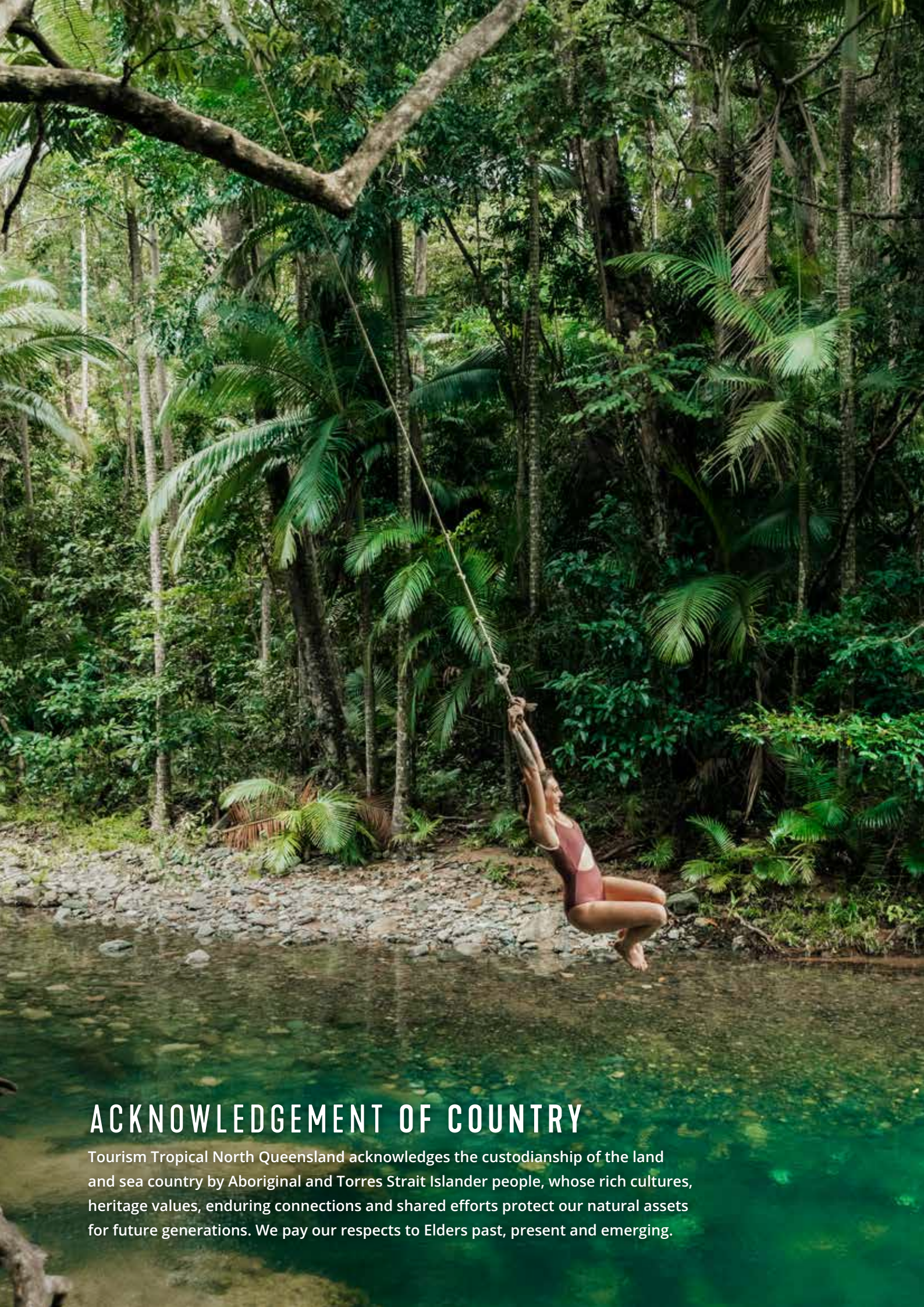


TOURISM TROPICAL NORTH QUEENSLAND

# SUSTAINABILITY REPORT 2024

DECEMBER 2024

CAIRNS &  
GREAT  
BARRIER  
REEF



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Tourism Tropical North Queensland acknowledges the custodianship of the land and sea country by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, whose rich cultures, heritage values, enduring connections and shared efforts protect our natural assets for future generations. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.



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# 1. WHY TTNQ EMBRACES SUSTAINABILITY

**The tourism industry is at the confluence of two globally significant trends, the need to urgently address the effects of climate change on our natural world, and the growing awareness of the need to manage 'peak demand' where demand reaches or exceeds the carrying capacity of a community or environment, often referred to as over-tourism.**

For Tropical North Queensland as a global leader in nature-based and eco-tourism, these converging trends present both opportunities and challenges that must be proactively addressed. Global coverage of climate-related bleaching of the Great Barrier Reef can be conflated with the idea of over-tourism, and the emerging trend of 'flight-shaming' to impact on future visitation.

As a destination, while visitor numbers can reach 55,000 per day in peak season with a population of ~240,000, we face the challenge of insufficient visitors in many areas to support the economy and sustain our environmental efforts. On the Great Barrier Reef where visitors can only access 7% of the protected area, limits on visitor numbers from the early 1990's zoning plans mean that numbers cannot exceed the carrying capacity of the Reef. We have, however, seen since 2016 a loss of more than 500,000 visitors to the Reef impacting on the funds generated through the Environmental Management Charge (EMC) that contributes to conservation, as well as the number of visitors participating in monitoring activities such as Eye on the Reef.

For Tourism Tropical North Queensland (TTNQ), balancing the positive role tourism can play in environment conservation, monitoring, and now regenerative tourism can be balanced with proactive approaches to managing our environmental and social impacts through programs such as carbon reduction measures and certification. It is our bold ambition that:

## **EVERY VISITOR TO TROPICAL NORTH QUEENSLAND WILL MAKE A DIRECT CONTRIBUTION TO CONSERVATION**

The tourism industry in our region contributes an estimated 55kg of Co2e per visitor per night, while this represents less than 7% of the region's total emissions (EarthCheck & Griffith University, 2023) it is essential the industry maps its path to reach Net Zero emissions by 2050 and demonstrates the role tourism can play in socially and environmentally sustainable economic growth for the region.

In 2024 consumer travel behaviours continue to evolve, with sustainable travel considered part of the 'new normal' in the decision-making and purchasing funnel.

[CLICK TO VIEW >> SIX KEY GLOBAL TRAVEL TRENDS 2023](#)

The research indicates more consumers are choosing destinations and experiences that align with their desire for deeper connections that leave positive impacts and support personal longevity by immersing themselves in wellness practices.

