

September 9, 2026

New tourism infrastructure shows confidence in Tropical North Queensland

Confidence remains strong in Tropical North Queensland with more than \$295 million worth of tourism investment underway and record international visitor spend on the back of four years of additional destination marketing funding.

Tourism Tropical North Queensland (TTNQ) Chief Executive Officer Mark Olsen and Chair John O'Sullivan revealed the exceptional marketing campaign results in the 2025-26 TTNQ Annual Report.

Mr O'Sullivan acknowledged the funding from all three levels of Government as critical to the destination's success with 26 per cent of the organisation's funding in 2025-26 coming from Cairns Regional Council and a further 14 per cent from the Queensland Government via Tourism and Events Queensland.

"The additional \$18 million in Federal funding secured by TTNQ since the pandemic to drive international tourism recovery had helped to turn the global spotlight on Tropical North Queensland as the gateway to the Great Barrier Reef," he said.

"The return on investment in both advertising value and TTNQ generated visitor spend reached \$34 of visitor expenditure for every dollar invested by our partners across industry and Government.

"This is one of our best results considering the tiny budget we have in comparison to our competitors who outspend us by at least four times.

"Through these Federally funded campaigns TTNQ delivered \$267.5 million in visitor spend supporting an estimated 1450 extra jobs in our community.

"Our combined campaign activity with five domestic campaigns and 67 international trade campaigns in 2025-26 alone reached our target consumers nearly 50 billion times through our publicity, digital, campaigns and trade activity.

"The results to date are promising with Tropical North Queensland's international visitor spend reaching a record \$1.3 billion in the year ending March 2026, increasing by 27.6 per cent from the same period in the previous year."

Mr Olsen said the record visitor spend from escalated campaign activity over the past four years combined with the most substantial investment in tourism infrastructure since the construction of the three Crystalbrook hotels showed confidence in Tropical North Queensland as a destination.

"The Hilton Palm Cove Cairns Resort & Spa is in the final stages before opening, and work is underway on the \$60 million Skyhaven accommodation at Cairns Airport and the \$85 million Skyrail Rainforest Cableway upgrade," Mr Olsen said.

"The Morris Group's \$40 million redevelopment of Double Island is also among the surge in interest by developers who are sensitive with scale to the landscape which is ideal for the only place on earth where two natural World Heritage areas are side by side.

"Ecotourism is at the heart of the visitor economy in Tropical North Queensland and is continuing to grow with projects like these as well as substantial State Government investment in the \$15.5 million expansion of the Smithfield Mountain Bike Park and the \$59 million Wangetti Trail."

MEDIA RELEASE



In addition to the Annual Report, the TTNQ Board also approved the TNQ 2045 Destination Management Plan which positions Tropical North Queensland as a key region in achieving the State's aspirations in 2045 and beyond.

"Our goal is to reach our stretch target of \$10 billion by driving growth in visitor spend and length of stay to surpass our 2045 forecast of \$8.6 billion," Mr Olsen said.

"Developed in consultation with more than 230 stakeholders across 32 regional workshops, the plan identifies priorities for each sub-region and strategies for success across ecotourism, events, connectivity, experiences, brand, and industry.

"With a vision for Tropical North Queensland to be Australia's No1 ecotourism region by 2045 and a world leader in adventure and regenerative tourism supporting thriving local communities, the plan is a managed approach to tourism growth.

"The key to Tropical North Queensland's success as a tourism destination will be growing the type of tourism our communities seek which means attracting visitors who are conscious of their impact and leave as custodians of our region and its stories.

"Our communities want tourism that recognises our First Nations connection, plays an active role in sustainable and regenerative tourism practices, respects culture and communities with authentic connection, supports an inclusive and accessible industry with a skilled local workforce, and delivers truly remarkable visitor experiences."

Read the 2025-26 TTNQ Annual Report: <https://tourism.tropicalnorthqueensland.org.au/tools-resources/>

Read the TNQ 2045 Destination Management Plan: <https://tourism.tropicalnorthqueensland.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/TTNQ-Destination-Management-Plan-2045-web-final.pdf>

ENDS

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