

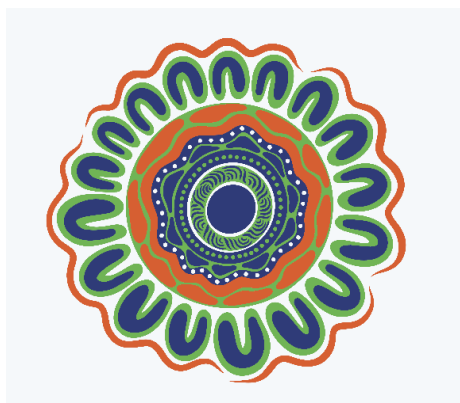
Federal Election QTIC Position Paper

February 2025



**QUEENSLAND
TOURISM INDUSTRY
COUNCIL**

The Voice of Tourism



QTIC acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Queensland. We recognise those who shared stories, welcomed guests on Country, and were stewards of the earth for millennia before us, and their continued connection to land, waterways, and culture.



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QUEENSLAND TOURISM INDUSTRY COUNCIL

The Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) is pleased to offer this submission to the Australian Government and the Treasury for consideration in the 2025-26 Budget.

QTIC is the peak industry body and leading advocate for the tourism, hospitality, and events sectors in Queensland, committed to the growth and sustainability of the state visitor economy. Our efforts focus on powerful lobbying, policy development, and collaboration with key industry stakeholders to create a favourable business environment for operators.

As a not-for-profit, membership-based organisation, we take pride in ensuring that the concerns and needs of our members and the broader tourism industry inform all relevant policy debates and that businesses have strong representation in decision-making processes. By promoting the value and importance of tourism in government forums and to the wider community, we help to create a vibrant, diverse industry that benefits all.

Through delivery of workforce and skilling programs, advocating for attraction and infrastructure investment, and working with the private sector to develop innovative solutions to tourism priorities, QTIC continues to serve members and industry. We also provide expert advice and support, including workforce and business development opportunities and access to vital industry insights.

DECISIVE ACTION NEEDED FOR A THRIVING VISITOR ECONOMY

Tourism is an economic powerhouse for Australia, contributing significantly to the state's prosperity and standing as Queensland's second greatest export. It is one of the state's largest employers, acting as a key driver of job creation, particularly in regional Queensland, where tourism sustains entire communities. Across the state, the sector provides one in every twelve Queenslanders with a job, supporting local businesses, generating opportunities in remote and rural areas, and building pathways for young people and diverse workforces. With Queensland set to host the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, there is an unprecedented opportunity to enhance global visibility and solidify the state's tourism appeal for decades to come. Strategic investment in tourism infrastructure, digital innovation, and workforce development will be critical to ensuring the visitor economy meets future demand and remains globally competitive.

The Queensland Government is already laying the groundwork with the development of a 20-year tourism strategy, aiming to drive sustainable growth, diversify tourism offerings, and attract high-value visitors. However, long-term success requires decisive commitments from both sides of government in the lead up to this year's election.

The tourism sector's contribution to economic recovery, regional employment, and national prosperity cannot be overstated. Strong government support is crucial to ensuring that Queensland, and Australia, remains at the forefront of the global tourism landscape, capitalising on future opportunities such as the Brisbane 2032 Games, while also building resilience against potential economic and environmental challenges.

We urge both sides of the Australian Government to seize this pivotal opportunity to secure the future of our visitor economy. By committing to sustained and strategic investment in tourism, the Government can ensure that Queensland thrives as a global tourism leader, driving unparalleled economic growth, job creation, and community resilience for decades to come.

INTRODUCTION

Queensland stands on the brink of a transformative era as it prepares to host the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, now just 7.5 years away. This once-in-a-lifetime opportunity offers an unparalleled chance to position Queensland not just as a global tourism destination, but as a jobs creator and economic powerhouse. Tourism drives international visitation, strengthens local economies, supports thousands of businesses across multiple sectors, and secures long-term economic growth.

