




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Keppel Electorate, Tourism

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (2.32 pm): Tourism is a cornerstone of the Central Queensland economy and the southern Great Barrier Reef region. The Palaszczuk government is building on our success with a record \$180 million funding scheme to position Queensland as Australia's leading tourist destination. In fact, we are investing more in tourism than any other government in Queensland's history. Tourism in the southern Great Barrier Reef region is going from strength to strength. We are seeing increases in domestic and international tourists visiting our region. For the southern Great Barrier Reef region, tourism is worth a whopping \$1.2 billion to the local economy and supports around 12,400 jobs. This is a 6.4 per cent growth in the number of people employed in this sector according to the latest research from Tourism Research Australia. In fact, in the year ending March 2018, two million domestic tourists visited the region spending \$1.1 billion.

The southern Great Barrier Reef destination has seen the strongest growth in visitation across the state, with 10.2 per cent growth in visitors this year. In the Central Queensland region the Queensland Labor government has been a driving force in developing tourism infrastructure and our investment is starting to pay dividends—investments such as the \$1 million upgrade at Mount Archer, \$16 million of new playground and water feature equipment at Kershaw Gardens, the \$53 million upgrade to the world-class Yeppoon foreshore and lagoon, the \$6.3 million upgrade to the Emu Park foreshore and Centenary of Anzac precinct and \$810,000 in upgrades to the lookout at Wreck Point. These investments are all drawing more and more visitors to this beautiful region.

The time is right for the government, working with industry, to push into new tourism markets and invest in innovative tourism experiences to increase our market share and grow our \$25 billion tourism industry, but we must provide a high level of tourism infrastructure to underpin the industry. The government's record \$180 million tourism spend includes \$48.6 million for the Attracting Tourism Fund, the \$36 million Growing Tourism Infrastructure Fund, the \$10 million Outback Tourism Infrastructure Fund and, importantly, \$25 million to deliver power and water infrastructure to the jewel in the crown of the southern Great Barrier Reef destination region, Great Keppel Island.

Our \$36 million Growing Tourism Infrastructure Fund, which is now open for applications, is designed to create new jobs and drive more visitors to regional Queensland. The Palaszczuk government is also investing \$25 million to rejuvenate Great Barrier Reef island resorts, with applications for this fund also now open. The Great Barrier Reef has an important role in the growth of tourism in Keppel and securing our region as a leading tourist destination. The Great Barrier Reef contributes \$6 billion to the Queensland economy and supports more than 60,000 jobs. It is without a doubt Queensland's greatest asset. However, the reef is more than just about our economy; it is an iconic part of Queensland and something we must protect for our future generations—something I hope my daughter, Odette, will cherish when she is older.

That is why we committed \$25 million during the state election campaign to revamp these island resorts. Island resorts are an iconic part of the tourism offering and are essential to attracting new and return visitors to the reef. The Great Barrier Reef Island Resorts Rejuvenation Fund has a focus on greening, growing and cleaning the GBR island resorts with one main aim—to encourage protection of the reef and its islands. This funding is in addition to the \$25 million commitment we made at the 2017 election to deliver power and water infrastructure to Great Keppel Island. Tourism operators, residents and future tourism development projects will benefit from improved access to infrastructure that will create jobs and provide a catalyst for tourism and economic development across the region. Providing affordable and reliable power and water will support existing tourist operators to become more sustainable and grow while also supporting new and expanded tourism ventures on the island.

Last week I was proud to reveal that the planned demolition of the decommissioned Great Keppel Island resort is now complete, paving the way for future development. This is a major milestone for this project. Now that demolition is out of the way, we can get on with the job. We are committed to partnering with the private sector to deliver new tourism experiences on Great Keppel Island and we are delivering on our commitment by putting a \$25 million Great Keppel Island infrastructure investment on the table, together with the opportunity for a slice of the \$36 million Growing Tourism Infrastructure Fund.

The LNP had no long-term plan to grow tourism when it was in government. At a time of unprecedented growth of the Asian middle class, those opposite took their eye off tourism and conceded market share to the southern states. They ripped \$188 million from the tourism budget. I am proud to be part of a government that is making a record \$180 million investment in tourism to create jobs in this sector in the long term. This investment is a game changer for Queensland's tourism industry, for Keppel and for the southern Great Barrier Reef.