



**Cape York Sustainable Futures:**

**Submission to Joint Standing Committee on Northern Australia Tourism Industry, 2017**

*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.*

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**RESPONDING AGENCY: CAPE YORK SUSTAINABLE FUTURES (CYSF), incorporating Tourism Cape York (TCY), the recognised Local tourism organisation for Cape York, and the Cape York Business Enterprise Centre.**

**CEO: Trish Butler**

**Contact details:**

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**SUMMARY OF THE SUBMISSION:**

Cape York is a remote region, however progressive sealing of the Peninsula Development Road is already breaking down that isolation. Tourism visitation is expected to increase significantly and rapidly, presenting many opportunities for local people, but also challenges if the local residents are to be ready to capitalise on those opportunities.

This submission identifies the opportunities and also highlights the challenges and impediments, such as: land tenure uncertainty, lack of business skills and awareness of the tourism industry, seasonal impacts, lack of resources to co-ordinate the local tourism industry to allow it to grow, missed opportunities in economies of scale re promotion and marketing, inadequate accommodation to meet demands of the different tourist demographic, poor digital connections.

**RESPONSES:**

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

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**Opportunities and methods for stimulating the tourism industry in Cape York**

Cape York is its own brand. It is a region well known around Australia and in many parts of the world as the northern-most point of Australia, and as one of the world's most diverse wilderness regions. It is widely recognised by its land mass shape and has the potential to be positioned as the ideal destination for a broad range of international tourists. The land mass shape of the Cape is commonly used as the logo or unofficial brand for organisations and businesses.

In 2012 CYSF, created Tourism Cape York (TCY) which was recognised formally as the Local tourism organisation for Cape York. TCY is taking a range of measures to enhance the visitor experience on the ground and encourage a quality of service that meets visitor expectations, but it is under resourced to do so. Prospective visitors and tourism businesses can access a wide range of information through the TCY website: <http://www.tourismcapeyork.com/>.



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Existing limitations associated with infrastructure (e.g. supplies and roads), knowledge and customer relations and seasonal constraints all provide opportunities for an entrepreneur, such as training, and green season tourism. Growth through increasing the average length of stay in a centre opens up a range of small scale business opportunities for local residents.

Improved road conditions are allowing increased tourist visitation and are the catalyst for changing visitor demographics and activity patterns with a greater proportion of visitors now wanting to visit 'frontier country' in comfort. The demand for basic supplies and services can be expected to increase. CYSF noted an increase in visitation of 10% in 2015 and again in 2016. Improvements to the road have already enabled access by campervans, caravans and conventional vehicles which will in time diversify the types of tourist visiting the region, with a wider variety of interests and favoured destinations.

CYSF has spent several years identifying the range of opportunities across Cape York and these can be seen in Attachment 1, identifying opportunities within the sub-regions of the Cape. Under funding from the state government in 2017-18, CYSF will be formalising these sub-regions with associated destination plans to highlight the range of attractions and activities available. This will be aimed at encouraging travellers to visit more destinations in all communities, and by so doing, spread the benefits of tourism and open up opportunities for small/micro business and employment.

Traditionally the key market for Cape York has been, and remains, the domestic traveller, largely retirees. While international visitation has been present it is not expected to be a major market segment in the short term, although the future proposals for development of tourism attractions will take into account this visitor component.

In 2016 CYSF produced the Cape York Tourism Development Action Plan, copy of which is appended for your information (Attachment 2). That document includes assessment of infrastructure requirements, market segment analysis and 8 strategic objectives for the region to pursue and as such is relevant to the Inquiry. 7 sub-regions were identified within Cape York to facilitate future tourism development and coordination.

#### **Opportunities (see Attachment 1 for details):**

The following identifies the types and category of attractions and opportunities for future development. They are present in most communities and in 2017/18 it is intended to identify those most appropriate for each sub-region to maintain a point of difference across the whole region. They provide opportunity for small/micro business development and a more entrepreneurial approach.

- Natural and cultural assets and activities, including such as: walking tours, wildlife viewing, traditional hunting/fishing, rock art, feral pig hunting, 4WD challenges, croc sighting, cultural and art centres, diving, bird watching, flora and fauna
- Wilderness experiences
- Overland Telegraph Line experience
- Loop road network: development and signage
- Accommodation: safari style camping, lodges and ecotourism venues. Joint venture potential given security of land tenure
- Bush activities – wilderness experiences
- Fishing, charter boats



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- Photography
- Mining tourism in Weipa and house boats
- Expanding the shoulder season/Green season tourism
- Fly in/fly out; fly/drive itineraries; cruise/drive options
- Expanding available camp sites and infrastructure in National Parks
- Management of the permit system for NPs – currently a failure and could be an opportunity for another operator/indigenous groups to take over.