[CLICK TO VIEW >> TRAVEL TRENDS TO EXPECT IN 2024](#)

Consumers have become discerning, travelling more thoughtfully, more creatively, with greater intent. They have become wise to greenwashing and vague sustainability claims seeking transparency and demanding that tourism is inclusive, restorative, reconciliatory and ultimately regenerative.

[CLICK TO VIEW >> PREDICTED TRAVEL TRENDS FOR 2024](#)

TTNQ as the Regional Tourism Organisation, brings together the industry and community as the custodians of a destination with our vision be a global leader in sustainable and regenerative tourism supporting thriving local communities.

## 1.1 DESTINATION VISION

**A global leader in sustainable and regenerative tourism supporting thriving local communities.**

TTNQ supports this vision by being a highly valued and respected, results-driven organisation, working in partnership with our stakeholders to deliver world-class, innovative destination marketing driving visitor spend year-round and supported by our community.

## 1.2 DESTINATION MISSION

**That every visitor makes a contribution to conservation and leaves as a custodian of our region and its stories, sharing their experience globally.** TTNQ will support this mission by gaining recognition for the region and our industry contribution to conservation and regenerative tourism and sharing the stories of our industry globally to drive future visitation.





## 1.3 OUR PROMISE OF GREATER GOOD

Our region's commitment to the Country, Communities, Culture, and Conservation is encapsulated in our 'Promise of a Greater Good' and in our brand promise that our visitors will see great, and leave greater:

We all have a desire to stay connected. To others. To the world. To nature.

Our people have been connected to this country for thousands of years.

We have protected these fragile environments with care and respect – from the bordering savannah lands to the oldest tropical rainforest on earth, and the Great Barrier Reef.

Things have changed over the course of time, and in Tropical North Queensland, the change continues. As does our promise to keep adapting for the greater good of our planet, wildlife, communities, and people.

Protecting Earth is up to all of us and your travels here have a greater positive impact than you realise.

Your visit helps fund vital research and programs, which contribute to the ongoing preservation of these globally significant environments.

Highly trained guides, passionate scientists, and Traditional Custodians act as stewards of all these places. They not only share in-depth knowledge with you, they also collaborate on cutting edge environmental projects.

For decades, science and conservation has been behind the scenes. Now experiences encourage interactive participation in wildlife monitoring, reef research, rainforest regeneration, and cultural knowledge-sharing.

Our promise is to ourselves, to each other, to country, to protect one of the most important and biodiverse natural regions in the world for current and future generations.

Together we can do more. **This is Our Promise of Greater Good.**





An aerial photograph of a tropical beach. The top half of the image shows clear, turquoise water with two people swimming in the middle. Below the water is a wide, light-colored sandy beach. At the bottom, there are lush green palm trees and other tropical vegetation. The overall scene is bright and scenic.

SEE GREAT  
LEAVE GREATER







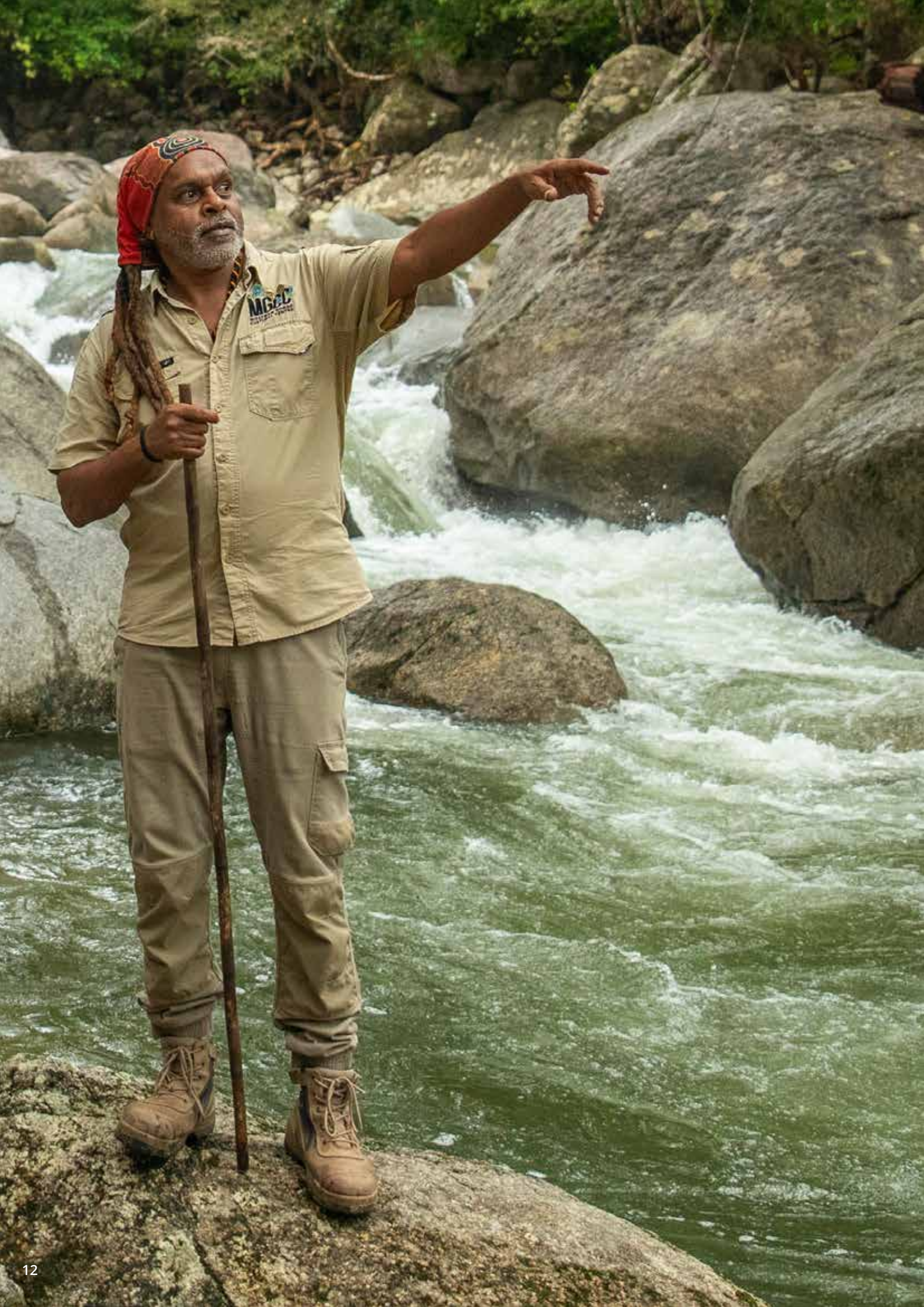
# 2. OUR SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORK

TTNQ is publishing this 2024 Sustainability Report as part of our annual reporting framework for the organisation to demonstrate leadership in sustainable tourism at a regional level and to support our industry, many of whom already produce an annual Sustainability Report. We recognise that all tourism is on Country, and that all businesses in tourism (including TTNQ) should develop an environmental, social and governance framework to align with changes in global reporting, compliance and the emerging consumer trends.

