

## MEDIA RELEASE

**STRICTLY EMBARGOED until 10:00PM FRIDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2023**

### Queensland tourism hotspots recognised for outstanding achievements

After another ground-breaking year for Queensland tourism operators, the Queensland Tourism Awards were back on 24 November for a tropical night of glamour in the beautiful tropical city of Cairns in North Queensland.

There were 31 award categories ranging from attractions, events, tour and transport operators, accommodation, restaurants, culture and marketing. Across the 31 categories, 78 operators were awarded including 31 Gold, 26 Silver and 20 Bronze.

From the many awards presented on this night, there were four new businesses entered into the Queensland Tourism Industry Council's Hall of Fame – Fun Over 50 Holidays - Immersive Tours and Adventures, Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary, Paronella Park and Bundaberg Rum Visitor Experience.

For a first this year, the awards introduced the new category called 'Excellence in Accessible Tourism'. This award recognises the businesses that are providing services that go above and beyond to accommodate for people with disabilities or specific needs.

Striking Gold for Excellence in Accessible Tourism was the BIG4 Adventure Whitsunday Resort with its unforgettable reputation for being one of Queensland's leading resorts when it comes to accessible holiday accommodation.

Among these higher achievers is a Brisbane local, Hailey Brown who has been awarded the Stephen Gregg Award for Young Achiever of the Year. Hailey is a Queensland entrepreneur who has become a catalyst for change in the tourism industry by creating a tour guide app that is fully audio, allowing people with vision impairment to have an audio guide to the world.

Queensland Tourism Industry Council CEO Brett Fraser said the Queensland Tourism Awards was a significant event for the state as it recognises the outstanding achievements of Queensland's tourism industry including businesses, events and individuals.

"While we have seen some record-breaking statistics in the last few years, it has been a whirlwind for the Queensland tourism industry so it's important that we celebrate the industry's achievements," Mr Fraser said.

"According to data collected by Tourism Research Australia, we saw 25.3 million domestic and 1.6 million international holiday-makers choosing to travel to Queensland in the 12-months to June 2023.

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“The tourism industry is one of a kind and doesn’t come without its challenges and the Queensland Tourism Industry Council takes pride in advocating for this industry by using these awards to showcase the achievements of our operators.”

Queensland ended the 2022/23 financial year with an overnight visitor expenditure of \$4.3 billion in international tourism, outperforming the national average by 2 per cent **Error! Bookmark not defined..**

The State welcomed 1.6 million international visitors this past financial year, with the largest market of visitors coming from across the ditch in New Zealand and having an average overnight spend of \$212 million, which is an almost 50 per cent increase since pre-pandemic<sup>1</sup>.

Domestic tourism in Queensland saw total visitation of 25.3 million, equalling a massive 16.4 per cent increase on the previous year. Of these millions of domestic visitors, the domestic overnight visitor expenditure shot up to \$28.8 billion which is a 46.8 per cent increase<sup>2</sup>.

Queensland Airports Limited, which owns and operates Gold Coast, Townsville, Mount Isa and Longreach airports, continues to be the platinum sponsor of the Queensland Tourism Awards and is now in its 17<sup>th</sup> year partnership.

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“Queensland Airports Limited is proud to be a long-standing partner of the Queensland Tourism Awards, recognising tourism as the lifeblood of our great state,” said Queensland Airports Limited CEO Amelia Evans.

“We welcomed just under eight million passengers through our four airports last financial year, with every passenger representing economic and social growth for local businesses and communities.

“We are expecting a very busy summer and school holiday period with December set to be one of our strongest on record, largely driven by tourists heading to Queensland to enjoy our exceptional destinations and tourism attractions.

“The Queensland Tourism Awards provide a great opportunity to celebrate the industry’s remarkable accomplishments in delivering the best possible experience to our collective customers.”

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<sup>1</sup> [TEQ - International Snapshot June 2023](#)

<sup>2</sup> [TEQ - Domestic Snapshot June 2023](#)

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Tourism Minister Stirling Hinchliffe said the Queensland Tourism Awards celebrated another extraordinary year of accomplishments.

“Congratulations to award winners and finalists for creating world-class visitor experiences and helping to make 2023 an extraordinary year for Queensland tourism,” Mr Hinchliffe said.

“Queensland’s place as the nation’s favourite holiday destination and record \$33.2 billion visitor economy are a credit to the ingenuity and commitment of the State’s tourism operators.

“Thank you to BIG4 Adventure Whitsunday Resort for their leadership in all-abilities visitor experiences and as winner of the Palaszczuk Government’s inaugural Excellence in Accessible Tourism Award.

“Our gold award winners are on track to put Queensland in an unbeatable position for national recognition at the Australian Tourism Awards in March.”

Select category winners will gain automatic entry into the Qantas Australian Tourism Awards, which will be held in the Northern Territory on Friday 15 March 2024. Next year the Queensland Tourism Awards will be held at The Star in Brisbane.

– ENDS –

### Notes for Media:

- Media are asked to refrain from contacting award recipients **until after 10:00PM FRIDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2023**
- A full list of Queensland Tourism Awards recipients is attached.

