

Inquiry into the economic and regulatory frameworks for Queensland island resorts

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Submission to the QLD Transport and Resources Parliamentary Committee Inquiry

Economic and Regulatory Frameworks for Queensland Island Resorts

Dear Committee,

I am a long term permanent resident of Keswick Island, since building a substantial residence here in 2008. Karen and I moved here then, commuted to Mackay daily to run our business's, and had set our lives up to do so. We still live permanently on Keswick Island, having to give up our businesses on the mainland as a consequence of action by the current Head Lessee.

Regards,

Craig Gilberd

1. Current Regulatory Frameworks.

Although somewhat cumbersome, I personally believe the current framework is usable. What I have found extremely disappointing is the lack of governance and accountability by the authorities to uphold the agreements in place under which we based our decision to invest life savings here. The agreements I refer to are the Head Lease, the Land act and the associated terms of agreement with the Mackay Regional Council and DNRME. The authorities I refer to are the Qld State Government, its various departments and the Mackay regional Council. This lack of governance has reduced our value to 30% of our investment, according to our last bank valuation. This valuation is quite old and prices have deteriorated further since then. I blame the authorities totally for this. Yes, the Head Lessees have not performed as promised, however have not been held accountable. The Head Lease clearly states that breaches of non use, environmental breaches, plus multiple other breaches allows the State Government to forfeit the lease. I do not understand how the current Head Lessee is allowed to continue.

2. Role of Island resorts in attracting new and return visitors to Qld and the Great Barrier Reef.

Tourism to Keswick Island is at an all time low since China Bloom took over the lease. The last 2 Christmas/New Year periods I have not been aware of any tourists here at all. Vastly different to the past.

There were however 79 visitors here during that period that were either Non resident Sub-lessees, or Sublessee's family and friends. I repeat, I observed no tourists. That in itself shows no interest in the Head Lessee to engage in tourism despite what has been presented in the media. It is quite obvious that the Sub-lessees are directly responsible for the majority of visitors here. Tourism is a required use in the Head Lease.

3. Historical operational status and existing constraints that impact economic development opportunities for island resorts.

From my perspective, how the current Head Lessee has behaved, I can only assume they are land banking and attempt to do just enough to tick a box to keep authorities at

bay. It appears that is very easy to do as the authorities seem loathe to take any action of substance.

5. Infrastructure access arrangements and other challenges for lease holders to develop or redevelop islands, residential and public purposes.

A deed of agreement between DNRME and the Head Lessee states that an all tide jetty for free public use was to be installed by 2014, in lieu of the marina being delayed many times. We are yet to see it. Disgraceful, as this is a solid breach, and yet no accountability. How do you expect people to safely get to and from shore without it. Add to this that the airstrip was closed to all planes for approximately 2 years. Again disgraceful. We were told that is an issue between the Head Lessee and Sub-lessees. We don't agree when the first condition on the Head Lease states a required use is for aviation purposes. There is nothing wrong with the runway here, I have personally landed on it 1305 times over a 13 year period. Again, no action by the authorities.

Karen's and my biggest personal grief caused by the current Head Lessee China Bloom was that we were given 12 hours to remove my plane from Keswick Island and cancelled my annual flying agreement that had been in place for 13 years. No reason given, and no consultation about our history. As mentioned we commuted to Mackay to run our respective businesses. This cancellation occurred on the day they took over the Head Lease. This cost Karen her Real Estate Business and although I had just sold my business I was employed for a period post sale as part of the handover. We had to make a decision, give up Keswick Island or give up our businesses. We decided to stay on Keswick. This has impacted on our retirement finances.

I also believe having a plane permanently located on the Island added a safety net for emergencies, and multiple times I have flown people off in an emergency.

In short, fixed wing access, both private and commercial should be maximised as historically this has been the most common form of access.

6. Co- existence with the protected area estate both onshore and within the Great Barrier Marina Park Area.

China Bloom to date have grossly demonstrated that they have no regard for the environment. From beach dune excavation during turtle laying season to no silt control on non permitted development at the waters edge. This has enraged the residents and the local public, leading to public demonstrations and intense media releases. Little to no accountability from authorities resulted.

7. Enable appropriate development that supports strong social, environmental, economic and cultural outcomes.

This type of development plan was in place right from the beginning of the Head Lease in 1996. Lack of holding the Head lease accountable to the development has lead to no development past the initial infrastructure. Plus certain clauses were deleted from the Head Lease to minimise the need to develop. This was done illegally by the Qld Govt as Sub-lessees written approval is required to change the lease. Note the Land Act.

8. Best support sub-tenancies to meet to contemporary requirements for commercial and residential occupancy.

Please be aware that as well as my aviation agreement cancelled, all private business on the island was ordered to cease. Most were given 7 days to wind up their businesses. This occurred when China Bloom took over the lease.

I would like to express my disappointment in the devastation of Brampton Island. Once a famous iconic tourist Island for decades, it has been allowed to fall into total disarray since the lease changed hands in 2009. In my opinion it is one of the most extreme cases of the Qld Govt 's mismanagement of our beautiful islands.

Submitted by :
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