



Speech by

Hon. Margaret Keech

MEMBER FOR ALBERT

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Tourism Industry

Hon. M.M. KEECH (Albert—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development) (10.18 a.m.): 2004 has been a watershed year for Queensland's tourism industry. Earlier this year Premier Peter Beattie declared 2004 Queensland's Year of the International Tourist. We are now reaping the dividends of the Premier's wise decision as visitors fly into Queensland from around the world. We have arrested the decline in international numbers since September 11 and the SARS outbreak, and our domestic market remains strong. The government's aviation strategy is producing sensational results. Queensland is on track to welcome more than two million international visitors this calendar year.

International capacity into this state is up more than 20 per cent on 12 months ago. Domestic capacity between October this year and last year has risen by a massive 31 per cent. Queensland has never been so accessible, and low domestic fares have convinced thousands of Australians to spend their holidays here.

For this reason Queensland's leading tourist destinations are predicting a bumper Christmas holiday season. The Beattie government's commitment to the industry is unquestioned. The government has been working in a Smart State partnership with industry associations and participants. Tourism Queensland has a new whole-of-state emphasis on marketing and development of priority niche market segments such as ecotourism, indigenous tourism, drive and marine tourism, education and business tourism, backpacker and adventure tourism, and food, wine, arts, culture and events tourism. We are also planning a new push into China, the sleeping giant of Asian tourism.

For Queensland tourism is big business. It is our second biggest export industry and employs more than 150,000 Queenslanders. Visitors to Queensland spend an estimated \$18.3 billion each year, which means jobs, jobs and more jobs, in particular in our regions. We have the best tourism product and the best operators. Recently at a nationwide competition run by the *Australian*, Queensland received five wins in 10 categories: Hayman Island won best resort accommodation, Palazzo Versace won best luxury accommodation, Novotel Twin Waters won the value accommodation category, Sea World won the award for family-focused tourism and Silky Oak Lodge's Healing Waters Spa won the destination spa experience award. All Queenslanders can be very proud.

The industry is brimming with confidence and enthusiasm. Certainly this mood will be evident at the Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre tomorrow night when the industry celebrates its night of nights, the 2004 Queensland Tourism Awards. On behalf of the Beattie government I commend tourism operators for their contribution to our magnificent industry and to the economy of Queensland.