

Question on Notice
No. 890
Asked on 26 May 2011

MS DARLING ASKED THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM, MANUFACTURING AND SMALL BUSINESS (MS JARRATT) —

QUESTION:

Having enjoyed the hospitality of the Mackay-Whitsunday region during regional Parliament, will the Minister inform the House what is being done to help tourism operators?

ANSWER:

Tourism is the State's second largest export earner. It directly contributes \$9.2 billion annually to Queensland's economy and directly employs 122,000 people. The tourism industry in the Mackay Isaac Whitsunday region alone directly accounts for over 6,800 jobs and contributes over \$514 million to the economy.

The Government recognises the vital role tourism operators play in generating economic activity and employment in the region and has invested strongly in supporting industry recovery.

In response, the Australian and Queensland Governments committed \$12 million to support a range of initiatives designed to attract tourists back to Queensland and build industry resilience.

This \$12 million package includes: The \$10 million Nothing Beats Queensland campaign, which is focused on alleviating adverse impacts caused by negative publicity with the clear message that Queensland's tourism industry is strong and very much open for business; and an additional \$2 million Business Resilience Package which is focused on building industry capacity specific to the individual needs and attributes of each region. This involves the delivery of Tourism Industry Recovery Forums across the state, (including most recently in Airlie Beach on 26 May 2011), and a Capacity Building Program which includes 14 tailored workshops in consultation with Regional Tourism Organisations within the Mackay Whitsunday region.

In addition, a new dedicated Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation's (DEEDI) Principal Tourism Development Officer has recently been established in the Mackay Whitsunday region to help tourism operators develop their business and work to promote new tourism investment. The officer will work closely with Tourism Queensland (TQ), local Regional Tourism Organisations, councils and local businesses to drive the ongoing development and recovery of the tourism industry.

Under their local branding strategy, TQ is also undertaking additional marketing initiatives specific to the Whitsunday region. This includes the launch of *The Whitsundays, 74 Island Wonders* in February 2011 and a 74 Hour Sale campaign in April 2011, which targeted Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane markets. TQ partnered with Virgin Australia on both campaigns, which also involved a combined 37 local tourism operators. The 74 Hour Sale campaign was a great success, resulting in over 22,000 visitors to the campaign website with an online conversion of 33 per cent.

Additionally, the Natural Disaster and Recovery Relief Arrangements (NDRRA) have also provided two small businesses in the region with funding support to the value of \$10,000 to help them on the road to recovery.

The DEEDI Regional Service Centre in Mackay has also dedicated specific resources to provide direct industry support and help Whitsunday operators build resilience and access specialist advice. DEEDI also provides a suite of online interactive tools that can be accessed via the DEEDI website including a dedicated Back in Business webpage which provides a range of information on the support and services the government has made available to help struggling businesses.

In conclusion, the Queensland Government is investing \$14 million in major infrastructure projects in this region alone to support the tourism industry. This includes \$7 million towards the redevelopment of Shute Harbour Road (in addition to a combined \$10 million from the Australian Government and Whitsunday Regional Council) to deliver a beautification program for Airlie Beach; as well as \$7 million to upgrade the Whitsunday Coast Airport.