### MEDIA CONTACT

Mia McGaffin  
BBS Communications Group  
M: 0497 491 586  
[mmcgaffin@bbscommunications.com.au](mailto:mmcgaffin@bbscommunications.com.au)

Ehmily Nicholson  
BBS Communications Group  
M: 0434 367 448  
[enicholson@bbscommunications.com.au](mailto:enicholson@bbscommunications.com.au)



QUEENSLAND  
TOURISM INDUSTRY  
COUNCIL

Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) is the peak industry body for tourism in Queensland representing more than 3,000 members. QTIC is a private sector, membership-based organisation which, since 2001, has worked to influence and shape the state’s tourism business environment that directly contributes \$27.2 billion to the Queensland’s economy and employs more than 237,000 Queenslanders.

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Category	Place	Winner	Hall of Fame	Region
<b>Major Tourist Attractions</b>				
1st		Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary	Hall of Fame	Gold Coast (Destination Gold Coast)
2nd		Sea World		Gold Coast (Destination Gold Coast)
3rd		GC Aqua Park		Gold Coast (Destination Gold Coast)
<b>Tourist Attractions</b>				
1st		Bundaberg Rum Distillery Visitor Experience	Hall of Fame	Bundaberg Tourism
2nd		Historic Village Herberton		Tropical North Queensland (Tourism Tropical North Queensland)
3rd		Daintree Discovery Centre		Tropical North Queensland (Tourism Tropical North Queensland)
<b>Major Festivals and Events</b>				
1st		Toowoomba Carnival of Flowers		Southern Queensland Country (Southern Queensland Country Tourism)
2nd		Isa Rodeo Limited - 2022 Mount Isa Rodeo		Outback (Outback Queensland Tourism Association Inc.)
3rd		Rare Spares Rockynats 03		Capricorn Enterprise
<b>Festivals and Events</b>				
1st		Isa Rodeo Limited - 2022 Mount Isa Mines Indigenous Rodeo Championships		Outback (Outback Queensland Tourism Association Inc.)
2nd		Outback Queensland Masters		Outback (Outback Queensland Tourism Association Inc.)
3rd		Crankworx Cairns		Tropical North Queensland (Tourism Tropical North Queensland)
<b>The Steve Irwin Award for Ecotourism</b>				
1st		Fun Over 50 Holidays - Immersive Tours and Adventures		Brisbane Economic Development Agency
2nd		Barefoot Tours		Tropical North Queensland (Tourism Tropical North Queensland)
3rd		Daintree Discovery Centre		Tropical North Queensland (Tourism Tropical North Queensland)
<b>Cultural Tourism</b>				
1st		Fun Over 50 Holidays - Immersive Tours and Adventures	Hall of Fame	Brisbane Economic Development Agency
2nd		Paronella Park		Tropical North Queensland (Tourism Tropical North Queensland)
3rd		Qld Music Trails - The Outback Trail		Outback (Outback Queensland Tourism Association Inc.)
<b>Award for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tourism</b>				
1st		Cape York Peninsula Lodge		Tropical North Queensland (Tourism Tropical North Queensland)
2nd		Jellurgal Aboriginal Cultural Centre		Gold Coast (Destination Gold Coast)
3rd		Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre		Tropical North Queensland (Tourism Tropical North Queensland)
<b>Tourism Retail &amp; Hire Services</b>				

1st	Whitsunday Coast Airport	Whitsundays (Tourism Whitsundays)
2nd	Shute Harbour Marine Terminal	Whitsundays (Tourism Whitsundays)
3rd	Pelican Boat Hire	Sunshine Coast (Visit Sunshine Coast)

#### Visitor Information and Services

1st	Ipswich Visitor Information Centre	Brisbane Economic Development Agency
2nd	Hervey Bay Visitor Information Centre	Fraser Coast (Fraser Coast Tourism & Events)
3rd	Bowen Visitor Information Centre	Whitsundays (Tourism Whitsundays)

#### Business Event Venues

1st	Sofitel Brisbane Central	Brisbane Economic Development Agency
2nd	Empire Apartment Hotel Conference Centre	Capricorn Enterprise
3rd	Mackay Entertainment and Convention Centre	Mackay (Mackay Tourism Limited)

#### Major Tour and Transport Operators

1st	Ocean Rafting	Whitsundays (Tourism Whitsundays)
2nd	Tropic Wings Cairns Tours & Charters	Tropical North Queensland (Tourism Tropical North Queensland)
3rd	Cruise Whitsundays	Whitsundays (Tourism Whitsundays)

#### Tour and Transport Operators

1st	Creative Tours	Sunshine Coast (Visit Sunshine Coast)
2nd	1770 LARC! Tours	Gladstone Area Promotion & Development Ltd
3rd	SeaLink Whitsundays	Whitsundays (Tourism Whitsundays)
Highly Commended	Hopo Gold Coast Ferry	Gold Coast (Destination Gold Coast)

