

Department of Transport and Main Roads  
GPO Box 1549  
Brisbane Qld 4001

1 March 2019

## Re: Regional Transport Plans

The Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Department of Transport and Main Roads on the Regional Transport Plans.

QTIC is the state's peak body for tourism in Queensland and represents the interests of the tourism industry. QTIC is an independent membership-based organisation with in excess of 3,000 members, operating in all sectors of the tourism industry, including business operators, Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs), sector associations and education providers.

The tourism industry in Queensland contributed \$25.0 billion to Queensland's Gross State Product (GSP), representing 7.9% of total GSP<sup>1</sup> and generated \$7.1 billion in exports in the year ending June 2016<sup>2</sup>, making it one of the state's largest export industries accounting for 14.8% of total Queensland exports. The tourism industry consists of over 53,000 businesses across Queensland; nine out of ten of these businesses are small to medium enterprises. In the development of the *Regional Transport Plans* it is not just the local residents that should be considered, also included should be the large flow of visitors to the state, seeking opportunities to explore Queensland.

Across this suite of plans, it is important that consistent terminology is utilised throughout, consistent with previous TMR documents and discussions. These refer to 'Highways' and not 'Ways'. This change was instigated by TMR, it would be more appropriate to employ this terminology consistently to avoid confusion.

Further consideration should also be given to the multi-use of roads across the state. Most roads are not utilised solely by residents, there is also a diverse visitor base using the networks. Considering visitors, tourism in Queensland is split into thirteen distinct regions. Each of these regions has its own Destination Tourism Plan. These plans were developed as a partnership between the Regional Tourism Organisations and State Government. The documents act as a sign post to priority investment and development opportunities for each

<sup>1</sup> Tourism Research Australia, *State Tourism Satellite Accounts 2015-2016*

<sup>2</sup> Tourism Research Australia - *State Tourism Satellite Accounts 2015-16*, Queensland Government Office of Economic and Statistical Research - Overseas exports of goods by industry.

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region. These priorities are developed based on industry insight and trend analysis that indicates opportunities to enhance destination competitiveness. It appears the proposed Regional Transport Plans do not consider the destination management plans. In order to ensure that the plans meet the regional needs and support the growing visitor base, it is important that the destination management plans are reflected and priority infrastructure projects are integrated.

An overview of key action and regional priority areas that should be considered when developing the Regional Transport Plans are outlined below:

**Brisbane** - Future growth of tourism in Brisbane will have significant implications for road capacity and management for peak times, increased demand on public transport and will require expanded route development including Brisbane Airport. Brisbane's strategy for growth is underpinned by vital new infrastructure including roads and public transport, attractions, and with expanded airport capacity. *Catalyst Project 11* refers to the gap in infrastructure in regional transportation and driving routes. Improvements to tourist routes (road infrastructure and signage) need to be supported, as a means of increasing access and dispersal within the region, and growing intrastate, interstate fly-drive and long-haul drive, group touring and international self-drive markets.

**Bundaberg** – Priority activities include the development of an incentivised drive market campaign. Facilitate the development of new touring routes and supporting infrastructure to encourage and influence drive visitors to explore the entire region by linking the coast to the hinterland (increasing dispersal) through boutique drive experiences. Encourage and support new experiences that appeal to the caravan and camping market through an inland drive tourism partnership to increase awareness and support new heritage and cultural product development (including the RM Williams Bush Learning Centre, public art trails, etc).

**Capricorn** – Investment priority: Secure funding for major public works for tourism-oriented projects that have a broader community benefit through a high-quality investment prospectus including: development of Panorama Drive, Pacific Heights Yeppoon, to provide an alternative, storm surge immune, route to the expanded Iwasaki Integrated Resort development. Promote the future potential of the Sandstone Wilderness through an Infrastructure Plan by the land owners and managers with detailed cost and benefit modelling of key projects including: road upgrades to Canarvon Gorge, 2wd and 4wd trail development, caravan and camping facilities and Gemfields interpretative trail.

**Fraser Coast** – Enablers of success: support the case for upgrading of the Bruce Highway; seek incentives to improve inter/ intra-regional public transport and build support for implementing priority tourism signposting improvements. Focus on drive itinerary development and packaging targeting 75% of the domestic overnight market that live within a 400km radius of the Fraser Coast, to extend stays and enrich the Visiting Friends and Relative experience to drive revisitation. It is estimated 448,000 of the total 597,000 domestic overnight visitors come from intrastate locations. Continue to develop and promote drive itineraries such as the Great Beach Drive initiative; liaise with key stakeholders to implement physical signage and develop promotional collateral and; build a range of drive itineraries

focusing on core experiences, including nature, heritage and fishing itineraries that are aligned with key demographics within the drive market – i.e, young families, grey nomads, budget, high end etc.

**Gladstone** – Destination goals: attract new niche visitors coming for nature and adventure experiences, seeking 2% per annum growth in Gladstone region’s market share (for the whole of Queensland). Pre-requisites for achieving the growth are a mix of new and enhanced product development and enhanced National Park and marine/diving/islands experiences, whilst also profile/ awareness raising in target markets via a major marketing campaign under the Southern Great Barrier Reef banner.

**Gold Coast** – Action plan: identify and build waterfront and beach sites capable of hosting major events, business events and conferences, reviewing infrastructure needs such as car parking, access issues and public amenity.

