




Speech By
Shane King

MEMBER FOR KURWONGBAH

Record of Proceedings, 30 November 2023

TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr KING** (Kurwongbah—ALP) (3.12 pm): I move—

That the House take note of the Transport and Resources Committee Report No. 31, 57th Parliament, *Inquiry into the economic and regulatory frameworks for Queensland island resorts*, tabled on 17 March 2023.

The Transport and Resources Committee resolved to hold an inquiry into Great Barrier Reef island resorts after becoming aware of the stories that we had been hearing about failed development. It is not just about the abandoned and damaged infrastructure that litters some of our coastal islands; it is also about the impact that development—or the lack of development—has on everyone's right to access and enjoy these amazing natural spaces. We travelled to hear from Queenslanders about how they were affected when developers failed to deliver on the promises they make when they first buy or propose to build an island resort.

We were very fortunate in travelling to see some of these island developments firsthand. We held eight public hearings. We went to Cairns, Airlie Beach, Mackay and Yeppoon. We had three hearings in Brisbane. In what I believe was a first, we held a hearing in a private residence on Keswick Island. I would like to thank the Gilbert family for their hospitality and Col Wilson and the rest of the residents for their honesty and patience. I have to say that I am just a bit—no, a lot—jealous of the paradise that they call home. It is a beautiful place.

I want to thank all of the witnesses who appeared before our committee and the individuals and organisations who made written submissions. I would like to thank our Transport and Resources Committee secretariat staff and departmental officers. I thank Amanda, who filled in as committee secretary on that away trip—it was not an easy looking after us for that difficult week—and our Hansard reporter. After a long week away, we were hit by the Qantas Friday evening curse where our 6 pm flight was finally cancelled at 11 pm, but I will not go into that any further.

We made 18 recommendations, most of which, I am pleased to say, have been supported or supported in principle. Time permitting, I will touch on a few of those. Some of the problems that we identified included the confusion and red tape around three levels of government and how they interact with each. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, GBRMPA, will say one thing but that appears to stifle plans made under other authorities. Recommendation 17 of the committee supported the idea of some sort of one-stop shop in these tripartite situations so that residents and affected people have one place to sort out these issues.

We heard accusations that some leaseholders were buying up land with no intention to follow through on development, otherwise called land banking. We also made a recommendation on that. I see that there has been enforcement action for some leaseholders at Double Island and Great Keppel. We heard anecdotally from witnesses that the traditional model of the large resorts appears not to be

as popular. Tourists can visit Bali much more cheaply than they can visit big resorts. A lot of tourists want more environmentally sustainable options as well. Hamilton Island is a stand-out exception—the Oatley family has had roaring success. There is space for both types.

Some resorts that have been subject to the ravages of Queensland's version of Mother Nature have bounced back whereas others have deemed it not economical to rebuild. It was devastating to see resorts left to rot. Great Keppel Island stood out in particular. It is lucky that the area has a fantastic local member in Brittany Lauga, who has never given up on seeing things progress. The situation on Keswick Island, as described by locals, was by far the most emotive. They told us that over the years they felt intimidated by Oasis Forest. They told us of being shadowed around the island by security and other matters—even having their Christmas tree cut down.

There is a barge that has been out of operation for a lengthy period. This has necessitated groceries and supplies being shipped over on a dive service and transferred to a rubber dinghy to get to the barge ramp. That is how we travelled to the island with all the Hansard gear. It is precarious, to say the least. A jetty would be nice. I understand that that is being worked on now. We tried again and again to get Oasis Forest before the committee. They sent planners and everyone else but no-one who could refute these allegations. They even removed a plane from the island. We thought having a plane to leave the island in an emergency was a sensible safety measure. I was pleased to see that after our report was tabled the plane was back. Talks are underway for a marina or jetty. I encourage locals there to keep up the fight. It is a beautiful piece of paradise in which they live. They should be able to enjoy it without intimidation. I think this report was a fair representation of what was put before us. I commend it to the House.