




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

Record of Proceedings, 30 November 2023

TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to take Note

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (3.37 pm): I would like to make a small contribution to the Inquiry into the economic and regulatory frameworks for Queensland's island resorts. First of all, I would like to put on record my thanks to the member for Condamine and the member for Whitsunday for bringing this to our attention. As deputy chair of the Transport and Resources Committee, this is something that I know both of those members were very keen for us to inquire into. Secondly, I would thank the chair of the Transport and Resources Committee for what he has done and being able to steer this inquiry the right way.

I will be honest with you, Madam Deputy Speaker: this is probably one of the best inquiries I have ever seen in this House—to give us an opportunity to try and protect what was once our absolute jewel in the crown for the tourism industry. I remember as a young bloke when we went to South Molle Island and other islands in the Whitsundays. Back then they were in their heyday. There was Hamilton Island, which Keith Williams built, Daydream Island and those other islands. Right now, today, those islands are not what they used to be. We have a real issue here when we are trying to find a tourism offering for overseas markets to come to our tourism industry.

I suppose members are thinking: why is the member for Gregory so keen on these islands? He is out west. I have a dream to match our outback tourism industry with the Great Barrier Reef. We need to give our international tourists a reef and beef tour. They want the real reef, which is in the Whitsundays, Cairns, Townsville and all of that area along the Great Barrier Reef. Outback tourism wants to take those people for a couple of days and put them in the real outback.

One issue I have always had—and I am not taking anything away from South-East Queensland—is that when people come in from overseas they go to the Gold Coast, they go to Yatala to the Outback Spectacular—

Ms Pugh: And the pies.

Mr MILLAR: And the Yatala pies; I take that interjection. We have such an incredible opportunity to give overseas tourists—whether they are from South-East Asia, Japan, Germany or the US—that real Queensland experience which is organic—

Mr Head: They just need to come to Callide for that.

Mr MILLAR: They can go to Callide too, but I want them to come to Longreach and to Winton to experience that as well.

What stood out in this inquiry was the neglect of those islands by people who currently have the leases over them. I am really proud of the recommendations that were brought forward and put into this report. Recommendation 1 states—

The Department of Resources should take immediate action to cancel tourism leases where lessees have been determined by departmental audit within the last three years to be non-compliant with lease conditions, subject to the requirements of natural justice.

I think that is extremely important. It is a use it or lose it opportunity. If they do not want to continue to upgrade those islands, then they need to lose them. I will give an example, and I will also be up-front, honest and transparent. I went to Keswick Island and one of the main people there was a bloke called Col Wilson. Col used to be my news editor at the ABC in Mackay. He is a good mate of mine, but what he said to me was absolutely true.

For us to get to Keswick Island, we had to catch the *Wildcat*. I am a typical bloke from out bush in the outback; I am not great on the sea. We got to the Mackay Harbour and we used a wonderful company and got on a boat called the Mackay *Wildcat*. It was a beautiful boat but probably a little bit small for me. I think we had 20-knot winds heading over to Keswick Island and then we had to get off. There was no barge there for us to get off so we had to get off into a tender and go across in a dinghy to Keswick Island. While that was not good for me, I was thinking about elderly people or someone in a medical emergency or someone who needs to get to Mackay very quickly. That needs to be fixed.

I want to thank the people of Keswick Island. It is the most beautiful island I have ever seen. If you ever want to see an island which has that beautiful residential approach to it, it is Keswick Island. I certainly hope the minister will take notice of these recommendations in the report to fix these islands so we can continue tourism in Queensland.