



Speech By  
**Michael Healy**


**MEMBER FOR CAIRNS**

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**PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT**

**Far North Queensland, Tourism**

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (2.44 pm): Today I extend my sincere congratulations to both Matt Smith on his election as the new federal member for Leichhardt and Senator Nita Green on her appointment as Assistant Minister for Tourism and Assistant Minister for Northern Australia. Their success represents a strong endorsement of Labor's forward-looking vision for Far North Queensland—one that champions jobs, infrastructure, environmental stewardship and a thriving and, most importantly, sustainable tourism sector.

Federal Labor's commitment in the 2025 election campaign laid out a bold and very practical roadmap for strengthening tourism in Queensland. Key measures like the expansion of fee-free TAFE will train more Queenslanders for vital roles in hospitality and tourism, while investments such as the \$7.2 billion Bruce Highway upgrade and regional airport improvements will improve access and drive long-term regional growth. Of critical importance is the \$10 million Reef Educational Experience Fund, which will support local operators while ensuring the reef remains central to our region's identity and, most importantly, to our prosperity.

After discussions with Tourism Tropical North Queensland, the tourism industry in the Far North, we all collectively believe that it should be a strategic imperative that Cairns host the Australian Tourism Exchange in 2028. Now is the time to seize that momentum. I have been in contact with the federal minister for tourism and I have stated that claim, as I have with Senator Nita Green.

The Australian Tourism Exchange is the largest tourism trade show in the Southern Hemisphere. Cairns was the first regional city to host this prodigious event back in 2014. Since then, we have seen hundreds of millions of dollars invested in new hotels in and around Cairns, along with a \$176 million expansion and upgrade of the Cairns Convention Centre.

Cairns is the gateway to two World Heritage areas, home to world-class operators and a global icon in nature-based tourism. Considering that the Tropical Far North is still yet to get back to its 2019 international visitor numbers since COVID, the Australian Tourism Exchange would provide the opportunity to showcase the best of our region to international buyers, deliver real benefits to local tourism businesses and reaffirm Cairns as a global destination. To achieve this, we need all levels of government pulling in the same direction. The Queensland government must get behind this opportunity and make a strong case for bringing ATE to Cairns. I have written to the Premier and the tourism minister, making them aware of this outstanding opportunity. Our industry is ready. Our region is ready. What we need now is the political support for our industry's vision to deliver this transformative outcome for Far North Queensland and allow Cairns the chance to shine not only on a national scale but also on a global scale.