




Speech By
Hon. Dr Steven Miles
MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Ecotourism

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (2.41 pm): The Queensland government recognises the importance of the tourism industry to the Queensland economy. It is a major export earner and generator of jobs for the state. Our world-class national parks, marine parks and World Heritage areas provide a competitive advantage for tourism in Queensland and this government considers high-quality, best practice ecotourism to be a key way to grow tourism in this state.

To guide ecotourism developments in line with this government's strong commitment to the environment, the Department of National Parks, Sport and Racing, in association with the Department of Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games, has refocused the Ecotourism Facilities on National Parks-Implementation Framework. The framework sets out the guiding principles for ecotourism facilities on national parks and provides a model for evaluating and managing ecotourism proposals.

The Palaszczuk government understands that our national parks are valued by the community as the most highly protected conservation areas in the state. Any ecotourism development must achieve the right balance between conservation of these natural and cultural values and their use for commercial tourism purposes.

The framework now ensures that alternative off-park sites are considered first and gives preference to facilities proposed on previously disturbed sites. It also includes a new principle requiring a contribution back to the conservation and management of the national park and benefits to local communities. The public interest provisions have been expanded also to ensure that exclusive use areas are restricted only to those areas essential for commercial operations.

We are continuing to work with existing proposals to ensure they progress and deliver great tourism and conservation outcomes for Queensland. Some existing proposals do not meet the conservation standards of the implementation framework but, where possible, we will work to find an alternative space for these ventures.

In addition to the new framework, I am pleased to announce that the draft Queensland Ecotourism Plan was released for public consultation at the DestinationQ forum on 8 October. Like the revised framework, the Ecotourism Plan promotes a fresh approach to ecotourism in Queensland, and is underpinned by a guiding principle of protecting and conserving our natural and cultural assets for future generations to enjoy.

The Ecotourism Plan reflects the government's policy priorities of: showcasing Queensland's unique wildlife and the world renowned Great Barrier Reef; encouraging the refurbishment of existing infrastructure such as reef island resorts; supporting the development of innovative ecotourism experiences; and encouraging the expansion of authentic Indigenous products. I am confident that the revised framework and Ecotourism Plan will give proponents the investment certainty they need to develop innovative, best practice ecotourism products on national parks while meeting community expectations for the conservation of these highly valued places.