




Speech By
Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Record of Proceedings, 17 October 2013

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Aquis Great Barrier Reef Resort

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (3.48 pm): It has been incorrectly asserted by the member for Cairns that I do not support the Aquis Great Barrier Reef Resort proposal. I am very aware that it is not every day that a multibillion dollar proposal is offered up to our region and so it has my support. Notwithstanding that, there are some important questions to be answered. Asking questions and casting a critical eye over proposals does not mean opposition to them. A project like this is too significant for political point scoring, which only distracts from what really matters—getting it right. The terms of reference for the EIS released earlier this month are a good start.

The proponent will be required to provide necessary infrastructure so that existing public transport services and infrastructure are maintained to their current standard or better. The terms of reference also ask that any infrastructure built as part of the project is both compatible with and does not disrupt existing infrastructure, including airport operations or future transport corridors.

One area of concern is the demand that will be placed on roads, including the Cairns Western Arterial Road, which is likely to be used by workers travelling from the growth corridor of Cairns both during construction and once established. The construction workforce is expected to reach 9,300, with 10,000 ongoing operational jobs. We need to ensure that the supporting infrastructure is there to maximise productivity.

The terms of reference mandate an assessment of mitigation for coastal erosion risks, storm tide inundation and flooding. These assessments will need to be carefully scrutinised to ensure both the commercial and environmental sustainability of the development. Some considerations not included in the EIS terms of reference include the impacts from population flows on local schools, kindergartens, housing, hospitals, the electricity network and local government infrastructure. We also need to think about how this infrastructure can be delivered and funded. The government should also be looking at how local TAFE facilities can be utilised so that most of the construction workforce is sourced locally. There may also be opportunities for leveraging education exports.

The Aquis development presents opportunities for co-investment in infrastructure that will be necessary for the future economic development of the region, including for public transport. The government needs to be engaging with the council, the proponent and local community representatives to act on these opportunities now. We cannot turn our focus to partisan politics or we will miss out on opportunities for the future of our region.

One of the key reasons for the increased interest in tourism investment in Queensland is the falling Australian dollar, which is forecast to fall to US84c by the end of next year. This will lead to a strong resurgence in tourism, particularly in North Queensland, irrespective of whether any development includes a casino.

The Newman government has announced that it will approve up to three new casinos without any detail of whether more gaming machines will be allowed or where the revenue gains for the state will go. It is incorrect to say that we simply must have more casinos to attract tourists to Queensland. Independent studies show people will continue to come in increasing numbers for our beaches, wildlife and the reef. I have never suggested that no new casino licences be granted, but if one were granted it would most likely be for the Aquis development. However, I stress the point that Queenslanders are seeking a proper economic growth and development strategy that must be based on more than casinos.