




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Talaroo Hot Springs

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (2.30 pm): I rise today to inform the House of the recently opened Talaroo Hot Springs, run by the Ewamian people of the gulf savannah country in Far North Queensland. The Ewamian people are proud traditional owners who have maintained obviously strong physical and spiritual connection to their land for literally thousands of generations. However, their story, like that of so many other traditional owners, is one of struggle and tenacity, having been dispossessed from their lands in the late 19th century and forced to live under a protection act that fundamentally gave them limited rights and virtually no opportunities. Despite this adversity, the Ewamian people knew that the 60,000-year bond with their land could not be broken. I am pleased to say that Talaroo Hot Springs is the beneficiary of their continued relationship with and respect for that country.

I am also proud to say that Talaroo Hot Springs is the beneficiary of rightful support from the Queensland government, as this unique natural wonder is one of a suite of outback tourism attractions in the far northern drive tourism market. The Queensland Palaszczuk government has responsibly invested in the enterprise as we understand and recognise the importance of tourism infrastructure not just to the economy but also to the empowerment of advancement of our First Nations peoples.

Talaroo Hot Springs is one of a kind. It is the only mountain spring in Australia not fed through the Artesian Basin. It derives its water source via underground hot granite pathways from the nearby Newcastle Range. Formed over millions of years, this geological marvel is of scientific importance, where aquatic life in high temperatures can be observed and studied in the interests of furthering climate and environmental knowledge.

Undoubtedly, Talaroo Hot Springs is an opportunity to bring visitors and tourists on country for a spectacular cultural tourism experience under the guidance and wisdom of the traditional owners. This is something that we as a government have been working on with the Indigenous population. We want to see these products take place. Recently I had the privilege of visiting Talaroo springs and can advise that the infrastructure and facilities built onsite are absolutely outstanding. It is a fantastic experience. Aesthetically blended boardwalks, bathing pools and camping facilities are now available along with authentic cultural tours explaining both the geological and the traditional owner aspects. I was impressed by the natural and genuine experience on offer. It is not surprising that we are seeing fantastic responses from a variety of sightseers and guests enjoying the bush hospitality and beautiful landscape. I can confirm that the welcome extended to all the guests is absolutely unprecedented. I have experienced a range of products in my time. The Ewamian people have done extremely well in their articulate manner of presentation.

I personally thank Ewamian elder Jimmy Richards for his vision and leadership at Talaroo. Jim's connection with the lands goes back to many levels. As a young man he worked as a jackaroo, maintaining fences and doing a range of other jobs. While Jim's spiritual link with Talaroo is strong, he also acknowledges that when you work hard and care for country an economic future can be found.

With Cobbold Gorge and Undara lava tubes nearby and readily accessible by the Gulf Developmental Road, these complementary experiences will further promote the Savannah Way as a sought-after leisure and adventure destination. Indeed, the Palaszczuk government has also seen fit to support these two other products, ensuring that we have fantastic world-class products in our regional areas, particularly in the bush.

These have all been the beneficiaries of the Growing Tourism Infrastructure Fund and the Outback Tourism Infrastructure Fund. These iconic tourism assets have been recipients of state government backing. These growing tourism funds equate to tens of millions of dollars in financial assistance. I am pleased to say that this investment is already reaping rewards, with bookings, accommodation and occupancy skyrocketing whilst we are in the middle of COVID. Of course, the challenges to tourism presented by COVID remain but, importantly, the state government continues to invest and support the industry in a range of ways.

The world-class Talaroo Hot Springs, run by Ewamian people, is one of the amazing and unique products we have all across our wonderful state. I congratulate and thank all involved for their hard work, input and ongoing commitment to this amazing and unique tourism product. We know that tourism provides an excellent opportunity for many of our First Nations people.