




Speech By
Hon. Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Record of Proceedings, 1 December 2020

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Coronavirus, Land Rent Relief

 **Hon. SJ STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Resources) (10.02 am): As Queensland embarks on its road to recovery post COVID-19, we need to make sure our businesses revive and thrive again. Last week I stood in this House and talked about the many ways the Palaszczuk government is providing relief for our resources sector, but we are also providing relief in other areas of my portfolio to make sure we help out those who are doing it tough where we can. That is why the Palaszczuk government has provided farmers, businesses and tourism operators with over \$50 million in land rental relief since the COVID-19 pandemic commenced. This means around 6,000 farmers, businesses, tourism operators and community and sports clubs on state owned land will not have to pay rent until early 2021.

This means that a grazier in Emerald in Central Queensland with land size of around 5,000 hectares will save nearly \$10,000—money that could be used for more hay or lick. It also means a community sports club in Rockhampton will have saved around \$16,000. This is money that can be spent on the community's benefit, such as going towards uniforms, training equipment and many other things. In the industry that has been hit the hardest by the pandemic—tourism—a tourism operator in Cairns will have saved around \$87,000 in rent since the start of the COVID pandemic.

Many operators advised that there was a downturn in their business during the summer bushfires and with the COVID-19 pandemic following and that their vacancy rates have been well below normal revenue for all of 2020 to date. So far, more than 72 tourism businesses operating on state owned land and islands have been provided with land rent relief, saving a total of more than \$5.5 million.

It has been great to see so many Queenslanders supporting each other during these tough times, with many taking their families and discovering some of the natural beauty we have right here on our doorstep. In my electorate of Townsville, we have the magnificent Magnetic Island. I have spoken to operators there who have told me that the Palaszczuk government's COVID-19 relief measures, combined with a resurgence of in-state travellers, have kept many tourism operators afloat during these tough times. I might add, Mr Speaker, that if you have never been to explore Maggie Island, I suggest you do yourself a favour and check it out—you will not be disappointed. We will come through this if Queenslanders continue to back Queenslanders, as the Palaszczuk government is backing our employers.