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## **Re: Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan Review**

The Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the *Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan Review*.

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 more than 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 \$27.3 billion to Queensland's Gross State Product (GSP), representing 7.8% of total GSP<sup>1</sup> and generated \$7.5 billion in exports in the year ending June 2018<sup>2</sup>, making it one of the state's largest export industries. The tourism industry consists of over 57,000 businesses across Queensland; nine out of ten of these businesses are small to medium enterprises.

We provided a submission in October 2014 in response to the Australian Government, Department of the Environment on *The Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan*, in which we expressed concerns over the impacts of climate change not being fully reflected or addressed within the Reef 2050 Plan. Having had an opportunity to assess the *Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan Review*, we are pleased to see a stronger focus on climate change impacts and responses.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) has identified climate change as the greatest threat to the Great Barrier Reef, encompassing impacts on sea temperatures, ocean acidification, sea level rise, ocean currents, increased severe weather events, and impacts affecting heritage, communities and industries. Since the Reef 2050 Plan launch in 2015, the Great Barrier Reef has faced two mass coral bleaching events, in 2016 and 2017, and further widespread coral

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<sup>1</sup> Tourism Research Australia - *State Tourism Satellite Accounts 2017-2018*

<sup>2</sup> Tourism Research Australia - *State Tourism Satellite Accounts 2017-18*, Queensland Government Office of Economic and Statistical Research - Overseas exports of goods by industry.

bleaching up to the summer of 2019-20, as well as increased severe weather events experienced along the Queensland coastline, including the devastating *Cyclone Debbie* in 2017.

The increasing impacts of climate change on the Great Barrier Reef pose an alarming ongoing threat to the biodiversity of the Reef's fragile ecosystem and to the communities and industries that rely on it. QTIC, again, stresses the vital and urgent need for effective action to mitigate against climate change and reduce its impacts.

In mid-2018, QTIC launched the *Building a Resilient Tourism Industry: Queensland Tourism Climate Response Plan*<sup>3</sup>. The plan identifies practical actions that the tourism industry can take toward climate adaptation and mitigation. Additionally, the *Queensland Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2017-2030*<sup>4</sup> has been developed as Queensland's guiding strategy for managing the impacts of climate change. With the availability of sector-specific climate response plans, not only tourism but also the agriculture, biodiversity and the built environment sectors, it is vital to ensure the objectives of the Reef 2050 Plan consistently align to achieve coordinated outcomes. These plans, supported by the Queensland State Government, offer actions that are relevant to the Great Barrier Reef and should be supported within the Reef 2050 Plan actions and goals.

In our October 2014 submission, we also supported initiatives to improve water quality, including reduction of runoff and good land management practices to improve water quality, and prioritising opportunities for the beneficial and responsible re-use of dredge material. We are pleased to see that Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan targets and ambient water quality guidelines remain a priority in the Reef 2050 Plan and we remain firmly supportive of these objectives.

In addition to the matters of climate action and water quality management, we would like to acknowledge the significant role tourism can play in achieving other objectives outlined in the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan Review:

- We support the objective for "*people and communities [to] take individual and collective action to maintain its resilience*". Tourism plays a significant role in educating local communities and visitors alike on the fragile reef ecosystem, its significance as a World Heritage Area, and the threat of climate change. Tour operators in the marine park are exposed to the reef environment every day, allowing for ongoing monitoring and assessment of key tourism sites. Tour operators have a unique, engaging and compelling platform to deliver messaging to their guests and encourage individual and collective action to protect the Reef's outstanding universal value. This should be optimised through investment in training programs, like the existing Master Reef Guides, Reef Guardians and Eye on the Reef programs by the GBRMPA. In addition, product development and support for existing operations will expose participants and visitors to high quality interpretation paired with exposure to the reef environment, promoting stewardship and delivering messaging to inspire collective action to maintain resilience of the Reef.

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<sup>3</sup> Queensland Tourism Industry Council (2018). *Building a resilient tourism industry: Queensland tourism climate change response Plan*.

<sup>4</sup> Department of Environment and Heritage Protection, Pathways to a climate resilient Queensland – Queensland Climate Adaptation Strategy 2017-2030. [https://www.qld.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0017/67301/qld-climate-adaptation-strategy.pdf](https://www.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/67301/qld-climate-adaptation-strategy.pdf)

- We support the objective to effectively engage *"governance systems to prioritise, adapt and engage communities in systems for Reef management"*. Already abiding by strict operational guidelines, tourism operators can contribute significantly to the objectives of existing programs like the GBRMPA's Reef Guardians and High Standard Tourism programs. Many tourism operators are already engaged in these programs and further opportunity should be optimised as citizen science programs and conservation tourism become increasingly popular. Relying on the Reef for their livelihoods, tourism operators are its greatest advocates, with a strong impetus to protect it and engage in its effective management.

COVID19 has devastated the global tourism industry and our industry will feel its devastating effects for some time to come. The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) *World Tourism Barometer* for January-May has shown the impacts of COVID19 on the global tourism industry are already three times those of the 2009 Global Financial Crisis<sup>5</sup>. This translates into a reduction of 300 million international tourists and US\$320 billion lost in international tourism receipts. As tourism gradually rebounds, it is critical that our local industry is positioned to build on our competitive strengths, and that we take this opportunity to increase our leadership in sustainability and take positive action on climate change.

It is also important to acknowledge the important contribution that the Reef 2050 Plan plays to support global development goals. Specifically, our actions can contribute to Goal 13 (Climate Action) and Goal 14 (Life Underwater) of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>6</sup>, to which Australia is a signatory.

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



**Daniel Gschwind**  
Chief Executive

<sup>5</sup> United Nations World Tourism Organisation (2020). *World Tourism Barometer January-May 2020*

<sup>6</sup> United Nations (2015). *Sustainable Goals for Development*. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

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