




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Great Keppel Island Revitalisation Project

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (2.40 pm): It was exciting news that broke last week about a contract signed for the Great Keppel Island Revitalisation Project by Singapore-Taiwanese company Wei Chao. This is another positive step forward in the revitalisation of Great Keppel Island and a huge boost of confidence to the entire Central Queensland region. While we still have to do our due diligence on Wei Chao, it just goes to show our decision to invest in the Great Barrier Reef islands is the right one.

Last week I met with the investors, Isabella Wei, her husband CK and business partner Candy, alongside Mayor Bill Ludwig, Knight Frank's Pat O'Driscoll and Capricorn Enterprise CEO Mary Carroll. I take this opportunity to thank and congratulate Mayor Ludwig, Pat O'Driscoll and Mary Carroll for their tireless efforts to make this deal a reality. It is true to say that Isabella, CK and their business partner Candy are passionate to grow tourism on Great Keppel Island. They told me that they want to work with the traditional owners, the existing businesses on the island and the entire community to develop the island in a way that we can all be proud of.

The first stage of the project will be to develop key infrastructure, including a marina, airstrip and services infrastructure together with a beachfront resort. Ms Wei said she could not wait to unlock Great Keppel Island's potential. Isabella grew up in Australia and said she fell in love with the island when she visited it—as we all do. I am also pleased that Ms Wei has confirmed that the major contractor will be an Australian company and, where possible, all subcontractors working on the project will be local too which will boost our local economy and grow jobs. I am also pleased that they want to help local jobseekers into work on the project and the company plans to work with the existing businesses on the island to help them expand.

The announcement has already buoyed locals and is beginning to drive confidence in our region. On the very same day as the announcement, businesses in my electorate told me about the positive reaction they have experienced. Real estate agents tell me they have already seen an increase in sales enquiries. Carli at Two Sisters Coffee Bar at Cooe Bay said the good news just seems to keep on coming for our region at the moment. Similarly, Wendy at local children's boutique Crooked Cubby said that the news is awesome for the region and Geoff Mercer from Great Keppel Island Hideaway said for the first time in 10 years he is optimistic about the island's future.

Great Keppel Island is the jewel in the crown of our region and the Palaszczuk government is proud to be investing \$25 million into the supply of power and water to the island in order to grow tourism and jobs across the entire Central Queensland community. I committed to this funding at the 2017 state election and the Palaszczuk government is delivering on that commitment. We know that investing in infrastructure drives economic development. Investing in infrastructure facilitates investment, increases accessibility to markets and helps attract and retain workers. It is a fundamental driver of productivity and growth.

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, like the Great Keppel Island Revitalisation Project. It is great to see business owners from Great Keppel Island in the *Morning Bulletin* recently describing the investment by our government as 'fantastic' and 'essential'. Shane Bonney from GKI's Tropical Vibes said to the *Morning Bulletin*, 'For this island to go ahead, we need power and water. I'm all for it.' I table a copy of the newspaper article for the information of the House.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Morning Bulletin* online, dated 6 September 2018, titled 'GKI business owners share perspectives on power and water' [[1643](#)].

The Palaszczuk government is 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 \$25 million on the table for the Great Keppel Island infrastructure project, together with the opportunity for a slice of the \$36 million Growing Tourism Infrastructure Fund. In Central Queensland the Queensland Labor government has been a driving force in developing tourism infrastructure and our investment is starting to pay dividends. The future is looking brighter and brighter for Great Keppel Island.

Together with the state government investing in infrastructure, the Wei Chao group's investment and passion to develop a new tourism offering and also to work together with local businesses and the traditional owners, we can develop something that we are all so proud of. I have offered my support to the Wei Chao group because I know the community wants to see something happen on Great Keppel Island. We want a whole new generation of tourists to fall in love with our beautiful island situated only 12 kilometres off the Capricorn coast, a half an hour journey by ferry, with 17 beautiful white sandy beaches, clear blue water, snorkelling, reef fishing—I caught the biggest Spanish mackerel of my life just off the beach of Great Keppel Island. It is just an amazing place to visit. I look forward to the project progressing to construction and to working with Isabella, CK and Candy, together with traditional owners and island business owners, to continue to grow tourism on Great Keppel Island.