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## Accessible tourism grows in Tropical North Queensland

An accessible rainforest canopy walkway and a kayak launcher are among 46 new Tropical North Queensland initiatives to result from Queensland's Year of Accessible Tourism.

Tourism Tropical North Queensland Chief Executive Officer Mark Olsen said the Queensland Government's \$12 million investment in making tourism more accessible was enabling a rapid shift in the Tropical North's appeal to visitors of all abilities.

"Tropical North Queensland has a long history of offering accessible experiences in our dual World Heritage areas and in 2022 launched an Accessibility Hub on the destination website to assist travellers select activities and itineraries suited to their ability," he said.

"This portal allowed people of all abilities to fulfil their dream for travel with wheelchair-friendly beaches and rainforest boardwalks identified as well as products such as Quicksilver's water-powered lift to lower people into the water to snorkel on the Great Barrier Reef.

"The Queensland Year of Accessible Tourism in 2023-2024 has helped many more Tropical North Queensland operators to modify their premises, introduce new product, and better communicate how their business was accessible.

"Eight operators were able to modify their infrastructure under the Boosting Accessible Tourism Experiences Grants. This included adding new fishing gear to allow people of all abilities to join Cairns Reef Fishing Tours and the introduction of an audio tour at Herberton Historical Village.

"Etty Bay Cabins and Caravan Park received an Accessible Tourism Infrastructure Grant to refurbish a cabin into an accessible family cabin, while Access Project Grants of up to \$250,000 were awarded to five of our operators.

"This resulted in a boost to infrastructure with accessible modifications at Cooktown Museum, Hook-A-Barra and Strait Experience. The Daintree Discovery Centre is building a 70m accessible canopy walkway linking the Discovery Theatre to the Interpretive Centre and Cobbold Gorge Tours received funding for an all-terrain wheelchair, modified coaster bus and accessible kayak launch pontoon."

Cobbold Gorge Tours General Manager Daly said their guests' needs were changing and the Year of Accessible Tourism presented an opportunity to upgrade facilities to better cater for people of all abilities.

"We have been working on becoming more accessible over the past few years by installing walkways both in the Gorge and Village to assist with access and are now able to add new infrastructure thanks to this grant," she said.

"Our new kayak launcher will be great for young families, elderly and people with disabilities as it has ramps and handrails. The kayak sits on a solid base, so it is easier to get in and out of.

"Some equipment is as simple as a seat for the standup paddle board which is great both for people who struggle to balance as well as wheelchair users.

"A traverse mule stretcher has a single wheel underneath which will make it much safer and easier to evacuate people out of the gorge if they become unwell or injured rather than using a traditional stretcher and carrying them out."

# MEDIA RELEASE



Mr Olsen said the key to being accessible was to be helpful and provide the information necessary to understand how there is extra assistance available for people who have an accessibility challenge whether it is a temporary injury like a broken leg, someone with a pram or in a wheelchair.

“The bulk of funding for our region was delivered in the communications space with 31 products receiving the Access Starter Grant of \$5000 to upgrade their website and other methods of communicating their accessibility to potential visitors.”

Tourism Minister Michael Healy said the Year of Accessible Tourism was such a success it was extended into 2024.

“A \$12 million investment has funded a range of initiatives including 279 projects across Queensland to improve the tourism experience for everyone, regardless of their access requirements,” said Mr Healy.

“It’s terrific to see all these Tropical North Queensland operators embracing the opportunity to make their products and experiences available to visitors of all abilities.

“For those operators planning events, you can now use our Queensland Government Accessible Events Guide to help you stage accessible and inclusive events.

“With \$1.8 billion per annum of untapped potential in accessible tourism nationwide, we are igniting change and laying the foundations for Queensland to be the most accessible and inclusive state in the nation as we build towards Brisbane 2032.”

Visit the Tropical North Queensland Accessibility Hub at <https://tropicalnorthqueensland.org.au/plan-your-trip/accessible-travel/>.

**ENDS**

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