



Speech By  
**Amanda Camm**


**MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY**

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Record of Proceedings, 23 March 2021

**MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**Whitsunday Electorate, Tourism**

 **Ms CAMM** (Whitsunday—LNP) (2.26 pm): I rise today to draw to the attention of the government the Whitsunday region, which I believe they have forgotten. I believe they think that the Great Barrier Reef tourism industry and the tourism industry as a whole only exist in Cairns and not other parts of Queensland. I think that the current government has forgotten that they have been elected to represent all of Queensland.

The Whitsunday region represents 40 per cent of the \$6.3 billion Great Barrier Reef tourism industry. One in three jobs in the Whitsundays relies on tourism compared to Cairns, where it is one in six. Prior to COVID, operators were running at 90 per cent capacity. It is estimated that now they are running at an average of 15 per cent capacity across a fleet in both day and night markets. Our largest operator in Whitsunday is down 70 per cent due to international border closures.

We have had visits from the Minister for Tourism Industry Development and the shadow minister, the member for Cairns, to our region—not once, but twice—yet there is still no support, no funding and no advocacy from the government to support operators in my region who are currently only being supported by the private marina industry. If it were not for private marina owners in the Whitsundays I would have boats out on moorings that potentially could be washed up in weather events that will cost this state millions of dollars over the course of the summer months.

In my region 20 operators pay almost \$2.6 million in berthing fees, yet these same operators received only \$198,000 from the marina rebate scheme, which was completely flawed in the way in which it was constructed. There was a lack of consultation with both marine industry owners and operators across our community. That presents a shortfall of \$2.38 million. Cairns has been entirely subsidised 100 per cent—

**Mr HEALY:** We own the marina!

**Ms CAMM:** I will take that interjection. The Queensland government do own the marina of Cairns but that does not prohibit them from engaging with any other marine operator. It does not prohibit them from engaging with any other private marine operator in the same way. They could come and negotiate and see what could be done to support our marina operators.

Of the 37 operators from one marina precinct, only half were able to use the rebate to pay a portion of their marina fees as the eligibility was flawed—that is, the fee was not based on per metreage because whoever came up with the rebate did not even understand how the marine industry operated. Instead, it was a flat rate of up to \$20,000, and operators had to pay their berthing fee first before being able to claim. Therefore, mum-and-dad operators in the Whitsundays—not multinational foreign owned operators, like we see in Cairns—had to go to the marina owners and ask for support.

The Whitsunday Charter Boat Industry Association has written to the Premier, the minister, the assistant minister and the Treasurer to request that the marina berthing fund be re-established, that further funds be put in there and that the eligibility criteria be reviewed based on metreage and

commercial operator fees. It is not sustainable to expect the private industry in the Whitsundays to subsidise because of the nepotism of this Labor government in the way it conducts itself across our state. It is almost pork-barrelling. It is appalling.

**An opposition member:** Not 'almost'.

**Ms CAMM:** I will correct the record: it is pork-barrelling. It is absolutely appalling. My local RTO, Whitsunday tourism, has put together some numbers and facts. It has stated that the Whitsundays has received \$1.2 million, compared to \$27.8 million in subsidies across the tourism industry in the Cairns region. The Queensland government's Cairns Holiday Dollars program effectively supports the industry of Cairns, while it robs operators in the Whitsundays and stops them from getting back on their feet. I urge the Labor government to enter a dialogue with the people of the Whitsundays because it has become clear that they really do not care.

*(Time expired)*