## TROPICAL NORTH QUEENSLAND FIRST NATIONS TOURISM ACTION PLAN 2022-2025

## **CONSULTATION SUMMARY**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge the spirit of Country and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as carrying custodial responsibility.

We pay our respect to the Ancestors and Elders, past and present.

We recognise the deep relationships, connections and responsibilities to lands, waters and skies integral to First Nations Peoples' identity and culture and we give regard to their connections as central to culture and being.



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## **PART 1 - INTRODUCTION**

In recent years there has been an awakening in the tourism sector. Internationally, nationally and at State level, there has been a growing recognition of the role of the First Nations peoples in tourism. This has been founded on a convergence of two factors. First, it has been based on the fundamental human rights of First Nations to self-determine their future. The recognition of these rights has seen the delivery of lands and waters back to First Nations people to unlock for social, cultural, environmental, and economic growth. In Queensland the State Government is committed to a Path to Treaty and a Voice model to the Queensland Parliament.

Since 2017 the State of Queensland has seen strong action toward creating an environment that gives a voice to First Nations tourism. The approach by the Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) and the Queensland Government has been simple - First Nations empowered leadership, supported by industry and government. The result has seen the development of the Queensland First Nations Tourism Plan 2020-2025. The Plan saw several quick successions including the Year of Indigenous Tourism, a \$10 million Indigenous Tourism Fund to support it and after significant consultation around the State, the scoping, development, and creation of a representative peak First Nations tourism body – the Queensland First Nations Tourism Council who will be a strong Voice of First Nations Tourism at a State and Federal level. This spark of activity has also seen the emergence of a range of First Nations industry organisations, networks and initiatives embracing the momentum.

This has been coupled with the future settings being repositioned by all levels of government, industry, and community in response to COVID-19 and the announcement of the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. More recently the Australian Government has announced an acceptance of the Uluru Statement of the Heart and a commitment to Voice, Treaty and Truth. As a result, the tourism sector is moving and changing to plan and realise the emerging opportunities for First Nations tourism in Tropical North Queensland.

Moving forward, this mobilisation must be premised on reframing the relationship with First Nations people by empowering and providing support to local communities, their organisations, tourism operators and individuals to develop the vision, planning, framework, implementation and monitoring for tourism on their Country. This will ensure the wealth prosperity, environmental sustainability and cultural expression will flow to those communities.

## **PART 2 - ABOUT THIS CONSULTATION SUMMARY PAPER**

This Discussion Paper looks at the approach to develop a First Nations Tourism Action Plan at a regional level for Tropical North Queensland. A Year of Indigenous Tourism initiative, it is funded by the Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport (DTIS), supported by Tropical Tourism North Queensland (TTNQ), and led by a Steering Committee of First Nations people from the region. Group.

The Consultation Summary Paper analyses the structures, plans, research and data that are relevant to this region, and connects the landscape of the tourism sector that impact on it. Importantly, it provides the voice of the First Nations people of Tropical North Queensland, through crystallising their local knowledge into a document that maps the way forward for the region.

At the heart of the Summary Paper is the fundamental principle that all tourism occurs on Country. It strikes an imperative that the sector supports visitors to understand the spiritual and custodial relationship of First Nations people to their Country. The Summary Paper advocates that the sector should support visitors to also connect to Country, connect to cultural expression, and ensure tourism contributes positively to community including building local capacity. The Summary Paper prioritises a localised approach where actions are driven locally with regional, state, national and international structures supporting communities to develop tourism that is appropriate for their area.

The Summary Paper provides a draft Tropical North Queensland First Nations Tourism Action Plan for consideration. The role of the Action Plan is to create an environment of success with these elements. Through values, indicators, and actions that are measured for effectiveness, we are seeking to create a road map that delivers a regional ecosystem that will bring First Nations people, industry and government into a collaborative, coordinated framework that is culturally appropriate, economically powerful, and sustainable for future generations. The Indigenous Experience Cluster Group, supported by the sector through TTNQ, QTIC, the QFNTC, and local, State and Australian Government agencies, can bring this Action Plan to life.

## PART 3 - DEVELOPING THE PLAN

A Steering Committee has been formed to lead the development of the Tropical North Queensland First Nations Tourism Action Plan, supported by TTNQ. The Steering Committee includes representatives of the First Nations Tourism Sector of Tropical North Queensland extending from Cardwell to the Torres Strait and west to the NT border. The Steering Committee includes representatives appointed by the Indigenous Experiences Cluster Group (IECG) and from key organisations across the region, including:

- Co-Chairs Juan Walker and Dale Mundraby, with Willie Enoch-Tranby, the TNQ Indigenous Experiences Cluster Group (IECG);
- Alicia Haines, Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA);
- **Gavin Singleton** representing the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) Indigenous Reef Advisory Committee;
- Ross Andrews, Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (FNQROC);
- **Joann Schmider**, Indigenous academic community and the Rainforest Aboriginal People;
- Fraser Nai, emerging Torres Strait tourism industry;
- Kirsty Burchill, First Nations Tourism Project Coordinator; and
- Other representatives and organisations as identified by the Steering Committee.

TTNQ acts as secretariat for the development of the Action Plan and continue to provide administrative support to the TNQ Indigenous Experiences Cluster Group. The Action Plan is designed to complement the *Queensland First Nations Tourism Plan 2020-2025: Voices of Today, Stories for Tomorrow*, by the Queensland Tourism Industry Council. The development of the Action Plan has been made possible through the support of the Queensland Government through the Year of Indigenous Tourism program and from Tourism Tropical North Queensland and the leadership of the Steering Committee. The Action Plan aims to:

- Educate the industry and key stakeholders of their obligations to respect culture and Country and to understand the stories of their place and to promote sustainable tourism on Country;
- Set a **clear vision and establish targets** for the development and growth of culturally appropriate Indigenous tourism in the Tropical North Queensland tourism region;
- Establish **stronger links between the industry and key stakeholders** at a State and regional level to ensure the region's aspirations are considered as the sector evolves;
- The Steering Committee has undertaken consultation in fourteen (14) communities across the region and these **community inputs have been fed into the development of the plan;**
- Identify the **priority action areas and projects** needed to build on the success of the region's established First Nation tourism experiences; and
- **Map the way forward** from the current situation towards the vision, including the model for implementation, identification of key milestones, actions and enablers of success.

## PART 4 - CONTEXT

## FIRST NATIONS TOURISM

First Nations tourism experiences are increasingly in demand in Tropical North Queensland and across the world. The opportunity exists to better support, promote, and connect First Nation visitor experiences and help visitors better connect with Country and culture when they are in Tropical North Queensland. Building on the success of the Queensland First Nations Tourism Plan 2020-25 the Tropical North Queensland Indigenous Experiences Cluster Group identified the need for its region to have its own clearly articulated plan for First Nations Tourism.

The First Nations of Tropical North Queensland have been a leader in First Nations tourism in Australia for a very long time. So, as we go forward, we acknowledge the role of those First Nations people who have laid the foundations for tourism in the region and utilise the experience and knowledge to drive the region as a premier First Nations tourism destination by 2032. This will require support for empowering local communities, impactful leadership, coordinated structure and networks, strategic focus and planning, effective implementation with adequate resources, and continued monitoring and evaluating of success.

First Nations tourism intersects across sectors. In addition to the tourism sector, these include the environment sector, the arts and culture sector, the innovation and research sector, and the business development, training and employment sector. The level of participation of First Nations people in the tourism sector has changed. Driven by native title and better access to finance and capital, First Nations participation in tourism ranges from small businesses like artists and tour operators to larger hospitality business operators, owners of accommodation facilities, managers of National Parks, co-owners of airlines and producers of major festivals and events.

