



Speech by

Mrs J. SHELDON

MEMBER FOR CALOUNDRA

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TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—Lib) (12.11 p.m.): I wish to draw the attention of this House to the perilous predicament that Queensland's tourism industry finds itself in. The consequences of the 11 September attacks, preceded by a slowing in the Asian economy and coupled with the collapse of Ansett, have plunged our tourist industry into a state of uncertainty and financial loss. It is normal under extraordinary circumstances for governments at all levels and of all political persuasions to provide assistance to the tourist industry in the form of rescue packages. But it is not normal for Queensland—a state where tourism revenue is the mainstay of so many of our local economies—to offer the lowest levels of assistance of anywhere in Australia. On 1 October the Beattie government, to much fanfare, announced that it would introduce a \$3.3 million tourism rescue package aimed at redirecting moneys into new marketing campaigns. The government was also forced to admit that of this \$3.3 million package just \$1 million was new funding.

This assistance package is the lowest of any state and pales into insignificance when compared with the rescue packages offered by our main tourist competitors, Victoria and New South Wales. By comparison to the \$1 million in new funding offered by the Beattie Labor government in Queensland, the Carr Labor government in New South Wales has announced a \$15 million tourist rescue package over two years. Of this funding, \$4 million is new money and will be provided each year—that is, \$4 million in new funding compared to Queensland's paltry \$1 million in new funding. In addition, on 18 September the Bracks Labor government in Victoria announced that its tourism rescue package would contain a marketing boost of \$10 million in new funding—that is, ten times the new money being offered by the Beattie government in Queensland. Only two weeks ago, even the Western Australian government announced that its tourism rescue package contained \$5 million in new funding that would be directed into an extensive marketing campaign.

The Beattie Labor government's failure to properly fund our tourist industry is akin to squandering away the massive tourism edge that our state enjoys over places such as Victoria and New South Wales. Queensland's peak marketing authority, Tourism Queensland, will this year operate with an annual budget of \$43.4 million. This compares woefully against the \$53.2 million the Bracks Labor government has provided Tourism Victoria and the \$55.1 million the Carr Labor government has provided to Tourism New South Wales. With the Beattie government currently involved in its mid-year budget review, I call on the Premier and his Tourism Minister, who I note comes from the Gold Coast, to urgently reassess the inadequate level of assistance on offer to the Queensland tourist industry. Queensland simply must be the nation's leader when it comes to promoting our tourist destinations. We cannot achieve this status while our two main competitors are outspending us by more than \$10 million each.

The Beattie Labor government's failure to act is simply compounding the problems being experienced by tourism operators across the length and breadth of our state. It is time to stop the rhetoric. It is time to realistically look at how we have positioned ourselves against our main competitors. It is also time to address this massive funding shortfall—a massive shortfall at a time of massive uncertainty for our valuable tourism industry. The inadequacy of this funding comes at a time when the Beattie government has already exposed itself as showing unprecedented disregard for our tourist industry. Earlier this week in response to a question on notice, the Minister for Tourism admitted that her department had not been involved at all—not even consulted—when the Premier decided to dump the state's popular tourist slogan 'The Sunshine State' and replace it with the 'Smart State' logo. It

amazes me, as it amazes tourist operators across Queensland, that the tourist industry, its department or its minister were not even consulted before a decision was made to drop a most successful tourist slogan.

Tourism is also a major earner of dollars and a major provider of jobs in my electorate, especially the Sunshine Coast. I ask the minister and the Premier to give more money to the Sunshine Coast tourism industry to help with promotion, because people can travel by car to the Sunshine Coast. They do not need to get a plane, and many people are now electing not to go by plane. This can increase our dollars and increase our jobs, but we need more money.
