



Grounded: Red Bull Air Race organisers have cancelled all events for this year.

Minister vows to fight for tourism cash

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WA is lagging behind the rest of the nation in hosting big-ticket events and needs to "lift its game", according to new Tourism Minister Kim Hames.

In his first public comments on the tourism portfolio since the Cabinet reshuffle last month, Dr Hames said he would fight for a bigger slice of the State Budget to attract events.

He denied that his remarks implied previous minister Elizabeth Constable had underperformed.

Dr Hames made the comments while announcing \$2.8 million would be spent bringing the world's third-biggest tourism trade show to Perth in June next year.

The Australian Tourism Exchange was last hosted in Perth in 2008 and attracted more than 2100 delegates from 40 countries, injecting \$10 million into the local economy.

During the past two years WA has lost the Red Bull Air Race, Johnnie Walker Golf Classic, Margaret River Pro surfing event and V8 Supercar Championship Series.

"We have lagged behind the other States for a long period of time and particularly Victoria in the events that we have been able to attract to WA," Dr Hames said.

"I think we need to invest a lot more in that area and get out there and be competitive and try and be imaginative in terms of the type of event we can bring to WA."



Investment needed: Dr Kim Hames

Shadow tourism minister Ljiljanna Ravlich said the events calendar had been "virtually wiped out" under Dr Constable and she supported Dr Hames' approach.

Australian Hotels Association chief executive Bradley Woods described Dr Hames' comments as "a very refreshing, articulate and honest assessment of the problems we are experiencing with events in this State".

He said events funding in the last Budget fell from \$20 million to \$12 million but needed to go to \$50 million as a "starting point".

Victoria spent \$130 million a year, including \$47 million on the Australian Grand Prix.

Graham Moss, chief executive of the non-Government Tourism Council, said he was heartened by Dr Hames' comments.