




Speech By  
**Craig Crawford**

**MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER**

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**MOTION: CASINO GAMING LICENCES**

 **Mr CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (6.27 pm): I rise to speak against the motion tonight. The \$8.15 billion Aquis development is proposed to be constructed in my electorate of Barron River on the outskirts of Yorkeys Knob. I start by confirming that I am in favour of this development. I have met with the proponents many times, as well as people who oppose it.

The LNP launched the integrated resort development process on 19 December 2013. It was the LNP that short-listed preferred proponents in Queensland on 27 May 2014. Under the terms of the EOI process, all proponents were required to address a number of mandatory elements which formed the evaluation criteria in the evaluation plan and they included: that the proponent had to have experience and capability, they had to have financial capability, they had to have project understanding and they had to have concept details. Aquis met the criteria and was short-listed. However, Great Keppel Island did not meet the criteria for reasons unknown to me. Under the LNP's mandatory elements, as I just listed, it was that side of the House who decided not to short-list Great Keppel Island, not this side.

**Mr Seeney** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order, member for Callide!

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members! Pause the clock.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** The IRD is a superior policy because it is targeted to the international tourism market. International tourism markets take time to develop. They take time to grow. Cairns is a fine example of a flourishing tourist market, catering for international tourists as well as domestic tourists. For many years it has been a playground for the Japanese, for the Americans, for the Europeans and recently for the Chinese. Cairns is not just a market for gambling; it is an established tourist industry underpinned by a city with a population of around 150,000 people, a major international and domestic airport, tourism infrastructure already in place and a market share already thriving.

Currently tourism contributes \$23 billion to the Queensland economy and supports 230,000 jobs. Tourists, particularly those from the growing Asian tourist market, are demanding large resorts, with an array of facilities within easy access to international airports. They want the whole package in one location. They want Singapore. They want Macau. They want Honolulu. They want Vegas. They want Cairns. They want the Gold Coast and they want Brisbane.

In Cairns the community wants Aquis. Research identifies the majority of Cairns residents want Aquis. They want the construction jobs. They want the ongoing operation to complement the tourism infrastructure already on the ground. By introducing boutique gaming licences such as Great Keppel Island, we begin to take away from major centres such as Cairns the bulk tourism market that would normally be flooding in. If we allowed Great Keppel Island to have a licence based purely on the fact

that they are an island and nothing else—a tourist destination on the Great Barrier Reef—we water down the very thing that we are trying to create. Boutique gambling licences will potentially pop up on islands like pokies in a pub. There is nothing significant about Great Keppel Island that makes them any different to any other island in the Great Barrier Reef. You give it to one and you give it to all of them.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I call the member.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** Queensland needs to be competitive on the world stage as a destination for the new Asian market. For Cairns our tourist market is shifting from competing with Queensland destinations such as Townsville, Mackay, Whitsundays and the Gold Coast to now having to gear up to compete with Las Vegas, Singapore and Macau.

**Mr Cripps** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order, member for Hinchinbrook!

**Mr CRAWFORD:** To compete at this level you need more than just a casino licence. You need to be a destination on the world stage. You need to be known. You need to be easily accessible by direct international flights with—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I call the member.

**Mr CRAWFORD:** This is going to take forever, Mr Speaker—modern airports that already have the infrastructure in place to accept and process incoming tourists. You have to be an existing marketplace which is already well and truly entrenched in this area. But importantly you have to be a place that a major developer is prepared to invest in a large-scale development without fear of smaller competition eroding their business away. It was the LNP that decided that Great Keppel Island did not meet the short-listing, not this government. To quote the member for Whitsunday, they have ownership of that.