



Speech By  
**Hon. Craig Crawford**


**MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER**

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Record of Proceedings, 15 July 2020

**MOTION**

**Coronavirus, JobKeeper**

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (4.40 pm): I support the motion moved by the Treasurer. COVID-19 has been felt very hard in Cairns, as members who have spoken before me have said. Prior to COVID-19 Cairns had one of the lowest unemployment rates in Queensland, if not the lowest unemployment rate around. JobKeeper has been a big saviour for a lot of employers and employees. We have seen staged openings which have been working well, but when you speak to a lot of businesses in the Cairns region they still have a large number of their workforce on JobKeeper. They want to keep their workforce. Some of these are very highly skilled employees. They are skippers of catamarans, they are aircrew that work for various aviation companies, they are highly trained baristas and they are highly skilled in a range of industries.

We know that it will not be until international tourism returns in all of its glory again that we will see Cairns and Far North Queensland really firing like it did only around six months ago. The big tourism operators in Cairns often report to me that they generally run at around 70 per cent to 75 per cent of their clientele being international tourists—companies like Skyrail, Quicksilver and some of the big ones like that. Obviously we need those international borders to open. We understand why those international borders cannot open at this stage. At the moment Cairns is relying very heavily on JobKeeper. As reported by the member for Cairns earlier, there are more JobKeeper applications in Cairns than the Brisbane CBD—3,607 versus 3,048. Each one of those people is working for industries that are either in tourism or directly supplying tourism. They might be limousine operators and drivers. Not everyone can be reskilled overnight and trained how to drive an excavator or how to do other skills like that in which some of these employees are very specialised.

We are not attacking the JobKeeper program. We are quite happy and we are very supportive of the Prime Minister in introducing it. We simply ask that the Prime Minister acts with compassion and takes into consideration Queensland, particularly areas such as Cairns. Until we see those international markets come back, we need to continue this funded program going forward. All of the communities of Cairns would be highly supportive but especially the business community and the tourism community—my neighbours, my friends, a number of people whom I know who are on this program. They are heavily reliant on it to continue. I support the motion and thank the Treasurer for moving it.