The Year of Indigenous Tourism (YOIT), commencing in 2019 and extended to 2020, gave rise across the State to various experience development initiatives including mentoring programs, a significant upgrade of marketing assets, enhanced programming of First Nations content in existing festivals, and increased funding to support the engagement of specialised, Indigenous talent to design and deliver experiences.

There remains a strong need to support industry development, not by doing the work, but by offering the support and funding to local First Nations communities, people and business owners to achieve their own success.

We also note that the Path to Treaty is a significant Queensland Government initiative started in 2019 and designed to reframe the relationship with First Nations Queenslanders - and truth-telling and healing are an important part of the Path to Treaty process. There is an opportunity to promote truth-telling as part of Indigenous tourism, including stories of Indigenous history and colonisation on the lands/waters on which the tourism experiences are happening.

## **PART 5 - DESKTOP ANALYSIS**

The desktop analysis comprised a selection of legislation, strategies and plans, as well as research and data.

## **Relevant Legislation**

The following legislation was considered on the development of the Draft Action Plan:

#### Human Rights Act 2019<sup>1</sup>

The *Human Rights Act 2019* provides a starting point on the acknowledgement and protection of human rights for First Nations in Queensland. The Preamble states:

Although human rights belong to all individuals, human rights have a special importance for the Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Queensland, as Australia's first people, with their distinctive and diverse spiritual, material and economic relationship with the lands, territories, waters, coastal seas and other resources with which they have a connection under Aboriginal tradition and Ailan Kastom. Of particular significance to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Queensland is the right to self-determination.

Of specific relevance for this report, s28 of the Act stipulates the cultural rights of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples:

(1) Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples hold distinct cultural rights.

(2) Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples must not be denied the right, with other members of their community—

(a) to enjoy, maintain, control, protect and develop their identity and cultural heritage, including their traditional knowledge, distinctive spiritual practices, observances, beliefs and teachings; and

(b) to enjoy, maintain, control, protect, develop and use their language, including traditional cultural expressions; and

(c) to enjoy, maintain, control, protect and develop their kinship ties; and

(d) to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual, material and economic relationship with the land, territories, waters, coastal seas and other resources with which they have a connection under Aboriginal tradition or Island custom; and

(e) to conserve and protect the environment and productive capacity of their land, territories, waters, coastal seas and other resources.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/pdf/2020-05-25/act-2019-005

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Ibid, pg 19.

#### Nature Conservation Act 1992 (Qld)<sup>3</sup>

The object of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (Qld) is outlined in s4 as the conservation of nature while allowing for the involvement of Indigenous people in the management of protected areas in which they have an interest under Aboriginal tradition or Island custom. The Act sets out to achieve this in s5(f) by:

- Recognition of interest of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in nature and their cooperative involvement in its conservation:
- the recognition of the interest of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in protected areas and native wildlife;
- the cooperative involvement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the conservation of nature;<sup>4</sup>

#### Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003<sup>5</sup>

The main purpose of *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003* is to provide effective recognition, protection and conservation of Aboriginal cultural heritage with the fundamental principles being:

(a) the recognition, protection and conservation of Aboriginal cultural heritage should be based on respect for Aboriginal knowledge, culture and traditional practices;

(b) Aboriginal people should be recognised as the primary guardians, keepers and knowledge holders of Aboriginal cultural heritage;

(c) it is important to respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of Aboriginal communities and to promote understanding of Aboriginal cultural heritage;

(d) activities involved in recognition, protection and conservation of Aboriginal cultural heritage are important because they allow Aboriginal people to reaffirm their obligations to 'law and country';

(e) there is a need to establish timely and efficient processes for the management of activities that may harm Aboriginal cultural heritage.<sup>6</sup>

The Act strongly indicates the significance of empowering and protecting First Nations to be the guardians of their cultural heritage.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/pdf/inforce/current/act-1992-020

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Ibid, pg 17.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/pdf/inforce/current/act-2003-079

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Ibid, pg 10.

## **Strategies, Policies and Plans**

A large selection of local, regional, state, interstate and national strategies and plans were reviewed to ensure that the work being done acknowledges and builds on previous work. The main Strategies that are relevant have been outlined in Appendix 1 and reach across a number of sectors to indicate the opportunity for the sector to establish networks, alliances and access resources. This included:

Local:

• A number of local Council Plans including NPARC Corporate Plan 2018 – 2022 and the Yarrabah Tourism and Events Strategy

Regional:

- Cairns & Great Barrier Reef Brand Platform
- TTNQ Strategic Direction 2021/2022
- TNQ Destination Tourism Plan
- The Wet Tropics Sustainable Tourism Plan 2021–2031
- Cape York Peninsula & Torres Strait Tourism Development Action Plan 2008 2011

#### State:

- Cultural Engagement Framework Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures in Queensland
- Paving the Way First Nations Training Strategy 2022
- Queensland Brand Playbook, Tourism and Events Queensland
- Queensland Government's Toward Tourism 2032
- Queensland First Nations Tourism Plan 2020-2025
- Queensland's 2021 Closing the Gap Implementation Plan
- The Gurra Gurra Framework 2020–2026, Department of Environment and Science
- Queensland's Protected Area Strategy 2020–2030

#### National:

- Reef 2050
- The Australian Government's Thrive 2030

#### International:

- UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- The Larrakia Principles 2012

#### Analysis: Alignment with key Strategies

There are many areas that the Action Plan aligns with the delivery and realisation of key aspects of Queensland Government legislation and policy, and and the TTNQ tourism strategy and brand. The Tropical North Queensland region provides direct contact with the icons in the Queensland Brand Book of nature, the Great Barrier Reef and Indigenous culture. In this regard, it can play to its strengths. There are a number of destinations within the region that create a multi-day itinerary for tourism visitation.

According to TTNQ Destination Tourism Plan the region has geographical coverage of 20% (340,645 km2) of the State's total area. This includes 25 local government councils. The region stretches from Cardwell in the south to the Torres Strait in the north and west to the Northern Territory border. It is the gateway to hundreds of accessible experiences set on the stage of the Great Barrier Reef, the Earth's oldest rainforest and the outback and inhabited by the oldest living culture.

Over the past 10 years, there has been significant work undertaken by First Nations tourism champions, business operators and First Nations communities, together with Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC), Tourism and Events Qld (TEQ), key Government departments and other organisation to build a strong First Nations tourism sector in Queensland. Upon analysis, our strength for Tropical North Queensland First Nations tourism is that it is already a leader and a known region for Indigenous experiences. With a coordinated Action Plan, there is an opportunity to develop and grow the sector to capitalise on this advantage.



## **Tropical North Queensland Region**

The region has a very rich and diverse cultures with dance, art and festivals ready to be elevated and linked in with the broader sentiment of First Nations tourism heading toward 2032. The regional population has a high percentage of First Nations people with a large number of First Nations groups, and this enables visitors to get ready access to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, more than other states and regions. The historical story of the region is one that is so significant and fundamentally important to Queensland and Australia. In this regard the region can position its tourism sector to be a major feature of the truth telling agenda on the Path to Treaty.

The geographic location is a strong tourism destination with its World Heritage Areas, other protected areas being managed by First Nations people and the vicinity to the Outback and Torres Strait Islands experiences providing an opportunity to leverage collaborative tourism products and services. If planned well, this could create a regional itinerary including Cairns, Gulf, Cape and the Torres Strait. Potential connecting links to demand tourism including leveraging off regional festivals and events like Cairns Indigenous Art Fair, Winds of Zennith, and Laura Dance Festival await further development.

