



First Nations Tourism Plan Working Group Expert Advisors



Kerryn Collins - Member of the QTIC Champions Network

With more than 25 years experience as an award winning strategic destination marketing professional, Kerryn brings a passion for tourism and a love for all things Indigenous! Growing up in the Gold Coast, Kerryn served as the General Manager for Cook Islands Tourism from 2011-2016 and was instrumental in the awareness and increase of the Cook Islands for the Australian market.

She was the President of the tourism board association, Treasures of the South Pacific that was charged with working collaboratively with smaller South Pacific Islands to market their destinations throughout Australia.

Prior to this, she was the Vice President Product for Qantas Vacations (now Helloworld) based in Los Angeles from 1999-2006. Responsible for the creation, development and negotiation on behalf of four brands, she excelled at nurturing relationships with key stakeholders, tourism boards and airlines within the portfolio of destinations including Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Tahiti, Asia, Papua New Guinea, South Africa and Dubai.

Kerryn later moved to Seattle taking the helm at Down Under Answers, a Seattle based South Pacific boutique wholesaler, as their Executive Vice President from 2006-2011. She galvanized the travel agent community around the concept of tailor- made customer experience and secured multiple awards for service excellence and the company's first ever digital platforms. Strategic partnerships was paramount to her success and the company quickly rose to be one of the top wholesalers in the North American market.

Kerryn and her husband reside on the Gold Coast. She is currently the Director of Marketing and Business Management at Spirits of the Red Sand, Australia's newest and most spectacular Aboriginal live theatre show and dinner experience located halfway between Gold Coast and Brisbane.



Ross Hanley - Manager, Industry Engagement, Department of Employment, Small Business and Training

Ross holds the position of Manager, Industry Engagement in the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training. Ross is extensively involved in the departmental engagement arrangements with industry to help employers, small business and other industry stakeholders provide information which can shape government decision making, including investment settings, program design and training product development.

A large portion of Ross's time in the State Government has been in the vocational education and training (VET) sector where he has been actively involved in creating links between industry, schools and the training sector to develop effective pathways for students into employment. Ross was also a St Joseph's Nudgee College Board member from 2015-2019 and represented Australia in Rugby Union from 1982-85.

Aaron Hoffman – Acting Senior Director, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, Queensland Health



Dr Natasha Montesalvo - EarthCheck

Natasha currently holds a Bachelor of Science from Sheffield Hallam University, England; Master of International Tourism & Hospitality Management, James Cook University, Australia and a PhD. Tourism Management, Griffith University, Australia. Her PhD thesis looked at 'Destination Brand Governance: An Exploratory Study of a Nature Based Brand'.

Natasha joined EarthCheck in 2020 having spent four years as the Policy and Research Manager for the Queensland Tourism Industry Council. She has a strong understanding of the political systems that govern and shape the tourism industry and how they can strengthen and inhibit industry success.

During her time at the Queensland Tourism Industry Council, Natasha partnered with Griffith's Institute for Tourism to co-author the climate adaptation and mitigation strategy for the Queensland tourism industry. A first of its kind document for Australia, leading climate adaptation and mitigation actions for the tourism industry. Since the development of this document, she was responsible for leading the steering committee directing the implementation of critical actions.

Natasha's PhD focused on how the relational ties between DMOs and tourism and hospitality operators can be utilised to enhance the visitor experience.

Prior to her post-graduate studies Natasha gained operational experiences within several luxury hotel groups in Australia and the UK and spent some time working across Europe for a major UK tour operator as a holiday representative.



Kathryn Morton – Experience Development Specialist, Tourism and Events Queensland

Kathryn entered tourism with a background research and subsequently combined her skills in researching emerging tourism trends with on-the-ground, grass-roots industry experience by working in hotels and resorts domestically and around the world.

Kathryn has excelled in development focused roles working with tourism businesses, particularly small businesses. Her aptitude in assisting small businesses led Kathryn into the Indigenous tourism sector in 2010, where her impacts on businesses can have broader implications beyond single operators to benefit communities. She routinely demonstrates her desire and passion for Indigenous tourism and her experience, expertise and inquiring mind are valuable assets for the businesses she works with.

