

October 14, 2025

International recovery boosts First Nations tourism

First Nations tourism operators are enjoying increased business as international tourism numbers return to Tropical North Queensland with some reporting record figures at the TNQ Indigenous Experiences Cluster Group meeting today (October 14) during Indigenous Business Month.

TNQ Indigenous Experiences Cluster Group Co-Chair Juan Walker said his business, Walkabout Cultural Adventures, which operates tours on Kuku Yalanji Country, had improved sales by 13 per cent.

"I anticipate further growth after joining Tourism Tropical North Queensland (TTNQ) on international trade missions in the Western markets over the past year including a roadshow in the United Kingdom and Europe as well as attending the Australian Tourism Exchange," he said.

"We are already getting bookings for September and October next year, like we were achieving before Covid, and international business is now more than 70 per cent of our market.

"Queensland has the highest number of Indigenous-owned and led products on country and more and more people are interested in working in tourism to create a unique experience on the country where they come from."

Co-Chair Dale Mundraby, the Operations Manager of Mandingalbay Authentic Indigenous Tours, which showcases Mandingalbay Yidinji Country across Trinity Inlet from Cairns, said business had peaked in September with their revamped product.

"We joined TTNQ's mentoring program to become trade-ready so that we could work with the international market and have put in place many of the necessary certifications with Ecotourism Australia such as Respecting Our Culture Certification which help us to get noticed," Mr Mundraby said.

"Since relaunching our business in 2022 we have jumped from a handful of guests to 520 in September across our Hands on Country Eco Tour and the new Deadly After Dark Sunset Cruise including dinner at Ochre.

"Working with partners is a fundamental stepping stone in attracting visitation and we are getting bookings though Ochre as well as direct to our business since launching that partnership, while other tourism products are also recommending us.

"The cluster group is another partnership where participants have the support of other Indigenous operators which is helping emerging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses. Having a place for conversation among our peers is crucial to survival."

Tourism Tropical North Queensland (TTNQ) Chief Executive Officer Mark Olsen said seven Indigenous products had been mentored over the past year to understand how to work with the international tourism distribution system and the destination now had 41 trade-ready experiences in the TNQ Deeper into Dreaming brochure.

"The Indigenous Experiences cluster has been invaluable in helping to grow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tourism and was behind the TNQ First Nations Tourism Action Plan which launched in May 2023 recognising that all tourism is on country," he said.

"This was the first Indigenous action plan for tourism in Queensland, and the cluster will now start the review process for the 2025-28 plan to align with the State Plan launched in November.

MEDIA RELEASE



“TTNQ’s Reconciliation Action Plan was officially accredited by Reconciliation Australia during Indigenous Business Month, marking another milestone in the organisation’s work to elevate First Nations tourism.

“The RAP deliverables include working with each of our Local Tourism Organisations and partner agencies to identify and work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, businesses and organisations.

“The Indigenous experience in tourism is a form of reconciliation that has a huge positive impact in helping to close the gap. It allows visitors to connect in a respectful way to country, culture and the people at the heart of it.”

Find out more: <https://tourism.tropicalnorthqueensland.org.au/indigenous-experiences/>

ENDS

TTNQ Contact: Liz Inglis | liz.inglis@ttnq.org.au | 0419 643 494