Tropical North Queensland has 25 local government areas:

<ul> <li>Aurukun Shire Council</li> <li>Burke Shire Council</li> <li>Cairns Regional Council</li> <li>Carpentaria Shire Council</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council</li> <li>Mareeba Shire Council</li> <li>Mornington Shire Council</li> <li>Napranum Aboriginal Shire Council</li> </ul>
<ul> <li>Cassowary Coast Regional Council</li> <li>Cook Shire Council</li> <li>Croydon Shire Council</li> <li>Doomadgee Aboriginal Shire Council</li> <li>Douglas Shire Council</li> <li>Etheridge Shire Council</li> <li>Hope Vale Aboriginal Shire Council</li> <li>Kowanyama Aboriginal Shire Council</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council</li> <li>Pormpuraaw Aboriginal Shire Council</li> <li>Tablelands Regional Council</li> <li>Torres Shire Council</li> <li>Torres Strait Island Regional Council</li> <li>Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council</li> <li>Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council</li> <li>Weipa Town Authority</li> </ul>
Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council	Weipu Town Automy

The review of Local Government plans across the region indicate that there is a renewed enthusiasm for tourism as a social and economic driver is an advantage whereby that enthusiasm can potentially integrate tourism, arts and culture into Council's operations to address the needs for infrastructure like visitor information centres, interpretive signage and amenities. This can also include existing Festivals providing an opportunity for growth. Local Aboriginal Councils also have Indigenous Knowledge Centres in each community that can be utilised to provide an opportunity for structural tourism product and experiences.

Whilst there are many strategies that the Action Plan could link with, it is recommended an alignment with the key industry and government strategies in Appendix 1, that link across the tourism, arts, environment, innovation and research, business, education and training sectors to demonstrate the alignment for when strategic partnerships and access to resources and funding is required.

## **Relevant Research and Reports**

The following research and reports were considered:

- Jacobson, D. 2017 "Tourism considerations for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art sector in far north Queensland". Cooperative Research Centre Report CRO19
- Jacobsen, D. (2017) Tourism enterprises beyond the margins: the relational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander SMEs in remote Australia, Tourism Planning & Development,
- Donald, David J. (2012) Identifying Indigenous Business Opportunities in the Recreational Fishing Tourism Industry on Cape York Peninsula, Submission Number: 212 Attachment J, FRDC Project No: 2010/230
- Various research reports available on TEQs corporate website, for example including TNQ Regional Summary and TNQ Social Indicators, Indigenous trend reports
- Ruhanen, L., Whitford, M., & McLennan, C. (2013). Demand and supply issues in indigenous tourism: A gap analysis. Mapping Australia's international and domestic visitor markets against indigenous operators, (report prepared for Indigenous Business Australia & Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism, Indigenous Tourism Working Group).
- Ruhanen, L., Whitford, M., & McLennan, C. (2015). Indigenous tourism in Australia: Time for a reality check. Tourism Management, 48, 73–83.
- Whitford, M., & Ruhanen, L. (2009). Indigenous tourism businesses in Queensland: Criteria for success. An Australian case study towards the development of a national diagnostic tool for Indigenous tourism businesses. Gold Coast: Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Sustainable Tourism Pty Ltd.
- Whitford, M., & Ruhanen, L. (2010). Australian indigenous tourism policy: Practical and sustainable policies? Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 18(4), 475–496.
- Whitford, M., & Ruhanen, L. (2014). Indigenous tourism businesses: An exploratory study of business owners' perceptions of drivers and inhibitors. Tourism Recreation Research, 39(2), 149–168.

In general, the research literature indicates much of what underpins the Draft Action Plan. The desire for First Nations tourism is present but the supply of experiences needs to be addressed. The potential for tourism to be a positive driver in sustainable communities is possible, but First Nations must lead the way. The creation of small businesses in communities will feed and grow an ecosystem to support more success. As such the need for localised training, authentic product development, building capacity of businesses, and investment in sustainable infrastructure is also needed. This has been incorporated into the Draft Action Plan.

## Tourism Data

First Nations tourism data is generally very difficult to obtain, particularly in regional areas. Data was supplied by TTNQ via Cummings Economics through information supplied by Tourism Research Australia. The relevant data is supplied in Appendix 2. Key findings are:

- The region has statistically developed, along with the Northern Territory Top End, as the leading regions for Aboriginal experiences in Australia.
- Aboriginal experiences are dominantly of interest to international visitors with some domestic.
- The region has lost its #2 spot nationally to Melbourne when combining domestic and international.
- Domestically the region lost its #2 spot behind Central Australia in 2017 to the Top End (Litchfield / Kakadu).

For Tropical North Queensland:

- 300,000 international visitors recorded Indigenous experiences
- 57,000 domestic visitors recorded Indigenous experiences.

The number of 57,000 domestic overnight visitors to Tropical North Queensland recording an Aboriginal experience compares favourably with the total Australia wide domestic number of about 300,000. This importantly indicates that almost 20% of domestic Indigenous experiences in Australia occur in the Tropical North Queensland region.

The indications are that the total pre-Covid international market was about 300,000 a year. However, if restricted to those recorded as visiting an Aboriginal community or site or attending an Aboriginal performance, the number is probably more like 150,000 to 200,000. Of these, those on group tours is probably of the order of 40,000.

The number of 57,000 domestic overnight visitors to Tropical North Queensland recording an Aboriginal experience compares favourably with the total Australia wide domestic number of about 300,000. This importantly indicates that almost 20% of domestic Indigenous experiences in Australia occur in the Tropical North Queensland region.

Upon analysis, a strength for Tropical North Queensland First Nations tourism is that it is already a leader and a known region for experiencing Indigenous experiences. With a coordinated Action Plan, there is an opportunity to develop and grow the sector to capitalise on this advantage.

## **PART 6 - ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM**

Consultations took place in a series of 20 face-to-face workshops, meetings, online surveys and through the regular meetings of the TNQ IECG. The consultation program commenced from March 2022. Approximately 300 people have been engaged through the process. This Consultation Summary Paper and its Draft Action Plan will go out for further consultation and finalisation by the end of 2022. The final report and Action Plan will be a 'living document' owned by the TNQ IECG who will work with key community, industry and government stakeholders to generate resources for implementation of the Action Plan, and progress monitoring, review, evaluation and continuous improvement of the Action Plan.

## **Indigenous Experiences Cluster Group**

The Tropical North Queensland (TNQ) Indigenous Experiences Cluster Group (IECG) was formed by a collective of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and organisations, with the support of Tourism Tropical North Queensland (TTNQ), to encourage co-operation and the sharing of information and experiences around Indigenous and non-Indigenous tourism business and culturally appropriate visitor experiences.

The role of the group is to bring together existing Indigenous and non-Indigenous businesses, entities and related networks to better promote culturally appropriate tourism experiences to the consumer. The scope of the IECG extends across the entire Tropical North Queensland region (Cardwell to the Torres Strait and west to the NT border) to encourage greater marketing of culturally appropriate experiences and to bring together agencies that can support tourism businesses to increase visitor engagement.

The Steering Committee of the TNQ IECG and TTNQ has developed a Draft First Nations Tourism Action Plan for Tropical North Queensland (the Draft Plan).

The Steering Committee has guided the development of the Draft Plan. They have extensive networks and have provided their valuable insights into how they, as key industry operators, strategists and leaders. These can be seen in the format and content for the community consultations of which they helped deliver. As such, their thoughts, ideas and knowledge have been incorporated into the Draft Plan from its vision and guiding statement through to its actions.

## Industry

#### **Tropical Tourism North Queensland**

Tourism Tropical North Queensland (TTNQ) is the Regional Tourism Organisation responsible for marketing Tropical North Queensland to Australia and the world. The destination is known as Cairns & Great Barrier Reef in the international marketplace. The Tropical North Queensland Destination Tourism Plan (in Appendix 1) has been produced to provide prospective investors with an understanding of tourism in our region and its potential to grow.

According to the TTNQ Destination Tourism Plan, tourism is a \$3.2 billion export business in Tropical North Queensland that employs one in seven people. The destination's unique value proposition is having two World Heritage areas side by side. The Great Barrier Reef is alongside the world's oldest rainforest, the Wet Tropics Queensland World Heritage Listed Area, and both are less than a day's drive from the Australian outback. The oldest living culture on earth calls these diverse landscapes home.