Tourism Tropical North Queensland's reporting framework, outlined in this our first annual Sustainability Report, has been drawn from and aligns to the Australian Government's National Sustainability Framework.

[CLICK TO VIEW >> NATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORK](#)

Sustainability remains a goal of constant improvement. A journey not a destination, and this report highlights our progress against the four pillars outlined in the National Sustainability Framework.



## 2.1 RESPECTING CULTURE

Aligned to the Tropical North Queensland First Nations Tourism Action Plan (FNTAP), the organisation's targets and actions are focussed on the five priority action areas of Country, Culture, Community, Capacity, and Continuity. The core premise of the FNTAP is that all tourism is on Country and therefore has a responsibility to be sustainable.

| PRIORITY  | GOALS   | MEASURE & RESULTS IN 2024   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Recognising all tourism is on Country</b>                                | <p>Implementing the TNQ First Nations Tourism Action Plan by 2032.</p> <p>Increase the number of TTNQ members that formally acknowledge Country for visitors.</p>   | <p>17% of FNTAP actions are complete, 50% or more are underway, and 33% are still to be actioned</p> <p><b>TARGETS</b><br/>All FNTAP actions are complete and all TTNQ operators acknowledge Country in 2032.</p>   |
| <b>More visitors engaging with and connecting to First Nations cultures</b> | <p>Increase the percentage of visitors having a First Nations experience.</p> <p>Increase the percentage of domestic visitors to TNQ having an Indigenous experience.</p>                                 | <p>The percentage of visitors to TNQ engaging with an indigenous experience in 2024 increased from 7% to 15% over 12 months, but remains below the 2019 benchmark of 15%.</p> <p><b>TARGET</b><br/>Increase the percentage of total visitors having an indigenous experience from 11.5% to 25% by 2032.</p> |
| <b>Supporting Indigenous experiences to develop and grow</b>                | <p>Increase in the number Indigenous experiences in our region that are Best of Queensland.</p> <p>Support Indigenous experiences to grow and develop through the TNQ Indigenous Experiences Cluster.</p> | <p>Increased from just 5 in 2018 to 18 in 2024, representing 64% of Best of Queensland Experiences (BoQE) Indigenous Experiences.</p> <p>38 experiences now listed in our Deeper into Dreaming brochure.</p> <p><b>TARGET</b><br/>45 experiences are BoQE in 2032.</p>                                      |

## 2.2 ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE ACTION

Guided by the Regional Action Plan developed by EarthCheck and Griffith University for TNQ, as part of the State-wide Climate Action Plan for Tourism in Queensland and developed for the Queensland Regional Tourism Network (QRTN). The TTNQ approach to Environment and Climate Action focuses on measurable actions that will reduce the region's carbon footprint from 55kg per person per day, to map a pathway to reach Net Zero emissions by 2050 in line with the national targets.

| PRIORITY                              | GOALS   | MEASURE & RESULTS IN 2024   |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Reducing energy consumption</b>    | Support the TNQ tourism industry to measure and reduce their carbon footprint.  | 15% of TTNQ members are offsetting their footprint.<br><br><b>TARGET</b><br>20% offsetting in 2026.   |
| <b>Transition to renewables</b>       | Increase the percentage of TTNQ members using or generating renewables by 2026.   | 32% of TTNQ members generating or using renewables.<br><br><b>TARGET</b><br>40% of TTNQ members using renewables in 2026.   |
| <b>Reducing waste to landfill</b>     | Supporting our industry with strategies to reduce waste to landfill through cooperation and education   | 14 TTNQ members involved in waste reduction training and site visits.<br><br><b>TARGET</b><br>15 TTNQ members measuring and reducing waste to landfill in 2026.   |
| <b>Restoring land and sea country</b> | Increase the number of TTNQ businesses contributing to restoration projects to begin to close the gap in the pathway to Net Zero emissions by 2050. | In the time TTNQ has been partnering with Reforest, 18 members and events have planted 5,639 trees in the local Mabi Rainforest and Daintree Rainforest restoration projects.<br><br>A number of members are also working on reef restoration projects in the waters of the Great Barrier Reef.<br><br><b>TARGET</b><br>30 TTNQ members and events supporting either land-based or in-water restoration projects by 2026. |



## 2.3 CREATING A POSITIVE SOCIAL IMPACT

Tourism in our region has a long history of generating positive social impacts for communities from job creation to the preservation of culture and cultural sites of significance. As tourism in TNQ grows, it must maintain its social licence but ensure it maintains community support (measured through the TEQ Social Indicators research).

| PRIORITY  | GOALS   | MEASURE & RESULTS IN 2024  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Positive impacts on employment through tourism</b>       | <p>Increasing the percentage of tourism jobs in emerging regions.</p> <p>Increasing Indigenous employment in tourism.</p> | <p>40% of all TTNQ activities support dispersal to emerging regions.</p> <p><b>TARGET</b><br/>Increasing Indigenous employment in tourism from 6% to 12% by 2032.</p>                        |
| <b>Maintaining community support and social licence</b>     | <p>Maintain community support for tourism as numbers grow over the next decade.</p>                                       | <p>The TEQ social indicators in 2024 show 53% support for tourism growth.</p> <p><b>TARGET</b><br/>Maintaining community support for tourism growth above 42%.</p>                           |
| <b>Accredited tourism businesses benefiting communities</b> | <p>Increase the number (and percentage of TTNQ members) adopting Ecotourism Australia and EarthCheck accreditation.</p>   | <p>191 experiences in TNQ are accredited with Ecotourism Australia or EarthCheck, representing 21% of TTNQ members.</p> <p><b>TARGET</b><br/>25% of TTNQ members are accredited in 2026.</p> |





## 2.4 TAKING A MANAGED APPROACH

Key to the success of our region, and TTNQ's approach to sustainability, is a managed approach where the region's goals and targets are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and have a time frame (SMART) and that the efforts of individuals are brought together to benefit the wider region. This starts with the overall ambition to get our industry onto the pathway towards Net Zero Emission by 2050.

