



Speech by

Annastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

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GREAT BARRIER REEF

Ms PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (11.54 am): And now for something positive. Climate change is undoubtedly impacting upon our world. Closer to home, we have already seen the impacts of coral bleaching on the Great Barrier Reef. The Great Barrier Reef is one of the wonders of the natural world. It is the world's largest coral reef ecosystem. The reef includes a range of fascinating geographic forms ranging from fringing coastal reefs and lagoons, outer reef islands, estuaries and coastal beaches. Tourism is the lifeblood of the local economy, especially here in Cairns, and as a government we need to do all we can to encourage more tourism. The Bligh government recognises this significant contribution to our economy and we are committed to further growing the local tourism industry as part of our government's Q2 vision for a strong economy.

As mentioned yesterday through the member for Whitsunday, the tourism assistance package means that through Tourism Queensland the key focus will be on tropical north Queensland, providing \$700,000 in international marketing initiatives to encourage more tourists from the UK, Germany and the US to visit Cairns. But we need to do more to encourage more tourism here. This morning at the Chamber of Commerce breakfast, discussion at our table centred on the fact that, whilst this year's tourism was good, bookings for operators are down from November onwards. I see this as a prime opportunity for Tourism Queensland to encourage Queenslanders, especially from down south, to visit Cairns over the school holiday period.

In conclusion, I welcome the Premier's announcement yesterday of an additional \$10 million per year over the next five years to help protect the Great Barrier Reef, taking Queensland's contribution to \$175 million. The evidence is clear: we need to improve the water quality around the reef and limit the use of harmful herbicides and pesticides. We recognise those farmers who are doing the right thing. The Bligh government is committed to doing all we can to protect our natural icon—the Great Barrier Reef—not just for our generation but for future generations to come.