



Speech by

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TOURISM LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr ELLIOTT (Cunningham—NPA) (12.53 p.m.): As a former Minister with responsibility for tourism, national parks, sport and the arts, I have pleasure in taking part in the debate on the Tourism Legislation Amendment Bill. I have taken a considerable interest in the ongoing progress of tourism in Queensland. I am pleased to say that, regardless of which side of politics has been in power, through the Tourist and Travel Corporation, now Tourism Queensland, we see ongoing progress which I think augurs well for the future not only of the State but also our younger people who wish to work in the industry.

I am certainly delighted to see what has taken place. I believe that Tourism Queensland will continue to be professional and ensure that we get more than our fair share of tourists from overseas and, of course, from the local market, which is still greatly made up of families, couples and singles from interstate. That has always been a very big part of the market and I believe it always will be.

I place on record my appreciation of and admiration for the role of Sir Frank Moore in cranking up the tourist industry. He was just really getting going when I became the relevant Minister. I worked with him very closely. I found him to be tremendously active and very proactive. He certainly got out of bed earlier than I did—and I was a bushie, used to getting up fairly early. Sir Frank would have as much work done by midday as the average person would do all day. He is just one of those sorts of blokes. He seems to be able to survive on an unbelievably few number of hours' sleep. He would be up at 3.30 or 4 o'clock in the morning working on speeches or proposals and so on. That is just the way he operated.

Sir Frank probably saw me as a bit of a greenie, because I advocated a change in resort development in Queensland. I went around preaching that the resorts of the future would be below treetop level and that people would hopefully be able to approach the coastal resorts from the ocean side and not really be able to tell where the natural environment ended and the resort started. More than perhaps any other country in the world, we have the ability to sell ecotourism.

No matter where in the world we look, one city is much the same as another. While individual cities have wonderful attributes, such as the Opera House in Sydney, to a lot of overseas people one city is much the same as the next. People really want to see the natural phenomena of the Barrier Reef, our national parks and our heritage. We have a tremendous number of attributes that can be sold to international visitors. As the Olympic Games draw near, that opportunity will be magnified.

I have always had great admiration for the current Minister. I think he understands tourism. He has always looked to me to be prepared to get out there and push tourism. We have to look at tourism outside of politics. We should not be fighting about it because, quite frankly, we all are striving for the one thing—that is, more tourism and more job opportunities, particularly for young people where they live. Tourism is the one industry in which jobs can be created just about anywhere. I have seen instances of that.

In the early to mid-1980s we took about 35 tourism journalists around the State in a cavalcade of cars, on a tourism safari. We took them to all sorts of strange places. We gave them a drover's breakfast on the Nive River near Augathella and they were amazed. The stock camp cook prepared the most magnificent breakfast.

Mr Pearce: A fair dinkum breakfast.

Mr ELLIOTT: Yes. And they had rum out of tin pannikins. Some had rum and milk; some had just rum. Those journalists thought the safari was marvellous. Interestingly, afterwards some people set up a similar operation and they were able to create a little industry. A lot of other things have been

done over the years by the Tourist and Travel Corporation, which has given projects a bit of impetus, assistance, support or money. There are so many things that Tourism Queensland can achieve by providing just a little help. Putting a carrot on the end of a stick and encouraging people to chase the carrot will achieve more than belting them with a big stick and telling them how to do it.

Quite frankly, the initiative and incentive is out there in the bush and along the coast. There was never any doubt that those things existed along the coast, because right from the word go the Gold Coast has been the biggest mover and shaker that I have ever come across in respect of the tourist industry. But there are people in other parts of Queensland who are just as capable of achieving things. For example, the Heritage Trails are a wonderful initiative. Both State and Federal Governments have become involved and are prepared to push the project together. That is how we should approach things.

It is tremendously important to preserve our heritage for future generations. All of us are interested in it. I am personally involved in it to some degree. I can see just how important it is.