**Mackay** – Product and experience development priorities: continue to facilitate the development of dual use recreational areas for locals and tourism, including the Waterfront Priority Development Area. Investigate the feasibility of developing a Mackay and Isaac Region RV and Camping Framework (including signage). Advertise the region’s iconic experiences via promotional and gateway signage.

**Outback** – Implications of growth: additional visitor volumes may have implications for road and air access. Roads will need to be maintained especially during peak seasons and major events. Regional airports will need to improve infrastructure and increase flight frequencies to cater for a higher volume of passengers. Opportunities include working with government to maintain existing routes; package product with transport operators for easier saleable product to incorporate cost/frequency challenges; encourage private investment in transport operations.

**Southern Queensland Country** – Strategic priorities include: roads and related infrastructure, including signage, with the emphasis on improving visitor safety, accessibility and the overall destination experience.

Furthermore, within the Darling Downs regional plan, amendments should be made under the ‘Expanding the Tourism Market’ heading (pg 36), there is reference to ‘Tourism Events Queensland Regional Tourism Organisation’. This should be reworded to ‘Queensland’s Regional Tourism Network’ as Tourism Events Queensland is a separate entity to the Regional Tourism Organisations.

In addition, page 36 references ‘opportunity to expand tourism market abroad by capitalising on the direct access provided by Toowoomba Wellcamp Airport.....’. It is proposed that to this point the following should also be included, ‘.....and the proximity of the Darling Downs within an easy 1.5-2 hour drive of Brisbane and the Gold Coast is very appealing to the international visitor delivering a Queensland Country experience for the FIT (free Independent Traveller) and international drive market’.

**Sunshine Coast** – Product and infrastructure development: Increase road access through improvements to the Bruce Highway.

Enablers of success - In partnership, build the case for the duplication of the current rail line to Landsborough with benefits for both freight and passenger movement (including visitors). Where relevant, implement the outcomes of the Drive Tourism Strategy and Camping Options review at a regional level to maximise the value of the tourism and long-haul drive markets.

**Townsville** – Growth implications: access will be required to service the projected increases in visitor numbers with a focus on the reinstatement of international services through Townsville Airport and further expansion of direct connectivity to Australian capital cities. Road infrastructure will not be dramatically impacted, however focal points such as Wallaman Falls will require forecast market demand reviews. The dispersal of visitors within Townsville North Queensland may require development of transport options from Townsville to regional centres.

Top opportunities include: attract private and public investment to develop new and improve existing tourism and events infrastructure. Market drive journeys across the region's wetlands, outback, Great Barrier Reef islands and rainforest all within close proximity to an urban centre

**Tropical North Queensland** – Top Opportunities: further development and promotion of self-drive itineraries across domestic and international source markets to expose diversity of regional food, beverage, nature, adventure, culture and communities.

Infrastructure priorities - To support the development of key infrastructure that will increase the resilience of the tourism industry and the regional economy. To support the delivery of the Cairns Port Shipping Development to increase access for the cruise ship market. To support the development and delivery of the Global Tourism Hub with key stakeholders. To support the development of key roads in the region to encourage regional dispersal.

**Whitsundays** - Growth implications: Annual wet-season: tidal flooding of the Bruce Highway (Highway One) and road link from Proserpine to the key tourist precinct of Airlie Beach. Disruptions to road links into and within the region are accepted as, 'something one deals with', in a tropical climate (wet seasons and cyclones). However, it needs to be noted that a number of visitors access the key tourist precinct of Airlie Beach (access point to the Whitsundays Islands and Great Barrier Reef) by road. This is either as self-drive; fly-drive after arriving at Proserpine (Whitsunday Coast) Airport; or from coach/bus services along the Bruce Highway. Usually flooded roads water levels rise and fall in relatively short periods (so the impact is perhaps considered by Dept. of Transport and Main Roads as not as intense as in other areas of tropical Qld). Top opportunities identified within the plan include, growth of drive tourism.

#### **State-wide considerations -**

It is important that the safety of road users is imbedded in the strategies. Opportunities to include rest areas and driver revivers should not be over looked. With over 33,000km of roads

in Queensland, currently there are only 33 driver revivers. By integrating rest zones and driver revivers across the network, road users will have safe places to rest. Consideration should also be given to the location of signage, ensuring it is located in areas where it is not easily missed or causing confused.

As Queensland still has significant communication blackspots, mapping remains a major challenge for the state. Unreliable access to Google Maps challenges those unfamiliar with regions. Partnering with Visitor Information Centres to provide maps to road users would assist in strengthening networks and assisting regions with blackspots as an interim measure. Furthermore, partnerships with telecoms companies to reduce black spots and mapping companies to generate comprehensive regional maps is recommended to support the provision of quality information. Wayfinding is an integral part of the destination experience and influences the overall consumer satisfaction with a destination. Failure to address the shortcomings of current models will result in frustration, reputational damage and reduced regional dispersion. This is counterproductive to the goals of the "*year of the Outback*".

QTIC also commends the explicit inclusion of sustainability within this strategy. Climate and shock resilience need to be embedded into the approach to ensure the longevity of infrastructure. Failure to take into consideration changing priorities, trends and climate will limit the on-going relevance and implementation of the plan.

If developed effectively, this strategy offers the opportunity to directly contribute to a number of the Sustainable Development goals to which Australia is committed to. These include goals 11 (sustainable communities and cities), and potentially 13 (climate action).

For all enquiries regarding the points raised in this letter, please contact me or the QTIC Policy Team on (07) 3236 1445 or email [policy@qtic.com.au](mailto:policy@qtic.com.au).

Kind regards



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