



Speech by

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APPROPRIATION BILLS—ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (4.31 p.m.): In speaking to this estimates committee report, I want to touch on some of the issues of tourism. We all note that tourism is a growth area in Queensland and has tremendous potential for growth in jobs and for doing a lot about the unemployment statistics. However, it is very disappointing that this government is actually spending less on tourism than it was three years ago. It is spending less on events tourism than it was a number of years ago. It is spending less in marketing. When there is so much potential in this industry to further cut the unemployment figures, you would think that this government would put the funds into really growing tourism. I acknowledge the Growing Tourism strategy which currently is just a glossy brochure, the details of which have not been released publicly. We will certainly be looking forward to seeing the detail of that particular policy.

I note that the minister says it will be funded from existing budgets. But, as I have stated, we have seen something like a \$5 million fall-off in funding to tourism in the last three years. During the estimates process the minister said that another \$2 million should have been accounted for in the budget papers but it was not because they were a bit late getting the details to the printers, and that was for the Goodwill Games. I would accept the minister's explanation in this regard except for the fact that the budget papers did mention the Goodwill Games funding but that the \$2 million funding did not appear in the bottom line of the budget papers. So regardless of that discrepancy in the budget papers, there has been a significant fall-off in funding in events tourism also.

Since the estimates process it has come to light that outback tourism offices are being relocated. Here we are with the Year of the Outback next year and outback tourism offices are being relocated from the outback to Brisbane! It seems crazy to think that that job should be done and that those policies and directions should be formulated in Brisbane. The people of the outback are asking why their offices are being taken away. I think they have a right to be angry. They have a right to ask how it could really be in the best interests of promoting outback tourism to no longer have those officers there at the coalface with those who are delivering the services and trying to promote the wonderful tourist attractions in our outback. I would like to bring this to the attention of the House.

We note that the inbound tourism operators will welcome the moves that the minister has mentioned in regard to the industry code of conduct. Obviously, this is something that the industry is very keen to see happen quickly. One aspect that I feel needs attention in the liquor licensing area, which is also part of this portfolio, is the fact that the minister did not know that the department had failed to meet its targets in terms of putting liquor licensing officers into indigenous communities. Considering that there is great concern about problems in indigenous communities—and I acknowledge there are problems in white communities as well—this delay as outlined in the budget papers is extremely disappointing. I think this shows that there needs to be better coordination and direction in achieving these objectives and trying to address these problems.

The draft Queensland cruise shipping plan was mentioned in budget papers several years ago and it is mentioned once again in these budget papers. The minister said that the draft will be available to the industry fairly soon. We acknowledge that there is tremendous potential once again not only in the south-east corner but also throughout regional Queensland to really develop this industry. It has taken years for us to see even the draft of the cruise shipping plan. There is so much potential not only

for the bigger craft but also for some of the super-yachts—the maxi-yachts—to really take that industry into the regions and to value add to our tourism industries in these areas.

In short, what we see in relation to the tourism industry is a lot of lip-service with the Premier standing up here in parliament this morning talking about events and then spending less on them. At the end of the day, if the government wants to maximise tourism and maximise the jobs, the Premier cannot get up in this place and say that he supports tourism and then not supply the level of funding that was supplied several years ago. That just does not make sense. It does not maximise the jobs that this great state could really see come about in the tourism industry. As I have gone around talking to people, I have found that it seems the government's actions have not instilled a lot of confidence in the tourism industry that there is recognition that it really is an engine-room industry. The government has to recognise that by putting its money where its mouth is and really funding the programs not only in marketing but also in infrastructure over and above existing programs.