Tropical Tourism North Queensland, as the peak body for the region, has provided extensive consideration of First Nations tourism. They have produced information brochures, protocols and strategies that are critical for the Plan. They have extensive access to research and data, through Cummings Economics (see Appendix 2), that have fed into the Plan. They have provided valuable insight into the region's structure and networks, and provided critical advice on potential measures that will assist in generation of information that will ensure success. They have also contributed to identifying enablers to reach the collective vision. These include:

- Business mentoring programs for Indigenous tourism
- Business start-up support program / pathway (who do I start with)
- Reignite the ROC accreditation program regionally or State-wide
- More regional marketing
- Rethink the TNQ IECG structure and membership and whether it becomes a more formal structure, linked to the QFNTC
- An investment attraction program

## **Community Workshops**

The Consultation Program took in workshops across thirteen locations. The Steering Committee members led discussions at a series of workshops in the region.

Approximately 298 participants were engaged by email to participate. A total of 20 workshops were held:

- Thursday Island 1 Workshop
- Bamaga- 2 workshops
- Weipa- 1 Workshop
- Coen- 1
- Lockhart River-1
- Mossman 2
- Cairns City -2
- Edmonton- 1
- Normanton- 1
- Innisfail- 2
- Kuranda- 1
- Atherton- 2
- Cooktown 2
- Laura- 1

Total attendance at all workshops and community engagement on ground: 98

The Workshops focussed on 5 key questions. The following observations are made about the responses from the workshops:

#### Local led approach

The important approach for the Action Plan is one where the local communities are leading and to be supported by regional, state, national and international level structures. Local communities are to be empowered, supported and their capacity built by the sector.

#### **Bio-Cultural Regions**

All tourism occurs on Country. As such, the type of Country is important and has been managed by First Nations peoples over millennia. Consultation led to the approach that First Nations tourism should be focussed on bio-cultural regions. These included:

- Torres Strait (Thursday Island)
- Cape York (Weipa, Bamaga, Coe, Laura, Lockhart River)
- Gulf Savannah (including Einsleigh Uplands & North-west highlands and Normanton)
- Wet Tropics (Kuranda, Atherton, Cairns, Cooktown, Innisfail, Mossman, Yarrabah)
- Great Barrier Reef

#### **Torres Strait:**

In the Torres Strait Region workshops were held on Thursday Island and Bamaga. Key priorities are:

- A local tourism plan
- Collaboration with the sector
- Promotion and marketing
- Product development
- Access to funds and venture capital

Challenges for the region are:

- The region is in the early stages of tourism
- Transport infrastructure and accessibility
- Amount of product available
- Limited accommodation and product
- Community unsure of tourism sector

Opportunities and way forward for the region include:

- Strength of unique culture
- A focus on low volume, culturally aware
- Work with communities that are willing
- Support and respect those that don't want tourism

#### Cape York:

The Cape York regional consultation included workshops in Coen, Lockhart River, Laura, Weipa and Bamaga. Key priorities for the region are:



- A tourism hub to build capacity of existing and new micro businesses
- Tourism business development officers
- A local Chamber of Commerce or Local Tourism Organisation (LTO)
- Promotion and marketing
- Training for tour guides

Key opportunities included:

- Strong culture including performers, festivals like Laura Festival, and art centres
- Rich diversity of nature and wildlife experiences

Key challenges are:

- Seasonal tourism peaks
- Limited cultural tourism product
- Communities see potential
- Business support is needed
- Visitor management is a priority
- Community-led projects are needed

#### Gulf Savannah:

The Gulf Savannah regional consultation included a workshop in Normanton. Key priorities for the region are:

- New product emerging and potential to expand
- Stronger partnerships needed with non-Indigenous products
- Seasonal peaks
- Building cultural stories into existing product
- Reposition the Savannah Way with cultural connections

Key opportunities included:

- Linking Indigenous product along the Savannah/ Matilda way
- Gulf land train
- Walking tours

Key challenges are:

- Limited cultural tourism product
- Mentoring support
- Training support
- Business support is needed

#### Wet Tropics:

The Wet Tropics regional consultations included workshops in Atherton, Cairns, Cooktown, Innisfail, Kuranda, Mossman and Yarrabah. Key priorities for the region are:

- A shared return of benefit to communities
- A tourism hub and strong networks regionally and state-wide with industry
- Localised plans to provide a road map driven by local people first
- Building strong capacity for businesses
- Product development including women and young people
- Access to funding and industry resources
- Mentors and champions

The view on the current status of the Wet Tropics is there is:

- Highly developed tourism product
- Significant potential to grow cultural experiences
- Authenticity in stories and connections are vital

When it comes to the future for this bio-cultural region the focus should be on:

- Guide training and accreditation
- Support for new Indigenous experiences
- Greater presence for existing products

#### **Great Barrier Reef:**

The Great Barrier Reef region was considered at workshops across bio-cultural regions that have a connection to and custodianship for the Reef. In terms of where the Reef is at for First Nations tourism, it is suggested that:

- There is established tourism product, but limited indigenous content
- All visitors should connect with culture when visiting the reef
- There needs to be support for new Indigenous experiences

When it comes to the reef and First Nations tourism moving forward, the focus should be on:

- New partnerships and training
- Opportunities for new products
- Regenerative tourism potential

## **Driving the Plan Forward**

There was a long list of stakeholders suggested across the workshops to drive the Action Plan forward. However the most favoured were local First Nations people, local operators, Champions, tourism industry bodies and LGA's followed by community organisations, chambers of commerce and government agencies. This would suggest that the Indigenous Experiences Cluster Group could play a lead coordinating role (with the other industry bodies) to empower and enable First Nations and local operators to implement the Action Plan. As such, it is recommended that the Consultation Summary Paper and Action Plan itself be a 'living document' owned by the TNQ Indigenous Experiences Cluster Group who will work with key community, industry and government stakeholders to generate resources for implementation of the Action Plan, and progress monitoring, review, evaluation and improvement of the Action Plan.

## Survey

A survey was undertaken with the sector focussing on the following key areas:

- Vision and guiding principles for the First Nations tourism sector in TNQ
- An effective voice and representation in tourism
- Promoting, marketing and branding of First Nations' tourism experiences
- Authentic product development
- Infrastructure, protection of the environment and cultural sites and capacity building
- Partnership building

There were 34 responses to the survey. The key points raised by the survey that have been incorporated into the Draft Plan are:

- The vision is aligned to the State plan, and the Larrakia Declaration
- A regional governance model is needed for First Nations tourism, especially the connection with Traditional Owners and local or regional clusters of operators working together
- The top priorities / goals are capacity building, protect land and culture and care for country, with the additional benefit of building understanding and appreciation for country and culture
- The major challenges are coordination, collaboration, red-tape reduction, awareness of experiences and the knowledge in the industry
- Supporting authentic partnership agreements between Indigenous and non-Indigenous tourism businesses is essential
- The main support needed is business mentoring, training and education and grants
- Events and supporting infrastructure are also a priority

## SUMMARY: BENEFITS OF FIRST NATIONS TOURISM

The following benefits of First Nations tourism were identified through the engagement process:

- Revitalises and sustains tangible and intangible cultural heritage, language and traditions to build a sense of pride and belonging for First Nations people.
- Is a vehicle for creating business opportunities and sustainable economic activities through the development of self-determined Indigenous tourism businesses.
- Reconciliation and truth telling occur through First Nations tourism that enriches all Australians and visitors.
- Self-determination and capacity building.
- Sustainability and caring for Country.
- Source of diverse employment generation.
- Enable visitors to develop an understanding of the unique relationship First Nations people have with our natural environment.
- Positive development of local communities.

