




Speech By
Bryson Head

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

Record of Proceedings, 30 November 2023

TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to take Note

 **Mr HEAD** (Callide—LNP) (3.46 pm): I rise to talk about the inquiry into the economic and regulatory frameworks for Queensland island resorts that was conducted by the Transport and Resources Committee. This was the first inquiry that I was a part of as a new member in this House and it was certainly a good one to embark on as my first inquiry. When some people heard I was going on an island resorts inquiry, they thought 'Gee, you've landed a good gig becoming the member for Callide, Bryson.' A couple of my colleagues said that they had been members of this House for an extended time and had not been on a committee inquiry anything like that. It was certainly a very packed trip, with eight hearings over a short period. There was a lot of travel and a lot of time in a bus.

As was said by the member for Gregory and other members, there was some transport across the ocean, which was not exactly favourable if you are not good at sea. The three-metre-odd swell we had going across to Keswick Island is not something I will forget anytime soon. I might enjoy my fishing and I might not be too bad on the water, but when a boat is rolling around like that one was it can get to the very best of us. It was certainly an experience getting in the little tender to go across to Keswick Island, as was trying to cart the Hansard gear and everything else to have a public hearing on an island at a private residence. What we learned by doing that was certainly very worthwhile, and the residents on Keswick Island very much appreciated the opportunity to get a lot of their concerns on the record.

I note that the member for Whitsunday had been raising a lot of those concerns for a very long time not only in this House but previously when she was the deputy mayor in that region. That just speaks to the advocacy from the member for Whitsunday. The member for Condamine, as shadow minister for resources, was also fighting for things to be done on these island resorts for an extended period of time.

There were hearings conducted as part of that committee trip, and following that, the committee made 18 recommendations in the report. I want to talk to a couple of them. Recommendation 1 was that the Department of Resources should take immediate action to cancel tourism leases where lessees have been determined by the departmental audit within the last three years to be noncompliant with lease conditions. This recommendation highlighted as well that we should not have had to have this inquiry in order to get a lot of action that has happened since from the Department of Resources. There are a lot of laws in place that could have been followed up on and there is a lot of compliance action that the department could have taken. However, in typical form, the government did not want to act until they were dragged kicking and screaming to do it. At the very least, thanks to the great advocacy from the likes of the member for Whitsunday, we have seen some results but there is certainly a long way to go.

In response to recommendation 5 from the committee, the government noted that the Land Act had already allowed significant penalties and fines to be applied for noncompliance with lease conditions. That is in the government's response to some of these recommendations. Again, there is a

lot there that the government could have been doing, but they chose to wait for a public committee inquiry before doing something. I say to the government: just start doing it. You are in government, you have ministers there, so you can start making decisions and get things done for the sake of Queensland.

Keppel was a part of the world we went to as well. We flew into Rocky, and we have heard comments around the cancelled flights from Rocky. I am lucky; I had driven to Rocky, so I got in my car at Rockhampton and headed for home while all my colleagues were stuck there trying to get a flight out that night. If the people of Keppel and Rockhampton want a true advocate for them when it comes to issues such as the islands, all they need to do is support Nigel Hutton and Donna Kirkland in the state election in 2024 because they will fight hard for their communities and they will make sure that the government follows through and delivers for the island resorts up the coast. If we did this committee inquiry again, we should be considering the impact of fire ants on island resorts and upon tourism in Queensland.

(Time expired)