




Speech By
Michael Healy

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

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ADJOURNMENT

Great Barrier Reef Experience

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (7.20 pm): When the member for Bonney arrived, I was 27. I have seen a lot of the investment that Labor has made and I would like to talk about that now. Last month, I accompanied Minister Hinchliffe to the launch of Experience Co's new floating activity platform in Cairns. This is an outstanding and remarkable piece of technology which the government contributed to significantly, and I will talk about that shortly. The new activity platform is the first to be built on the Northern Great Barrier Reef. It was built by Austal and English Engineering Cairns. They have built pontoons and 45-metre high-speed wave-piercing catamarans. We can build things and we continue to build more. I am sure once we get a real federal government we will see more business in our part of the world.

There is no doubt that this platform will enhance the experience of tourists and our tourism offering for the region. In addition to the new swimming platforms, we will have a 10-seat air-conditioned underwater observatory with floor-to-ceiling windows and a fully functioning scientific lab where reef research and projects will be conducted by Great Barrier Reef marine biologists and master reef guides. We also have Indigenous guides, who are fundamental to the new experience being offered by Experience Co.

Other activities for guests include fish feeding, introductory and certified diving, guided snorkelling tours, one of the largest helmet diving circuits on the Great Barrier Reef and a huge sundeck with sun lounges where visitors can relax in comfort while admiring the beauty of the Great Barrier Reef, which is being well protected by us. The pontoon has three levels and is 1,003 square metres and the capacity to host up to 250 guests, making it the largest reef pontoon on the Great Barrier Reef. It is also important to acknowledge that we have spent \$176 million expanding the Cairns Convention Centre, so we will have more events.

Mr Harper: How much?

Mr HEALY: \$176 million.

Mr Harper: That is a lot of money.

Mr HEALY: That is a significant investment which we will get a great return on. When those groups and businesses come to our city, we have the appropriate infrastructure and we will be able to cater for them.

Experience Co Ltd is an Australian listed public company founded in 1999—not long after the member for Bonney was born—which specialises in adventure and leisure tourism and brands. This pontoon project is one of 22 projects funded through the \$25 million Growing Tourism Infrastructure Fund. This is important. I spent nearly 30 years in tourism, and I can say that during COVID people were not investing. This government works with the private sector and continues to see significant products being born and this is one of them. This fund is a key element of the Queensland economic

recovery strategy, Unite and Recover for Queensland Jobs. This is a fantastic investment and is another example of the Palaszczuk government working with the private sector, ensuring a strong future for tourism.