Sitting suspended from 1 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

Mr ELLIOTT: I wish to make a few more comments in relation to what I was speaking about before lunch, particularly the Heritage Trails, which are a great concept. I would like to see more work done in the inland areas, particularly on the Plenty Highway. Over a long period, the Tourist and Travel Corporation tried to develop that road as an access road to Ayers Rock, the Olgas and into the Northern Territory generally. That area still has an aura of romanticism about it for many travellers, particularly those in four-wheel drives. The road is not very rough. I have driven over parts of it and have flown over all of it. It is not like the Birdsville Track. I believe that it has the potential to enhance inland tourism in that area, linking Queensland with the other States and creating more of an interrelationship between those areas. I remember when the reef to the rock flights began, including Western Australia. They went well for a while, but I do not know how they are going these days. There is a lot of interest being shown in Western Australia. It is a very large State which many people find tremendously interesting.

The problem with the Heritage Trails in the early days was that there were not enough tourist attractions close enough together to make it viable for people to conduct tours in the regions. Too much time was wasted travelling between attractions and, as such, people became bored with that long-distance travel. These days, starting with Toowoomba itself, we have the Jondaryan Woolshed, the Chinchilla steam museum, the Miles Historical Village and the Romavilla Winery at Roma. Then out past Blackall and Barcaldine there is the Wool Scour and the Stockman's Hall of Fame in Longreach, which is a tourist magnet.

The number of people who visit the Stockman's Hall of Fame is nothing short of amazing. Sir Frank Moore was one of the real movers and shakers in that exercise, together with Randall Chandler, local members and other people who got behind it. I know that Vaughan Johnson has always been a tremendous supporter of the Stockman's Hall of Fame, as have most of the other members who represent western electorates. His predecessor also regarded it as tremendously important. Even though the money spent on that facility seemed like a lot at the time, it really has opened up that area and brought a lot of money to western Queensland in particular.

Frank Moore has put a lot of effort into tourism. He has been an icon in the tourism scene in Queensland. He is also well recognised throughout the nation and internationally. What is more, he has put his own money where his mouth is, together with some other people. I have stayed at some of their hotels, particularly the Burke and Wills in Toowoomba. They are to be congratulated on that. Many people are prepared to put their money into the commercial centres of big cities and places such as the Gold Coast. But once we get away from the main centres of population, it takes a lot more effort and courage for people to put their money where their mouths are. So I congratulate the people who are involved in that group. I believe that it really will have a big impact on regional tourism in the longer term.

Many centres do not have the standard of accommodation that is needed to attract people. It is interesting that Toowoomba looks like getting a major hotel development. All of the local members in that area, including Mike Horan, Graham Healy, Russell Cooper and myself—particularly Mike and Graham—have done a lot of work on that project. I am pleased that this Government has not played politics; it has picked up that project and is continuing it. Toowoomba does need a high-class, up-market hotel, and I believe that once a hotel of that nature is built there, more conventions will be held in Toowoomba. Of course, that will have a flow-on effect to all those other places I have mentioned.

In the Warwick electorate there is an absolute plethora of wineries and associated tourist operations. Many of them have been there for a long time, and a lot more are just starting up. The wine industry is taking off in the Toowoomba district. An interesting winery at Old Gowrie homestead is well and truly under way, with grapes having been planted on the side of Gowrie Mountain. Old Gowrie will become another tourist attraction in that area.

I support the Bill. I am interested in what the Government is doing. I had concerns when I first heard that the Government was going to abolish the advisory council. But when one considers the statistics on how often the council has met and what it has done, I suppose that we could obtain that sort of advice in other ways. However, we must ensure that the board comprises a good cross-

representation of people from throughout the State, because tourism is not just about the coast and the south-eastern corner of the State; it is a wide and diverse operation. So it is important to maintain a representation on the board from throughout the State and that those people are revolved as much as possible—within reason—to keep fresh and new ideas coming through. That is what it is all about. As I said, I support the Bill.