To fully capitalise on the Games and ensure a thriving tourism industry well beyond 2032, strategic investment is essential. This includes a sharp focus on infrastructure development, workforce growth, and innovative marketing strategies that showcase Queensland's unique offerings to the world. Tourism is more than holidays—it creates jobs in hospitality, transport, construction, and retail, and supports critical industries like agriculture, creative services, and manufacturing.

With international visitation steadily recovering, policymakers and industry stakeholders must prioritise initiatives that enhance regional dispersal, address workforce challenges, and adopt a data-driven approach to future tourism planning. By taking action now, we can ensure that Queensland's tourism sector not only recovers but leads the way on a global stage, demonstrating how tourism underpins broader economic and social success.

KEY ELECTION PRIORITIES

To ensure Queensland's tourism sector thrives and remains globally competitive, QTIC urges all candidates and parties to commit to the following priorities:

1. BOOST INTERNATIONAL VISITATION GROWTH

Tourism Australia reported that international visitation reached 7.5 million in 2023, recovering to 86% of pre-pandemic levels. This growth was largely driven by successful global campaigns like "Come and Say G'day," which revitalised Australia's image as a top travel destination. However, competition remains fierce, and further investment in marketing and strategic bilateral air service agreements is essential to boost visitor numbers beyond pre-pandemic levels. Enhanced infrastructure and modernised border processes will also be critical in attracting and retaining international tourists.

- Increase Tourism Australia's funding to enhance global marketing efforts, ensuring competitiveness in the global tourism landscape.
- Expand the Export Market Development Grant (EMDG) to empower tourism businesses in international markets, particularly supporting small businesses in regional areas.
- Freeze the Passenger Movement Charge at \$70 for the next five years to maintain competitiveness.
- Co-invest in the Aviation Attraction Investment Fund to secure international routes and promote regional tourism, while reforming airport capacity management and focusing on strategic bilateral air service agreements to boost passenger numbers.
- Increase the Business Events Bid Fund to enable regional Queensland to attract high-value events and expanding support to smaller-scale events in regional areas.

- Modernise border processes with digital upgrades to streamline visitor experiences, including digitising the Incoming Passenger Card and adopting 'passenger on the move' technology.

2. ADDRESS RISING INSURANCE COSTS FOR TOURISM BUSINESSES

The rising cost of insurance has become a significant burden for Australian tourism businesses, especially SMEs in regions prone to natural disasters. Limited coverage options and escalating premiums due to climate-related risks have created a challenging environment. Enhancing the Northern Australia Cyclone Reinsurance Pool (NACRP) and establishing national insurance frameworks could alleviate these pressures, ensuring businesses can continue operations without prohibitive financial risks.

- Expand and enhance the Northern Australia Cyclone Reinsurance Pool (NACRP) to provide broader coverage and meaningful premium reductions for SMEs.
- Establish a Joint Taskforce on Insurance Affordability to explore national solutions and develop a sustainable insurance landscape.
- Develop a national public liability framework to protect SMEs, modelled on New Zealand's system.
- Introduce matched grants to underwrite insurance costs and reform taxation on insurance products.

3. INVEST IN TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE AND REGULATORY REFORMS

QTIC calls on both parties to demonstrate their commitment to the tourism industry in the lead up to the election and commit to projects like the Whitsunday Skyway. This project and others like it should have a clear pathway to qualifying for funding to support the delivery of world class tourism offerings. The risk is currently extremely high for investors on many fronts, and investors are watching closely how our government performs with a view of further investment. Never in the history of Australia has it been harder to attract new investment in product development and the government needs to outline how it will streamline and remove impediments to enable delivery.

