

# Spotlight turned to North West tourism at Karratha meeting

**By Robert Hobson**

THE STATE of tourism in the North West was once again in the spotlight with Karratha hosting members of the Pilbara Regional Council two weeks ago for a tourism workshop and meeting.

It included representatives from the four Pilbara shires as well as Australia's North West Tourism, Tourism WA, the Department for Planning and Infrastructure and the regional Visitors Centres.

Following heated discussions on the future of tourism in the region a number of issues were discussed in a workshop to define the strategies and initiatives that would further promote and sustain the industry.

Roebourne Shire Council representative Simon Kot said there needed to be a coordinated approach by the participants to deal with shared interests.

"We need basic objectives, a coordinated approach to market-

ing to prevent competition and duplication of funds," he said.

Australia's North West Tourism regional manager Vaughn Davies said that the workshop was a good initiative and there were many beneficial outcomes from discussing the variety of issues common to all parties and stakeholders.

"It is an excellent initiative of the Pilbara Regional Council to assess the state of tourism in the Pilbara (and) it was good to get all stakeholders in the same room talking about the future of tourism in the region," he said.

"There were numerous positives that came from the meeting looking at all aspects of tourism including land use planning, marketing, visitor servicing and destination development in terms of infrastructure and product development."

With product development focused on inter and intrastate travellers, it was suggested that the facilities should cater for

those who came to see the iconic sites dotted around the Pilbara.

Even though interstate travellers had the highest proportion of visitation, there were still West Australian and international travellers coming to the Pilbara.

According to NWT marketing manager Julianne Bush, word got around that a place was worth visiting, no matter where the tourists were from, and that it was the local natural and historical attractions that these people wanted to visit and experience.

"People do not (necessarily) want to see the towns, but it's the turtles, the gorges and the rock art on the Burrup," she said.

She also agreed with Mr Davies, saying that communication between the various parties allowed the exchange of ideas and information.

"This brought all the parties together in one location to open up communication," she said.