



Speech by

Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard Tuesday, 24 May 2005

TOURISM, FAIR TRADING AND WINE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (2.37 pm): Perfect one day; Melbourne the next! The opposition's concern in relation to this legislation is that the state government is not only going to flog off Sunlover Holidays to the private sector but to the private sector in southern states. This is a major concern given that Queensland's iconic tourism industry requires the involvement of people who have a passionate interest in Queensland's economy. The opposition is concerned that the rumours that were flagged last year about what would happen with Sunlover Holidays seem to be materialising in this legislation. Our shadow minister has outlined some of those concerns.

But let us revisit the stories from last year. In November last year, when the concerns were raised that a Melbourne company could take over the commercial arm of the department that runs tourism in Queensland, it was revealed that there had been a company that had come forward with an offer. When members read the wording of the legislation before the House they will see that it does not explicitly state that there is a proposal to flog off Sunlover Holidays to a southern company, but the provisions of this legislation make it possible. Given that there has previously been documentation alluding to a deal with a southern company, it is now of great concern that this Beattie Labor government would take this body, which has been responsible for promoting Queensland and which has had a primary focus on Queensland holidays, and sell it off to the private sector and potentially to the private sector based in a southern state. This is not on; it is concerning. Our tourism industry in Queensland has been a flagship industry. The industry is a major employment booster. It requires people who have a passion to see our state promoted and promoted strongly.

As a member of parliament from an area which strongly relies on the tourism industry—that is, the Sunshine Coast—I know that people are keen to see this industry expand and not go backwards. I am concerned that in recent years government spending on tourism in real terms has in fact retreated. We do not want to see this industry lose the support of government whether by selling off companies to southern companies or by whittling away the support which is available through consolidated revenue. We do not want it to lose the attention and focus of government.

Tourism is a major economic spinner for the Sunshine Coast and many other regions—the Gold Coast, for example—up and down the state. It has a significant multiplier impact in our community. That is increasingly being acknowledged at the local government level and broader community level. They realise that not only do the benefits go to the people who directly sell accommodation and other products to tourists but that they permeate the community.

We cannot take our attention away from this industry. We should never apologise for promoting a strong tourism industry in Queensland. This industry is the lifeblood of many areas of this state. It certainly supplements a number of other very important industries. In some areas it has become the primary income source. That is why we should never take our focus off promoting Queensland holidays and Queensland tourism. We have to make sure that the role of government is not one of retreat and sell off to other states.