




Speech By
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Record of Proceedings, 9 May 2017

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Cairns, Tourism

 **Mr CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (12.33 pm): The Cairns economy is continuing to grow through the strong tourism-led investments to our great Tropical North. We have continued to see consistent tourism numbers coming from the United States, Korea, Japan, the United Kingdom and New Zealand. Our tourism operators have enjoyed a good season this year and they are already getting started on the next season without much of an off-peak period.

The Tropical North was not directly impacted by Cyclone Debbie, but we have certainly had our share of cyclones and we know there will be more. Currently in the Cairns CBD there are three tower cranes, with a fourth not far from being erected. Not since Labor rebuilt the Cairns Hospital have we seen any tower cranes in the sky—not under the LNP, not one, nothing. Good governments do not need to erect tower cranes themselves, but good governments create the right economic moment through leadership, investment, stability and certainty.

The GA Group have commenced the facelift and extension of a city hotel, a long-awaited start to what we hope will be more hotels undergoing the same. We have two new projects in the CBD—both by the GA Group—approaching the start line, giving a shot in the arm of confidence to the Cairns community not seen for years. This morning federal government approval was given for the GA Group's \$120 million twin towers hotel project. The building industry in Cairns, like the civil construction industry, has returned to traditional practices and work sites. The large contractors have large projects to work on, the medium contractors have medium projects to work on and the smaller operators have plenty of houses and subcontract work to keep them busy. There is adequate work for all in their respective sectors and they do not feel the need to compete with smaller contractors to try to steal their work.

The Cairns Aquarium opens within months—a much awaited addition to the tourism industry that Cairns and the Tropical North relies on ever so strongly. It was this aquarium build which broke the deadlock of major projects starting in our region. Since the aquarium turned its first sod, we have seen a consistent movement of projects from concept, through planning to construction.

As a government, we are working with our tourism industry that is ever reliant on external factors that influence people's movement, their safety and their spending affordability. As a government, we have listened to the industry and taken action where needed. Whether it is on airline attraction from Asia, whether it is through snorkelling safety round tables to change the code of conduct to protect operators, whether it is the campaign to tell the country and the world that Queensland is open for business, our government has listened and responded.

I want to pay my respects to a Cairns tourism icon who passed away last week. Denis Ferguson arrived in Cairns in 1978 to take up a manager position with the airline TAA. He quickly decided that Cairns tourism was at the forefront of something very special but needed a lot of work to get the message out beyond Lee Marvin's marlin fishing exploits. After a few years at the helm of TAA, Denis

switched jobs to take up the marketing manager's role for Air Queensland and then after that he went on to set up Destination Cairns Marketing with another tourism pioneer Peter Miller. DCM provide services to many inbound tour companies to entice them to include Cairns, Port Douglas and the Far North. He set up the first charter group to come from Japan, via Port Moresby in those days, before the new international airport was opened at Cairns.

DCM morphed into a marketing company and worked on the original marketing of the Tjapukai Dance Theatre and the privately owned Kuranda commentary train and Sky Rail. More recently Denis's company developed an online reservation system for the region's tour operators—a system that gives hotel tour desk operators and concierges last seat availability to most tours, cruises and adventure operators. Denis's passing will mark the end of an era. He was one of the last true pioneers. Tourism in the Tropical North owes Denis Ferguson a great deal.

Around Cairns you will see investment in construction. It is not a boom but more a steady pipeline of works, whether it is being funded by the local government or by our government through Works for Queensland or whether it is the private industry stepping up to do their part. There is one government that has not stepped up and that is the federal government. I am hoping that tonight we will see it step up to the plate. There is no doubt that in the Far North the Great Barrier Reef is a massive icon. It does not just belong to the Far North. It does not just belong to Queensland. It belongs to Australia and the world. The federal government needs to step up tonight and do something to protect the Great Barrier Reef.