#### **Methods:**

- Coordination of sub-region and niche development by creating an Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO) for Cape York
  - TCY as the RTO for Cape York
  - Establishment of the sub-regions as LTOs
- Development of destination plans for each sub region
- Delivery of regular workshops with frequent visits to communities and key centres to promote tourism potential and opportunities and assist people develop business plans
- Establish a small business and tourism mentoring program
- Provision of one on one business advice for established businesses
- Establish Tourism Coordinators in each sub-region to create a network of tourism businesses and a coordinated presentation to the wider tourism industry

#### **Impediments and challenges**

##### **Impediments:**

- A key factor inhibiting growth and investment is the uncertainty relating to land tenure and ILUA's, not helped by the recent Federal Court decision. While Aboriginal Freehold exists, it does not provide the necessary collateral for indigenous residents and TOs to obtain bank loans. Serious investment in tourism development cannot be expected until an investor can be satisfied their investment is secure and that land title uncertainties do not pose a risk.
- Cape York is many years behind other parts of Queensland in the development of hard and soft infrastructure. While the PDR is being gradually upgraded it is still an impediment to development.
- Knowledge and understanding of the tourism industry and business practices within Indigenous communities is not high. A project being conducted by CYSF in 2017-18 will help to bridge this knowledge gap. There is little local business activity in the tourism industry.
- Communications both internet and mobile phones – lack of coverage and poor services hampers business operations
- Seasonal aspects of tourism industry: accommodation in short supply in the dry season
- Cape York is overlooked in the Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO) region with larger commercial centres such as Cairns and Port Douglas facing different priorities and experiencing a market segment far removed from that of Cape York.
- National Parks (NP) are overcrowded in the tourist season and risk being “loved to death” – lack of available camping sites. Rubbish disposal is becoming a problem, more so now due to the proposed closure of Cook Shire dumps at Laura and Coen



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- Pressure of the green and conservation movement to restrict business and commercial development across the region is an impediment to investment
- Threat by the state government concerning World Heritage nomination discourages investment.

#### **Challenges:**

- State and federal resolution of land tenure and ownership issues **in the short term**.
- Raising awareness within indigenous communities of business and commercial operations and procedures, and understanding of the tourism industry, through introduction of a mentoring program, a one on one approach is needed in remote areas
- Continuation of funding for business support programs such as ASBAS NATI and other appropriate mentoring programs
- Infrastructure provision: fast track the PDR, bridges over the Jardine, Archer & North Laura rivers, signage (directional and information), provision of amenities, including toilets, rubbish removal, quality accommodation, sea access, digital access
- Enabling Cape York to receive higher and more appropriate recognition within the industry – e.g. by establishing TCY as the RTO for the region
- Opening up more NP areas for visitation; instituting appropriate land and people management procedures within the Parks
- While Cape York is viewed as a ‘wilderness area’, and indeed many areas within Cape York would have that status, it is also home to 16,000 people who are seeking a productive way of life. The challenge is to balance protection of significant areas with liveability for residents.

#### **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.**

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#### **Opportunities and methods**

- The community played a key role in the formulation of the tourism development strategies adopted by CYSF. Workshops held across the region in 2010 and 2011 laid down the priorities for the future direction of the industry. All actions by CYSF as the peak body since then have adhered to the policies and principles set by local residents at those workshops. With a small population the impact of tourism is closely felt at the community level, as a consequence the community will continue to play a significant role in the future direction of the industry in the Cape.
- A key opportunity is for Cape York to be represented by its own RTO in order to adequately pursue the identified opportunities. The Cape York tourism profile and specific development needs are not the same as those for Cairns, Port Douglas or the Cassowary Coast.
- An RTO would provide the structure and coordination that is lacking for the region. This would provide opportunities for achieving economies of scale in promotions and marketing with coordinating advertising. While TCY produces an annual Visitor Guide this could be expanded with web linkages and on-line booking via a digital e-book
- An opportunity is building up the knowledge base of the industry particularly with the changes expected with improved access. Visitor surveys and research are needed in Cape York to keep



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a track of the changing tourism landscape. These should be delivered by the peak body however this requires funding for development, delivery, evaluation and reporting

- An opportunity for Cape York is delivery of programs to improve the standards of delivery of services. Peak bodies have a role to play in improving customer relations and raising awareness of industry regulations. It is imperative that the peak local body (TCY) is appropriately resourced to deliver this service.

