



# ***TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE***

**Members present:**

Mr SR King MP—Chair  
Mr LL Millar MP  
Mr BW Head MP  
Mr JR Martin MP  
Mr LA Walker MP  
Mr TJ Watts MP

**Staff present:**

Ms D Jeffrey—Committee Secretary  
Mr Z Dadic—Assistant Committee Secretary

## **PUBLIC HEARING—INQUIRY INTO THE ECONOMIC AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS FOR QUEENSLAND ISLAND RESORTS.**

### **TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**MONDAY, 15 AUGUST 2022**

**Brisbane**

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### **The committee met at 9.35 am.**

**CHAIR:** Good morning. I declare open this public hearing for the committee's inquiry into economic and regulatory frameworks for Queensland island resorts. My name is Shane King, member for Kurwongbah and chair of the committee. I would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay our respects to elders past and present. We are very fortunate to live in a country with two of the oldest continuing cultures in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, whose lands, winds and waters we all share.

With me here today are: Lachlan Millar MP, the member for Gregory, who is our deputy chair; Bryson Head MP, member for Callide; James Martin MP, member for Stretton; Les Walker MP, member for Mundubberra; and Trevor Watts MP, member for Toowoomba North.

On 21 February 2022, the Transport and Resources Committee resolved to conduct an inquiry into the economic and regulatory frameworks for Queensland island resorts. This public hearing is the second in a series of public hearings the committee will hold. The committee's proceedings are proceedings of the Queensland parliament and are subject to the standing rules and orders of the parliament. As parliamentary proceedings under the standing orders, any person may be excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the chair or by order of the committee.

Only the committee and invited witnesses may participate in the proceedings. Witnesses are not required to give evidence under oath or affirmation, but I remind witnesses that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence. You have previously been provided with a copy of instructions to witnesses, so we will take those as being read. I also remind members of the public that they may be excluded from the briefing at the discretion of the committee.

These proceedings are being recorded and broadcast live on the parliament's website. Media may be present and are subject to the committee's media rules and the chair's direction at all times. You may be filmed or photographed during the proceedings and images may also appear on the parliament's website or social media pages. I ask everyone present to please turn mobile phones off or to silent mode. If there are any questions taken on notice today, I ask that the committee has the answers provided by 4 pm on Tuesday, 23 August 2022.

### **ANDERSON, Dr Esther, Senior Research and Policy Officer, Queensland Tourism Industry Council**

**CHAIR:** Welcome. Thank you for your submission and your attendance here today. Would you like to make a short opening statement before we go to questions?

**Dr Anderson:** Yes, thank you. I thank the chair and committee members for the invitation for the Queensland Tourism Industry Council, QTIC, to appear. I would also like to tender an apology on behalf of Chief Executive Officer Mr Brett Fraser, who is unwell.

QTIC is the state's peak industry body and leading advocate for the tourism and hospitality sector, representing the interests of our members and the more than 60,000 tourism businesses throughout the state, providing its membership with a voice to government. Since its inception QTIC has actively supported and participated in numerous initiatives and projects relating to the current inquiry including Great Barrier Reef tourism, land tenure, infrastructure arrangements and coexistence with protected areas.

Island resort operators have consistently reported to QTIC that the land tenure environment for tourism businesses is complex, inflexible and costly. A lack of certainty, lengthy approval processes, multiple agency responsibilities and disproportionate charges are powerful deterrents for capital attraction. The initial submission to this inquiry was prepared in close consultation with members. Many of the issues that were raised there are the same as have been brought up in previous years.

One of the key constraints is red tape and regulatory complexities. A prevalent industry concern highlights that multiagency interdepartmental liaisons with overlapping processes create a significant challenge for operators. Consistency in fees, terms and conditions, applications and approval processes would help to ease pressures and offer clear guidance for operators. Other operational

issues also affect the investment environment for current and future leaseholders such as workforce shortages, insurance market failure and disaster preparedness and mitigation, but those are broad issues that affect the general tourism industry as well. A holistic approach to planning and development is required, not only making considerations for businesses and consumers but also working in conjunction with traditional owner groups and local communities. Collaboration can ensure that allowances are made for mixed-use arrangements and multiuse infrastructure but also to support long-term commercial viability, employment and the incorporation of environmental concerns.

The health, continued protection and maintenance of the Great Barrier Reef remains an integral component of the long-term success of the Queensland visitor economy. Environmental best practice should guide all activities in the marine park area and form a basis for solutions and resourcing. QTIC continues to advocate for this via voluntary accreditation programs that incentivise best practice for tourism operators in addition to key industry partnerships. There is a strong return for visitor demand in regions along the reef. This is demonstrated by record domestic overnight visitor expenditure numbers in the last quarter. There is considerable opportunity here to capitalise on this demand via supportive economic and legislative environments for island resorts, attracting greater reinvestment, ensuring sustainable business growth and showcasing industry best practice. Thank you.

**Mr WATTS:** Thank you so much for coming in. In QTIC's submission, one of the key constraints relating to operational status for the economic development of islands is red tape. I am particularly interested in that, as someone who comes out of small business who loves dealing with other people's red tape. Could you give us some examples of things you might recommend to reduce or remove particular pieces of red tape and why? Do you have that granular detail?