Recognising 84% of the region's carbon emissions result from air travel, TTNQ is supporting the growth of a Sustainable Aviation Fuel industry in our region, but we are not the key drivers of this. Therefore, our efforts remain focused on supporting our members where we have the greatest direct impact.



| PRIORITY                                | GOALS   | MEASURE & RESULTS IN 2024   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>A pathway to Net Zero emissions</b>  | Map the region's pathway to achieving Net Zero emissions by 2050 and support the industry to reach this goal.   | A regional model for carbon emissions is now in place and can be updated annually.<br><br><b>TARGET</b><br>From 55kg per visitor per day to 42kg by 2032.   |
| <b>Measuring our footprint</b>          | Increase the number of TTNQ members that are measuring (and reducing) their carbon footprint, contributing to the wider regional targets.                                 | From the TTNQ members survey 14% are measuring their footprint.<br><br><b>TARGET</b><br>Increase from 14% to 20% in 2026.   |
| <b>Maintaining a Network of Leaders</b> | Support the proactive businesses in our region to address their sustainability changes through a collective approach.   | In its first year the Leaders Network grew to 113 TTNQ members.<br><br><b>TARGET</b><br>150 Sustainability Leaders in TNQ in 2026   |
| <b>Building resilience</b>              | Attract funding to our region to increase the industry's resilience to natural disasters and increase their sustainability with solar, battery storage, water tanks, etc. | Through TTNQ leadership 38 businesses were supported in 2024 from the TC Jasper grant program of \$10M to build back better.<br><br><b>TARGET</b><br>15 businesses per annum accessing sustainability funding programs or investing in technology to reduce their carbon footprint and build their resilience to disasters. |

As a region, our pathway to Net Zero Emissions requires a mix of industry-led efficiency gains, new technology including Sustainable Aviation Fuels (noting 84% of current emissions are from aviation), and offsetting. The diagram on the next page (p20) gives an indication of the pathway needed for TNQ to reduce its current emissions from 55kg of Co2e per visitor per day (2.5M kg per day) in 2024, towards 2050. At 3%-5% annualised growth in visitor nights (and therefore emissions), assuming no change in technology or efficiency, and not including offsets, the region will be producing approximately 5.3M kg of Co2e per day in 2050.

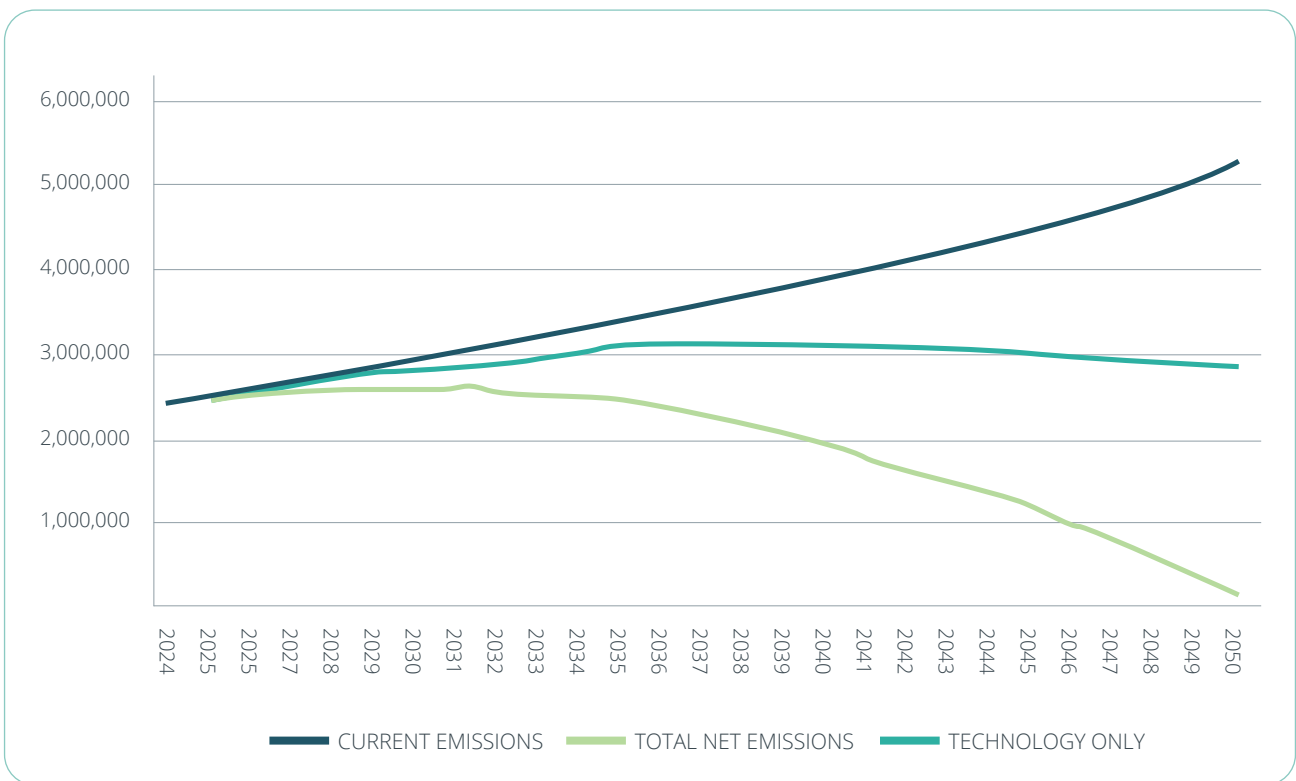
Relying on technology improvements alone, including an increasing proportion of aviation fuel being Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF), reduces the footprint from the annual growth trajectory but really only keeps emissions at current levels by 2050. This is on the assumption that SAF produced regionally will increase from 1% of aviation fuel in 2028 to 55% by 2050. Without industry efficiency gains and consumer and industry offsets, the region cannot reach Net Zero by 2050.

A coordinated approach is needed to increase the take up by industry of efficiency measures (including carbon measurement frameworks such as ecoBiz, Strive for Sustainability, Quality Tourism Framework and EarthCheck) and increasing engagement of the industry and consumers in offsetting programs.

