




Speech By
Brittany Lauga

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

Record of Proceedings, 14 February 2024

TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Ms LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (2.02 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Transport and Resources Committee report *Inquiry into the economic and regulatory frameworks for Queensland island resorts*. I begin by congratulating and thanking the committee and the chair for their work and efforts in coming to Central Queensland and to Yeppoon to hear from our local stakeholders about the importance of the inquiry. The recommendations they have made have been very well received by my community, industry and tourism operators.

In the electorate of Keppel there are a number of amazing islands off the coast in the Southern Great Barrier Reef. The most famous of all of those islands is, of course, the beautiful and majestic Great Keppel Island—or Woppa, as it is known by the traditional owners and native title holders, the Woppaburra people. I have spoken a number of times in this place about the beauty and magic that is Great Keppel Island in the Southern Great Barrier Reef, how proud I am to have that jewel in our crown right there, just a number of kilometres off the coast of Yeppoon and how much I have enjoyed it.

An honourable member interjected.

Ms LAUGA: It is beautiful. I take that interjection. I have enjoyed visiting that island since I was a little girl. Many people have great stories and memories of their visits to Great Keppel Island.

While the island has not always had a bright past, through the recommendations that have been made in this committee report and the work that the state government is doing I hope that Great Keppel Island has a bright future. Last year we all celebrated when the Department of Resources made Tower Holdings relinquish the leases it held over around 700 hectares of land on the island. They held a huge parcel of leases and basically held us all to ransom for over 10 years. More than 10 years ago they closed the resort on Great Keppel Island and it has been left to sit and perish.

Ms Pease: Shame.

Ms LAUGA: It is a form of environmental vandalism. What is left there is a tragedy. Thankfully, the leases are back in the state government's hands as a result of the actions of the then Palaszczuk government. We have control of those parcels of land. We can set the future for what that land will look like and the future of Great Keppel Island, having been held to ransom for so many years by that unscrupulous developer. Now these leases have been relinquished, the state government is starting to work on cleaning up the old resort. I am instructed that the department is using every lever that it can utilise to try to recoup the costs associated with the clean-up from Tower Holdings as a result of it leaving the resort in such a disgraceful way.

Over the past few years, we have been working on a master plan for the island in consultation with a large group of stakeholders. I think there are about 50 stakeholders on the working group mailing list who have all played a really important role in developing the master plan. What I love about the master plan is that it has been developed by the community for the community. In consultation with the

traditional owners, the tourism operators and the residents of the island, the master plan has been developed by the community for the community. In years gone by, a revolving door of developers have had grand plans for what they wanted to do with the old resort, none of which came to fruition.

Now that Tower Holdings has relinquished the leases, we have taken back control of the island and we are developing a master plan that sets out a bright future for the island. I am really pleased that that has been supported by the recommendations from this committee inquiry. Recommendation 1 of the committee states—

The Department of Resources should take immediate action to cancel tourism leases where lessees have been determined by departmental audit ... to be non-compliant with lease conditions ...

I am particularly pleased that that has happened on Great Keppel Island. I envisage that that recommendation and government policy will go on to provide future benefits to other island resorts where this has been the case and developers have held us to ransom. I am very pleased that we are delivering \$30 million worth of infrastructure improvements on the island including a new wastewater treatment plant and walking trails. I commend the committee report to the House.

(Time expired)