



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY

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WHITSUNDAY TOURISM AWARDS

Ms JARRATT (Whitsunday—ALP) (7.27 p.m.): The Whitsunday Tourism Awards were held last Saturday, 19 October. The night saw the gathering of local tourism operators, community leaders and Whitsunday residents in a Proserpine transformed to Las Vegas for the night to celebrate our vibrant tourism industry and witness the presentation of awards to outstanding operators and individuals in 23 categories.

We in the Whitsundays are blessed with many fantastic tourism venues and operators. I certainly did not envy the judges in their task of selecting winners from the field of high quality nominees. However, I was absolutely delighted that the award for significant festivals and events went to an event funded by the state government and coordinated by our local Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service staff. This was the celebration of the Whitsundays community day on Whitehaven Beach. This event was held as part of the centenary of federation celebrations last year and involved the transportation of over 2,000 locals to Whitehaven Beach on Whitsunday Island. While the event was coordinated by QPWS staff, it was in every way a true community event with the Whitsunday Shire Council and a plethora of local businesses and community groups pitching in to ensure the success of the day.

Some of the groups who were so generous in their support in celebrating the Whitsunday event were winners themselves at the awards night. Fantasea Cruises won three awards, including the category of significant tourist attraction and unique accommodation. Both of these awards are associated with the Fantasea Reef World pontoon which is moored on the Great Barrier Reef and provides a wonderful reef experience for visitors. Hamilton Island Limited was also a big winner at the awards, picking up four awards.

The 2001 Hahn Premium Race Week hosted by Hamilton Island won the major festivals and events category while recognition was also given in the categories of meeting and business tourism, tourism product marketing and luxury accommodation. Obviously Hamilton Island Ltd is a very professional outfit that offers a most desirable product. This year the award for outstanding contribution by an individual was presented to Whitsunday Shire Council Deputy Mayor Tolma Camm for her vision and dedication to the creation of the Queensland Marine Academy based in the Whitsundays. Tolma has enormous energy and determination and certainly deserves the accolades she has received.

On a bittersweet note, this year the major tour and transport operators award went to Heli-Aust Tourism, a company that provides air transport in and around the Whitsunday area. Sadly, the recent air tragedy in the Whitsundays had connections to this group. I know that we all wish managing director Alan Sweeney and his staff well for the future. On that note, I pay my respects to the family and friends of the victims of the terrible Piper Cherokee crash that took the lives of six people on 26 September. The 2002 Whitsunday Tourism Awards were a great success and I place on record my congratulations to all nominees and winners, many of whom I have not had time to mention individually tonight. The tourism industry in the Whitsundays is vibrant and exciting and the level of competition for awards is extremely high, making these awards very prestigious. I am now looking forward to the Queensland Tourism Awards on 29 November where I am sure the Whitsundays will be a shining light.