**Dr Anderson:** Not at that granular level, but I do note that there are, I believe, 19 regulatory frameworks governing land use in the catchment area. The ability to work through all that apply could make it a bit difficult to access, understand and work through those processes. Perhaps there is a need for guidance as well.

**Mr WATTS:** If we as a parliament were looking to advise and understand how you might reduce that red tape, which department or area in government do you think would be the best to lead that analysis?

**Dr Anderson:** That is a difficult one to pinpoint, because a key need would be that coordinated approach, given that the terms of the inquiry, the marine park itself and businesses operating in the marine park cut across several government departments. It is difficult to give a concrete answer on that one.

**Mr WATTS:** Could you give us an idea of what sort of process we should go through to get those answers? I am sure that everybody on the committee and generally in government would like to make it more palatable for island operators. If we are not sure who and we are not sure how, are there any ideas you could give us around a framework that we might be able to use to work out those answers?

**Dr Anderson:** I may have to take that question on notice, because I am not sure that I am able to confirm something one way or another at the moment.

**Mr WATTS:** Is that possible, Chair?

**CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr WATTS:** I am particularly interested in trying to understand from QTIC's point of view whether there is something we should know about how to try to improve this situation for tourism operators.

**CHAIR:** Your questions are along the lines of red tape, how to eliminate it and if any processes have been identified; would that be fair enough?

**Mr WATTS:** What would be lovely is to know, in QTIC's opinion, who in terms of government agencies would be able to potentially lead that and if there is a process that you would recommend.

**CHAIR:** You will take that question on notice?

**Dr Anderson:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Mr WATTS:** I will put in an apology shortly, because I have to attend shadow cabinet.

**CHAIR:** I understand.

**Mr MARTIN:** I had a question about the island developments that are sitting abandoned or in disrepair. Does QTIC have a view on what should occur with these? I know there have been quite a few in the media—Dunk Island I think, Hinchinbrook and others. Does QTIC have a view on what should happen with these islands and do you have any suggestions on how the issue of abandoned sites could be resolved?

**Dr Anderson:** First of all, I would suggest—I am trying to think of the right word—returning that land to environmental best practice and ensuring that any collateral or leftovers are not left to fallow and to potentially impact the area surrounding the resorts, for starters. In terms of other processes, whether that is already integrated into leasing and pre-planning and applications for what should happen in the instance of business failure or abandonment, I am unsure, but integrating some sort of clause in those development applications and approvals would be a logical step in that regard.

**Mr HEAD:** One of QTIC's recommendations is support for services such as waste management, fire services, roads, infrastructure and other services, particularly for integrated resorts, with private sublease holders in private dwellings—service provision should be equitable across both mainland and island resorts. Can you please elaborate on how all these services could be potentially improved across island resorts?

**Dr Anderson:** We have had reported that services such as waste management, roads in some instances, rubbish collection and other things tend to fall on the resort operators, even in cases where there can be some elements of public infrastructure or a residential component. Previously I believe there have been instances such as closure of public access roads, which does not really serve the tourism industry, outdoor recreation, business environments or residents as well. It is about equitable access to services and equivalent services provided that equate to rates as well.

**Mr HEAD:** Would you have any figures on what costs might be involved in making those services more accessible to island operators?

**Dr Anderson:** No, I do not have that on hand.

**CHAIR:** Would you be able to get back to us with some figures if you take that on notice?

**Dr Anderson:** Yes, I can look into that one.

**CHAIR:** It is in one of your recommendations.

**Mr WALKER:** The QTIC submission states that unique challenges are presented by island resorts that integrate residential sublease dwellings. This has been noted by several submitters to the inquiry. Could the QTIC please elaborate on this issue?

**Dr Anderson:** That is one of the issues we are well aware of, but in this instance it came up slightly less in consultation with industry—not suggesting that it is any less of an issue, but it was not necessarily a key focus that was reported back to us. However, it has been previously. With regard to the difficulties in ensuring that where there is a residential component residents are also well served by the resort itself, I think that quite well ties in with things like services, but subleasing—my apologies, it is not entirely my area in that regard. I can speak much more broadly.

**Mr WALKER:** This might help you: are you able to highlight any current examples of Queensland island resorts that successfully integrate residential sublease dwellings? You may have some examples that already exist. Hamilton Island and islands like that have that tourism component. I think Hayman does as well. There may be some other examples that you could share with us that work really well.

**Dr Anderson:** Apologies. Off the top of my head it is hard to recall. I would definitely affirm those two, and in terms of other island resorts—sorry, I have a very long mental list of island resorts. I am trying to recall which ones have a residential component.

**Mr WALKER:** You can get back to us on that. Chair?

**CHAIR:** This inquiry is going for a period of time so, with your indulgence, if we come up with some other questions as we progress through that time will it be okay to write to your organisation with those questions?

**Dr Anderson:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. We have some questions on notice to start with and, as I said, we may come up with some more. We request answers to the questions on notice by Tuesday, 23 August 2022. There being no further questions, we thank you very much. We really appreciate you coming along today and without your colleague who no doubt had some more information as well. You will

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be provided with a copy of the transcript of the proceedings when it is available, and a copy will be published on the committee's webpage. That conclude this hearing. Thank you to everyone who has participated today. I declare this public hearing closed.

**The committee adjourned at 9.52 am.**