

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 229

asked on Thursday, 20 March 2014

MR COSTIGAN ASKED THE MINISTER FOR NATIONAL PARKS, RECREATION, SPORT AND RACING (MR DICKSON) —

QUESTION:

Will the Minister provide details on how eco-tourism operators in the Whitsundays will benefit from reforms introduced by the Newman Government?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for the Question.

The Whitsundays is an iconic Queensland tourism destination and the Queensland Government is committed to increasing recreation and ecotourism access opportunities in this region. Through initiatives such as the *DestinationQ* forum, this Government is working with industry to grow tourism, including ecotourism, as a key pillar of the Queensland economy.

A key priority identified through *DestinationQ* was the development of the Queensland Ecotourism Plan 2013 – 2020 which includes 43 initiatives to support the growth of best practice ecotourism in the Whitsundays and across the State.

Aligned with these Ecotourism Plan initiatives was another key action which will contribute to the goal of increasing ecotourism access opportunities. The *Nature Conservation Act 1992* has been amended to allow privately owned, low impact purpose-built ecotourism facilities to be established on national parks. The Government has embarked on a two-pronged approach to develop environmentally sensitive, privately-funded ecotourism projects — firstly, releasing a state-wide call for expressions of interest, and secondly, releasing a series of site-specific ecotourism opportunities.

Officers from the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing (NPRSR) will continue to work with stakeholders in the Mackay/Whitsunday region to support sustainable ecotourism opportunities that are now available through this Government's reforms.

In addition, significant progress has been achieved in relation to *DestinationQ* actions directed at reducing regulatory burden and red tape affecting ecotourism operators including those in the Whitsundays. Achievements include the simplification of payment arrangements for commercial operators through the introduction of new invoicing procedures and providing the opportunity for commercial activity permits over protected areas to be renewed, where appropriate, rather than requiring a new application every three years.

The above information details what reforms NPRSR are undertaking to benefit tourism operators in the Whitsundays. In regards to whole of government initiatives benefiting the tourism operators in the Whitsundays, please direct any additional queries to the Honourable Jann Stuckey, MP Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games