



Speech by

Hon. Margaret Keech

MEMBER FOR ALBERT

Hansard Tuesday, 22 May 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Tourism Industry, Climate Change

Hon. MM KEECH (Albert—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading, Wine Industry Development and Women) (10.24 am): Climate change is the next great challenge facing Queensland's tourism industry. Queensland is home to some of Australia's—indeed the world's—greatest natural tourism assets. The Great Barrier Reef, the Daintree and our many wonderful national parks attract thousands of visitors to the state every year. The potential effects of climate change put Queensland's second largest export industry at risk.

It is clear that we need to act now to address the impacts of climate change, particularly on the tourism industry. The Beattie government is working closely with industry to tackle this issue head-on. We are united on the need for action and, with Queensland's excellent record on environmental and ecotourism issues, our tourism industry is best equipped to lead the charge.

The impact of climate change was identified as a key issue for the tourism industry during the development of the Queensland Tourism Strategy. Regional climate change briefings for the industry and an online best practice sustainable tourism package are among the environmental and ecological tourism initiatives resulting from the QTS.

While Queensland is working hard to address this worldwide issue, our tourism industry is being let down by a lack of action from the federal government. In a Howard-Costello election year grab-bag budget, the big omission was a serious attempt to tackle global warming. At a recent climate change summit delegates were told that, long before our natural tourism product is affected by global warming, changes in consumer perceptions could have a negative impact on tourism jobs and export earnings. There are fears that an international perception that Australia has failed to act on climate change could undermine any branding investment and our reputation as a natural tourism destination.

The Howard government has been dragging the chain on this issue for too long. Tourism is an industry worth \$18 billion a year to Queensland, and our tourism operators have been let down by the federal government's budget. It is time to take action. The Beattie government and Queensland's tourism industry are doing their bit. It is time John Howard did his.