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The future of WA tourism lies in better links to Asia

The future of WA travel could involve travelling to Indonesia from Perth by car and ferry, and offering Perth-Bali holiday packages to tourists from over east, according to MacroPlan Australia managing director Brian Haratsis.

Mr Haratsis said WA needed to follow the lead of Asia and Europe in linking with travel markets.

He cited the examples of the European Union building a tunnel under the Bosphorus in Istanbul, Turkey, to unite east and west, and China expanding its freeway network and adding ferry services designed to allow people to drive and ferry from Beijing to Jakarta by 2020.

"Australia needs to plan outwards and look at better links with Asia," Mr Haratsis said.

"It's not a wild dream for people to drive to Broome and catch a ferry with their car to Indonesia."

Mr Haratsis also suggested better packaging of Perth with Asia to capitalise on the east coast market.

"I was speaking at a conference in Melbourne recently to a roomful of about 100 people and asked how many people had been to Perth in the last five years — one person put their hand up," he said.

"There's a very low level of



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understanding about WA on the east coast.

"The long-term trend in travel has been moving away from driving around Australia in a caravan, to packaged trips and short breaks.

"People don't realise how close Bali is to Perth, so why not take advantage of Perth's location and use brands like Bali that are really well known to drag people to Perth? You could have 'three days in Perth and three days in Bali' packages available from the east coast.

"Once people experience Perth, they'll like it — they'll like the beaches, the weather and

that it's safe."

Mr Haratsis also recommended that Perth improve its tourism product to better capitalise on the travel market.

While WA boasted a wealth of natural attractions, this catered to a niche market.

"If you're coming from England or the US and want to stay in a four or five-star resort-style hotel with views in Perth, where do you stay?

"There's not a lot of relevant product for a wide group of travellers."

He envisaged a Perth with five-star resort accommodation

and broader tourism experiences, along with WA destinations that could be accessed by frequent and direct flights.

"The future of WA tourism has got to be relevant product," he said. "It needs to be easy to get in and out, with more frequent direct flights and a mix of product.

"You've got AirAsia, Tiger coming on and now Virgin coming back, which will help. But in the next five to 10 years Perth needs to piggyback off the next resources boom and provide new tourism product from that."