



QUEENSLAND
TOURISM INDUSTRY
COUNCIL

The Voice of Tourism

SUBMISSION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DEVELOPMENT, MANUFACTURING, INFRASTRUCTURE
AND PLANNING
ON THE
NORTH QUEENSLAND REGIONAL PLAN

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OVERVIEW

The Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning regarding the North Queensland Regional Plan.

In summary, QTIC recommends the following:

Recommendation 1

Support the sustainable growth of First Nations tourism through the adoption of and investment in key action items from the Queensland *First Nations Tourism Potentials Plan*.

Recommendation 2

Focus on high-yielding visitors through the provision of demand-driven quality visitor experiences.

Recommendation 3

Consider (and measure) the economic, social and environmental impacts of tourism markets, including cruise ships, and set long-term plans to optimise benefits to the community.

Recommendation 4

Demonstrate global leadership of the region in transitioning to a low emission, sustainable future.

Recommendation 5

Explore opportunities for alternative transportation to enhance the connectivity of the region – supporting a multimodal transport infrastructure.

Recommendation 6

Ensure the Wi-Fi connectivity across the region.

Recommendation 7

Consider the emerging international (tourism) trends in long-term planning for the region.

QUEENSLAND TOURISM INDUSTRY COUNCIL

QTIC is the state peak body for tourism in Queensland. QTIC is an independent, private sector, membership-based tourism industry organisation.

All of Queensland's 13 Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs) are members of QTIC, as are 20 industry sector associations and in excess of 3,000 regional members, operating in all sectors of the tourism industry.

QTIC works in partnership with government agencies and industry bodies at a local, state and national level and is a member of the Australian Tourism Industry Council (ATIC).

THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

The tourism industry in Queensland contributed \$27.3 billion to Queensland's Gross State Product (GSP) year ending June 2018¹. This represents 7.8% of total GSP. The industry also generated

¹ Tourism Research Australia. State Satellite Accounts 2017-18.

\$7.5 billion in exports, making it the state's second largest export accounting for 10.1% of total Queensland exports.

The tourism industry consists of over 55,000 tourism businesses across Queensland; over nine out of 10 of these are small businesses. These businesses support employment to over 237,000 Queenslanders. Positions in cafes, restaurants and takeaway food services contribute the largest shares of direct tourism employment (41,000 jobs), as well as retail trade (25,000 jobs) and accommodation (19,000 jobs). In Townsville, there are over 2,070 tourism businesses. The majority are SMEs (93%) with 145 businesses employing more than 20 staff.

On an average day in Queensland, there are approximately 149,000 international visitors spending \$16 million a day. There are 265,000 domestic visitors, spending \$50 million daily and 128,000 day trippers. That is over half a million people away from their place of residence seeking experiences, food, drink and accommodation on a daily basis.

The World Travel and Tourism Council² (WTTC) projects travel and tourism employment will grow 5.8% (compound annual growth) over the next decade in the Asia Pacific region. In contrast, the total economic growth is projected at 4.1% per annum and other industries such as mining and agriculture are forecast to grow at 1.8% and 2.2% per annum respectively.

The five-year average growth rate for total visitor nights in Queensland is projected to be 4.0% over 2014–15 to 2019–20, or 3.9% over 10 years. This compares to 4.4% total five-year average annual growth for Australia, or 3.8% over 10 years.

The table below highlights the significant economic contribution that tourism makes to Townsville and the Northern Queensland Outback.

Region	Visitors (annually)	Visitor Expenditure (annually)	Tourism Employment
Townsville	1.53 million	\$968.7 million	8,300
Outback	0.99 million	\$641.6 million	3,700
Source: Tourism Research Australia. NVS & IVS. March 2019			

Tourism and employment

Tourism is a key economic driver in regional Queensland, supporting employment and community growth, employing more than 237,000 people directly and indirectly, or one in ten people employed in Queensland¹. This is substantially more than mining (2.5% of employment) or agriculture, forestry and fishing combined (2.6% of employment).

There is a broad diversity of jobs within the tourism industry with 11 occupations representing the majority of workers in the industry. Of those directly employed in tourism, two thirds are employed outside of Brisbane, highlighting the value of tourism in regional Queensland.

