge all Western Australians who have not been to Rottnest recently to have another look. If they have not been there for a long time, it has changed. Things are happening on Rottnest. It is exciting; it is everything people have ever loved and more.