



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH

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ADJOURNMENT

Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (7.24 pm): I rise to highlight what the Gold Coast really needs to ramp up its tourist visitation numbers and it is not the non-viable, fanciful cash grab of a global tourism hub, aka the Gold Coast casino that is being bandied around by an out-of-touch tourism minister and wannabe mayor, Kate Jones. It is the immediate extension of the Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre in Broadbeach to accommodate large national and international conventions and conferences that will bring an instant increase to tourism visitation numbers to the Gold Coast and Queensland.

Every tourism operator on the Gold Coast understands that the convention market attracts high-end spenders for a longer stay period. Currently, the convention centre does a wonderful job under the astute guidance of Ms Adrienne Readings, but we need it to grow as our global tourism hub rather than having another slot machine palace that will only cannibalise further the local market provided by community clubs, pubs and our existing tourism hub called the Star casino. To think that three major slot machine casinos are sustainable in a minuscule market compared to Macau, Las Vegas and even Sydney and Melbourne shows how financially ignorant are the Labor Party boffins running the state's investment decisions.

The current convention attendance capacity of 3,500 fails to satisfy large exhibition demands. With the convention centre operating at around 85 per cent of booking capacity, international and national conventions are bypassing the Gold Coast for other larger venues. Even retaining existing convention centre users is proving difficult because of the lack of exhibition space.

Despite Broadbeach being the main beneficiary of any convention centre enlargement, there are unquestionably flow-ons to other accommodation hotspots if the conventions were too large for Broadbeach to cater for completely. That would turn Broadbeach into a genuine global tourism hub without the need to sacrifice other public lands across the Gold Coast.

The convention industry is an integral part of the tourism industry. What better place to host an international convention than on the Gold Coast with its myriad natural and man-made attractions, World Heritage listed rainforest—which we can access via cable car if allowed—42 kilometres of pristine beach, a vibrant night-life, brilliant theme parks for the kids and a world-class dining and entertainment precinct? That makes the expansion of the convention centre a no-brainer.

Juxtaposed to this sensible, practical and doable boost to Gold Coast and Queensland tourism is the harebrained scheme by the Palaszczuk Labor government for a third casino in the south-east corner of Queensland with no idea as to where it should be located, no idea who the proponents might be and no idea what sort of entertainment and usage that is to be provided by this made-up zinger terminology of a global tourism hub.