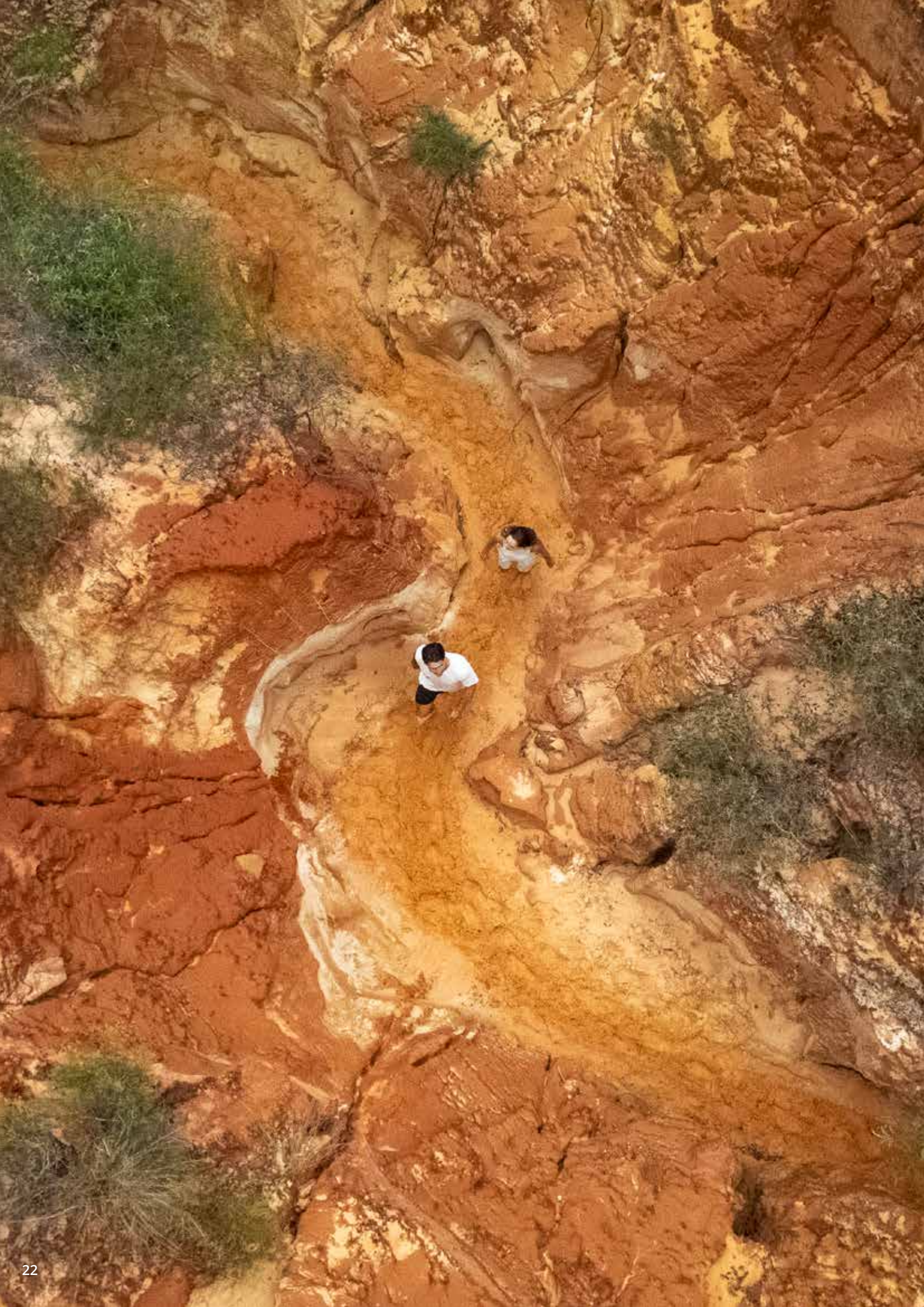
In 2024 TTNQ launched the Guardian of the Reef initiative to engage more consumers in purchasing certified experiences and is working with Reforest to get more consumers and TNQ businesses offsetting locally.

### TTNQ PATH TO ZERO EMISSIONS 2024-2050

(Kilograms per day from TNQ Tourism)







# 3. TOP 10 TTNQ-LED SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

It is a privilege to call Tropical North Queensland home. As the Regional Tourism Organisation, TTNQ is dedicated to ensuring that every visitor leaves as a custodian of our region and its stories, thus protecting it for generations to come. Sustainability guides the way we think, the decisions we make and ultimately, the way we do business.

## 3.1 A SUSTAINABILITY COORDINATOR AT TTNQ

TTNQ appointed Green Arrow Consulting (Nikki Giumelli) in 2024 to support our industry on its path to Net Zero emissions. Nikki leads several regional projects aimed at reducing the industry carbon footprint, including a food waste reduction pilot, data collection, and fostering carbon reduction programs such as Reforest (see item 10).

### TARGET

50 tourism businesses in region on the path to Net Zero by June 2025, showcasing results through the TTNQ Climate Action program.

## 3.2 TNQ SUSTAINABILITY LEADERS GROUP

The region formed its first Sustainability Leaders Group in 2024, with members committing to advance sustainable tourism in their operations. Businesses are supported through monthly newsletters featuring regional case studies, current resources, networking opportunities and grant opportunities.

This platform aims to foster the exchange of achievements, innovation, ideas and stories that champion sustainability for the destination.

### TARGET

150 members by June 2026.



### 3.3 MEASURING OUR FOOTPRINT

Through the Queensland Regional Tourism Network (QRTN), TTNQ was able to access the carbon accounting models developed by Griffith University and EarthCheck at a regional level.

This provided us with both the footprint of our region (55kg per day per person), and the ability to break that footprint down to the key sectors, highlighting that 84% of our current emissions comes from aviation. From this, the region could map the forecast growth in emissions out to 2050.

### 3.4 MAPPING OUR PATHWAY TO NET ZERO BY 2050

Using the 2023 – 2050 emissions forecasts from the EarthCheck and Griffith University model, and valuable input from our members, TTNQ was able to draft strategic framework to steer the region's transition towards achieving Net Zero carbon emissions. The framework starts with our commitment to sustainability, documented in this report, and consists of three building blocks:

- a) A regenerative tourism focus (giving back to conservation through tourism);
- b) Industry-led innovation and circular economy through regional partnerships; and
- c) Advocacy to support decarbonisation programs including sustainable aviation fuel and support for the decarbonisation of the marine sector.

TTNQ is building its consumer engagement platforms to support regenerative tourism and during the third and fourth quarters of 2024, the Sustainability Leaders Group were supported with educational sessions with EarthCheck, EcoBiz and Tourism Emission Reduction Commitment (TERC) programs to aid businesses in measuring, reporting, and assessing their sustainability performance and outcomes. Support packages have been provided to four TTNQ members to help them with their carbon accounting and sustainability data strategy, bolstering operator confidence to embed these practices in their businesses with the lessons and approaches to be shared with the Leaders Network to encourages others.





**SUSTAINABILITY IN ACTION: TTNQ'S APPROACH TO SUSTAINABILITY**



### 3.5 SUPPORTING ACCREDITATION AND CERTIFICATION

Through the Queensland Regional Tourism Network (QRTN), TTNQ was able to access the carbon accounting models developed by Griffith University and EarthCheck at a regional level.

This provided us with both the footprint of our region (55kg per day per person), and the ability to break that footprint down to the key sectors, highlighting that 84% of our current emissions comes from aviation. From this, the region could map the forecast growth in emissions out to 2050.

#### CASE STUDY: MANDINGALBAY AUTHENTIC INDIGENOUS TOURS

Eco Certified and Respecting Our Culture Certified Mandingalbay Authentic Indigenous Tours are the proud winners of the Business Category at the 2024 Queensland Reconciliation Awards. This recognition highlights the company's exceptional commitment to fostering reconciliation and promoting Indigenous culture through authentic, sustainable and immersive tour experiences.