On average around 79% of tourism employees are sourced from the local region, of the remaining, 11% are from interstate or intrastate and 4% are working holiday makers. Temporary visitors and skilled migrants to Queensland play an integral role in the provision of tourism experiences and are vital to an industry with a skills shortage.

² World Travel and Tourism Council. 2017. Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2017 Asia Pacific

Across Australia, businesses in the café and restaurant industries report greater labour market difficulties relative to those in the accommodation or attraction industries. In Queensland, top tourism-related occupations experiencing shortages are Cleaner, Guest Service, and Receptionist.

The 2017 *Tourism Workforce Plan*³ explores opportunities to develop the tourism workforce to address the deficit of skilled workers. Key outcomes of the workforce plan include assessing how the tourism and hospitality industry can build the pipeline of foreign workers by better using migration programs, build the tourism industry profile as an attractive career opportunity and how to enhance the capacity of industry to facilitate sustainable growth.

Employment in the accommodation industry in Townsville is projected to grow by 8.9% between 2017 and 2022, while retail trade is set to grow at 0.1% across the same period⁴.

Building a resilient tourism industry: Queensland tourism climate change response plan

The *Building a resilient tourism industry: Queensland climate change response plan* (The Plan) represents an industry-led climate adaptation and mitigation road map for the tourism industry sector in alignment with the Queensland Climate Adaptation Strategy (Q-CAS). The Q-CAS is centred around a partnership approach that recognises that climate change is everyone's responsibility and that a collaborative approach is needed to ensure resilience is embedded in Queensland's diverse economies, landscapes and communities.

The Plan aims to bring climate risks and opportunities to the forefront of industry discussion, raising the profile of mitigation and adaptation strategies. It addresses both adaptation and mitigation needs for the Queensland tourism industry, and as such contributes to Australia's international commitment to the Paris Climate Agreement. The agreement stipulates to limit global temperature rise to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels.

Recognising the urgency of addressing climate change, The Plan considers both a short-term and mid-term time frame, with a long-term view towards the 2050 target of net zero emissions. In other words, the tourism sector can begin immediately to implement actions that reduce risks and lay critical foundations for decarbonising tourism. The industry is also challenged to prepare mid- and long-term strategies towards a climate resilient, low emissions industry.

Action items were developed specifically to address six vision building blocks:

- resilient businesses, destinations and communities
- stewardship and education for healthy natural assets
- green tourism industry leading the way towards carbon neutrality
- diversified product for quality visitor experience
- sustainable branding and marketing
- the tourism industry is united in working together with government and communities.

Australia and the region's long-term tourism competitiveness will be impacted by consumer perceptions and expectations of the destination's sustainability track record. The global focus on climate change impacts on the Great Barrier Reef and puts this region into a very prominent focus.

³ Jobs Queensland. Queensland Tourism Workforce Plan 2017-2020. jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au

⁴ Jobs Queensland. Townsville North Queensland. Regional Tourism Workforce Plan. 2018-2020.

RESPONSE TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

In response to the terms of reference, QTIC highlights the following:

Advancing Indigenous Interests

Recommendation 1

Support the sustainable growth of First Nations tourism through the adoption of and investment in key action items from the Queensland *First Nations Tourism Potentials Plan*.

QTIC supports efforts to value, protect and promote First Nations knowledge, culture and tradition. There is significant opportunity to promote the oldest living culture on earth through the engagement of Traditional Owners and the support of new product development across the region. There is growing demand for First Nations tourism in Queensland and, as 2020 marks the Year of Indigenous Tourism, this will increase with stronger partnerships between First Nations people and other tourism stakeholders. It is important for the sustainability of the sector that growth is driven and created by First Nations people and built on strong partnerships with industry and government.

2020 the Year of Indigenous Tourism will celebrate the unique heritage, diversity of culture and the rich history we have here in Queensland and the opportunities that come with that.

In 2018, 1.15 million (13.9%) of international visitors to Australia had an Indigenous tourism experience; and, in Queensland, 12% of international visitors have an Indigenous tourism experience, which represents 4% growth from the previous year. International visitors from the UK, USA and Europe are most likely to participate in an Indigenous experience. The UN World Tourism Organisation estimates that 47% of tourists worldwide are motivated by a desire to experience a country's culture and heritage. Yet, despite the importance of cultural and heritage experiences for visitors, Australia ranks 105th globally, indicating significant room for improvement⁵.