#### Adventure Tourism

1st	Ocean Rafting	Whitsundays (Tourism Whitsundays)
2nd	Aquascene Magnetic Island	Townsville (Townsville Enterprise Limited)
3rd	Cape York Motorcycle Adventures	Tropical North Queensland (Tourism Tropical North Queensland)

#### The Richard Power Award for Tourism Marketing and Campaigns

1st	Rockhampton Regional Council - Explore Rockhampton	Capricorn Enterprise
2nd	Visit Sunshine Coast - Australia's Craft Beer Capital	Sunshine Coast (Visit Sunshine Coast)
3rd	Tourism Noosa - Find Your Inner Noosa - Winter Campaign	Sunshine Coast (Visit Sunshine Coast)
Highly Commended	Townsville North Queensland - Up for the unexpected	Townsville (Townsville Enterprise Limited)

#### Tourism Restaurants and Catering Services

1st	Sea World Cruises - Sightseeing and Dining	Gold Coast (Destination Gold Coast)
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2nd	The FLACKYARD	Mackay Isaac
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**Tourism Wineries, Distilleries and Breweries**

1st	Tamborine Mountain Distillery	Gold Coast (Destination Gold Coast)
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**Caravan and Holiday Parks**

1st	BIG4 Adventure Whitsunday Resort	Whitsundays (Tourism Whitsundays)
2nd	Esk Caravan Park & Brisbane Valley Rail Trail Motel	Brisbane Economic Development Agency
3rd	Cape York Camping Punsad Bay	Tropical North Queensland (Tourism Tropical North Queensland)
Highly Commended	Queens Beach Tourist Village	Whitsundays (Tourism Whitsundays)

**Hosted Accommodation**

1st	Narrows Escape Rainforest Retreat	Sunshine Coast (Visit Sunshine Coast)
2nd	Bli Bli House Riverside Retreat	Sunshine Coast (Visit Sunshine Coast)
3rd	Glass on Glasshouse	Sunshine Coast (Visit Sunshine Coast)

**Unique Accommodation**

1st	Mitchell Grass Retreat	Outback (Outback Queensland Tourism Association Inc.)
2nd	Lady Musgrave Experience	Bundaberg Tourism
3rd	Cruise Whitsundays - Reefstays	Whitsundays (Tourism Whitsundays)

**Self Contained Accommodation**

1st	Pinnacles, Airlie Beach	Whitsundays (Tourism Whitsundays)
2nd	RACV Noosa Resort	Sunshine Coast (Visit Sunshine Coast)
3rd	Mirage Whitsundays	Whitsundays (Tourism Whitsundays)

**3-3.5 Star Accommodation**

1st	Magnums Accommodation Airlie Beach	Whitsundays (Tourism Whitsundays)
2nd	Great Keppel Island Hideaway	Capricorn Enterprise

**4-4.5 Star Accommodation**

1st	Cape York Peninsula Lodge	Tropical North Queensland (Tourism Tropical North Queensland)
2nd	Empire Apartment Hotel	Capricorn Enterprise
3rd	Novotel Cairns Oasis Resort	Tropical North Queensland (Tourism Tropical North Queensland)

**5 Star Accommodation**

1st	The Reef House Boutique Hotel and Spa - Adult Tropical Escapes	Tropical North Queensland (Tourism Tropical North Queensland)
2nd	InterContinental Hayman Island Resort	Whitsundays (Tourism Whitsundays)

3rd	Emporium Hotel South Bank	Brisbane Economic Development Agency
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**New Tourism Business**

1st	Kokomo Cruises	Gold Coast (Destination Gold Coast)
2nd	qtQT Gold Coast	Gold Coast (Destination Gold Coast)
3rd	ULTIQA Signature at Broadbeach	Gold Coast (Destination Gold Coast)

**Excellence in Food Tourism**

1st	Creative Tours	Sunshine Coast (Visit Sunshine Coast)
2nd	Sarina Sugar Shed	Mackay Isaac
3rd	Scenic Rim Regional Council - Scenic Rim Eat Local Movement	Brisbane Economic Development Agency

**Excellence in Accessible Tourism**

1st	BIG4 Adventure Whitsunday Resort	Whitsundays (Tourism Whitsundays)
2nd	Hopo Gold Coast Ferry	Gold Coast (Destination Gold Coast)
3rd	Aquascene Magnetic Island	Townsville (Townsville Enterprise Limited)

**Outstanding Contribution by a Volunteer or a Volunteer Group**

1st	Moreton Bay Region Volunteer Program	Brisbane Economic Development Agency
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**Young Achievers Award**

1st	Hailey Brown	Brisbane Economic Development Agency
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**The Marie Watson-Blake Award for Outstanding Contribution by an Individual**

1st	Michael L. Hackett	Whitsundays (Tourism Whitsundays)
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**RACQ People's Choice Award - Experience & Services**

1st	Paronella Park	Hall of Fame	Tropical North Queensland (Tourism Tropical North Queensland)
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**RACQ People's Choice Award - Accommodation**

1st	Esk Caravan Park & Brisbane Valley Rail Trail Motel	Brisbane Economic Development Agency
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