Winning the Business Category at the Queensland Reconciliation Awards underscores Mandingalbay Authentic Indigenous Tours' dedication to creating meaningful cross-cultural connections and supporting the local Indigenous community. The company's efforts have not only enriched the cultural experiences of countless visitors but have also contributed to the economic sustainability and empowerment of the Mandingalbay Yidinji people

[CLICK TO VIEW >> DISCOVER MANDINGALBAY](#)

### 3.6 OUR PROMISE OF GREATER GOOD

A central objective of TTNQ is to integrate "The Promise of a Greater Good" into the sustainability messaging and products of member businesses. This promise represents not only a holistic, aspirational vision for a sustainable and well-managed region, but also tangible, concrete outcomes achieved through sustainability initiatives within member businesses. Digital brand assets have been created and are available via the Sustainability Hub, and members are actively encouraged to incorporate this message in consumer engagement activities.







### 3.7 ONLINE SUSTAINABILITY RESOURCE HUB

TTNQ has launched an online Sustainability Hub, providing members with a centralised platform offering vital sustainability resources, tools, and support services, including case studies, carbon accounting tools, carbon offsetting/biodiversity credit options, education, grants, and current resources, fostering continuous awareness and utilisation among members to assess real-time sustainability information and opportunities.

The key content areas of the Sustainability Hub include:

- Case studies
- Carbon Accounting Tools
- The 'Promise of a Greater Good' resources
- TTNQ Pathways to Sustainable Tourism resources
- Carbon Offsetting/Biodiversity Credit Options
- Education and Grants
- Reforest Dashboard

TTNQ members are consistently reminded of the new resources available via this resource and are encouraged to view it as an opportunity to assess real-time sustainability information and opportunities.

### 3.8 CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT

To further our commitment, TTNQ actively supports members in integrating sustainability into the visitor experience within the framework of 'the Promise of a Greater Good', offering educational resources and opportunities to deepen the understanding of sustainability principles.

Through targeted promotion and marketing initiatives, we highlight sustainable member businesses to raise visitor awareness and promote support for sustainable tourism options, maintaining an updated consumer site with relevant content.

#### CASE STUDY: SMALL WORLD JOURNEYS

Small World Journeys is a multi-award winning local education tour operator whose core business values are built on people, planet, profit. The business is a proud Eco Biz Star Partner, STAB accredited under the Quality Tourism Framework, winner of the 2021 Cairns Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Award for Sustainability, silver-level award winner for the Steve Irwin Sustainable Tourism Award at the 2021 Queensland Tourism Industry Council Awards, and Tourism Tropical North Queensland's 2023 Sustainability Award winner.

Through community service projects, innovative citizen science programs, and activities with Traditional Owners, Small World Journeys is transforming young people from "regular" tourists to travellers who contribute and work towards a better world.

[CLICK TO VIEW >> SMALL WORLD JOURNEYS SUSTAINABLE TOURISM](#)

### 3.9 INDUSTRY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The emphasis is on fostering industry engagement through targeted educational initiatives aimed at elevating skills and knowledge regarding the significance of measuring, reporting, and comprehending sustainability data utilising a range of supporting calculators and tools. The Sustainability Hub, along with educational resources distributed to the Sustainability Leaders Group through eDMs, webinars, and one-on-one consultations, has played a pivotal role in advancing industry education.

In response to industry feedback on waste management, the TNQ Waste Challenge will be launched early in FY2025 encouraging members to share waste management efforts to foster collaboration, knowledge sharing, and inspire effective waste management strategies across member businesses.

#### **CASE STUDY: CAIRNS AIRPORT AIM TO HALVE WASTE TO LANDFILL AND CONTRIBUTE TO A CIRCULAR ECONOMY (2021-2025)**

The production and disposal of single-use plastics is changing our landscapes and contributing to greenhouse gas emissions. Modern products are seldom designed with the end in mind and the use of a vast range of materials makes recycling difficult. Queensland is one of the largest generators of waste in Australia, producing more than 32 million tonnes of it each year.

In 2019 when the initiative began, Cairns Airport used to dispose on average 75 tonnes of landfill per month, by December 2024 this had reduced to 33.6 tonnes of landfill and 8.4 tonnes for recycling as a result of the programs in place. Cairns Airport saw this as an opportunity to rethink waste based on the principles of designing out waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use, and regenerating natural systems.











### 3.10 REFOREST PARTNERSHIP

TTNQ is working with technology platform Reforest to collaborate on local rainforest restoration programs alongside Terrain NRM and Rainforest Rescue. By encouraging industry to engage with this technology and take local climate action, operators will reduce their carbon emissions while inspiring their customers to reduce their travel footprint.

As part of this initiative, operators have access to an online regional dashboard displaying data related to habitat restoration and carbon emissions removal through the number of trees planted across sites in the region.

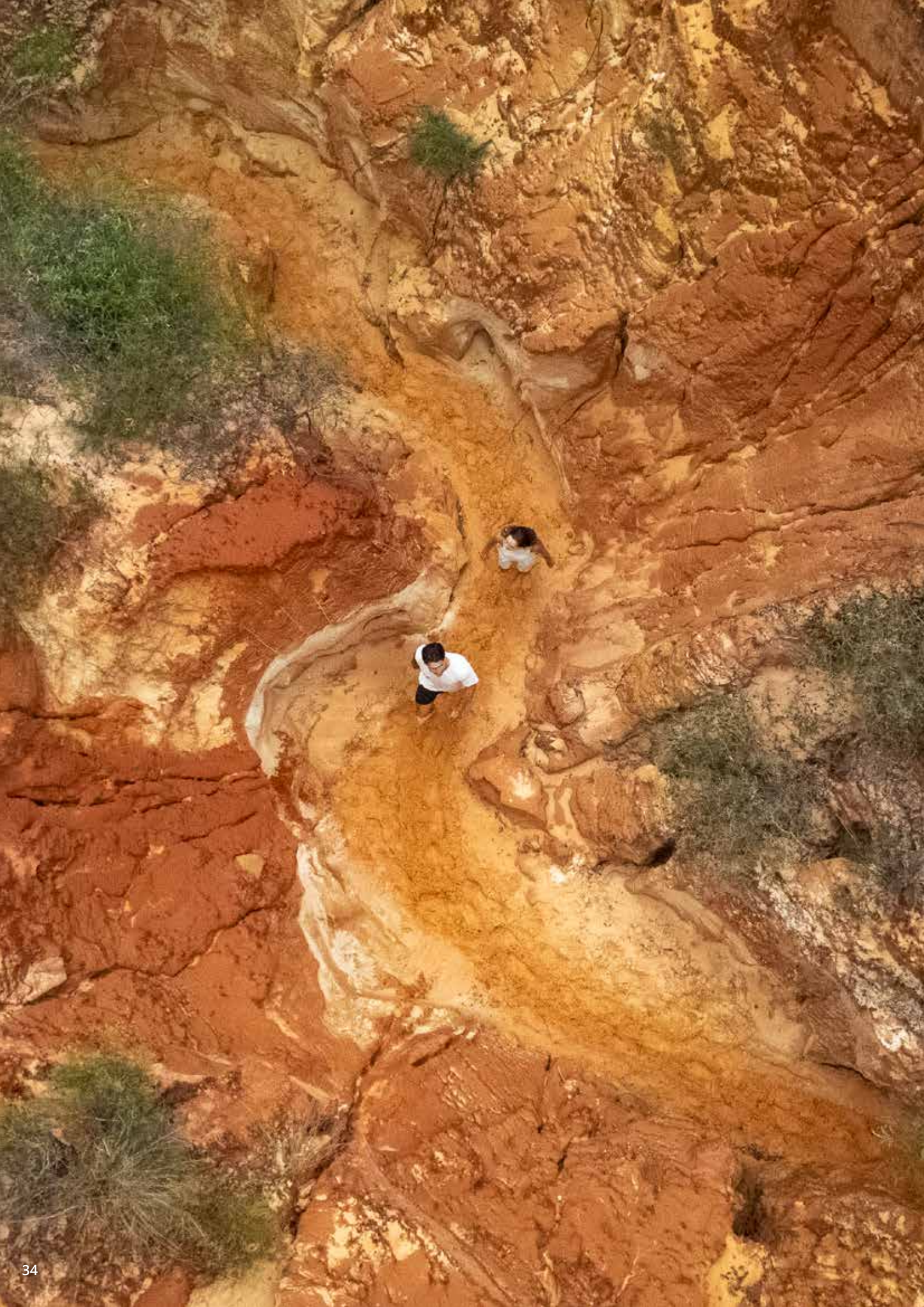
[CLICK TO VIEW >> REFOREST](#)