Kathryn has a Bachelor of Psychology from Queensland University of Technology, and in 2017 was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to investigate and design new, innovative approaches to grow and market Indigenous tourism experiences.



Gayle O'Brien - Department of State Development, Tourism and Innovation

Gayle O'Brien is an experienced professional who has held senior roles in international business, marketing, government and stakeholder relations. Her experience includes senior roles in metropolitan and regional Queensland as well as overseas.

In her current position as General Manager, Tourism Policy, Partnerships and Events at DITID, Gayle has led the development and implementation of a number of projects including the Queensland Government's Advancing Small Business Queensland Strategy 2016-20 and the Advancing Tourism 2016-20 strategy.

In addition, Gayle leads the strategic engagement between the government and Queensland's tourism industry, the attraction and leveraging of major events, the Great Barrier Reef Island Resorts Rejuvenation Program and the Young Tourism Leaders Program.

In regard to disaster resilience, preparedness and recovery, she is leading the delivery of Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements projects related to floods and bushfires, the tourism response to impacts of the Coronavirus, and tourism business continuity planning.



Katherine Reid – CEO Bundaberg Tourism (member of the RTO Network)

Katherine is the CEO of Bundaberg Tourism and sits on the QTIC Board as a representative for the Queensland RTO Network. Katherine has a holistic understanding of regional tourism and business, having been heavily involved in the destination development of the Town of 1770 - Agnes Water as President of the LTO, and owner, operator of eco-tourism business, 1770 LARC tours for 17 years. Winning numerous regional and state awards for Cultural and Heritage Tourism, Eco-tourism, Visitor Attraction and the CQ and Southern Great Barrier Reef Tourism Champion Award for outstanding contribution to the tourism industry.

On behalf of the RTO Network, Katherine has been involved in the development of the Climate Change tourism adaptation and mitigation strategy and the Nature-based tourism strategy. As well as an active lead on product and experience development initiatives across the destination, encompassing the Southern Great Barrier Reef, culinary tourism and Indigenous experiences.

Being recognised in the region as a collaborative leader, Katherine has forged strong partnerships across industries and has raised the reputation and awareness of the value of tourism and the contribution the industry brings to the regional economy.



Professor Lisa Ruhanen – Director of Education, University of Queensland

Dr Lisa Ruhanen is a Professor in Tourism with the UQ Business School, The University of Queensland. She has undertaken more than 30 academic and consultancy research projects in Australia and overseas in the areas of Indigenous tourism, sustainable tourism, and destination policy and planning. Lisa has more than 100 academic publications and in 2017 she and colleagues co-edited a book on Indigenous Tourism: Cases from Australia and New Zealand. She has worked for more than a decade with the United Nations World Tourism Organization as a consultant and member of their education advisory board.



Joe Sproats - Member of the QTIC Champions Network

Joe is a trained psychologist in clinical and organisational psychology, with a research Master of Arts in Psychology and a Master of Social Policy. Joe has held a number of management positions over a fifteen-year period with organisations in the Commonwealth, State, community and private sectors, prior to establishing his own full time consultancy practice in Management, Training and Planning in 1996.

Joe is the Co-Owner of Dreamtime Learning specialising in training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and owner of Platypus Wealth Institute.



Associate Prof. Michelle Whitford – Dean of Learning and Student Outcomes, Griffith University

Associate Professor Michelle Whitford is Dean (Learning and Student Outcomes) at Griffith University. Her research expertise is in the field of policy, planning, sustainable development and management of Indigenous tourism and events. Associate Professor Whitford's expertise includes leading and co-coordinating projects in the area of Indigenous tourism and events with a focus on supply and demand, capacity development, entrepreneurship, authenticity and commodification and management.

Michelle has co-coordinated research projects for various organisations including the Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Studies, Indigenous Business Australia and the Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism and Tourism and Events Queensland, the National Environmental Science Program and numerous Australian Federal State and Local Government agencies