




Speech By
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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Tropical North Queensland, Tourism

 **Mr CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (11.50 am): I rise to update the House this morning on the booming Tropical North Queensland tourism economy being experienced in and around Cairns, because we all know that when it comes to Tourism, Queensland is where Australia shines. In the 2014 calendar year the tourism economy for the Tropical North was worth \$2.9 billion. In the 2015 calendar year it rose by \$700 million to be worth \$3.6 billion. In the 2016 year it is estimated to rise by another \$100 million to be worth \$3.7 billion. It is well on track to be a \$4.2 billion a year industry by 2020, which amounts to a \$1.6 billion a year increase in five years.

In the past year we have seen an increase of over 500,000 domestic visitors to the Tropical North. The Cairns airport recently reported that 2,670 extra flights to and from Cairns have been added in the past year, and larger aircraft now operating on some existing flights have added 95,800 seats over the year. As reported by Herron Todd White yesterday, that is equivalent to an additional 550 Boeing 737s coming to Cairns every year. I am informed that Cairns airport has reported that from September 2015 to September 2016 there has been a 3.9 per cent increase in domestic visitors and an 8.8 per cent rise in international passengers, with an overall combined increase of 4.5 per cent.

Despite high unemployment levels which are still above the rest of Queensland, local reports and articles indicate that Cairns in the Tropical North has begun to see a rise in job ads, with a 2.2 per cent increase in job ads since the same time last year. I was delighted to see an article published yesterday in Cairns by *TropicNow* editor Gaven King regarding overdue good news for local employment. He reported—

For the first time in a long time during this current tourism boom, we're finally starting to see new jobs being created.

The latest Herron Todd White Cairns Watch report, which was published yesterday, claims that in the past year an additional 2,500 people have gained employment in the Tropical North.

The Palaszczuk government is focused on increasing Queensland's share of the global tourism market, especially from Asia. We want to tap into the potential rising Asian middle class that seeks premium Queensland tourism experiences. I am pleased to be part of a government that is serious about growing the No. 1 economic driver for Cairns and the No. 1 opportunity for job growth in Cairns, with \$49.9 million to extend the Tourism Guarantee to give greater certainty to Tourism and Events Queensland to promote and seek events. We know that in Cairns events attract dollars to our region. Whether a small event of a few hundred or a large event of many thousand, they all contribute significantly to the Cairns economy. The \$33.5 million for Connecting to Asia for destination marketing to Asian cities is most welcome. In Cairns we live in a remote area—

Ms Jones: Thanks to your support for that.

Mr CRAWFORD: I thank your support for that, Minister.

Ms Jones: Any time!

Mr CRAWFORD: You are welcome. The importance of having air routes in Cairns cannot be overstated, as over five million passengers per year use the Cairns airport as a gateway. I support our government and the Minister for Tourism in her continued push for new air routes to Queensland and Cairns in particular. I welcome the continued work that is being done to secure direct Asian flights to Cairns and Queensland. We do not want Queensland to simply be a stopover or a tick on a list with Uluru and the Sydney Opera House. We want tourists to not just spend time here but to also spend money in our local shops and eateries, our hotels and local attractions.

Recently the P&O *Pacific Eden* began using Cairns as its home port. This 1,500-person passenger ship will regularly exchange up to 3,000 passengers at the Cairns Cruise Liner Terminal during the current cruise season. In a recent conversation with P&O I was informed that their data indicates that passengers spend almost double the amount in Cairns than any other cruise destination in their network. I want to congratulate Ports North for their continued work in attracting cruise ships to Trinity Inlet, because in Cairns we all know that being able to dock at the Cruise Liner Terminal generates greater opportunities for Cairns cafes, restaurants, shops and reef boat operators, to name a few.

It is jobs that we want in Cairns. We know that tourism generates these jobs. Whether by direct tourism employment or construction employment, Cairns is well positioned, the outlook is exciting and confidence is up.