Any long term, sustainable benefits for First Nations peoples in an economic sense must be based on sound, market-driven business cases. There is a great opportunity for First Nations tourism however it must be couched within the opportunities and constraints of the tourism industry market. Developing First Nations businesses without the appropriate business case is not strengthening the positioning of the sector.

The launch of the *First Nations Tourism Potentials Plan* for Queensland in late 2019 provides a guiding framework for the sustainable growth of the sector. Opportunities to support the growth of First Nations Tourism in Northern Australia should be framed around this document and aligned with regional needs. The plan was developed within QTIC but is entirely led by Indigenous representatives. Regional consultations have taken place throughout the state with the Indigenous community and with the tourism industry.

Tourism is a prominent opportunity for Indigenous advancement. It offers viable pathways not only for employment but also for Indigenous business formation and entrepreneurial capacity building.

⁵ World Economic Forum. Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index. 2019. http://reports.weforum.org/travel-and-tourism-competitiveness-report-2019/rankings/?doing_wp_cron=1574307401.0502140522003173828125

Tourism

Recommendation 2

Focus on high-yielding visitors through the provision of demand-driven quality visitor experiences.

Recommendation 3

Consider (and measure) the economic, social and environmental impacts of tourism markets, including cruise ships, and set long-term plans to optimise benefits to the community.

High-quality development proposals benefit from being attractive, environmentally sensitive, well-designed and well-serviced. As areas of high scenic and natural amenity are some of the region's major drawcards, managing environmental impacts from these uses, including scenic amenity, is paramount. It is important that new tourism product is demand-driven and offers high quality, high yielding experiences – generating positive impacts for people and places.

Whilst significant opportunities exist within recreational vehicle (RV markets), self-drive and camping and caravanning markets, it is important to consider the infrastructure required to support these visitors to ensure yield is maximised whilst protecting vulnerable landscapes. It may be tempting to offer low cost or free campsites to entice stays, however research indicates that those that stay predominantly in free sites are unlikely to spend as much in the local economy. Ensuring a balanced approach to commercial and non-commercial camping that promotes maximum benefits to the region is essential. Partnering with sector experts such as Caravanning Queensland and engaging with motorhome clubs will be critical to ensuring most benefit.

Within the identified opportunities outlined in the plan, there appears to be a potential contradiction between a focus on small-scale cultural and environmental experiences that have the potential to draw high yielding markets that promote benefits to people, place and the economy and the desire for mass tourism through cruise tourism. Balanced consideration must be given to the benefits and significant impacts that cruise tourism has on destinations, including large-scale visitor numbers on delicate eco-systems and the carbon footprint of cruise travel. The global cruise market is growing at a rapid rate but it is evident from some popular cruise destinations overseas and in Australia that without well-considered, long-term planning the expected benefits can be diminished.

Across all tourism market segments, measuring the regional benefits of tourism should be a priority. Going beyond current International and National Visitor Surveys, visitor expenditure and impact on the community and the economy should be measured to understand the true benefits of the tourism industry and better understand how to encourage high value visitors.

Mining and Extractive Industries

Recommendation 4

Demonstrate global leadership of the region in transitioning to a low emission, sustainable future.

This objective must be balanced comprehensively with the expressed desire for a rich and diverse environment and its long-term sustainability. Over the next few decades a global transition away from fossil fuel extraction and use is inevitable and universally advocated to ensure climate stability.

For an economy significantly dependant on fossil fuel industries this represents a challenge but also an opportunity. The region is rich in minerals, many of which will be critical and in high demand in the transition to renewable energy technology.

In addition, the region has world-leading technology expertise and research capacity in its university to place the region in a highly competitive potential position as a leader in a 'new energy future'. North Queensland can show off its intellectual and industrial capacity in this context with a coherent and comprehensive transition plan to a low emissions economy.

