



Hon Peter Lawlor MP
Member for Southport



**Minister for Tourism and Fair
Trading**

27 September 2009

Island Caretaker Ben Southall to visit Queensland's Outback

The spirit of Queensland's Outback has beckoned Tourism Queensland's Island Caretaker Ben Southall, who will travel from his home on the Great Barrier Reef to the Queensland Outback in October, Tourism Minister Peter Lawlor announced today.

Mr Lawlor said Ben's visit would coincide with the Angel Flight Outback Trailblazer, a new bush charity event.

"Ben's visit to the Outback for the Trailblazer event will be a wonderful opportunity for him to muster up his spirit of adventure and enjoy some fair dinkum Aussie fun," Mr Lawlor said.

"The Outback Trailblazer is a wonderful tourism initiative that rotates from district to district, giving bush communities the opportunity to work together to showcase the best of their towns and nearby attractions.

"The event aims to not only raise money for charity but also to attract more visitors to explore the magnificent Queensland Outback.

"Before Ben was announced as the Caretaker for the Islands of the Great Barrier Reef he was busy organising charity events in and around his hometown of Petersfield in the UK so participating in the Angel Flight Outback Trailblazer is something he is really excited about."

Mr Lawlor said Ben would leave his 'office' on Hamilton Island on October 20 on a scenic charter Angel Flight to Longreach with founder, Bill Bristow.

"Ben's visit will also help draw attention to the Reef to Outback - An Undiscovered Australian Journey, a touring route which connects Australia's most contrasting landscape, from the World Heritage-listed Great Barrier Reef, to coastal towns, national parks and the vastness of the Outback," he said.

"Since its inception, at the 2008 Australian Tourism Exchange in Perth there has been an overwhelming response to the Reef to Outback touring route from the international marketplace, particularly in the UK and Europe.

"Twelve tourism operators joined the growing list of products and experiences captured under this international drive initiative, which continues to grow in popularity."

Mr Lawlor said German visitors to the Outback increased by 50 percent to 6,000 in the year ended June 2009.

Ben said he couldn't wait to pack his swag and participate in a range of truly unique Queensland Outback adventures.

"I'm really looking forward to sharing my visit to the Outback with the world and highlighting the diversity of experiences available in Queensland from the Reef to the Outback," Ben said.

"I will be joining the 'Outback Angels' for four of the seven days exploring bush trails, discovering amazing wildlife and scenery in an action-packed 4WD adventure challenge.

"I heard the team at Angel Flight do a fantastic job coordinating non-emergency flights for financially and medically needy people in remote locations all over Australia and I'm excited to have the opportunity to participate in this wonderful event."

For more information about Ben's Queensland adventures, log on to Ben's Blog at - www.islandreefjob.com or for information about the Angel Flight Outback Trailblazer visit - www.outbacktrailblazer.com.au

For images of Ben's experiences, go to Tourism Queensland's Image Gallery.