



Speech by

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CRUISE AND NAVAL SHIP VISITS; CAIRNS CBD REVITALISATION

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (11.39 a.m.): This morning I wish to inform the House about the importance of visiting ships to Cairns. Last week, two large ships visited the port of Cairns. Their visits demonstrate yet again not only the importance to the port of these visits but also the tremendous benefits—for example, jobs and business enhancement—that flow to the city and the general economy of the Cairns urban area. One of the ships was a cruise liner, the Norwegian Star, and the other was a naval vessel, the USS Ogden. The Norwegian Star, which is part of the Norwegian Capricorn Line, joins a long list of cruise ships to have visited Cairns. It is estimated that in 1999 some 25,000 passengers have been brought to the city via cruise ships. I commend the Cairns Port Authority for its efforts to increase the cruise line business to the City of Cairns, which definitely enhances the city's skyline. When one travels the parallel streets that look to the port, one can see some of the most glamorous cruise liners in the world looming above the buildings.

For some time we have recognised the tremendous benefits that flow to the city through passengers undertaking trips and tours, for example, to the reef and the rainforest. They travel on the Skyrail, visit the Tjapukai cultural theatre and the shops and restaurants around the city. We should not forget that supplies are bought from businesses in Cairns to provide for the ship. That makes even a one-day visit, as in the case of the Norwegian Star's visit last week, considerably beneficial to the Cairns economy.

Last week's visit by the USS Ogden also made us aware of the tremendous benefits to Cairns through visiting naval ships. The four-day visit by this very large amphibious transport ship had a great impact on the local economy. Rest and recreation was the reason for the visit. For the past three months, the ship has been on continuous service in the Arabian Gulf. The sailors welcomed being on dry land and experiencing the famous and comfortable City of Cairns. The ship carries some 500 marines and another 250 naval personnel and crew. Those 750 sailors were let loose in our tropical wonderland and that definitely contributed to the energy and business of Cairns. The Lieutenant Commander of the USS Ogden, John Deehr, was quoted in the Cairns Post as stating—

"There's an amazing number of sailors who like to do tours."

They are due to arrive home four days before Christmas. Therefore, shopping was high on their agenda. I am also pleased to say that some sailors participated in a local basketball match. A team from the ship played the Cairns Marlins and, very kindly, donated the proceeds to the mayor and the chairman's Christmas appeal and the Marlin's development program for promising young players.

The financial benefits to the city are hard to estimate precisely. However, if we consider that those 750 crew and marines spent money in the city for four days—for example, on eating and drinking out, on entertainment and on Christmas gifts for family members—it is likely that some \$300,000 was spent. If we add the amounts to provide for this huge ship for fuel, food and for other goods and services, it is estimated that the total spent in Cairns over those four days exceeded half a million dollars. Therefore, this is an important contribution. Everyone in Cairns who is concerned about the city's economic development should recognise the benefits to the city area.

As someone concerned with the revitalisation of the Cairns CBD, I recognise the important boost these visits give to the CBD area, particularly in terms of activity on week nights and on weekends. Generally, the far north was pleased to receive the news that trading hours have been extended on Sunday mornings in exchange for a cutback in Sunday evening trading hours. This will

mean that on Sundays the Cairns CBD area will be open and welcoming to tourists and naval personnel who wish to shop or engage in other retail and related activities.

These visiting cruise liners and naval vessels also benefit the port-based industries in Cairns. One of the important elements of our economy is marine related industries. Certainly, there were benefits for providers. In particular, I recognise the efforts of the Cairns Port Authority to accommodate these vessels, which do result in disruption to other port operators. Those familiar with the port of Cairns will know that this very small port has to accommodate international, national and regional shipping trade, the largest fishing fleet in Australia, diverse tourism operators and now cruise ships and naval ships. That requires considerable organisation on the part of the harbour master and those in the port authority. There is limited direct benefit for the Cairns Port Authority. I recognise the effort made and the costs sustained by the port authority in order to allow benefits to flow to the broader Cairns CBD. These visits mean business, jobs and entertainment and enhanced security in the city area. The more people there are in the CBD during daylight and evening hours, the safer our city area will be. These visits add to the character of Cairns and to the tremendous views at our ports.

Beyond the economic benefits, there are additional benefits for Cairns. For example, these are further ways in which the people of Cairns have the opportunity to communicate and stay in touch with people from around the world. I call on the authorities in Cairns to establish a program calling on navies from around the world to use the port of Cairns for rest and recreation. I spent some years growing up in Sydney. During the Vietnam years, I was well aware of the tremendous benefits to Sydney of the rest and recreation visits by those serving in Vietnam. I am mindful also of our soldiers serving in East Timor. I hope that our Navy and naval vessels from other countries are encouraged to consider a visit to Cairns for rest and recreation and provisioning as a reward for those serving in hot spots around the world.

I wish also to mention the tremendous benefits through the activity of the CBD revitalisation program in Cairns. The Cairns local committee has brought to the Minister a program of action, including major projects, such as the continuing upgrading of Shield Street and City Place, and a rearrangement and extension of Spence Street through to the waterfront, as part of the City Port Project, to create Reef Fleet Plaza on our precious waterfront. The importance of shade trees, the extension into the streets of the heritage and vibrant history of Cairns as well as ways in which we can encourage further entertainment and recreation activities for locals and visitors are important parts of that continuing revitalisation program.
