



Speech by


## Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

Hansard Thursday, 13 October 2011

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### ECOTOURISM

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (2.38 pm): As the LNP shadow minister for the environment, I continue to be inundated with calls and requests for meetings from frustrated ecotourism operators—operators who are fed up with the bumbling bureaucracy and the ‘lock it up and throw away the key’ mentality of this tired Bligh Labor government. Ecotourism operators are not environmental vandals. They depend on the environment to make their living. So why is this government treating them as criminals?

This week in parliament I have posed two questions to the Minister for Environment on behalf of discouraged ecotourism operators. I recently met with representatives of the Agnes Water based Gladstone Region Action Group whilst visiting Burnett with the LNP candidate, Stephen Bennett. Their concerns relate to the Draft Discovery Coast Area (Baffle Creek-Rodds Peninsula) Management Plan. As we have seen played out in region after region and national park after national park, despite hollow platitudes from this government that they support tourism in protected areas, these management plans are used to lock tourism operators out.

The operators at Agnes Water are disturbed that, despite repeated questioning of DERM, they cannot get a straight answer on what constitutes ‘sustainable nature based recreational activities’ under this draft plan. So I ask the minister to please define ‘sustainable nature based recreational activities’ and to please give the Gladstone Region Action Group the assurances they need to ensure the ongoing viability of their members’ environmentally friendly business endeavours.

My second question to the minister pertains to the plight of Cairns Mountain Bike Tours. I appreciate there is ongoing conflict between this company and the Cairns MTB club, but surely the government needs to assess tourism permits in isolation of this or commit to facilitating a mediated outcome. Surely, Cairns Mountain Bike Tours must be treated as any other tourism operator seeking access to our protected estate. If permits are issued, as they have been, they must be adhered to by all parties, the government included. If not, how can any commercial operator have any confidence that their venture is viable?

Unlike Labor, the LNP has made the commitment to develop and implement a state-wide streamlined permit system for sustainable tourism and recreational enjoyment of Queensland’s public land. We in the LNP want people to enjoy their environment. We will not be locking it up and throwing away the key.