### CASE STUDY: TROPIC WINGS 2024 QBIC ENVIRONMENTAL INNOVATION AWARD

Tropic Wings Cairns Tours & Charters is proud to be constantly striving towards greener and more eco-friendly tours. With a mission to foster passion for nature and deliver transformational experiences, Tropic Wings was recently awarded the Environmental Innovation Award at the 2024 Queensland Bus Industry Council (QBIC) Industry Awards.

Having been an eco-certified business for more than two decades, Tropic Wings' latest initiative involves introducing 12 new battery electric vehicles (BEVs) with plans to transition 80% of its vehicles to electric by 2028.

Additionally, the company continues offsetting emissions by planting trees in local reforestation projects with Reforest, contributing to ecosystem restoration and biodiversity conservation. Through Reforest, Tropic Wings supports restoring degraded agricultural land on the Atherton Tablelands, planting rainforest species to restore native Mabi rainforest that is home to many threatened species including the Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroo and the Herbert River Ringtail Possum.



# 4. TTNQ'S PRIORITY ACTION AREAS IN 2025

## 4.1 TRACKING TOOLS FOR INDUSTRY IMPROVEMENT

TTNQ has established the Sustainability Leaders Cluster group comprising 113 operators, each with a level of eco certification and /or sustainability accreditation or an interest in improving their sustainability practices. This group of operators is actively implementing sustainable practices in their businesses and is promoted by TTNQ as an example to the rest of the industry via case studies

and opportunities for B2B learning. Data collected from this group forms the baseline understanding of key emissions by the tourism industry in TNQ.

The target is for 150 operators to be in this group by June 2026.

## 4.2 PROJECT REEF (PHASE 2)

In 2024, TTNQ in partnership with Tourism Australia, Tourism and Events Queensland, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Expedia and Qantas launched the Guardian of the Reef tourism and conservation program. Providing a consumer education and booking portal to book only certified experiences and accommodation, the platform provided educational content on the management of the Great Barrier Reef, and the role of Master Reef Guides. Expedia made a \$70,000 AUD contribution to reef conservation through the Great Barrier Reef Foundation. A world-first, the platform and the associated media program reached more than 200 million consumers, had over 55,000 online customers and sold in excess of \$7 million in reef-conscious travel.

The next phase of the campaign is planned for 2025 aiming to recognise the contribution the Great Barrier Reef has made to environmental awareness, conservation and education. This multi-phased campaign and activation will showcase tourism and science working together to promote conservation in tourism, to show travellers how their visit helps protect the Reef for future generations, giving global reach to the idea of “see it, love it, protect it”.

## GUARDIAN OF THE REEF CAMPAIGN

In September 2024 TTNQ partnered with Expedia to introduce Guardian of the Reef, a world-first platform promoting reef-positive travel choices that reward travellers for learning about the Great Barrier Reef.

Conservation curious travellers can visit the newly launched website and work through a series of short educational videos, each with a coupon reward system to use with Expedia bookings on the Great Barrier Reef.

Developed in consultation with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (Reef Authority), Guardian of the Reef blends science and environmental education with Indigenous wisdom and sustainable products, to help travellers learn more about the health of the Great

Barrier Reef and contribute to a variety of conservation initiatives to support the long-term health and resilience of the Reef.

### WORLD-FIRST EDUCATION INITIATIVE INTRODUCES “GUARDIAN OF THE REEF” PLATFORM



*tw* Edited by  
TRAVEL WEEKLY







### 4.3 BUSINESS EVENTS CAIRNS - CONNECT GREAT, LEAVE GREATER

Business Events Cairns is in a unique position to drive awareness and capability for the region's ability to deliver sustainable and socially purposeful event offerings through targeted marketing and content delivery. This will provide more meaning to decision makers on the region's unique environmental proposition as a business events destination of choice. The regional Promise of a Greater Good strategy will be further developed to support the Connect Great, Leave Greater brand platform.

Through the collection and sharing of success stories and case studies of everyday practices that the industry delivers consistently, planners will be educated about how important sustainability is to this region. This will develop a legacy as part of the region's offering – one which can't be done anywhere else.

### 4.4 WATER & WASTE MANAGEMENT

In 2024, a greater emphasis has been placed on motivating member businesses to initiate or continue to input sustainability data in their selected software platforms. In 2025 the Waste Challenge will kick off as an initiative tailored for the tourism industry to showcase practical and innovative waste solutions. The key objectives for this initiative are to educate, drive awareness, actively reduce waste and increase resource recovery programs within the tourism industry.

Without a new water supply, Cairns faces the possibility of a drinking water shortage by 2026. The Cairns Water Security project commenced in 2024 to provide a secondary supply to the community and greater emphasis will be placed on the tourism industry to manage water use. In 2025, TTNQ will work in partnership with Cairns Regional Council on educating and delivering water management tools to the tourism industry to reduce consumption.



