



Speech by

Dr LESLEY CLARK

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Hansard 27 February 2003

NATIONAL TOURISM AWARDS, FAR-NORTH QUEENSLAND WINNERS

Dr LESLEY CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (7.05 p.m.): Winners are grinners, and the grins could not have been any wider on the faces of James Dixon of Down Under Tours, Jenny Tonkin of Cairns Coconut Caravan Resort, Terry and Cathy Maloney of Daintree Eco Lodge and Spa, and Gerry Collins of Undora Experience in the photo that appeared in the *Cairns Post* on Monday of this week. Why? Because they were all winners at the National Tourism Awards, held in Adelaide last Friday.

Terry and Cathy's smiles were particularly wide because they won both the ecotourism and the deluxe accommodation categories—an unprecedented achievement. Down Under Tours won the major tour and transport award, Coconut Caravan Resort took the tourism and caravan park award for the second time and Undora Experience won the unique accommodation award. The far north alone took out as many awards as the ACT and South Australia, which were the second most successful states after Queensland, which took out eight awards in total.

These companies began their journey to national acclaim as winners at the Regional Tourism Awards in Cairns, where I joined them and the other finalists from the region. As Bill Calderwood, the CEO of Tropical Tourism North Queensland, said, to win 11 of the 29 state awards last November was terrific, but to go on and win five national awards was exceptional and our best result yet. I congratulate all of the finalists and winners. They are testament to the outstanding quality of our tourism products and services in far-north Queensland. We are now second only to Sydney as the most attractive tourist destination in Australia.

There was more good news for the Cairns tourism industry this week when Australian Airlines announced that 100 new jobs would be created by its plans to add three new international destinations to its already successful low-cost Asia tourism routes, with capacity to be expanded by two additional Boeing 767-300s. Confidence in the Cairns economy is at an all-time high, with the employment figures released this week indicating that the unemployment rate is 5.9 per cent. I thank Minister Merri Rose for her outstanding commitment to tourism in Queensland and acknowledge the excellent work of Tourism Queensland that helps to ensure Queensland remains Australia's best and most popular tourism destination.

On a more sober note, I acknowledge that there is a danger that a war with Iraq could impact on our tourism industry. I can only hope that this impact is not too severe. The tourism industry in Cairns has done it tough on a number of occasions over the last decade. I know that it is resilient, but I just want for it to reap the rewards for all of its hard work. Whatever the future holds, the tourism operators in my electorate know that they can always count on my continuing support. I wish them well for the coming tourism season.