




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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ADJOURNMENT

Keppel Bay, Dive Wreck

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (10.22 pm): I want to sink a decommissioned navy vessel off the Capricorn Coast to create a dive wreck that will generate significant tourism and economic benefits to the Keppel community. The federal government recently announced that former navy vessels HMAS *Tobruk* and HMAS *Sydney* will be decommissioned and offered to states and territories for the creation of dive wrecks to support the tourism industry. In April I wrote to the Premier and put forward Keppel Bay as one of the possible locations to be considered as a navy vessel dive site. It is absolutely wonderful news that these two great ships are going to be offered as dive wrecks and not simply scrapped for their metal.

HMAS *Tobruk* was used extensively during regional peacekeeping and humanitarian operations, as well as border protection in Northern Australia. HMAS *Sydney* was deployed to the Persian Gulf on five occasions in support of operations during the Gulf War, Afghanistan War and the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Closer to home, HMAS *Sydney* was involved to support Australia's response to regional uprisings and humanitarian operations. The addition of HMAS *Tobruk* or HMAS *Sydney* as a diving destination could provide a significant boost to the southern Great Barrier Reef's tourism industry and economy and to the identity and morale of the local community. A dive wreck, ex-HMAS *Adelaide*, was scuttled off Avoca Beach in 2011 and is now home to some wonderful new marine life including giant cuttlefish, blue groper, kingfish, yellowtail and octopus.

The addition of this dive site will provide the tourists visiting our region who are looking for nature oriented activities—this accounts for around 26 per cent of visitors—a richer choice of experiences. My campaign for one of the navy vessels to be sunk in Keppel has received widespread community support and I have received dozens upon dozens of emails and messages in support from local residents, dive groups and tourism operators. Capricorn Enterprise CEO Mary Carroll supports the initiative and its potential to bring divers from worldwide. Local divers say a dive wreck will certainly boost economic activity in the industry. A dive wreck would offer tourism and economic benefits to Keppel that could well last for the next 100 years or more.

Of course, there is still a long way to go pending approval, and any decision on where to sink the ship would need to satisfy all environmental approvals. We must also take advice from experts about the most appropriate location. The Keppel community already has a strong tourism focus and client oriented service vital to capitalise on this fantastic opportunity. We have the necessary infrastructure, with access from Rosslyn Bay Marina, and existing quality tourism operators in place to provide diving trips to the wreck. I know the Premier and her government are great supporters of tourism in our region and indeed throughout the state. I believe Keppel Bay would be a fantastic choice for the location of one of these naval vessels.