

Speech By

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HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE; REPORT, MOTION TO TAKE NOTE

Mr BOOTHMAN (Theodore—LNP) (3.25 pm): It is a pleasure to rise to make a contribution to what the Auditor-General said in *Report 12: 2022-23—Growing ecotourism in Queensland*. Being a member on the Gold Coast, I can say that ecotourism in Australia's tourism capital is critically important. Ecotourism on the Gold Coast is something that our region is built on. We have the green behind the gold, with some of the most pristine places anywhere in the world. We have the Gondwana Rainforests in the hinterlands behind the Gold Coast—

Mr Stevens: World Heritage at Springbrook.

Mr BOOTHMAN: That area is World Heritage listed, and I take the interjection from the member for Mermaid Beach. I want to give an overview of that region and talk about a very important person in history who was instrumental in ensuring this area was locked up for national park so that it could be appreciated forever. There is a region in that area which has Antarctic beech trees that are up to 300 years old. Some of the root systems in those trees are over 1,000 years old. One person who was critically important in protecting this region was Romeo Lahey because he campaigned for Lamington National Park to be formed. He was a local businessman, the son of a timber-getter in the Canungra region. He was very passionate as a conservationist and he believed in protecting this region because it was a critically important area that was diverse with beautiful rainforests, open scrub et cetera. I would like to quote some of his words about Lamington National Park and the McPherson Range which highlight that ecotourism has been around a long time. He said—

... it is a land of mountains, waterfalls, valleys, rivers, scrubs, forests, magnificent panorama and charming spots teeming with native animals and plant life. Its mountains run up to 4000ft. high, and its waterfalls are not equalled outside the State. Within a five mile radius of the head of the Coomera River, there are fifty falls from 20ft to 600ft high, some of them the finest I have ever seen.

These words are from Romeo, a proud and strong Queenslander. His business actually folded because, even though he was a timber-getter, he decided the region needed to be locked up and protected for generations to come. He actually worked with the Queensland government at the time and spoke to Macartney, the then minister for lands, to have the land transferred so it could be protected. It shows that Queensland is built on ecotourism, and there have been generations involved in ecotourism. The Gold Coast is certainly key to that. We have some beautiful areas in the Gold Coast such as the natural arch, Springbrook and Tamborine Mountain. Tamborine Mountain is an ecotourism hive for the Gold Coast. It is something that the Gold Coast is built on. About 30,000 individuals are employed by the tourism industry on the Gold Coast. In the Scenic Rim itself about 1,500 people are employed by the tourism industry. That again shows it is a major and important employer.

Having said that, in the Scenic Rim we also have some of the best dark skies of anywhere in South-East Queensland. This is creating a new type of tourism where people come out to look at the stars. This type of ecotourism is becoming more popular because of the advent of better technology

and automatic telescopes. A lot of people are now heading out to the Scenic Rim on a dark night to admire the wonders of the universe. Therefore, it is something we need to look into protecting because city lights cause issues when it comes to dark-sky photography.

I commend the minister for taking a very proactive approach and getting on with the job of ensuring that the Auditor-General's recommendations have been looked into and properly dealt with. It shows that the Crisafulli government is here for ecotourism and tourism on the Gold Coast and in the Scenic Rim. Tourism is one of the most important drivers in our region.