




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Tropical North Queensland, Economy

 **Mr CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (12.12 pm): The Tropical North Queensland tourism economy is strong. As we pass the 18-month marker of the Palaszczuk government it is time to reflect on where we are at in the tropical north, where we have come from and where we are planning to go. Our economy has rebounded strongly from increased tourist numbers spurred on by a weak but stable Australian dollar and overseas safety uncertainty. We have learned that Australians are rediscovering Queensland. We have seen the evidence of the opportunities in Asia.

It is a widely known fact in tourist circles that evidence shows that the No. 1 issue that drives travellers to a location is safety and security. Clean water; fresh and clean food; airlines that are safe, well-maintained and secure; safe streets; and low terrorism likelihood are now all key elements of selecting holiday locations. It used to be bang for the buck or how far one could stretch the dollar.

Asian travellers are actively selecting Cairns and Tropical North Queensland in numbers that have equalled the 1990s and are now overtaking them on all fronts. Our hotels are full. We have not seen this for some time now. Our reef boats are full and the airlines are full. I regularly hear reports of airline cancellations in Cairns where not one single hotel room has been available to put up crew or passengers. I heard a report recently about the international terminal where Cathay or Jetstar had to sleep something like 300 people on the terminal floor overnight because there was not one single hotel room available in Cairns. For the first time since the boom of the Japanese in the 1990s we have a serious shortage of hotel rooms in Cairns and Port Douglas. We have run out of stock. We have an urgent situation whereby the reaction time to get construction up to an operations stage will be too long even if we start construction today.

We have barely tapped the market. We know that Asians want to travel. We know that 30- to 40-year-old Asians are travelling up to four times a year. We know that the opportunities are endless. They like Australia. They like Queensland. They like Cairns. Asian interest in investment in Tropical North Queensland is strong. Project ideas—some big, some small—are everywhere. Whether it is \$10 million or \$2 billion, we need the private infrastructure; we need the hotel construction jobs. We have hotels ready to undergo multimillion dollar upgrades. New proposals for hotels and resorts are undergoing planning applications and new air routes are underway.

Our government has found a workable solution to the Cairns shipping channel development which will dramatically increase the nightly porting of international and domestic cruise liners at the Trinity Inlet cruise liner terminal. Cairns is one of the few terminals in the world where ships can dock right in the middle of town. The economic opportunities of this project are massive and it is this government, the Palaszczuk government, which is progressing this opportunity. We know that cruise line passengers spend an average of \$225 per day when in port. If honourable members do the numbers on 3,000 passengers per night with one ship per night they will see that they are staggering numbers.

The Cairns international airport is again due for redevelopment. It has only been a few years since they had the last one. It shows the rapid growth of passengers. We broke through five million passengers in any 12-month period only a few months ago. We are progressing closer to attracting regular air services direct from China, not just seasonal services but permanent air routes that do not have to come via the south-east corner.

I am concerned that those on that side of the House are now doing deals in terms of backing One Nation, a party which has publicly declared its position on Asians, a party driving the message through their leadership that they do not support Asians. They do not want the visits, they do not want the money and they do not want the investment. I listened to the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition earlier, but I did not actually hear them answer the question completely. Do they or do they not support One Nation's stand on Asians? What is the message that the LNP are sending to Chinese investors or Chinese travellers?

The Liberal National Party and One Nation Party message is simple: 'Go away. We don't want the people. We don't want your money. We don't want you to come here.' This is disgraceful. I call on the members opposite to seriously consider the impacts of negative political rhetoric and anti-Asian statements.

Mr Crandon interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! Member for Coomera, the member for Barron River is not taking your interjections so please cease.

Mr CRAWFORD: They should tell their leadership that they do not support deals with One Nation. Tell their leadership that we need to continue to work with the Asian countries to ensure that we can save and grow our tourism industry further.