



Speech by

Hon. Peter Lawlor

MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

Hansard Thursday, 20 August 2009

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Tropical North Queensland, Japanese Charter Flights

Hon. PJ LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Fair Trading) (10.10 am): It gives me great pleasure to announce that the Bligh government has helped secure four extra Japanese charter flights to tropical North Queensland. These charter flights are scheduled in September and October and signal an increasing confidence of the Japanese market in Queensland. The charter flights, supported by Tourism Australia, Tourism Queensland and Tourism Tropical North Queensland, would bring up to 1,300 Japanese visitors to the region, support important tourism jobs and create more local economic opportunities.

Three of the charters are carrying school excursion groups from Fukuoka to Cairns in October, having been organised by travel agency JTB and flown by All Nippon Airways. In addition, JTB will operate one charter to Cairns, which has already sold out. That will include a five-day holiday package for Japanese visitors during Japan's Silver Week long weekend, from 19 to 23 September.

Tourism Queensland, its Australian partners and its international office in Japan are continuing to seek opportunities with the Japanese travel and aviation industries to bring business into tropical North Queensland. This news follows a decision by Continental Airlines to continue operating four weekly flights between Japan and Cairns via Guam after they were introduced as a seasonal measure in April. In the year ending March, 252,000 Japanese visitors came to Queensland and 142,000 of them visited the tropical North Queensland region. Despite declines across Australia, Japan remains tropical North Queensland's largest international source market. My predecessor and member for Cairns, Desley Boyle, as well as the Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism, Steve Wettenhall, continue to make strong representations to me about the need to assist where possible the tropical North Queensland tourism industry.

The Bligh government is committed to tourism. When it has been most needed this government has assisted. The difference between this government and the opposition is leadership. That means making tough decisions in tough times, be it popular or unpopular. That means listening and responding to the needs of Queenslanders. When the opposition leader matches the Premier's initiatives, other people might take him seriously, even other opposition members.