



Speech by

**BRUCE DAVIDSON**

**MEMBER FOR NOOSA**

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Hansard 24 August 2000

**APPROPRIATION BILL, ESTIMATES COMMITTEE G**

**Mr DAVIDSON** (Noosa—LP) (3.38 p.m.): It gives me no joy to stand in this Chamber today and bring to the attention of the Queensland tourism industry the Labor Government's total lack of commitment to it. After the State Budget was announced this year, the Minister for Tourism issued a press release claiming that Graham Healy was a dud accountant. She went on to say that base funding to Tourism Queensland had increased to a record \$38.914m. When I go back through the annual reports of Tourism Queensland, I see that as far back as 1996 the base budget was \$29.485m. In 1997 it was \$33.899m. The annual report for 1998 showed that it was \$44.807m and the annual report for 1998-99 showed that it was \$47.116m.

Quite clearly, the Minister for Tourism has failed to advise the tourism industry, through her press releases, that the budget for Tourism Queensland has been reduced from \$47m to \$38.914m. That indicates a total lack of commitment by this Minister. I am sick and tired of people in the tourism industry coming to me and saying that they have been unsuccessful in achieving funding for their industry through the Minister and the Budget process because Treasury advises the Minister, who is advising the industry, that Treasury believes that tourism is a mature industry and that it does not need funding to promote and market Queensland. What an absolute joke!

I remember when I took over the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation, as it was known in those days, that we had to totally restructure that corporation. We had to appoint a new CEO. We had to appoint new directors of marketing. We had to appoint new senior staff. It was a disgraceful corporation that had been neglected for many, many years by Minister Gibbs and Minister Tom Burns. I think that the whole industry in Queensland knows the contribution that the coalition Government made to tourism in this State. I provided the first model for the tourism industry, ensuring that everyone in this State knew that the industry was worth \$8 billion a year and employed 130,000 people. No modelling had ever been done until the coalition did that.

It absolutely amazes me that the Minister then goes on to announce the allocation of funding for the Convention and Marketing Bureau, which was committed by the coalition Government in 1998—\$8m over four years. There should be no credit at all given to the current Minister for that. Everywhere I go I receive complaints, particularly from senior people in the industry. I refer to comments by Daniel Gschwind of the Tourism Council of Australia, who stated—

"It is disappointing that the government's commitment to tourism is not reflected in increased funding for its promotion. The government has not missed an opportunity to point out the importance of tourism in job creation, economic growth and regional development for Queensland—we would have liked to see that recognition translate into more investment for the promotion of our state."

As a result of the lack of funding for Tourism Queensland, there has been the abolition of the Convention and Incentives Program. The Gold Coast destination campaigns have not been successful, but there is no funding to do anything about that and relaunch new campaigns. The Australian Tourism Commission has no partnership funding for Tourism Queensland to undertake strategy studies of international markets. There are no new initiatives for Tourism Queensland. I have seen the Minister relaunch the Tourism Works for Queensland campaign. That was an initiative of mine in about 1997. The drive market strategy was also released by me in 1997.

The licensing of inbound tour operators proposal was complete when I left Government in 1998, yet Labor has done nothing about it in the two years that it has been in Government. That is a major issue for the Gold Coast, Cairns and other international tourist designations in this State. That proposal has sat in the bureaucracy for the past two years and has not progressed. I have read the statements that the Minister has made in the paper about it. Why does she not get that proposal, take it to Cabinet, have it approved and have it implemented? It is all there ready to go.

Over the past two months, a number of meetings by leading industry figures have been held, because the tourism industry in this State is in crisis. This has been the toughest year that the industry has seen in Queensland for a decade. All the tourist destinations— Cairns, the Sunshine Coast, Brisbane and the Gold Coast—are in crisis. There are a number of issues to explain that downturn in the tourism sector—bad weather, the GST, the Olympic Games. However, what is the Government doing about it? Instead of offering more money through the Budget process to market Queensland both domestically and internationally, it has cut the base budget for Tourism by \$4m and the last expenditure in 1998 by the coalition Government by \$9m.

Why does the Minister not show some guts and some commitment to the industry and get into Treasury and fight for funding for this industry? The Minister and the Premier go around making all the rhetoric about how great tourism is and how important it is to the State's economy. They should show their support for the industry by allocating the money that is necessary to market this State in the international domestic marketplace to ensure the continued growth of jobs, which are so important to all Queenslanders.

Time expired.

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