## 4.5 BACKING UP OUR GREEN CLAIMS

The EU Green Claims Directive (2024) means increasing scrutiny will be placed on tourism businesses to ensure they are not making false or misleading claims. TTNQ will work with the industry to test and roll-out a ‘four-way test’ for green and sustainability-based claims to ensure region and our member are complying. The four-way test will be built around:

1. Could your advertisement or publicity claim give a false impression of what is really in place in our region?
2. Is the claim vague or not able to be substantiated?
3. Can your claim be verified by a third party?
4. If TTNQ were asked to verify it, could we do so in a timely manner?

For example: “TNQ is the most eco-certified destination in Australia” this claim reflects accurately what we have in our region, it can be verified by the certification bodies, it is not vague and if called to demonstrate this claim TTNQ could do so when asked.

## 4.6 A CARBON FOOTPRINT AND TARGETS FOR TTNQ

TTNQ have completed a number of sustainability programs and implemented a range of internal programs such as waste separation, and sustainable procurement, as well as offsetting the carbon associated with our famils program. In 2025, the organisation will measure and track its carbon footprint to ensure it is practicing what it is seeking from our members in terms of carbon measurement, reduction and offsetting.



**FLASHCARD EXAMPLE: ARE YOUR GREEN CLAIMS CREDIBLE?**

**COMPLIANCE WITH THE EU GREEN CLAIMS DIRECTIVE**

As the tourism industry, businesses and destinations start to evaluate compliance with the EU Green Claims Directive, when it comes to our socials, advertising and publicity it is crucial to ensure we are not in breach of the Directive. Here are four questions staff should ask before they publish a claim on behalf of your business about your sustainability credentials:

1. COULD THIS CLAIM GIVE A FALSE IMPRESSION OF WHAT IS REALLY IN PLACE IN YOUR BUSINESS?

3. IF YOUR BUSINESS WERE ASKED TO VERIFY IT COULD YOU DO SO IN A TIMELY MANNER?

2. CAN THIS CLAIM BE VERIFIED BY A THIRD PARTY?

4. IS THE CLAIM VAGUE OR NOT ABLE TO BE SUBSTANTIATED?

**FOR EXAMPLE:**

**“TNQ has the highest concentration of eco-certified operators in Australia”**

this claim reflects accurately what we have in our region, it can be verified by the certification bodies, it is not vague and if called to demonstrate this claim TNQ could do so when asked.

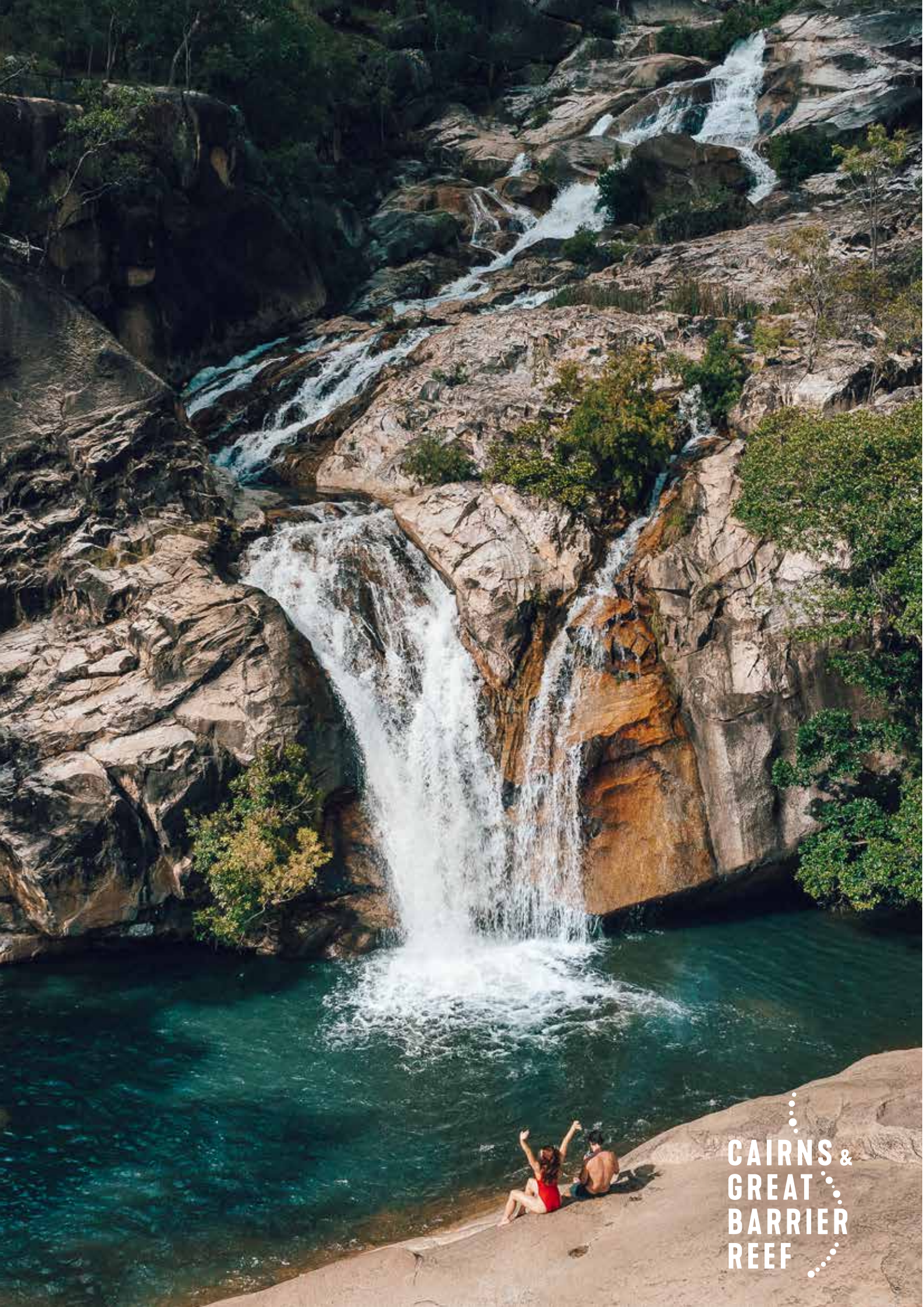
**WHEREAS:**

**“TNQ will be carbon zero by 2030”**

this claim is unclear because it does not define what ‘carbon zero’ is to be achieved, is it the whole region, just the organisation, scope 1&2 or scope 3, there is no data to even define the current carbon footprint, let alone what is needed to get to carbon zero. Our current footprint and path to reach zero emissions (net) by 2030 is not published or verified, this claim is vague and misleading and cannot be verified in a timely manner.



**TOURISM  
TROPICAL NORTH  
QUEENSLAND**



CAIRNS &  
GREAT  
BARRIER  
REEF