



Speech by

**Steve Wettenhall**

**MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER**

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## **CAPE YORK PENINSULA AND TORRES STRAIT, TOURISM INDUSTRY**

**Mr WETTENHALL** (Barron River—ALP) (12.05 pm): Cape York and Torres Strait are recognised as two of the most spectacular and culturally important tourism regions in Queensland. To ensure that the potential of tourism in this vast region is developed, in 2008 the Queensland government adopted the Cape York Peninsula and Torres Strait Tourism Development Action Plan. The purpose of this plan is to provide a strategic vision for the future of tourism in Cape York and the Torres Strait that incorporates the aspirations of cape and island communities and the commercial realities of industry and to establish key tourism priorities such as infrastructure, training and capacity building for communities and tourism operators, product and market development and improved visitor management.

The vision of the plan is to achieve long-term sustainable development of tourism on Cape York and the Torres Strait that respects and celebrates the culture, traditions and lifestyle of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, enhances environmental integrity and creates economic and social growth. The plan identified economic, social, cultural and environmental goals focused on developing a sustainable tourism industry. Among the key strategic priorities identified in the plan is enhanced public infrastructure to support tourism visitation and the effective management of visitor, environmental and social impacts. A priority action was to establish and develop a bush camping sites development program for Cape York on all land tenures and initially identify three site locations for the development of new infrastructure.

I am very pleased to report to the parliament that on Monday, 12 October 2009, together with the member for Cook, I travelled to Somerset in the northern peninsula area—not far from the tip of the cape—to officially open new bush camping facilities at this popular location for visitors. The facilities comprised toilets, a shelter and water storage and will greatly enhance the experience of visitors to this beautiful and historic site. The project was developed in partnership with the Gudang people, who are the traditional owners of the land, through the Apathima Land Trust, and will be managed by the trust with the assistance of the Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council.

A number of local people attended the opening ceremony including Apathima Land Trust Chairman Mr Bernard Charlie and Councillor Gina Nona. I want to take this opportunity to again recognise and thank Mr Charlie and the trust for working cooperatively with the government to bring this project to fruition. These new facilities at Pulu—the Somerset bush camp—will generate an income stream for local people from the collection of camping fees and will provide some employment based on management of the area and facilities. The member for Cook and I were the first people to camp at Pulu. The camping registration receipt No. 001 bears our names.

Whilst in the area we took the opportunity to inspect other sites throughout Cape York proposed for development of further bush camping and ecotourism facilities including the now abandoned Pajinka lodge near the very tip of Cape York and at Cockatoo Creek on the Old Telegraph Track. The tip of Cape York is the most northerly point on the Australian mainland and for many is the ultimate destination of their trip to the tip. Upon their arrival, though, visitors will find no facilities whatsoever. At such an iconic destination with such high visitation from both independent travellers and guided tours, this situation cannot be allowed to continue. As a first step to address this problem it has been agreed that funds will be allocated

to conduct a site assessment to determine the best location and tenure for the development of new visitor facilities at this iconic location.

Similarly at Cockatoo Creek, high visitation with no facilities is causing the area to become degraded. We must recognise that more and more people will come to the cape and that basic facilities have become necessary to safeguard hygiene, to avoid environmental damage and to meet visitor expectations. Subject to reaching agreement with the traditional owners, new facilities are proposed to be installed at this location as well.

Throughout Cape York, people who work in the tourism industry reported to us that they had enjoyed one of their busiest seasons. The global financial crisis has obviously not deterred people from visiting the cape—no doubt for many the trip of a lifetime. There could be many explanations for this, but the continual improving condition of the Peninsula Development Road is undoubtedly one. This main access road through the cape is a tribute to our Main Roads workers and is in excellent condition. Through word-of-mouth in the travelling community, increasing numbers of people will have the confidence to visit the cape. Implementing the Cape York Peninsula and Torres Strait Tourism Development Action Plan will ensure a high-quality experience and yield new opportunities for the people who live in this unique and wonderful place.