## SUMMARY: CHALLENGES FOR FIRST NATIONS TOURISM

The following challenges for First Nations tourism were identified:

- Managing visitor impacts on Country.
- Strengthening profile and awareness of First Nations tourism experiences in the region.
- Representation of First Nations people in the sector.
- Increased partnerships, coordination and collaboration across the sector both internally with First Nations and externally.
- Developing knowledge of, and experience with, the tourism industry.
- Upskilling an increased workforce and increased capacity of businesses to ensure quality and consistency in tourism product offerings.
- Simplify and reducing government red-tape, and increase access to business capital and sustainable support.
- Increase compliance with cultural license and intellectual property.
- Grow diversity and number of market-ready product offerings.
- Land tenure resolution and an understanding of Native Title and associated leveraging opportunities.
- Better tourism infrastructure investment for increased visitation, remoteness and seasonality.

# SUMMARY: OPPORTUNITIES FOR FIRST NATIONS TOURISM

The following opportunities for First Nations tourism were identified:

- Leverage Queensland's market share of international and domestic tourism to grow awareness of, and demand for, First Nations tourism in Tropical North Queensland.
- Utilise natural assets and resources, together withour First Nations cultural heritage, to strengthen Tropical North Queensland's unique point of differentiation in the marketplace.
- Build on existing strong foundations to support new and established market-ready First Nations tourism experiences in our region.
- Secure long-term and sustainable funding support from government and through mutually beneficial partnerships.
- Inclusion of local Indigenous interpretive content to be integrated into infrastructure and signage.
- Expand First Nations tourism networks and develop mutually beneficial private/public partnerships with the broader tourism sector and supply chain.
- Build on the momentum generated by the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games and be well positioned to leverage the visitor economy and future events in the State.
- Contribute to truth-telling, reconciliation and cultural expression and language reclamation.
- Foster and support strong industry leaders to champion the sector and showcase local identities, groups and the benefits tourism has for the social, environmental and wealth prosperity in community.
- Develop tourism business opportunities for Traditional Owner groups including leveraging Native Title and National Park management.
- Leverage, as a unique selling point, that Tropical North Queensland is home to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.
- Promote and celebrate the diverse First Nations bio-cultural region stories in TNQ through the growing demand for Indigenous Art, products and merchandise.

## SUMMARY: THREATS FOR FIRST NATIONS TOURISM

The following threats for First Nations tourism were identified:

- · Lack of investment funding.
- Red tape and regulation.
- Representation of First Nations people in the sector.
- Internal and external politics impacting delivery.
- Racism and lack of respect from the sector.
- Fake art production and appropriation of intellectual property.

## **Priorities Areas for Action**

The priorities for the region are as follows:

#### Acknowledging that all Tourism is on Country

There was a clear direction that all tourism is on Country. Respect for connection to Country needs to come through Acknowledgements of Country, Codes of Conduct, Accreditation and Reconciliation Action Plans to ensure cultural safety. Respect should be shown through increased compliance and permits and Indigenous identified jobs in the tourism sector.

Coordination and structure through a coordinated regional approach to empower an independent voice for First Nations tourism. This would be done through facilitation and creation of networks, development of hubs and dedicated resources for positions to drive a regional agenda. Development of regional and localised plans is desired to assist with infrastructure, a road map forward to both shift into a strategic thinking space and put words into action. The allocation of Champions or ambassadors was seen as important as was the presence on key networks from local chambers of commerce through to national Indigenous networks.

#### **Cultural Expression**

Product development is seen as the major priority for the region. It was important that individuals with cultural knowledge were engaged in this process. Some specific types of tourism products were stated including bird watching tours, arts, and cultural tours, whilst some raised links to youth development programs, school programs and ranger programs. Underpinning this was the caring of Country, and the preservation of sacred sites. Increased joint management of National Parks was desired.

Marketing was expressed as important on several occasions to increase Bama visibility. There was a desire to connect every visitor to a First Nations experience, create famils to promote First Nations to the sector, and elect tourism champions in communities.

Collaboration was seen as a strong priority in the workshops. Partnerships between First Nations businesses and local tourism operators (both First Nation and Non First Nation) was seen as important. There was a desire to cross promote and interconnectivity in the region between First Nations businesses and the sector. Importantly, it was suggested that there was a creation of itineraries between First Nations tourism businesses. It was suggested that there needed to be more First Nation people employed in Visitor Information Centres.

#### Community

It was important that we were building from the ground up in communities and that the development was amongst our own people or through First Nations people. These programs could be linked to the hubs identified in the Coordination and Structure pillar above

In addition, it was a clear priority across the workshops for investment in better infrastructure to support the development of products. This included better internet serviceability and the NBN. Increased funding was frequently raised to enable purchase of land and assets. It was suggested that levies could assist in creating a fund.

#### **Capacity Building**

Training and capacity building was a strongly desired priority area. This included:

- Mentoring repeatedly raised for businesses at different stages of development
- Building capacity of existing businesses including the basic fundamentals critical to be successful, development of business cases and governance;
- specific training projects or programs for increasing female participants and young people;

#### Continuity

The consultation emphasised that the Action Plan must not sit idle. It must be a living document that is overseen and implemented with a possible monitoring and reporting mechanism each year through for example, a regional forum or presentation at Destination IQ. It was suggested that the TNQ IECG should take ownership of the oversight of the document and ensure its continuity. That is, oversee the implementation, monitoring, review and revision of the Action Plan over time. The process should demonstrate a process of continuous improvement of the document including the revision or addition of actions as necessary.

## **PART 7 - STRUCTURE OF THE PLAN**

The structure of the Draft Plan (Appendix 3) is as follows:

- Context
- Vision
- Guiding Statement
- Values and Principles
- Goals and Supporting Targets
- Key Indicators and Actions

## Context

The inclusion in the Draft Action Plan of a section on context of Tourism and First Nations Tourism in Tropical North Queensland provides the reader with understanding of where the region sits in relation to the global, national, state and regional tourism landscape. It provides some critical facts and positions the reader for the vision and key action areas to respond to the context. The context has been drawn from various documents and research provided by a range of sources.

## The Larrakia Principles

The right to speak, care for and operate tourism on Country is a human right. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (of which the Australian Government is a signatory), and the Queensland Government *Human Rights Act 2019* reinforce the right to self-determination and cultural expression for First Nations people in tourism. The Steering Committee felt it was important to include the Larrakia Principles for Tourism established 2012 for the tourism sector based on the UN Declaration. These have been placed upfront in the Action Plan. This provides a clear underpinning of human rights for First Nations people in the region to be empowered to direct how tourism operates on their Country.

## Vision, Guiding Statement, Target and Principles

The vision, target, guiding statement and principles were workshopped following the community workshops to draw on the aspirations of the local communities in the region. It is proposed that core drivers of the Action Plan be as follows:

#### VISION

That every person who visits Tropical North Queensland will make a connection with Country and culture and become an ambassador for the region

#### TARGET

There are four key targets identified:

- 20% of all visitors will have an Indigenous experience by 2025, and 30% by 2032
- Indigenous employment in our region should double by 2032
- All tourism entities in our region should formally acknowledge Country by 2032
- The number of visitors participating and contributing to 'regenerative tourism' supporting Country and culture should double by 2032.

#### **GUIDING STATEMENT**

All tourism is on Country, and all visitors should make a connection to Country when in Tropical North Queensland. Respect for Country is central, and tourism on Country will be led by local First Nations people, and supported by industry and government to deliver social equity, cultural vitality, sustainability, and wealth prosperity for First Nations people.

