




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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ADJOURNMENT

Western Queensland, Tourism

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (8.20 pm): I rise to draw attention to the importance of tourism in the Western Queensland economy and ask that the Labor government supports the industry in the seat of Gregory. COVID-19 travel restrictions in the previous two years have seen western drive tourism expand from a well-established grey nomad market to include a family holiday market, which is fantastic. I am keen to see the expansion sustained and I am keen to see that we continue to support our Western Queensland tourism industry.

The tourism industry in Western Queensland is a product that is unrivalled by any product in Australia. We have so much to offer and we need to continue to support that. We also need to see the widening of accommodation choices. We have seen that the accommodation choices are getting better and better in Western Queensland and, of course, we have the world-class glamping and farmstays in addition to caravan parks and motels.

We desperately need to offer some expandable travel choices. The iconic Spirit of the Outback from Brisbane to Longreach in an obvious starting point. Visitors remark on the difficulty of booking sleeper berths. This highlights the urgent need to expand the option and better meet that demand, so we need to continue to expand the Spirit of the Outback. I urge the Labor government to commission the construction of more sleepers, both double and single berths, and to examine ways of allowing travellers greater flexibility of leaving and rejoining the train. As tourism operators can now offer four-wheel drive experiences to nearby attractions and activities, travellers should be able to plan their trip that sees them break from the journey at stations such as Blackwater, Emerald or Barcaldine and enjoy the sights of those locations.

The other issue requiring government attention is the workforce—the difficulty of tourism and hospitality operators finding staff to operate, let alone expanding these businesses. Part of the problem is the severe shortage of rental properties for staff to live in. I urge the Labor government to build new accommodation in western communities for government employees. This will not only allow the government to better recruit and retain public servants in frontline roles such as in teaching, police and health; it will also see rental accommodation currently held by the state government returned to the private rental market.

The other key area is vocational and hospitality qualifications for young people. I am most grateful to the education minister for funding the long overdue maintenance of the Big Red Truck, as we call it; however, the necessary work required will see the Big Red Truck taken off the road for almost a year. We need to get the Big Red Truck back on the road. We have the Olympics coming in 2032, so let's get the hospitality industry going and back to work.