



Speech By  
**Michael Healy**


**MEMBER FOR CAIRNS**

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Record of Proceedings, 5 February 2020

**MOTION**

**Coronavirus**

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (11.45 am): My intention in addressing the chamber is not to attack other people or belittle anyone. My point is far more relative to what is happening in my electorate. Last year more than 200,000 Chinese visitors came to Cairns and, as you would expect, this contributes hundreds of millions of dollars to our local economy. Cairns is the fourth most visited Australian city for Chinese tourists behind Sydney, Melbourne and the Gold Coast. This makes our community particularly vulnerable since the federal government introduced its ban on Chinese travel to Australia. The ban on Chinese travel to Australia as a result of the global coronavirus health emergency is devastating for tourism operators not just in Queensland and Australia but also Cairns. As has been acknowledged by previous speakers, we have been doing it tough. Mark Olsen tells me that to date there have been 47,000 cancellations. The local industry expects this to rip \$300 million out of the Cairns tourism industry. We are looking at the likelihood of 1,700 jobs at risk. Unfortunately, we know there is more to come. We know that forward bookings have ground to a halt. Our industry is hurting and we need support to get through this.

The Palaszczuk Labor government has acted swiftly. The member for Clayfield touched on the \$76 million, and it is correct that the federal government put that money out there, but that initiative was as a result of what happened in the bushfires. This is going to be an entirely different kettle of fish. We are absolutely jumping on the back of that. As the minister said, this government has acted swiftly by putting in place multimillion dollar domestic marketing campaigns to give tourism operators an immediate shot in the arm at this very tough time. I want to acknowledge and thank the Premier for hosting the economy recovery meeting this afternoon with key players. It will be a great opportunity for our industry, particularly in Cairns, to let the government, key players and the minister reinforce what I have been saying: we are doing it tough. I know that Mark Olsen, the CEO of TTNQ, has been invited and will make his case for our region.

Our government will stand with the tourism industry and tourism operators in Cairns. We want to protect this industry and, most importantly, jobs. In fact, one in five Far North Queenslanders is employed in tourism. We need federal government support to market our destination in Australia and other international markets outside of China, leverage federal support and provide airline attraction funding. Our tourism operators need relief to help cover operational expenses during this dramatic downturn.

I can share some of my experiences. I was working in tourism in Cairns when 9/11 took place. It was an absolute disaster, and we as an industry secured support from both state and federal governments at the time. When SARS happened 17 years ago I was working in the tourism industry in Cairns. It was worth about \$130 million to our region; it is now worth \$1.6 billion. It is significant, without any doubt, but it is not just tourism. We have a significant aquaculture industry which I am sure the minister will talk about. It is huge. We also have foreign students. We have three universities and 16 English language colleges, and they will be feeling the pinch.

Besides the bickering that goes on in this place, the real world out there is hurting. I know that we as a government are listening. We are engaging. There are some parts of the tourism industry that will not be impacted as much as others. The Chinese business is high volume and it is powerful in a number of destinations. We will listen to this industry and we will do what we can. It is important that we listen to trade.

We cannot just turn up and impose our ideas. We are consulting. We are going through a process. We will work through this. We will get through this. If the federal government's silo of capital does not fit into this, they need to look at changing it. This is a national and international disaster and we all need to be getting involved and working together.