




Speech by

Bruce Young

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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GREAT KEPPEL ISLAND

 **Mr YOUNG** (Keppel—LNP) (9.32 pm): Great Keppel Island lies 15 kilometres off the coast at Yeppoon in Central Queensland. The island is the largest of the 18 islands in the Keppel group and covers an area of more than 14 square kilometres. The island was named in 1770 by Captain James Cook after the then First Lord of the *Admiralty*, Admiral Augustus Keppel. Prior to European settlement, the island was home to the Woppaburra people of the Darumbal nation.

The tropical climate and 17 white sandy beaches makes Great Keppel Island an ideal place for the enjoyment of locals and tourists alike. Currently, the island is serviced by ferries and aircraft. The coral reefs around Great Keppel Island match those of the Whitsundays, with clear water for most of the year making it our jewel in the crown.

Great Keppel Island once boasted a resort owed by Contiki, which was dedicated to making it a backpacker's island. We all can attest to the 'get wrecked on Great Keppel' slogan. Some years ago the island was taken over by the privately owned Australian company, Tower Holdings, which closed the facility after only two years. Tower Holdings unveiled a \$1.15 billion revitalisation plan for the island, which includes a 300-room resort hotel, 300 apartments, 1,700 villas, a large marina and ferry terminal, a championship golf course and a cultural centre.

The plan includes 550 hectares of environmental parkland on lot 21, which is currently public land for recreation purposes. This land has already been recommended for a conservation park by the former department of environment and resource management. This has been a very contentious issue for all concerned. The situation now finds local residents divided between those who support the redevelopment and those who are opposed to it. The proposal is about to go to the environmental impact statement stage.

The closure of the resort has had an enormous economic impact on the Capricorn Coast, with tourism investment in the region coming to somewhat of a standstill. Our once thriving community is struggling with the loss of island employment, island retailers, supply firms and flow-on effects to tourism generally. Once Great Keppel Island is fully operational, we could see up to 1,000 full-time, part-time and casual jobs generated. The flow-on effects for privately funded infrastructure and industries, including transport barges and maintenance, would be invaluable to this region. We need work out a way to move forward with the development of the resort without compromising our wonderful environment and come up with a result that pleases both parties.