




Speech By
Patrick Weir

MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE

Record of Proceedings, 30 November 2023

TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (3.17 pm): I rise to speak on the report of the Transport and Resources Committee's inquiry into the economic and regulatory frameworks for Queensland's island resorts. My interest in the islands started a long time ago. I remember many years ago when I was only a young fellow that a mate and I went up to Cairns. I worked different jobs in various areas around Cairns. Then I got a job as a builder's labourer on Lizard Island. I was on Lizard Island for four months. I actually turned 21 working as a builder's labourer on Lizard Island. I have not been back. I must go back some day.

This is an inquiry that the LNP has fought for and was long overdue. This inquiry follows years of complaints from residents living on and visiting many Queensland islands. It also follows widespread criticism from tourism providers who know what an asset these island resorts can and should be.

I acknowledge the committee's efforts under the leadership of the chair, the member for Kurwongbah, and the deputy chair, the member for Gregory. Also on the committee are: James Martin, Les Walker, Trevor Watts—and I featured for a little while as well. The research secretary at the time was Dr Amanda Beem. The inquiry was one in which I was very interested and very pleased to be part of. We in this place are often critical of committee reports. This is an example of what can be produced. It is a very good committee report with 18 very good recommendations. For those members of the House who have not read this report, I would encourage them to do so because it would answer most of their questions.

As I mentioned, the government should be doing everything it can to showcase our island tourism offering to the world. They are some of the greatest assets that Queensland has. Many tourists, both local and international, are looking for an ecotourism experience, and the government should be planning for and backing this growing market. It is a boom that our state could reap the rewards of and it would underpin decades of jobs and investment in Queensland's regional communities and our important tourism industry. Instead, as the report has outlined, the state of many Queensland islands has descended into rack and ruin. For eight years the Palaszczuk government has allowed these islands to be run into the ground. The content of the report and the number of recommendations show that this inquiry was well overdue.

This issue and the complexity of the management of these islands has been raised with me many times in my role as shadow minister for natural resources. The member for Whitsunday, Amanda Camm, invited me to see firsthand the access and leasing problems that residents were experiencing on Keswick Island. I am sure the member for Whitsunday will update the House on the progress or otherwise that has happened there since. It was an unforgettable trip in more ways than one. The seas were very rough that day indeed.

The other area where this hit home to me was on Double Island. When I was on one of my visits to Cairns I was invited to beautiful Palm Cove to meet some local residents who were very upset with the degeneration of the Double Island Resort. Without going into a lot of detail, there had been a lot of lease breaches. There was decay in the dwellings there. There were weed issues. There were environmental issues. Under no circumstances should that have been allowed and tolerated. I understand that action is happening in that space. When the minister comes in he will probably update the House on where that stands, but that takes us to the next part of this whole program—that is, what happens next?

The model for islands has changed over the years. Ecotourism is definitely a booming area. Whether that is a good fit for Double Island remains to be seen, but we need to be open to that and facilitate that a lot better. As the member for Kurwongbah said, having a one-stop shop is vitally important because there are so many overlaps, whether it be natural resources, the environment, local councils or GBRMPA. It needs to be better streamlined. There is also the issue of cyclones and the damage and destruction to buildings and who takes ownership of cleaning it up.

I cannot finish without saying that in North Queensland we are very fortunate to have two very good candidates in Bree James in Barron River and Yolonde Entsch in Cairns.

(Time expired)