- The Australian Government must commit to streamlining regulatory processes through a "single-window" approvals system and fostering public-private partnerships will further accelerate infrastructure growth and ensure Queensland is ready for global events like Brisbane 2032.
- Fund a "single window" approvals team for tourism infrastructure projects to streamline bureaucratic processes and improve interdepartmental coordination.
- Establish a Federal Tourism Cabinet Sub-Committee to prioritise tourism policy and investment, ensuring national coordination.
- Increase funding for iconic attractions via Austrade and provide tax incentives for regional infrastructure investment, encouraging public-private partnerships.
- Enhance digital infrastructure in remote areas and invest in transport connectivity to key tourism destinations, including support for electric vehicle infrastructure and road improvements for buses and caravans.
- Support the cruise sector by making legal exemptions permanent and streamlining passenger entry processes to maximise economic benefits.

4. SUPPORT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IN TOURISM

Queensland's tourism sector faces a critical workforce shortage, with over 4,000 vacancies currently unfilled. Nationally, the shortage impacts service quality and limits growth potential. Tourism Australia's Workforce Strategy highlights the need for targeted training programs, apprenticeships, and skilled migration to address these gaps. Expanding the Working Holiday Maker program and reducing barriers for international students will also play a key role in bolstering the workforce ahead of major events like the Brisbane 2032 Games.

- Establish dedicated federal funding for tourism apprenticeships and training to meet demand for Brisbane 2032, ensuring a skilled workforce.
- Include tourism and hospitality roles in skilled worker priority listings, addressing labour shortages and industry skill gaps.
- Fund regional working groups to address migration, housing, and workforce needs in tourism hubs.
- Introduce a \$25,000 incentive for tourism apprenticeships and expand the Working Holiday Maker visa program, including options for second and third-year visas and broader age eligibility.
- Remove barriers to employment for international students by reconsidering working hour caps and streamlining visa processes to encourage participation in the tourism workforce.

5. ADVANCE SUSTAINABILITY AND NET ZERO TARGETS

Australia's Sustainable Tourism Strategy underscores the nation's commitment to achieving net zero emissions by 2050. Investments in Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF), the National EV Charging Network, and eco-friendly tourism businesses are central to this goal. Supporting businesses in adopting low-carbon technologies and enhancing biodiversity projects will not only reduce the sector's carbon footprint but also position Australia as a leader in sustainable tourism, appealing to environmentally conscious travellers.

- Fund the Renewable Energy Transition Fund to support tourism businesses adopting low-emission technologies.
- Invest in Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) development to decarbonise the aviation sector, positioning Australia as a global leader in SAF production.
- Continue funding the National EV Charging Network, focusing on regional tourism areas and partnering with accommodation providers to expand coverage.
- Support biodiversity projects, carbon measurement initiatives, and marketing that highlights sustainable tourism, providing targeted grants and tax incentives for businesses adopting sustainable practices.

6. PROMOTE FIRST NATIONS TOURISM AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

First Nations tourism is experiencing unprecedented growth, with over 3 million trips incorporating cultural experiences in 2023. The government must commit to preserving and promoting Indigenous heritage while providing economic opportunities for First Nations communities. Investing in new product development, language promotion and workforce integration will further enrich Queensland's tourism offerings ahead of Brisbane 2032.

- Establish a First Nations Cultural Centre in Queensland ahead of Brisbane 2032.

- Fund initiatives that promote First Nations languages and cultural heritage, drawing on existing partnerships with Traditional Owner groups and enhancing workforce integration of young First Nations people.

CONCLUSION

Tourism is a cornerstone of Queensland's economic prosperity, cultural identity, and community resilience. The upcoming federal election represents a pivotal opportunity for political leaders to demonstrate their commitment to a thriving visitor economy.

QTIC urges both sides of the Federal Government to act decisively by committing to foster meaningful collaboration, providing targeted financial support, and implementing forward-thinking policies to build a thriving, resilient, and globally competitive tourism industry. With strategic investment and leadership, Queensland's tourism sector will not only drive significant economic and social benefits today for Australia but also create an enduring legacy of growth and prosperity well beyond 2032.