



Inquiry into Opportunities and Methods for stimulating the Tourism Industry in Northern Australia

Inquiry Terms of Reference

The Joint Standing Committee on Northern Australia will inquire into and report on opportunities and methods for, and impediments and challenges to stimulating the tourism industry in Northern Australia including but not limited to:

1. Domestic and international tourism comprising: recreational, environmental, cultural, educational, and industrial tourism;
2. The role of peak bodies, local communities, and all levels of government in developing and promoting tourism opportunities nationally and internationally, including regulations and workforce issues that may inhibit tourism development; and
3. Communication and transport infrastructure (particularly air, sea, road and rail transport and port infrastructure) which may facilitate and grow tourism.

DEPARTMENTAL COMMENTS ON TERMS OF REFERENCE

Name of Department/Agency: Tourism Tropical North Queensland (TTNQ)

TTNQ is the Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO) for Tropical North Queensland (TNQ). We are responsible for marketing Tropical North Queensland and increasing tourism visitation and expenditure in the region. TTNQ works with key stakeholders to deliver on the State endorsed Tropical North Queensland Destination Management Plan (DTP) with a goal to reach \$4.15B expenditure in the region by 2020.

Contribution endorsed by:

Cairns Regional Council	Mayor Bob Manning
Regional Development Australia FNQ&TS	Jann Crase, CEO
Qld Tourism Industry Council (QTIC)	Daniel Gschwind, CEO
LTO's: Savannah Way Ltd	Russell Boswell, Chair
Tourism Port Douglas and Daintree	Sheena Walshaw, Chair
Tropical Tablelands Tourism	Michael Trout, Chair
Tourism Cape York	Trish Butler, CEO, Cape York Sustainable Futures
Tropical Coast Tourism	Mark Evans, Chair
Advance Cairns	Kevin Byrne, CEO
Cairns Chamber of Commerce	Deb Hancock, CEO
Ports North	Chris Boland, CEO



1. Domestic and international tourism comprising: recreational, environmental, cultural, educational, and industrial tourism;

Response:

- **Impediments and challenges**

- Limited investment in leveraging awareness of globally iconic tourism assets, e.g. World Heritage listed Great Barrier Reef, Wet Tropics Rainforest.
- Limited product in remote and frontier areas (Cape York, Torres Strait and Gulf Savannah).
- Limited visitor numbers in remote and frontier areas (Cape York, Torres Strait and Gulf Savannah).
- Tourism seasonality in Northern Australia is an impediment to optimising use of Tourism infrastructure and retaining trained full time employees.
- High visitor to resident ratio in tourism reliant remote locations, which limits the proportionately small communities' ability to invest in driving demand and optimising potential economic returns.

- **Opportunities and methods**

- **Citizens of the Great Barrier Reef:** Federal Government community service advertising, community engagement strategy to encourage every Australian to become a Citizen of the Great Barrier Reef.
- Many of Northern Australia's most spectacular attractions are in National parks. Typically, these are not well marketed, and often visitor infrastructure is limited. Modest investment in these parks and the better integration of their marketing into broader State and Territory marketing initiatives will showcase attractions, especially where private industry marketing budgets are limited.
- Ecotourism development can be facilitated by the development and maintenance of state visitor infrastructure on National Parks in a structured way that creates touring corridors and nodes while providing access to attractive sites.
- Encourage private sector development of sustainable tourism products and experiences in protected areas i.e. National Parks.
- QPWS permit system - The issue is the delayed implementation of the new QPWS permit system to maximise use of key national park assets and minimise crowding.
- Facilitate indigenous community ground up genuine & collaborative development & marketing of Indigenous tourism experiences to build domestic and international awareness, preference and demand.
- Marketing investment in the existing portfolio of destinations and routes in preference to creating another brand that sits beside the Australian, State, regional and route brands.
- Investment in existing destination tourism plans to optimise development of support infrastructure and policies for tourism.
- Establishment of a \$5M Northern Australia bid fund to support the attraction of business tourism to Northern Australia particularly during off peak periods. Cities throughout the world have been measuring the financial return from hosting business events for several years with research proving these high yielding meetings bring wide-spread economic and social benefit to a region.



The fund would only be activated if the bid is successful and be based around strong return on investment criteria. It provides a 100% guarantee of return on investment as if the bid is unsuccessful no funds are accessed.

- Establishment of a Northern Australia - **High Visitor to Resident Ratio Community Leverage Investment Fund** - matching tourism marketing investment, based on \$2 for every \$1 invested by the community.

2. The role of peak bodies, local communities, and all levels of government in developing and promoting tourism opportunities nationally and internationally, including regulations and workforce issues that may inhibit tourism development; and

Response:

- **Impediments and challenges**

- Lack of adequate and sustainable funding for regional and local tourism management organisations and the scope and inconsistency of local government investment.
- Limited workforce and skills in remote and frontier areas.
- Failure to see tourism as a career and develop appropriate skills.
- Lack of entrepreneurs in remote and regional areas starting new tourism business opportunities.
- Lack of robust tourism data and analysis for Northern Australia
- The need to resolve land tenure issues to encourage private investment across Cape York.

