



Speech by

JAN JARRATT

MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY

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WHITSUNDAY REGION

Ms JARRATT (Whitsunday—ALP) (7.32 p.m.): In talking to people in my electorate and watching the vision of massive peace marches and rallies across the nation and the world and in listening to the passionate speeches made by colleagues in this House today, it is patently clear that John Howard's unconscionable push to involve our nation in illegal unilateral military action in Iraq has caused a pall of uncertainty and stress to fall on our community. So tonight I have deliberately chosen to speak of positive events that have occurred in my electorate in order to highlight the great things that can and do happen when energies are positively focused.

I turn first to the National Tourism Awards held in Adelaide last Friday night. Two of those awards found their way home to the Whitsundays. Hayman Island received the award for luxury accommodation and was inducted into the Hall of Fame. I congratulate it for that fantastic honour. A second recipient was Tourism Whitsunday, which won the national award for destination promotion. Tourism Whitsunday is a great team. It works as a team effort and consists of people who refuse to be defeated by the effects of September 11 and the Ansett demise. It has worked hard to ensure that the Whitsunday region is a great tourism destination well known around the country and indeed the world.

There was more good news for the tourism industry with the recent announcement that Virgin Blue will commence flights into the Whitsundays on 12 April. This will initially comprise one flight per week from Sydney every Saturday. The executive director of Virgin Blue, Brett Godfrey, said—

The Whitsundays are clearly one of Australia's most popular tourist destinations but up until now it has also been one of the most expensive for people to fly directly to. We are confident that Virgin Blue's low fares will mean more people will be tempted to set sail simply because it's more affordable.

This is great news for families and budget travellers who want to holiday in our fabulous part of the world. I send my congratulations to the Whitsunday Shire Council's mayor, Councillor Mario Demartini, and local tourism operators who worked tirelessly over many months to achieve this great result.

The good news just goes on. On 16 January this year I was very pleased to have the then Acting Premier in the electorate of Whitsunday to open the Flagstaff Hill Lookout and Interpretive Centre in Bowen. This is a new \$750,000 centre. It has attractions that include modern restaurants, historical displays and amenities and one of the best views in the whole of the state. I am pleased to say that the Queensland government contributed \$350,000 to the cost of funding, which came from the Local Government Department Queensland Rail. In addition, the state government-owned Ports Corporation contributed \$30,000, the federal government \$100,000 and Ergon Energy \$4,000. The Bowen council itself provided the balance of more than \$260,000. This is really good news for Bowen and puts it clearly on the tourist map in the Whitsundays.