#### **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The guiding principles for the Action Plan should be:

- Tourism should recognise and respect our First Nations connection (all tourism is on Country)
- The tourism industry should work in partnership with First Nations communities through authentic engagement (it starts with a conversation)
- Tourism should preserve and enhance our Country (its more than doing no harm, its about giving back to Country)
- The tourism network needs more First Nations voices (our people set our direction)
- Experiencing culture is a privilege, not a commodity (respect our ancient knowledge)
- Tourism must be a two-way street for communities (seeing real benefits, at all levels)

## Indicators

It was important to include a number of Indicators as important measures for actions that have been identified through the engagement process with community and industry. These have been consolidated and incorporated into the Action Plan in Appendix 3 and are included as follows under the relevant values of the Action Plan:

Country:

- Percentage of visitors that engage in a physical act of connecting with Country and culture
- Tourism activities connecting visitors to Country and culture are dispersed to match capacity of Country
- Percentage of visitors, operators and supporters who pledge to respect and protect Country and culture of our region
- Number of cultural sites supported by tourism

#### Cultural Expression:

- Increase the number of Indigenous operators in Tropical North Queensland listed on the Australian Tourism Warehouse Database (ATWD)
- Expand the range of cultural tourism products across the bio cultural regions
- Increase the number of accredited operators on Country

#### Community:

- Increase the percentage of visitors having a First Nations related experience on Country
- Increase the positive social impacts measured through the Tourism Events Queensland survey that link to Closing the Gap
- Increase the value of visitor spend and the flow on wealth prosperity to community

#### Capacity:

- Increase in the number of people meaningfully engaged and retained in employment
- Increase in the number of start up businesses in the TNQ IECG

#### Continuity:

- Level of cultural practices for operating on Country that are observed
- The Action Plan is implemented by community, industry and government

## **Goals and Actions**

The goals and actions for the Draft Plan were developed and drawn from community consultation workshops and to align with actions in key strategies like the Queensland First Nations Tourism Plan 2020-2025 that was created by QTIC, endorsed by the Queensland First Nations Tourism Council, and is recognised in both the Queensland Government Toward 2032 and the Wet Tropics Tourism Management Plan. The Actions are grouped under the relevant Values of Country, Cultural Expression, Community and Capacity.

The actions in the Draft Plan in Appendix 3, attempt to synthesize and encapsulate the actions raised in the community engagement process, and actions relevant to plans and strategies relevant to linking the tourism sector with other relevant policy documents from local to national level and across sectors.

## **PART 8 - CONCLUSION**

This Consultation Summary Paper outlines the significant amount of information and data to inform a strong road map for driving First Nations Tourism in Tropical North Queensland. The Draft Action Plan in Appendix 3 is the culmination of the Steering Committee, Indigenous Experience Cluster Group, community and industry input.

The Draft Action Plan is unique in its approach in that it puts local tourism operators and community as the key driver of the industry. It is First Nations community led, supported by industry and government. Respect for Country is at its core, with a focus on bio-cultural regions in design and importantly, incorporates community ideas and issues, underpinned by research and data, and connects to delivery of relevant Strategies from across sectors.

The Draft Action Plan should now be provided to relevant stakeholders for feedback and refinement, and finalisation. This will ensure that stakeholders can reaffirm their ideas and issues and ensure ownership by key these stakeholders who will be collaborating in the implementation of the final Action Plan.

## **APPENDIX 1 – STRATEGY AND POLICY REVIEW**

### Queensland First Nations Tourism Plan 2020-2025

This Plan was developed by the Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) through consultation with community, Industry and government. It focuses on growing an innovative and sustainable First Nations tourism sector in Queensland by drawing on the stewardship of culture and country and building capacity to foster the development of authentic, engaging and sustainable tourism experiences that respect First Nations cultures, knowledges and connections to country.

The Plan was successfully launched and has seen the ongoing benefits in the Year of Indigenous Tourism and the formation of the Queensland First Nations Tourism Council in 2021 as a voice for First Nations Tourism in

Queensland. The plan is held up by the sector as an exemplar and is referred to in other key strategies across the environment and tourism industries.

### Tropical North Queensland Destination Tourism Plan 2021

Tourism Tropical North Queensland (TTNQ) is the Regional Tourism Organisation responsible for marketing Tropical North Queensland to Australia and the world. The destination is known as Cairns & Great Barrier Reef in the international marketplace. The Tropical North Queensland Destination Tourism Plan has been produced to provide prospective investors with an understanding of tourism in our region and its potential to grow. Tourism is a \$3.2 billion export business in Tropical North Queensland that employs one in seven people.

The plan outlines key background and strategy for the regions tourism development including the following product development goals:

- To further develop Indigenous products and promote the region as a recognised leader in Indigenous tourism
- A two-year partnership with the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) to collaborate on the development of Indigenous tourism opportunities in the Torres Strait Islands
- To deliver \$1.5 million grant funding under the Connecting With Asia Fund to support Indigenous tourism businesses
- To work with key partners to grow and develop eco-tourism opportunities in the region such as the Wangetti Trail
- To develop the story of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area in consultation with key stakeholders





#### Thrive 2030: The Re-imagined Visitor Economy

The Australian Government has developed the Re-Imagined Visitor Economy (THRIVE) Strategy 2030 (the Strategy) to provides a national strategy for recovery and the return to sustainable growth for Australia's visitor economy.

With a goal to celebrate and promote First Nations tourism, the Strategy specifically provides *Priority 7: Grow unique and high-quality products, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experiences*. This aims to undertake the following:

Provide high-quality products and services that leverage Australia's competitive advantages such as our natural, built, and cultural attributes, including our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, vibrant cities, and authentic regions. THRIVE 2030 will drive the respectful embedding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures into Australia's brand positioning and support related product development.

#### Tourism Management Action Strategy 2019

This Action Strategy has been developed under section 7(4) of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975 (Cth). The development of this Action Strategy included a consultative approach between the Reef Authority and Queensland Government, under the Great Barrier Reef Intergovernmental Agreement. It was informed by input from industry, Traditional Owners, other partners and stakeholders. It has a number of specific actions relative to eco tourism in the region.

The Reef Authority's vision is for ecologically sustainable and culturally sensitive tourism, achieved through effective engagement with the Reef tourism industry, Traditional Owners and other partners. This supports transformational, world-leading visitor experiences on the Great Barrier Reef.

The strategy supports best-practice high-standard tourism. It encourages the presentation of the environment, biodiversity and heritage values of the Marine Parks, including appropriate recognition, respect and participation of Traditional Owners of sea country. It sets out specific actions to achieve the outcomes and objectives over the short, medium or long term.

Of specific relevance in the Strategy Outcome 3:

The managing agencies support tourism in the Marine Parks to respect, recognise and celebrate Traditional Owner connection to country, involve Traditional Owners, and help maintain natural and cultural heritage values.





### Reef 2050: Long Term Sustainability Plan

The Reef 2050 Plan commenced in 2015 and is Australia's overarching long-term strategy for protecting and managing the Reef to support its health and resilience. It sets out the vision for the Reef that Australians will strive to achieve as custodians of this World Heritage icon. The Plan provides a strategic framework for action and is intended to guide governments, key sectors and individuals on actions they can take to contribute to improving the Reef's future. The Plan has the following objectives for Indigenous heritage: • Traditional Owners caring for Country • Traditional knowledge about the Great Barrier Reef is owned and managed by Traditional Owners and is protected and retained for future generations.



• Traditional Owners' rights are genuinely recognised and prioritised and inform and drive how benefits are shared. • Local Traditional Owner land and sea management organisations are equipped to operate at the appropriate scale. • Country is healthy and culture is strong.

