



Speech By


Michael Healy

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Cairns Electorate, Events

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (2.06 pm): Today I rise to express the deep disappointment felt across Cairns and the Far North following yet another series of blows to our events calendar—blows that will have real and lasting impacts on local jobs, our tourism economy and the confidence of a region that has always punched well above its weight.

Before I do that, I want to touch on the fact that on Tuesday evening I stated that there had been no new agreements or announcements under the Connecting Queensland Fund. Since then, the minister has made me aware of an announcement of which I was not aware at the time. We have not found an official press release, but I understand that 24 hours before I made my announcement in the House there was a Facebook post by the Assistant Minister for Tourism. I am not sure if that is how the government is now making announcements. As such, I acknowledge the one announcement. I want to correct the record and apologise for any inadvertent error.

Cairns is not only a beautiful place to live but also one of Australia's most recognised tourism destinations. Events are not an optional extra for us; they are a critical economic driver. Every year, major events inject tens of millions of dollars into our visitor economy, filling hotel rooms, supporting hospitality, sustaining airlines, creating jobs and building the international profile that keeps our region competitive. Crankworx alone delivered more than \$20 million to the state's economy—to our economy in the Far North—between 2022 and 2024. It generated 67,000 room nights, drew 23,000 spectators and reaches 1.9 million viewers globally each year. It cemented Cairns as a world-leading mountain-biking destination, yet under the Crisafulli government this internationally renowned festival has been allowed to slip through our fingers.

The damage does not stop there. Cairns has also been snubbed for the Rugby League World Cup. Despite our world-class Barlow Park, despite recent investment in lighting upgrades to broadcast standard and despite our proven ability to host elite rugby league, we have not been allocated even a single game. Meanwhile, Brisbane, Townsville and other destinations will enjoy this event and share of the 110,000 visitors expected for the tournament.

When the tourism minister visited Cairns and said, 'We've got your back,' the people of Cairns took him at his word. However, that word rings very hollow today because, when we see the real opportunities, the Far North has been abandoned. Nowhere is this clearer than in the Premier's latest announcement on Triple M that Mackay will host a test match against Bangladesh next year—no mention of Cairns—a test match that could quite easily be held in Cairns—

Mr Smith: Or Bundaberg.

Mr HEALY: Or Bundaberg. We have the magnificent Cazalys Stadium in Cairns. More importantly, we need these events for our economy. For a government that claims Queensland to be the events capital of the nation, the neglect of the Far North exposes that slogan as nothing more than spin.

(Time expired)