



Speech by

Dr Mark Robinson

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

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MORETON ISLAND AND STRADBROKE ISLAND, ECOTOURISM

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Cleveland—LNP) (9.34 pm): The recent Brisbane River flood had a devastating impact upon many Queenslanders. One impact that escaped the attention of most was the effect upon the Tangalooma resort on Moreton Island. In the wake of the Queensland floods, this holiday resort on Moreton Island looked like laying off more than 100 staff due to losing 60 per cent of its bookings. Despite the government's \$600,000 marketing blitz, the downturn in visitor numbers to Moreton Island due to the flood and a depressed market meant the resort operators were considering letting go about one-third of the 340 staff.

This situation highlights the at times erratic nature of the tourism industry and some of the challenges it faces. The people of Cairns know well the ebb and flow of tourism and the problems associated with a tourism downturn. In comparison, the city of Townsville, with a broader economic base than Cairns, is less exposed to the ups and downs of tourism in Queensland.

My purpose tonight is not to run down tourism of course, as both government and opposition need to support the tourism industry. I hope that there will be a turnaround soon. My point is that overreliance upon tourism can be problematic. Putting all of one's eggs in the tourism basket has significant risks.

So the Tangalooma downturn highlights the problem in the Premier's rushed plan to try to push the Stradbroke Island economy to be reliant solely upon ecotourism. The Tangalooma situation demonstrates the fragility of the Premier's rushed and politically motivated plan to sack sandminers and to replace their jobs with 400 ecotourism positions.

A Brisbane marketing chief recently said that it would require five Tangaloomas on Straddie for ecotourism to take the place of mining to replace the expected loss of \$130 million to the local economy from the Premier's plan. This replacement economy is not likely, especially in the only eight years that it has left to run. Tourism experts believe the Premier's plan is overly reliant upon ecotourism and risks eroding what is currently a sustainable local economy for Straddie's 2,500 residents. It is a high-risk strategy.

One major problem is the lack of desire of miners to retrain for the hospitality industry. That is a very real problem. Further, ecotourism as the staple diet of the island is not supported by the island community, and it is flying blind without having conducted an economic impact study. Clearly, the lesson for Straddie, from one Tangalooma on nearby Moreton Island, is not to put all of our eggs in the ecotourism basket while still investing in ecotourism.

What has become clearer in recent days, and what will be addressed in the bill when it comes before the House, is that the Premier's policy on Straddie is more about appeasing the Greens in Ashgrove to save the environment minister's bacon than it is about looking after the residents of Straddie.