



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

Federation Chamber

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

**Northern Australian Tourism
Industry and Small Businesses**

SPEECH

Monday, 7 November 2016

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

<p>Date Monday, 7 November 2016 Page 145 Questioner Speaker O'Brien, Ted, MP</p>	<p>Source House Proof Yes Responder Question No.</p>
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Mr TED O'BRIEN (Fairfax) (17:17): I am delighted to be here to support the member for Capricornia's motion, because it goes to the heart of one of the government's strengths, and that is supporting the economy and ensuring that we have jobs and growth in one of our key industries in this country. But, before I address the specifics of her motion, I feel obliged to address some of the furphies coming from the other side over the last 15 or 20 minutes, with the shadow minister, the member for Grayndler, leading the charge.

There is no such thing as a 'minister for gunna' but, if there were, I think this government would let go of any ministerial rights and give the shadow minister for infrastructure and tourism, the member for Grayndler, that gong, because he is a gunna. We heard it from him a few weeks ago with respect to infrastructure and again we hear it today with tourism. The basis of the argument from Labor is, 'We were gunna do this,' 'We were gunna do that,' 'We were gunna support,' 'We were gunna spend money.' But the facts do not play it out. They are nothing but gunnas.

The reality is that Labor cut Tourism Australia. The coalition committed \$639 million for international marketing. It is the coalition that is delivering. Labor's carbon tax slugged the tourism industry—wait for it—\$115 million and that was just in year one alone. They want to talk about infrastructure for tourism, and yet the shadow minister himself committed only \$4.1 billion to the Bruce Highway—the most important piece of domestic infrastructure in Queensland—compared to the coalition's \$6.7 billion. Yet he consistently tries to take claim, because they refused to meet the 80-20 funding requirement from the Queensland state government. Even in my neck of the woods, the Sunshine Coast, it is the coalition that has invested the money. Over \$1 billion will be spent on the Bruce Highway on the Sunshine Coast, which is, not unlike the north of Queensland, a tourism mecca. That will be spent in the next few years, and, yes, that will be delivered by a coalition government.

As for the backpacker tax, which, again, is something that the opposition seems to harp on, it is very simple. The backpacker tax proposal is really now in the hands of the Labor Party. It is 32½ per cent. It can drop to 19 per cent as soon as the members opposite support the bill. They do not know if they support the bill. Instead, they are taking their time to try to talk about it. They are not even in government; they are in opposition and they still cannot be decisive on their position. Here we are with not just tourism but agriculture—key industries that drive our economy—and the Labor Party are holding them to ransom. If we do have fruit that rots on the vine, we know who we are going to be looking to, and that is the Labor Party. The 32.5 per cent can drop down to 19 per cent if they take action, but they refuse to take action, because they are the 'gunna' party. We were gunna do this; we were gunna do that. It is time to take action.

With all of the downtrodden stories from Labor about the tourism sector, let me read some terrific statistics about the Sunshine Coast, in which the seat of Fairfax is situated. Domestic visitor numbers last financial year were at their highest level—3.1 million—since before the GFC. How good is that? The year-on-year growth rate among domestic travellers on the Sunshine Coast was a very strong 7.8 per cent. The growth in overseas visitors was 3.5 per cent. The good thing is that not only are more and more people coming but they are staying longer and they are spending more money. This is a vital area for Queensland's economy.

There is an old rule, and it applies to business as much as it applies to countries or regions: when you want to grow your economy, the No. 1 thing you need to do is protect and leverage your core. As an Australian, and indeed as a Queenslander, I say that we have a few cores. We have the resource sector, we have the agrisector and we have the tourism sector. What we see in the coalition's suite of policies is a staunch defence and promotion of our core of tourism, and that is the reason I stand here today in vigorous support of this motion.