# Towards Tourism 2032: Transforming Queensland's visitor economy future

This strategy is a collective framework established by the Queensland Government to set the direction of tourism in Queensland for the next 10 years. It states as one of its goals that: By 2032, Queensland is recognised as Australia's leading destination for First Nations tourism experiences – showcasing and enriching cultural experiences for visitors and delivering



economic opportunities for Traditional Owners, Indigenous communities and businesses. It lists 16 actions for First Nations including:

- New and enhanced partnerships and agreements are formed between tourism businesses and with Indigenous communities to provide mentoring, share learnings and develop new and enhanced Indigenous tourism experiences.
- Support Indigenous tourism businesses to increase the quality of experiences and customer service.
- Extend the existing successful Our Country Advisory Service to additional destinations, including Cape York and the Torres Strait, through partnerships with key stakeholders, Traditional Owners and Indigenous organisations to empower new and existing Indigenous tourism businesses to grow in the sector.
- Deliver the \$4 million First Nations Tourism Package to support industry development including activating tourism in the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area.

# Towards Tourism 2032: Reshaping Queensland Visitor economy to welcome the world

The Queensland Government has developed Toward 2032 which states:

There is untapped potential in our regions – including existing cultural sites and opportunities for connection to country. The opportunities include jobs, community, environmental and economic benefits particularly for the very remote and disadvantaged areas.

The document was a precurser to the Toward 2032 document mentioned above.



## The Wet Tropics Sustainable Tourism Plan 2021–2031

The Wet Tropics Sustainable Tourism Plan 2021–2031 (the Plan) is a strategic framework that brings together Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples, the tourism industry, the conservation sector, and partner agencies to develop a sustainable and resilient future for tourism in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (the Area). The Plan builds on existing management practices already working towards sustainable tourism.



WET TROPICS SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PLAN 2021-2031

Through a consultative process, an intent statement emerged in the form of a visitor promise:

Visitors experience the Wet Tropics and its outstanding natural and cultural values through making genuine and mutually beneficial connections with nature, Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples and our inspiring storytellers, becoming advocates for the place and leaving enriched.

The Plan aims to deliver the visitor promise through six key goals:

- Respect for Country and people
- Rainforest Aboriginal tourism aspirations
- Building awareness through consistent messaging and branding
- Increased community involvement and advocacy
- Well-trained, professional tour guides
- Collaborative visitor management

## Queensland's Protected Area Strategy 2020 - 2030

Queensland's Protected Area Strategy 2020 - 2030 provides a pathway to grow the protected area system and transform the way protected areas are managed—In terms of First Nations it has the following Actions:

- Develop and implement a transformative co-stewardship framework with First Nations peoples for national parks and other public protected areas
- Co-design and co-deliver ecotourism through collaborative models of partnership with First Nations peoples to offer unique cultural tourism experiences
- Promote First Nations business and employment opportunities in the conservation economy through protected areas
- Strengthen support for First Nations peoples as landholders and recognise traditional land management practices and protection of cultural values on private protected areas
- Further expand the formal role of First Nations people in the management of protected • areas by training and qualifying Traditional Owners as authorised officers under the Nature Conservation Act 1992
- Further expand the Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger Program

## Paving the Way First Nations Training Strategy 2022

Paving the Way is a Queensland Government plan to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' skills development and respond to local and community employment needs.

Paving the Way includes actions and initiatives that focus on:

- · Indigenous-led training and workforce solutions
- skills and training pathways that meet local workforce needs
- cultural awareness and competency.

Paving the Way is part of the Queensland Government \$200 million Future Skills Fund investment which supports:

- high-quality training and training infrastructure
- building a diverse workforce
- ensuring every Queenslander has the opportunity to participate.

Paving the Way is also supporting the Queensland Workforce Strategy 2022-2032 to ensure Queensland has trained people to strengthen our communities and keep Queensland at the forefront of new economic opportunities. Paving the Way is underpinned by a commitment to empower community and increase participation in skills and training, particularly in areas that are most needed. These opportunities will help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples achieve self determination goals and share in Queensland's future prosperity.





Protected Area Strategy

**Oueensland's** 

## Cultural Engagement Framework - Working with Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander arts and cultures in Queensland

This Queensland Government Framework aims, through the delivery of Creative Together 2020-2030: A 10-year Roadmap for arts, culture and creativity in Queensland, to elevate awareness, understanding and the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures through the celebration and telling of the rich stories of two of the oldest surviving cultures in the world. Developed in a collaboration between the

First Nations Arts and Cultures Panel and Arts Queensland, this Framework supports the Queensland Government's commitment to Path to Treaty, reframing relationships and healing with First Nations people. This Framework signposts the transformation that we all need to take together and guides the arts, cultural and creative sector's engagement in working respectfully and collaboratively with First Nations artists, communities, and cultural businesses.

## Queensland's 2021 Closing the Gap Implementation Plan<sup>7</sup>

The Queensland Government's key policy document is *Queensland's 2021 Closing the Gap Implementation Plan*. The purpose of this Implementation Plan is to guide Queensland's implementation of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (the National Agreement). The Implementation Plan format reflects the Targets established to track progress against the objectives and outcomes of the National Agreement, including both:

- Priority Reforms: which measure how governments are changing the way they work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- Socio-economic Targets: which measure life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The underlying intent of the Plan is stated by the Honourable Annastacia Palaszczuk, Premier and Minister for Trade:

The Queensland Government is committed to reframing the relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders, by partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities in policy development and decision making, to ensure First Nations Queenslanders have a seat at the decision-making table.8





<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> https://www.dsdsatsip.qld.gov.au/resources/dsdsatsip/work/atsip/reform-tracks-treaty/closing-gap/closing-gap-implementation-plan.pdf

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> <u>https://www.dsdsatsip.qld.gov.au/resources/dsdsatsip/work/atsip/reform-tracks-treaty/closing-gap/closing-gap-implementation-plan.pdf</u>, pg iv.

The reason is further explained by the Honourable Craig Crawford MP Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships:

The release of Queensland's first Implementation Plan is an important step on the journey towards self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders... The Priority Reforms recognise that a shift in how we develop and implement government policies and programs is required for significant improvements in the lives of First Nations Queenslanders.9

The National Agreement commits parties to four Priority Reforms. For the purposes of this report it is relevant to consider Priority Reform One: Formal Partnerships And Shared Decision-Making where the outcome is:

People are empowered to share decision making authority with governments to accelerate policy and place-based progress on Closing the Gap through formal partnership arrangements.10

#### The Gurra Gurra Framework<sup>11</sup>

Directly referenced in the Closing the Gap Implementation Plan, the Gurra Gurra Framework 2020-2026 provides a very strong basis for interpretation of legislation in favour of supporting actions to enable sole management, and legislative change for delegations in service delivery. The Framework prioritises and accelerates commitment to First Nations through ten initiatives:

- 1. Being adaptable and responsive
- 2. Embedding a principles and values-based approach
- 3. Respecting First Nations community history and aspirations
- 4. Valuing culture within the department
- 5. Improving cultural capability and agility
- 6. Attracting and developing First Nations people
- 7. Improving our authorising environment
- 8. Strong governance
- 9. Strong procurement
- 10.Strong communication



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Ibid, pg v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Ibid, pg 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> https://www.des.qld.gov.au/\_\_data/assets/pdf\_file/0010/202033/the-gurra-gurra-framework.pdf

## The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was adopted by the General Assembly on Thursday, 13 September 2007. The Declaration is the most comprehensive international instrument on the rights of Indigenous peoples. It establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the Indigenous peoples of the world and it elaborates on existing human rights standards and fundamental freedoms as they apply to Indigenous peoples. The Declaration is particularly significant because Indigenous peoples, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, were involved in its drafting.



Australia endorsed UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2009. Since then, in international forums, Australia has committed to take actions to implement the Declaration and promote indigenous people's enjoyment of rights on an equal basis.

## The Larrakia Declaration on the Development of Indigenous Tourism

The first Pacific Asia Indigenous Tourism Conference was held in Darwin, on the traditional lands of the Larrakia people on the 28th – 30th March , 2012, where 191 delegates from 16 countries representing Indigenous communities, government agencies, the tourism industry and supporting bodies, resolved to adopt principles to guide the development of Indigenous tourism through the following declaration.

