




Speech By
Hon. Michael Healy

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Record of Proceedings, 14 February 2024

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Tourism Industry

 **Hon. MP HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Sport) (9.54 am): I am honoured also to stand before the House as the new Minister for Tourism and Sport in the Miles government. I may be a new minister, but I have had a lifetime of experience in sport and I am a veteran of nearly 40 years experience working in and around the tourism industry. I will be drawing on all of that experience to help our tourism operators get back on their feet following what can only be described as a horrendous summer of natural disasters across our state. I have been out to many of the affected regions and met personally with not just the operators but also the ever-important regional tourism organisations. Their strength and resilience in these tough times is to be admired. There is a long rebuild ahead for many, but I can assure you, Mr Speaker, and the industry that the Miles government will be with them every step of the way.

Already, the Queensland and Australian governments have partnered to deliver more than \$29 million in disaster recovery assistance to tourism operators in the Far North—and this is desperately needed. This targeted funding is supporting the industry to get back to business with: one, exceptional assistance and resilient infrastructure grants; two, discounted flights and accommodation; and, three, campaigns to profile tourism experiences and, most importantly, boost events.

In that light, I am delighted to announce today another new initiative. Virgin Australia and Tourism and Events Queensland are bringing discounted flights to the Whitsundays, Townsville and Cairns. From today, Aussies can snap up big discounts on Virgin Australia flights to Queensland from a range of destinations with over 300,000 seats on sale, starting at retail prices as cheap as \$69. This Virgin Australia sale gives travellers even more reason to have a holiday in the Far North where tourism is the lifeblood of those economies. We know tourism employs as many as one in three people in the Whitsundays and one in five in the Cairns region.

Severe weather events also affected the Gold Coast and Townsville. We recognised that they also needed a lot of assistance because the impact on the Australia Day long weekend trade was significant. We have backed our tourism operators in these regions also. We have been rolling out the incredibly popular Gold Coast Summer FUNds initiative on the Gold Coast, while Tourism and Events Queensland's Unmissable Holiday Deals campaign is shining a spotlight on Townsville and the Whitsundays. Queensland is open for business. The best way to help the tourism industry recover is to book a holiday in this wonderful part of our state. If you are dreaming of a tropical getaway, the welcome mat is well and truly out. Come on up; we would love to see you.