



Speech By  
**Michael Healy**


**MEMBER FOR CAIRNS**

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Record of Proceedings, 17 June 2020

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Cairns Electorate, Coronavirus**

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (7.03 pm): I have always been proud to be a member of the Palaszczuk Labor government but never more so than now as a result of the way we have handled this train wreck called COVID-19. The Palaszczuk government acknowledged very early, particularly in my city, that we needed assistance and came out with a very generous \$3.67 million fee relief package for operators at the Cairns marina. This meant that operators would get 100 per cent rebates for marina and Green Island jetty fees as well as the port's retail, food and beverage commercial leasehold tenants and that the schedule of charges for the marina was frozen until January 2023.

We then extended these measures to give property tenants rent relief for six months starting on 1 April. Commercial tourism and reef operator rebates that were previously announced were then extended until 30 September. Importantly, the rebates scheme was extended to freight and industrial businesses operating out of the Cairns port. We also implemented a package worth \$660,000 to assist the commercial fishery industry in our area. These decisions were a timely and common-sense response to what the industries up there wanted.

Just last week we announced a \$5 million regional airport package which I know Norris Carter, the CEO of the Cairns Airport, is very keen to get a slice of. This funding will help the airport attract intrastate flights to the far north which will create huge flow-on benefits for our city, providing a real boost for local businesses at a time when they need it most. Yesterday, there was a further announcement that \$10 million was being made available to airports to start planning and marketing to attract interstate flights and to negotiate new routes, obviously when the borders reopen. Air travel is a key component to enabling our tourism industry and the significant economic benefits it brings, and the government will commit \$15 million to airline route support. For a quick snapshot of how the COVID-19 lockdown has affected the Cairns Airport, we need look no further than the passenger movement numbers. In April last year, about 403,000 passengers moved through Cairns Airport. In April this year, we had 11,000—a decrease of 97.2 per cent.

Last week the government also announced a \$4 million support package for icon tourism businesses in Cairns so they can continue to pay their workers through the COVID-19 pandemic. This funding is part of a \$50 million package announced last month and will support some of the region's biggest employers. The Palaszczuk government's No. 1 priority is to safeguard jobs during these tough times. One in five workers in the city of Cairns are employed in the tourism industry and many of them work at these attractions. This funding will help to give workers certainty. We will continue to work with the industry as we move forward. We have a long way to go but it is a hell of a start.