



Speech By  
**Stephen Bennett**


**MEMBER FOR BURNETT**

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**ADJOURNMENT**

**Burnett Electorate, Ecotourism Operator**

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (9.13 pm): If we needed any more evidence of the risk to this great state's tourism sector, we need look no further than the latest government's ecotourism plan outlining more restrictions and red tape. Communities and tourism operators should be concerned. The last thing anyone wants to see is more negative effects on our communities. I have an example that I want to share.

The example I want to highlight involves a tourism venture that has successfully operated camping activities and the use of plastic kayaks. It employs seven staff. Within a month of the election, departmental officers started raiding operators in my electorate, arriving unannounced in police vehicles and using the police vessel. Departmental staff ordered the operators, including foreign backpackers, to stop using the kayaks, of all things.

About a month later there was another raid of the second camp and they gave the same verbal instruction regarding the use of both kayaks and small recreational boats. The department failed to provide any information about what legislation they were trying to comply with, even after formal requests to do so.

After seven months the department sent an email with a list of things the operator needed to do to comply. Let me remind members that this is for plastic kayaks and little plastic boats. The email advised that to keep using plastic kayaks they must: complete an application for temporary operations; owners and qualified surveyors to confirm that the vessels meet complicated codes; complete an application for a unique identifier for each vessel; complete an application for a certificate of operation for each vessel; submit an application for a non-survey vessel; submit a completed application for temporary operations and pay fees; provide proof of applicant's identification, such as a driver's licence or passport; provide photos of the Australian builders plate; provide proof of level floatation for vessels; provide photos of each vessel with individual identification marks on them; and provide a safety management system for the each vessel's operation. These were plastic kayaks.

The operators were prepared to pay the fees per vessel. They have 20 of these vessels. That would have cost \$5,500. However, the department was unable to tell the operators of the safety equipment they needed to carry on enclosed waters. They wanted them to fill out 20 forms to put identifiers on these vessels.

On 14 October the department issued a prohibition notice which ordered this tourism venture to shut down all use of kayaks based on the observations made in early February 2015. The operator was referred to the department of planning in South Australia. The owners made four phone calls, would members believe, and it was all sorted. The federal paperwork was filed in South Australia and it was processed in less than a week. It cost them \$200. This is a far cry from the \$5,500 MSQ wanted to charge.

The operators have always had a safety management plan in place. This local tourism venture received their certificate of operation for non-survey vessels and it was all sent off to MSQ with the assumption that everything was finally resolved, but, if members can believe it, there has been nothing to date. Unfortunately, tourism operators need to be concerned about these issues that emerge under this government. Ecotourism operators need to be concerned. These local businesses need our support, not more bureaucracy and red tape.