- Recognising that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted on the 13th September 2007, provides the foundation for this declaration
- Recognising that often Indigenous people are marginalized, disadvantaged and remote from the opportunity for social, economic and political advancement
- Recognising that whilst tourism provides the strongest driver to restore, protect and promote Indigenous cultures, it has the potential to diminish and destroy those cultures when improperly developed
- Recognising that as the world becomes increasingly homogenous Indigenous cultures will become increasingly important for tourism to provide differentiation, authenticity and the enrichment of visitor experiences.
- Recognising that for Indigenous tourism to be successful and sustainable, Indigenous tourism needs to be based on traditional knowledge, cultures and practices and it must contribute to the well being of Indigenous communities and the environment
- Recognising that Indigenous tourism provides a strong vehicle for cultural understanding, social interaction and peace
- Recognising that universal Indigenous values underpin intergenerational stewardship of cultural resources and understanding, social interaction and peace

## **APPENDIX 2: RESEARCH AND DATA FINDINGS**

The following data was provided by Cummings Economics via TTNQ:

Table 3 gives Indigenous experiences around Australia registered by Tourism Australia.

The following Table 4 (drawn from Table 3), illustrates that the Cairns region is a leader in number of Indigenous experiences registered by Tourism Australia.

Area	No.
Northern Territory Top End	11
Queensland Tropical North	10
Northern Territory Red Centre	5
New South Wales	5
Victoria	4
WA Remainder	4
WA Kimberleys	3
Queensland Remainder	1
South Australia	1

Table 1: Number of Indigenous Experiences Registered by Tourism Australia

Source: Cummings Economics from Tourism Australia.

Tables 5 & 6 give numbers from the International Visitor Survey (IVS) and National Visitor Survey (NVS) of international and domestic visitors recording Indigenous experiences as part of their visit to the Cairns/ TNQ region.

Aboriginal Experience	2019	2018	2017	2016
Experience Aboriginal art/craft & cultural displays	210,528	223,589	228,376	214,326
Visit an Aboriginal site/community	150,693	168,052	168,987	161,540
Attend Aboriginal performance	123,639	126,423	138,139	153,452
Total	299,077	322,234	338,181	339,832

Source: Cummings Economics from Tourism Research Australia, IVS.

#### Table 3: Domestic Visitors to Tropical North Qld Recording Aboriginal Experiences

Aboriginal Experience	2019	2018	2017	2016
Experience Aboriginal art/craft & cultural displays	47,743	39,762	37,021	48,796
Visit an Aboriginal site/community	23,512	23,664	52,682	48,246
Attend Aboriginal performance	0	0	0	0
Total	57,735	50,819	74,727	77,957

Source: Cummings Economics from Tourism Research Australia, NVS.

It can be seen from the tables, that about 300,000 international visitors record Indigenous experiences, and a much smaller number of domestic visitors at about 50,000 a year.

The 57,000 domestic overnight visitors recording an Aboriginal experience compares with total Australia wide of about 300,000 indicating almost 20% of domestic experiences occur in the Tropical North Queensland region.

International visitors in 2019 recording an Aboriginal experience were thus 37% of total international visitors to the region. This compares with 13% Australia wide.

The data indicates a number recording more than one type of experience. Experiences were led by arts and crafts. About 19% of all international visitors (ie. about 150,000), recorded visiting an Aboriginal community/ site and 15% experienced a performance (about 120,000 a year).

Table 7 gives international visitors recording an Aboriginal experience in Cairns/ TNQ region by origin compared with total visitor numbers. Because of limitation of sample sizes, it is likely that this information is not completely accurate. However, it indicates that the proportion is generally spread through different visitor origins, but with indications that the Chinese market was higher in performances but lower in experiencing arts and crafts and visiting an Aboriginal community/ site. The Table gives figures for numbers in total and those traveling in group tours.

Total Visitors	Art/C Cultural		Visit an A Site/Cor	boriginal nmunity	Attend A Perfor	0
Country of Origin	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
China	37,469	20%	19,738	10%	47,493	25%
Other Asia	26,564	14%	18,956	10%	22,663	12%
Americas	50,316	38%	37,312	28%	23,328	18%
Europe	87,742	38%	70,550	30%	26,188	11%
Other Countries	8,436	12%	4,138	6%	3,966	6%
Total	210,528	26%	150,693	19%	123,639	15%

 Table 4: Numbers & Proportion of International Visitors to Cairns/ TNQ Region Recording

 an Aboriginal Experience by Origin, 2019

Visitors in Group Tours	Art/Craft & Cultural Displays		Visit an Aboriginal Site/Community		Attend Aboriginal Performance	
Country of Origin	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
China	19,611	45%	10837	37%	19629	61%
Other Asia	5936	14%	4722	16%	5041	16%
Americas	11562	27%	8219	28%	4828	15%
Europe	5927	14%	5389	18%	2312	7%
Other Countries	494	1%	494	2%	494	2%
Total	43530	100%	29661	100%	32304	100%

Source: Cummings Economics from Tourism Research Australia, IVS.

Findings:

• Cairns has developed, along with the Northern Territory Top End, as the leading regions for Aboriginal experiences in Australia.

- Aboriginal experiences are dominantly of interest to international visitors with some domestic.
- The indications are that the total pre-Covid international market was about 300,000 a year. However, if restricted to those recorded as visiting an Aboriginal community or site or attending an Aboriginal performance, the number is probably more like 150,000 to 200,000. Of these, those on group tours is probably of the order of 40,000.
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#### • Table 5: Indigenous Experiences Registered by Tourism Australia

Table 5. Maigenous Experiences Registereu	
NEW SOUTH WALES	QUEENSLAND
1 Australian Museum	22 Adventure North Australia
2 Dreamtime Southern X	23 Culture Connect Australia
3 Ngaran Ngaran Culture Awareness	24 Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel
4 Sand Dune Adventures	25 Flames of the Forest
5 The Royal Botanic Garden Sydney / <u>Total = 5</u>	26 Janbal Gallery
NORTHERN TERRITORY	27 Jarramali Rock Art Tours
6 Bremer Island Banubanu Beach Retreat	28 Rainforestation Nature Park
7 Davidson's Arnhemland Safaris	29 Spirits of the Red Sand
8 Kakadu Cultural Tours	30 Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park
9 Kakadu Tourism	31 Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia -
10 Karrke Aboriginal Cultural Experience &	Mossman Gorge Centre
Tours	32 Walkabout Cultural Adventures
11 Lirrwi Tourism	<u>Total = 11</u>
12 Lord's Kakadu & Arnhemland Safaris	VICTORIA
13 Maruku Arts	35 Koorie Heritage Trust
14 Nitmiluk Tours	36 Melbourne Museum
15 Pudakul Aboriginal Cultural Tours	37 Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, Melbourne
16 RT Tours Australia	Gardens
17 SeaLink NT - Tiwi Islands	38 Worn Gundidj @ Tower Hill
18 SEIT Outback Australia	<u>Total = 4</u>
19 Top Didj Cultural Experience & Art Gallery	WESTERN AUSTRALIA
20 Venture North Safaris	39 Dale Tilbrook Experiences
21 Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia -	40 Go Cultural Aboriginal Tours & Experiences
Ayers Rock Resort	41 Kooljaman at Cape Leveque
<u>Total = 16</u>	42 Koomal Dreaming
SOUTH AUSTRALIA	43 Narlijia Experiences Broome
33 Wilpena Pound Resort / <u>Total = 1</u>	44 Ngurrangga Tours
TASMANIA	45 Wula Gura Nyinda Eco Cultural Adventure
34 Wukalina Walk / <u>Total = 1</u>	<u>Total = 7</u>

## APPENDIX 3 – DRAFT TROPICAL NORTH QUEENSLAND FIRST NATIONS TOURISM ACTION PLAN