The proximity to the Great Barrier Reef, which is in the global spotlight almost daily for its climate change vulnerability, makes this opportunity all the more important. No region is potentially better placed to show the way to reduce emissions against the backdrop of a resource-rich economy.

Several other objectives outlined within this plan are inherently reliant on the outstanding natural beauty of the environment. Any failure to protect those assets would mean that the natural competitive advantage will be lost to the region.

Connected

Recommendation 5

Explore opportunities for alternative transportation to enhance the connectivity of the region – supporting a multimodal transport infrastructure.

Recommendation 6

Ensure the wifi connectivity across the region.

Transportation and aviation services are a vital part of the tourism industry⁶. The transportation links of a tourist destination have an impact on the tourism experience, it is the first and last contact that a traveller has with a destination, forming part of the experience and shaping the overall attractiveness of a destination. Providing agile, comfortable and rapid mobility is an important part of the destination experience⁷. Convenient connectivity across air, rail and road is now seen as a requirement for a destination to be competitive⁸. As such, transportation policies that foster strong and vibrant local industries will support the development of tourism across the country. Positive impacts derived from appropriate accessibility include growth in local economies, resulting from increased employment, more visitor spend locally and due to air services acting as an attractor to businesses that value frequency and cost-effective air travel when deciding on locations. A strong economic argument can be made that strong connectivity leads to better regional economic outcomes resulting in more jobs and more diversified industries.

Without easily accessible, integrated and easy-to-navigate public and private transport infrastructure, regional growth will be hindered. Transportation infrastructure is considered critical as a means for commuting and promoting integration. Transport that facilitates access to workplaces, schools and medical institutes is essential – further links to tourism hotspots and key points of interest will also help drive prosperity and economic growth for North Queensland.

Whilst transport services are an integral part of the tourism industry, they are also a major contributor to emissions. Identifying and providing more sustainable paths of mobility that reduce the environmental impact of tourism is essential moving forward⁶. The challenge of mitigating climate change is critical to desirable tourism transportation futures. The move towards active urban transportation systems through initiatives such as dedicated cycleways, bicycle sharing schemes and increasing pedestrianisation are associated with significant individual health gains in terms of reductions in risk of personal injury caused by vehicle accidents involving cyclists and pedestrians, and reduced air pollution causing respiratory morbidity or mortality. Opportunities for

⁶ Sorupia, E. Rethinking The Role Of Transportation In Tourism. (2005). Proceedings of the Eastern Asia Society for Transportation Studies, Vol. 5, pp. 1767 - 1777, 2.

⁷ Gutierrez, A. & Miravet, D., The determinants of tourist use of public transport at the destination. (2016). Sustainability. 8.908.

⁸ Henderson, J. Transport and Tourism Destination Development: An Indonesian Perspective.(2009). Tourism and Hospitality Research Vol 9, Issue 3, pp. 199 – 208.

innovation in aviation such as electrification are also not as far from reality as once were. Plans to integrate innovation in transportation options should be considered.

Concerns are now being raised in Europe around the impact of flying on the environment. This flight shaming trend— flygskam - could have significant impact for regional and rural Australia. Whilst the future implications for Australia are unclear, this is a trend which needs to be monitored closely.

Similarly, digital connectivity remains poor throughout much of the north, affecting tourism's ability to drive consumer-led marketing and for basic communications. Research indicates that 65% of travel planning begins with an online search. When making a booking, 92% of travellers are influenced by online travel reviews. On average an individual will search 38 websites prior to committing to a travel booking. A strong online presence is now becoming a necessity of business operators rather than an option. As such, it is integral that infrastructure supports the online presence of businesses.

Whilst the Mobile Black Spot Program has gone some way in addressing the access to telecommunication issues in regional North Queensland there are still a number of regional areas that struggle with inconsistent, or a complete lack of, connectivity. In an 'online society', a lack of connectivity influences a business' ability to communicate with consumers and suppliers. It affects the online reputation of organisations and damages the perception of certain regions around the state. From a business management perspective, it encumbers a business' ability to seamlessly collect bookings, convert consumers and manage payments associated with the business.

