



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Main Committee**

**CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS**

**McMillan Electorate: Port Welshpool**

**SPEECH**

**Monday, 21 June 2010**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Monday, 21 June 2010  
**Page** 6009  
**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Broadbent, Russell, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** No  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Mr BROADBENT** (McMillan) (4.18 pm)—The development in Townsville of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority administrative offices, tourist information and the aquarium, along with boat based ecotourism throughout the reef, has created many jobs, offsetting job losses in the commercial fishing industry. This regional management and promotion of marine conservation is also playing a vital role in Australia's tourism industry, generating overseas visitors and valuable export income for the nation.

Port Welshpool in my electorate has the potential to do the same. It was once a fishing, shipping and air travel gateway to the Bass Strait islands, with over 100 fishing boats. Now there are less than a dozen and the airport has been closed, without the business of ferrying crews and catch. Recently, a number of state and Commonwealth marine protected areas have also been declared over the fishing grounds of the former fleet of this port but, as yet, there is no infrastructure from which to develop ecotourism of Townsville and other coastal areas near the Barrier Reef or south-west Western Australia.

Another great asset, the Port Welshpool Long Jetty, was closed in 2003 but is about to become the centre of an exciting community driven ecotourism development. A local non-profit group in my community, Welshpool and District Advisory Group, has raised \$5 million worth of investment from Marine and Civil Pty Ltd, which has also recognised the potential of this project in the region, to install an underwater observatory in the Long Jetty. This will be one of the most exciting tourist developments on the east coast for more than 20 years.

In Busselton, Western Australia, an observatory built by the same company is now generating between 60,000 and 90,000 visitors annually, with a calculated net economic benefit of over \$10 million. The Long Jetty project has the potential to provide the seed for the growth of ecotourism in Bass Strait. With over 100 islands, massive numbers of dolphins, whales and seals and an extraordinary variety of marine life, much of it unique to the region, the ecotourism of Bass Strait is yet to be developed. For taxpayers there is huge potential in these coastal communities for return on investment in maintaining and restoring basic infrastructure, like the jetty at Port Welshpool, for ecotourism. The underwater observatory will provide the customer base for many other businesses and will generate overseas tourism from Bass Strait ecotourism ventures. A third of the Busselton observatory visitors are from overseas, and so it will be at Port Welshpool—or better, being so close to the Phillip Island penguins.

The other personal interest that I have in the Port Welshpool Long Jetty is that those who are disabled have always had access to the jetty for fishing. Disability services are very close to my heart. It is very important that a jetty like the Long Jetty should be reopened so that there is access, including access for wheelchairs, for fishing and other day activities for people with disabilities. It is a great opportunity for the electorate as a whole.