- **Opportunities and methods**

- Utilise existing destination tourism plans to prioritize funding and investment in the development and marketing of Northern Australia tourism destinations.
- Support the establishment of adequate and sustainable funding mechanisms for regional tourism management organisations including Queensland industry lead transformation agenda.
- Retain access for working and special visa staff to fill seasonal employment demands in remote and frontier destinations.
- Consider extending the allowable period of stay for backpackers working in hospitality in remote locations under the working holiday visa.
- Tourism education and training must be available and undertaken at all levels of schooling to develop the motivation and fundamental people skills required for the tourism industry.
- Provide Queensland Payroll tax concessions to support job creation.
- Consider a relaxation of current charter restrictions placed on foreign flagged super yachts.
- The commonality of many impediments and business types across northern Australia makes universal business support mechanisms very appropriate. Programs such as ASBAS NATI, Austrade's Entrepreneur Program and Indigenous mentoring programs should be continued and linked across Northern Australia to share resources and models. Key areas for support include financial and business management, experience development and marketing strategies.



- Many towns and regions in Northern Australia present wonderful business and lifestyle opportunities for capable small business entrepreneurs. New initiatives by entrepreneurs can transform towns and communities. The benefits of regional business and the associated lifestyle must be promoted to people in more populated areas to attract them to regional areas, and incentives considered at all levels of government to encourage these new investors.
- National Visitor Survey and International Visitor Survey data for most of northern Australia is very limited and extrapolated from such unreliable samples that it is virtually useless. Occasional visitor surveys have been conducted in regions but there is very little reliable data on visitation overall and the best potential opportunities. A digital data collection methodology, supported by stakeholders across Northern Australia would support informed decision making around a wide range of development and marketing issues.

3. Communication and transport infrastructure (particularly air, sea, road and rail transport and port infrastructure) which may facilitate and grow tourism.

Response:

- **Impediments and challenges**

- Year-round sustainability of access via fragile road infrastructure in remote and frontier areas.
- Enabling reliable port access to Northern Australian coastal destinations.
- Northern Australia, particularly regional and remote locations face significant disadvantages in terms of poor digital connectivity. This negatively impacts on businesses ability to remain globally competitive, it significantly impairs liveability and amplifies risks to residents and visitors due to a lack of real time information on road closures and alternate routes.
- Remote regional and remote locations have a heavy reliance on aviation access, whilst the small population bases impact on the ability to attract and retain affordable aviation services.

- **Opportunities and methods**

- Increased investment in roads would makes more destinations and entire sub-routes available for more vehicles for more of the year. In every instance the sealing of roads in Northern Australia has increased visitation as caravans and two-wheel drive vehicles bring new market segments. Road investment adds more confidence to advance holiday planning as well as supporting all other industries and community functions. Priority routes for sealing include the Hann Highway, Gulf Development Road between Normanton and Burketown, and Borroloola to Burketown sector.
- Well planned sealing of remote main routes, while retaining adventurous loops and connectors will facilitate growth of the softer self-drive market while retaining the 4WD adventure market.
- Increase the drive market through the investment in support infrastructure improvements to road support facilities; - toilets, camping grounds, rest areas, directional/interpretive signage and waste management in remote areas. This will



provide greater amenity and opportunity and reduce conflict between the tourist and haulage industries.

- Extension of the National Highway to include the Captain Cook Highway from Cairns to Cooktown enabling Australian and Queensland Governments to partner to address safety and congestion issues.
- Remote communities are vulnerable to regular flood events, natural disasters causing road closures. Disaster funding can be used to fix the network however not to improve the network. Greater reliability on the transport system can increase the resilience of communities and year-round access to agriculture and tourism industries.
- Concurrent protection of the health of the GBR and well managed dredging and infrastructure maintenance and development.
- Support for the Cairns Shipping Development Project to expand the Port of Cairns shipping channel to accommodate 'mega class' cruise ships whilst concurrently protecting the health of the Great Barrier Reef.
- Mobile phone coverage is generally only through Telstra in towns, limiting safety communications and tourism marketing in between. Most towns have such limited internet capacity that one recreational vehicle with an illegal booster (which are common) knocks out the whole town's internet including EFTPOS and email for hours. This occurs continually, every tourist season in many towns. Tourism marketing increasingly focuses on digital platforms but these are not available in most of Northern Australia and far fewer tourists share their experiences on digital media because of the lack of connectivity. The health, education, lifestyles and business opportunities for people in regional Northern Australia would be immensely improved by reliable internet connectivity.
- An aviation plan must be developed to optimise services through the stimulation of passenger and freight opportunities and application of development incentives.
- Federal Government financial support of well researched and planned bids for international flights into key regional destinations.
- Expand the Northern Australia Infrastructure Fund to include funding opportunities for smaller Tourism businesses.