When examining Australia's Competitiveness in ICT readiness, Australia is under-performing, ranked 26th overall – dropping from 18th in 2017^{above}⁵. ICT use for biz-to-biz transactions is ranked 28th globally and mobile network coverage ranked 63rd. These rankings indicate that improvement is needed across these areas to enhance Australia's global travel competitiveness.

Emerging National and International Trends for Consideration

Recommendation 7

Consider the emerging international (tourism) trends in long-term planning for the region.

Authentic experiences – a growing number of travellers are actively searching for memorable experiences they can co-create, evolve, and emerge themselves in. As destination competitiveness continues to intensify around the world, visitors are seeking compelling, liveable, unique and personal experiences. Cultural and environmental attributes that are considered unique and markedly different from visitors' home countries are highly valued.

Investment in infrastructure and experiences across North Queensland should be market-driven and reflect the need for participative experiences that can deliver benefits for the host community and visitors.

North Queensland is endowed with significant cultural and environmental assets that offer exceptional opportunities in the mid to long-term to deliver high-value tourism products and services.

Over-tourism – has rapidly become a major issue for some destinations, particularly in popular European destinations. Over-tourism is defined as "excessive growth of visitors leading to overcrowding in areas where residents suffer the consequences of temporary and seasonal tourism peaks, which have enforced permanent changes to their lifestyles, access to amenities and general

well-being". Major issues arising from over-tourism include damaged to landscapes, strain on infrastructure and pricing or forcing residents out of housing or public infrastructure.

North Queensland is yet to experience these strains on the environment and community and is in an enviable position in most respects. However, this does not mean that the destination is immune. There is an opportunity to effectively manage the growth of tourism in the north to mitigate any concerns and ensure a sustainable future. Targets of tourism growth that consider not just visitor numbers but - more importantly - expenditure, environmental impacts and community benefits can address this critical issue and must support sustainable growth. Serious consideration should be given to the types of tourism that will support benefits to all.

Accessibility - the prioritisation of accessible travel is an important consideration with over 1.3 million Australians with a disability travelling annually. Queensland has a positive reputation regarding accessible tourism with 59% of Australians with disabilities indicating that they would recommend to other travellers with a disability based on the attractions and experiences on offer. Consideration of accessibility should be given in any future plans for the region.

Sustainable development goals - The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) clearly identifies the role that tourism has in contributing, directly or indirectly, to all the 17 SDGs. Specifically, tourism has been included as a major potential contributor to goals 8, 12 and 14 on inclusive and sustainable economic growth, sustainable consumption and production and the sustainable use of oceans and marine resources. Tourism has the opportunity to make a significant positive contribution to the 2030 agenda.

Digital futures - for Queensland's tourism industry to remain competitive and for tourism businesses to be productive and efficient, a high level of digital literacy is critical. Integrating digital infrastructure across public and private infrastructure is becoming an expectation rather than a desire, managing this requirement will be a critical aspect of destination competitiveness moving forward.

APPENDIX 1 – JOBS QUEENSLAND REGIONAL PLAN

Region	Action Items
Townsville	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the career pathways for existing workers and articulation arrangements available for people locally • Increase promotion of existing opportunities for local employers to share trainees/apprentices • Promote career pathways to attract new entrants • Explore funding options for North Queensland Gateway Schools coordinator • Increase partnerships between industry, schools and universities to provide hands on work experience opportunities • Increase promotion of relevant training packages available to business to increase skills pathways • Make available tour guide training and encourage participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the Townsville tourism region • Promote the local Ambassador program to encourage upskilling of local tourism workforce • Increase promotion of existing business support systems • Support tourism businesses to become employers of choice • Provide regional workshops for local employers around training package opportunities • Regional review of soft skills required for local tourism industry, with an aim to develop and implement programs such as be my guest to upskill the workforce • Consider broadening eligibility criteria of job readiness programs to include people returning to work, migrants, and mature age and the existing part time workforce to meet regional demand • Promote convenient and affordable upskilling opportunities for local tourism businesses to develop social media marketing strategies • Promote the range of services available to support Indigenous tourism businesses throughout the business lifecycle • Support greater industry related collaboration across the region through the creation of a regional coordinator • Showcase employment opportunities through expos and open days • Undertake a skills audit to address skills shortages by mapping available workforce and tourism qualification and match to vacancies within the region.