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Minister says region needs 'signature event'



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GEOFF VIVIAN

The WA Government is keen to fund an annual Geraldton festival to extend the region's tourism season, according to WA Small Business and Tourism Minister Paul Papalia.

"This region does not have a major event and should have one," he said. "Something that runs ideally for the length of a couple of weekends, and the week in the middle, will draw people."

Mr Papalia said this would draw attention to Mid West attractions like Kalbarri Skywalk, the pink lake, Abrolhos Islands and wildflowers.

"We have a regional events program and a significant amount of money can be allocated to support an event like that," he said.

"We need a collection of peak bodies and associations and individual players and local government and Australia's Coral Coast to work together, create an event, propose it, do the business case, and submit an application.

"If they do that, I'm sure it will be well received."

Mr Papalia said he had met various players in the Mid West tourism industry who had been working on such an idea.

City of Greater Geraldton Mayor Shane Van Styn said he met Mr Papalia on Wednesday.

"We discussed how the Geraldton Mid West Tourism group have been looking at how we can get up some sort of seafood festival as a signature event for Geraldton," he said.

"It's vital that Geraldton creates an iconic and unique event in conjunction with the private sector and the residents that

is capable of differentiating itself from other large events around the State."

"Some very positive discussions were had with Minister Papalia."

Mr Papalia visited Geraldton on Wednesday when he met various tourism and small business operators to discuss the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on

the local economy. He said for most regions of WA, internal State tourism had resulted in greater numbers than for the same time last year, which had extended well beyond the school holidays.

Mr Papalia attended a Business After Hours event on Wednesday and visited the Skywalk at Kalbarri National Park yesterday.

