



Speech by

**Mrs D. PRATT**

**MEMBER FOR BARAMBAH**

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Hansard 24 August 1999

### **TOURISM LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mrs PRATT** (Barambah—IND) (3.27 p.m.): I have to disagree with everybody in this House on one thing. Tourism is headed west. The South Burnett is one of the undiscovered jewels of this State.

In rising to support this Tourism Legislation Amendment Bill 1999, I have to say that I was not quite prepared to speak today, as the Bill was quite a way down the Notice Paper. Nevertheless, it is now being debated. For most rural communities, tourism has now become a central part of their lifestyle and their income. Anything that makes easier the promotion of events or areas in the hope of attracting the tourism dollar has to be commended.

The removal of the need to conduct an annual regulatory impact study for Indy, as outlined in the Bill, will reduce costs. The event is a major drawcard for the Gold Coast area and those funds can be better used to promote it.

Tourism is fast becoming the major employer of part-time and casual labour and the skills and experience obtained from those part-time and casual positions may very well lead to future employment for many of today's unemployed. Tourism is becoming the only industry for many towns, whether in coastal, regional or rural areas. Rural areas are doing it extremely tough, and Barambah is no exception. With close to the worst unemployment figures in Queensland and a high poverty rating, the Burnett has begun to rely heavily on tourism. As I said, Barambah has begun to fight for its fair share of the tourist dollar.

The South Burnett/Wide Bay area has been for some time promoting itself as an alternative tourist destination because people are sick to death of the beach, the waves and whatnot. They can get them just about everywhere. However, the pure gold of the west of Queensland is very rare.

In the north of the electorate there is the great Kilkivan horse ride, which attracted almost 1,000 horsemen, women and children this year. The Premier was there, and I believe he enjoyed it very much. Hopefully he will return while ever he is Premier. To the south-east are the Linville picnic races, which this year are to be held on 4 September. That event has grown every year. Fishing is a tourist drawcard in my electorate and the Aboriginal community at Cherbourg has also contributed to the area's tourism industry. The reason why my area has turned to tourism is that the traditional rural-based industries are not as viable as they once were. To combat the uncertainties of these rural industries, the area has diversified and has established many new industries.

If the Minister cares to visit the South Burnett he will see expanded acreages which have been planted with the various varieties of grapes to satisfy what we hope will be a prosperous wine industry. I am pleased to see that the boutique wineries and the wines that they produce are receiving plenty of attention at the annual wine industry awards. We also have an olive industry. The olives produced in the area have exceptional flavours. I was never partial to olives, but now I am addicted. We are also investigating the possibility of establishing a cheese industry. The interest in this over the last few weeks has been quite astounding. I am sure that tourists would love to go through our country area sipping the wines and sampling the product of our great olive industry and perfect cheeses.

It is because of the efforts of all of the people who are opening up new industries that I have one major concern about this Bill, that is, the abolition of the Regional Tourism Ministerial Advisory Council. As the Minister would be aware, there is a perception in rural and regional Queensland that

services are being cut back in many areas. With the abolition of this advisory council, the thought that tourism will favour the coastal strip over the west causes great concern. I would like some assurance from the Minister that this will not be the case and that all of those who voluntarily contribute vast amounts of time and effort to promote their areas will still receive assistance where and when necessary by being able to make the Minister aware of their needs and wants.

The name change does aggravate me, as it will involve great cost. However, I can see that the new name could aid in any promotions and therefore warrants support. I believe that, no matter what the name, people will work just as hard.

Getting from place to place in Queensland and Australia means covering vast distances. Perhaps a little education as to the distances one must traverse would not hurt, specifically for those in Europe. Recently a Japanese couple arrived at Kingaroy airport. They asked my husband if he could possibly fly them to Ayers Rock for an afternoon picnic and return before dark. We are all aware just how far Ayers Rock is from Kingaroy, but they believed that at Kingaroy they were in the outback. At first I was quite amazed but, after hearing the Premier and other members of the Government say this morning that Ipswich is in rural Queensland, I no longer wonder at the Japanese not realising how far away Ayers Rock is.

The South Burnett and Wide Bay/Burnett are beautiful areas, and I invite all members of this House to come and visit, because their tourist dollars are valuable to us. As this Bill aims to promote tourism, I commend it to the House.

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