#### **Impediments and challenges:**

- Impediment: Lack of funding to provide a structural framework for the coordination of the industry in Cape York is impeding the development of the industry. A 'hands on' approach is needed and due to the distances to travel this is an expensive undertaking. This is a role that should be undertaken by the peak body. However, TCY as the LTO receives no funding from the RTO and relies on support from Local Government, membership and advertising. Unfortunately, our Local Governments provide no funding to TCY.
- Challenge: Obtaining RTO status to provide the necessary funding to provide the structural support will be a significant challenge
- A further challenge will be establishing a coordinated tourism network across the region to facilitate integration with the wider tourism industry at a state and national level
- Raising the level of awareness of the industry across the wider community and an understanding of the regulations that apply is both an impediment and a challenge as the LTO has no funding to undertake this.

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

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#### **Opportunities and methods**

- Keep pressure on to increase the rate at which the PDR is upgraded, or at least keep improvements rolling out
- Telecommunications improvement to remove black spots in mobile reception for visitor safety and security. CYSF has communicated these needs to Telstra, indicating specific locations for additional towers
- Improvement to telecommunications and digital communications will assist local businesses, enhance visitor experience and provide a reliable platform for tourism development
- Airport infrastructure to facilitate fly in/fly out itineraries and extend the tourism season beyond the 'dry' season
- Establishment of a new port at Weipa – direct links to Asia (export) and Northern Territory (Tourism)

#### **Impediments and challenges:**

- Obtaining additional funding for road improvements a major challenge
- Remote area improvements are not a priority for Telstra. However the poor service is a safety issue and an impediment to business and commercial development



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**ATTACHMENT 1: Attractions all subregions**

**NPA – TIP OF AUSTRALIA**

**Natural attractions:**

- Falls – Fruit Bat, Elliott, Twin
- The Tip

**Heritage and historic:**

- Captain Billy's landing
- DC3 plane wreck
- Pajinka Lodge remains
- Somerset
- Fly Point
- Muttee Heads
- Possession Island
- Thursday Island
- Torres Strait heritage
- Ussher Point
- OTL various locations – Peak Point, Roonga Pt

**Commercial, recreation and towns:**

- The Croc Tent
- Seisia and Red Island
- Loyalty Beach
- Punsand Bay
- Bamaga
- New Mapoon
- Injinoo
- Umagico
- Jardine River Ferry

**Activities:**

- Fishing charters
- Beach fishing
- Croc spotting
- Bird watching

**WESTERN CAPE**

**Activities:**

- Fishing charters
- House boats
- Rio Tinto Mine tours
- Bird watching and nature walks
- Western Cape Eco tours
- Beach and wharf fishing

**Towns and communities:**

- Weipa – fishing, relaxing

- Mapoon – beach fishing
- Napranum – bush crafts
- Aurukun – art and culture

**Cultural:**

- Aurukun – art and culture

**KOWANYAMA PORMPURA AW**

**Nature based activities:**

- Wildlife tours and bird watching
- Fishing
- Bushcraft and traditional activities

**Cultural:**

- Art and heritage
- Rock art

**EASTERN CAPE**

**Natural attractions:**

- Rainforest – Iron Range
- Mt Tozer, Heathlands
- Coastline and reef – Quintel Beach, Chili Beach, Cape Weymouth
- Rivers and crossings

**Activities:**

- Fishing
- Birdwatching
- Photography
- 4WD specialists – Frenchman's Track

**Historic and cultural:**

- WWII remains
- Portland Roads
- Lockhart River Art Centre
- Old Lockhart site

**CENTRAL CAPE**

**Natural attractions:**

- Lakefield NP
- Port Stewart
- Oyala Thumotang NP
- Archer River



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- Coen River

**Historic and commercial:**

- Musgrave Roadhouse (old telegraph station)
- Coen township – Heritage House
- Archer River
- Moreton Telegraph Station
- Bramwell Junction
- Bramwell Tourist Park
- OTL start

**Events:**

- Cooktown Discovery Festival – June
- Laura races and rodeo – June

**ATTACHMENT 2: Cape York Tourism Development Action Plan**

**COOKTOWN AND LOWER CAPE**

**Natural attractions:**

- Bloomfield Falls
- Black Mountain
- Nature’s Powerhouse and botanical gardens
- Grassy Hill and lighthouse
- River of Life walkway
- Isabella Falls
- Coloured sand Elim Beach Hopevale

**Historic and cultural:**

- Art and cultural centre Wujal Wujal
- James Cook Museum
- Cooktown History Centre
- Kuku Bulkway Indig Art Gallery
- Cemetery and Chinese Shrine
- James Cook statue, monument and cannon
- Mrs Watson’s monument
- Hopevale Arts and cultural centre
- Old Laura homestead
- Quinkan and Regional Cultural centre
- Split Rock
- Palmer R Goldfields
- Maytown – Old coach road
- Guurrbi Tours

**Activities:**

- Riverbend tours
- Hidden Valley Trail rides
- Cooktown reef charters
- Fishing tours – sea and rivers
- Birdwatching
- rock art tours