



Speech by

JAN JARRATT

MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY

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QUEENSLAND TOURISM AWARDS

Ms JARRATT (Whitsunday—ALP) (12.05 p.m.): I have spoken many times previously about the importance of tourism to the electorate of Whitsunday. 2002 has been a particularly difficult year for those in the industry. They have had to dig deep and act laterally in order to overcome an industry downturn.

In an increasingly competitive marketplace, natural beauty alone cannot be relied upon to attract tourists to an area such as the Whitsundays. Quite frankly, it has been the vision and sheer hard work of the dedicated folk in Tourism Whitsunday, along with the tenacity and persistence of individual operators, that underlies the region's ability to survive and indeed flourish.

Mr Shine: And your efforts.

Ms JARRATT: I thank the member. This effort was duly rewarded on Friday evening at the Queensland Tourism Awards, where six out of a possible 29 awards available statewide were returned to the Whitsundays. For me personally, the most significant of these was the award for destination promotion, for which entrants were required to demonstrate the ability to foster greater consumer awareness of a region as a tourist destination. And the winner was Tourism Whitsunday. This award gives recognition to the enormous amount of work that has been put into promoting the Whitsundays both in Australia and internationally. The TW team, under the able guidance of CEO John Dean, are a well-oiled machine who market their product aggressively and successfully. It is especially poignant that TW should win this award at the very time that John Dean has announced his retirement from the organisation.

Mr Mulherin: He is a great guy. He has done so much for the area.

Ms JARRATT: He has done an enormous amount for the region. I want to place on record my open and complete admiration for the fine job that John has done at the head of the organisation and thank him on behalf of the people of Whitsunday for his uncompromising dedication to our region.

Another great highlight of the night was a presentation of the president's award for excellence, which this year went to Daydream Island's Vaughn Bullivant. I know that the award caught Vaughn by surprise and rendered him almost speechless—a rare event—but he is certainly a worthy recipient of this prestigious award. Daydream Island opened after extensive renovations just one week after the horror of September 11 and the collapse of Ansett. So if ever an operator faced an uphill battle to secure a niche in the market, it was Vaughn and Daydream Island. If ever there was a person prepared to face the challenges head on, it was Vaughn and his Daydream Island staff. They have done just that by providing a destination of unique quality and facility. This award proves that fortune favours the brave. I congratulate Vaughn on his courage and commitment to the region and his island.

The category of luxury accommodation was taken out by the fabulous Hayman Island. Lloyd Donaldson and his team can be justifiably proud of this award as it is testament to the uncompromising elegance and superiority of service that is the Hayman experience. Last year Hayman Island went on to win the national tourism award for luxury accommodation, and I feel quite sure that our state's representation is in excellent hands again this year. Congratulations to everyone from Hayman Island for their magnificent and consistent contribution to the tourism industry.

While the Whitsundays certainly has a great reputation for its luxury accommodation, we are also very proud of our budget and family style resorts. This year the winner of the standard accommodation award went to Club Crocodile Long Island. Club Croc provides an excellent standard of rooms and facilities for those on more limited budgets who want to experience everything that a tropical island holiday can offer.

The list of Whitsunday winners goes on. This year the award for significant tourist attraction went to Fantasea Reefworld, a fantastic destination situated on Hardy Reef, 39 nautical miles from the Whitsunday coast. The Fantasea Reef pontoon has capacity for up to 600 visitors, with all the modern comforts and coral viewing facilities one could hope for. Fantasea proprietor David Hutchen has always been a great supporter of the Whitsunday tourism industry, and the confidence he has shown in the region through the establishment of Reefworld is to be applauded. He and his team at Fantasea surely deserve the recognition and accolades inherent in this award.

Last but by no means least, I want to mention the award for significant festivals and events, which was this year presented to the 2001 Hann Race Week at Hamilton Island. This fantastic event saw 182 yachts enter the annual race week which, according to Club Marine's online report, was the second biggest fleet of offshore yachts ever assembled for competition in Australia. Not only does this event present a magical vista of sleek vessels sailing in pristine waters against a background of stunning islands and beaches, it also provides a huge economic boost to Hamilton Island and the larger Whitsunday region. Like all of the Whitsunday's six winning entrants and many more who were not successful on the night, the 2001 Hann Race week is part of what makes the Whitsundays one of the world's most desirable destinations. My hearty congratulations go to them all.