



Speech by

Mr W. BAUMANN

MEMBER FOR ALBERT

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NATURELINK GOLD COAST CABLEWAY

Mr BAUMANN (Albert—NPA) (11.09 p.m.): Recently, the Cairns Skyrail was rightly judged the State's best tourist attraction. That title has been won quite regularly by Gold Coast attractions, as no doubt it will again. Tonight, I would like to congratulate Cairns on its success on this occasion. Skyrail has proved a major addition to the attractiveness of Cairns as a tourist destination. It has given many people who would never otherwise get the chance the opportunity to see the natural wonders of our great northern rainforests. It provides that opportunity in an environmentally friendly way with virtually nil disruption to the forest floor or the forest canopy, allowing flora and fauna to remain undisturbed.

We now have the opportunity to replicate that great success story on the Gold Coast, and I certainly hope that we seize that opportunity. I hope that the Gold Coast's equivalent of Skyrail will, in a couple of years, be in a position to be judged the State's best tourist attraction. The proposed naturelink Gold Coast cableway would traverse the forest canopy between the Gold Coast hinterland townships of Mudgeeraba and Springbrook. Therefore, it would serve the invaluable purpose of spreading the benefits of the Gold Coast tourist attractions to the people of the hinterland in the same environmentally friendly way as Skyrail, giving considerable substance to the "green behind the gold" promotional slogan that has been used to great effect on many occasions by the south-east corner of Queensland to promote its marvellous hinterland and golden beaches.

It would mean, as it has with Skyrail, that youngsters, the elderly, the disabled and those with simply not very much time on their hands would have the opportunity to experience the wonders of traversing the high canopy of native forests without disrupting the environment. Added to that attraction, of course, is the opportunity for people to walk through the rainforest canopy via the stations installed at the various pylons along the cableway.

Like the Skyrail, marketing research suggests that naturelink would be a tremendous hit. Having had many years' experience dealing with the inbound and local tourist market on the Gold Coast, I have no doubt that that would be the exact truth. Research has shown that it is anticipated that visitor numbers to the area will be up to 500,000 annually, taking advantage of that new development. That level of support would have major spin-off benefits for many small businesses on the Gold Coast. The flow-on effect will equate to many millions of dollars injected into the local economy.

Naturelink will add to the web of attractions in the region and help maintain the Gold Coast as Australia's premier tourist destination. It will help keep people in the region for longer. Of course, in relation to inbound tourists, that is one very effective way of extracting more export dollars that we can retain in this country. It will promote more visits to the region by the people of Brisbane and from much further afield. It would be a tourist attraction that would be effective, in a local sense, for people who live within a 300-kilometre radius of the Gold Coast. It would be a very significant addition to our tourism infrastructure and a magnificent attraction of which all Queenslanders could indeed feel proud.

However, as always, there are knockers. They are the same type of people as those who oppose Skyrail in Cairns, the Hinchinbrook development, Sanctuary Cove and anything else that brings employment and prosperity. They will no doubt do their best to stop this project, and that must not be allowed to happen. There are 500 construction jobs in this project and there are almost 700 permanent jobs, and they are desperately needed jobs. I join with the Premier—and applaud the Premier—in his focus on jobs, jobs, jobs. We have to create the opportunities for our young people. This will be one

project that will most certainly promote those opportunities. I personally wish the project well and offer this encouragement to its proponents: the great majority of the people on the Gold Coast support this project. The knockers are definitely in the minority. The proponents of this project will get community support, and I look forward to riding on naturelink.
