

Tourism turn

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TOURISM, along with Western Australia, is emerging as the new frontier for Queensland mine site accommodation provider The MAC Services Group. By Noel Dyson

The MAC kick-started its foray into Western Australia last month with the announcement it had bought the Kambalda Caravan Park.

When the company was heading to the Australian Securities Exchange, The MAC executive chairman Kevin Maloney made little secret of the fact that the company would use some of the money it raised from its listing to step into WA.

However, a lesser known side of the company's growth plan is to use art tourism as a drawcard to its accommodation villages.



Kevin Maloney

This serves the dual purposes of increasing occupancy rates (although that is less of a problem in the midst of a resources boom) and also giving the company some extra credibility when it comes to approaching a local government agency for planning approval. Councils, after all, like to see developments in their municipalities putting a tick in the cultural box.

Maloney said The MAC had commissioned artists to create a series of murals for its Nebo accommodation facility.

"Every major tourist city has a hinterland behind it. Melbourne has the Dandenongs and Mackay has Nebo," he said.

The Nebo murals are based around scenes of Australian historical significance. These include Captain Cook discovering Australia, the convicts making their journey through the English courts, followed by their journey on the Plymouth and their first five years in Australia.

While the murals are at the Nebo facility, Maloney said they could easily be moved to the company's other facilities at Dysart, Moranbah and Coppabella, which are also in Queensland's Bowen Basin.

They could also be moved to the Kambalda facility The MAC group recently acquired. The company bought the Kambalda Caravan Park, which has a total freehold landholding of 11.25 hectares. About two thirds of that land is undeveloped.

The MAC has submitted an application to the Shire of Coolgardie to build more than 200 en-suite rooms, while continuing to operate the 50 serviced caravan park sites.

It is expected to cost about \$10 million to cover the acquisition and implementation of the first stage.

That first stage is expected to be completed during the first quarter of 2008.

Those 50 caravan park sites fit in well with The MAC's tourism plans.

Maloney said besides WA's Eastern Goldfields, the company was also sizing up opportunities in the state's Pilbara and Mid-West regions.