

## Bundaberg Tourism submission to the Destination 2045 consultation.

Bundaberg Tourism appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the discussion on shaping Queensland's long-term tourism strategy on behalf of the Bundaberg and North Burnett regions, through our role as a Regional Tourism Organisation.

Below, we outline our feedback aligned with the key themes of the discussion paper, as well as our thoughts on the New Ways of Working Network Review.

### *Ecotourism, nature-based development & sustainable use of National Parks*

Queensland's natural environment is one of its greatest tourism assets, offering visitors opportunities to connect with diverse landscapes, from the Great Barrier Reef to ancient rainforests and rugged outback. As global demand for eco and nature-based tourism grows, the state has a clear opportunity to position ourselves as a leader in sustainable, nature-based tourism, where conservation, visitor experience, and economic benefits align.

Strengthening investment in national parks and protected areas, fostering tourism partnerships, and streamlining land and infrastructure tenure frameworks will create an environment where ecotourism can thrive. A long-term commitment to sustainability & climate action accreditation, accessible infrastructure development, and structured investment in regionally significant projects will enable Queensland to not only meet but exceed visitor expectations for authentic, environmentally responsible experiences.

To position Queensland as a global leader in ecotourism, the state must proactively support low-impact, high-value experiences that balance conservation with visitor engagement.

Key actions to elevate ecotourism across the state include:

- **Strengthen Certification & Standards:** Extend and embed long-term Commercial Activity Agreements (CAA) for high-standard operators (GSTC or equivalent accreditation), ensuring a rigorous, globally recognised framework for sustainable tourism.
- **Invest in National Parks & Protected Areas:** Increase funding for visitor infrastructure in national parks, including trails, interpretation facilities, and low-impact accommodation, while maintaining conservation integrity.
- **Recognise the public-private partnerships in and adjacent to protected areas as assets:** Structured tourism partnerships within terrestrial parks can have similar value to GBRMPA/Marine Operator model, positioning tourism as a conservation ally rather than a threat.
- **Support sustainable tourism infrastructure development:** review land tenure frameworks to allow freehold land for eco-sensitive tourism infrastructure where appropriate, ensuring environmental and cultural considerations are upheld and celebrated.
- **Mon Repos:** presents a key opportunity to implement a new governance and business model that enhances both financial viability, visitor experience and conservation outcomes. Strengthening the



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partnership between tourism and national parks will support the site to attract diverse revenue streams while ensuring sustainable visitor experiences that support environmental stewardship.

- **Rail Trail Development:** Establish a strategic plan to connect hinterland rail trails from Brisbane through Queensland Country to the Southern Great Barrier Reef. With existing trails already driving strong regional dispersal, addressing connectivity gaps, such as linking the Gin Gin to Mt Perry Rail Trail with the Boyne-Burnett Inland Rail Trail, will enhance nature-based tourism and further strengthen regional economies.
- **Formalised Partnerships & Regional Roundtable:** Establish structured partnerships or a regional roundtable between tourism stakeholders and National Parks to foster collaboration, address access challenges, and align conservation and tourism objectives.
- **Celebrate action:** Incentivise tour operators to integrate climate education into their visitor experiences.

By embedding these actions within Queensland's tourism strategy, together we can amplify the states reputation for world-class ecotourism, delivering tangible benefits for the environment, regional communities, and the visitor economy.

### *Climate Action: Embedding Sustainability into Queensland's Tourism Future*

Further to positioning the state as a leader in nature-based experiences, the Department of Environment, Tourism, Science & Innovation has the opportunity, in partnership with the tourism industry, to embed climate action throughout the strategic priorities of the Destination 2045 roadmap. Ensuring visitors don't just experience the natural beauty of our state but actively contribute to its preservation and regeneration will guarantee that tourism growth aligns with environmental responsibility.

To achieve this, Queensland must prioritise sustainable design in tourism infrastructure. From accommodation developments and transport solutions to nature-based experiences. Investment incentives should encourage eco-certified, carbon-neutral, and regenerative tourism projects, rewarding operators who embrace climate-conscious operations. A state-backed Accommodation Infrastructure Fund could be structured to prioritise developments that adhere to sustainable building principles, utilise renewable energy, and support circular economy models.

RTOs, if resourced effectively, can play a crucial role in supporting operators to develop and refine experiences that educate visitors, protect natural assets, and enhance biodiversity. Queensland has a strong foundation in ecotourism, but a statewide approach to climate action, visitor education, and strategic investment in conservation-focused tourism partnerships will be critical to maintaining our competitive edge.

### *2032 Legacy*

As we look toward the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, **identification and prioritisation of state-wide enabling infrastructure to support visitor dispersal** into regional areas is just as critical as the games itself. Regionally, we must also consider what lasting assets we can create for our communities, beyond the opportunities with the Games.



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**A deliberate strategy for regional dispersal is critical.** The Bundaberg region urges increased investment in TEQ event funding, specifically for areas outside Southeast Queensland, to attract business events and encourage sporting teams to conduct pre-Games training in regional locations. The 2032 Games present a unique opportunity to drive visitation beyond the capital by developing targeted pre and post Games tourism campaigns that inspire visitors to extend their stay in regional Queensland. Additionally, strategic investment in sports tourism infrastructure will enhance regional sports and event facilities, ensuring long-term visitor appeal and a lasting legacy beyond the Games.

### *Regional Investment Attraction*

Investment in tourism infrastructure is the foundation of a thriving visitor economy, and Queensland has a significant opportunity to attract sustainable, high-impact development that meets both industry demand and community needs. A targeted, well-structured investment strategy, backed by government incentives and streamlined processes, will ensure the state remains competitive while driving purposeful growth in the right places.

A key priority should be an **Accommodation Infrastructure Fund**, designed to unlock private sector investment in areas where accommodation supply does not currently meet visitor demand, such as the Bundaberg region. Incentives such as payroll tax waivers, streamlined planning approvals, and infrastructure charge reductions would help de-risk investment and encourage the development of high-quality, sustainable accommodation. In parallel, a review of state regulations, such as public liability insurance requirements, could further remove barriers to investment, particularly for nature-based developments that align with Queensland's broader sustainability agenda.

To attract large-scale tourism infrastructure projects, Queensland needs a dedicated **multi-agency tourism investment task force**, ensuring cross-government collaboration on key developments. We applaud the introduction of a Tourism Cabinet subcommittee and hope it can drive a strategic approach to identifying priority investments, targeting support and cutting red tape for high-value projects that align with our regional Destination Management Plans across the state.

**The Bundaberg region** presents a compelling case for multiple new hotels and short-term accommodation investment, underpinned by strong population growth, increasing tourism demand, and region-shaping infrastructure projects.

Our region is fortunate to have some extraordinary tourism operators that have made significant investments in our region, including Bundaberg Rum, Bundaberg Brewed Drinks, Macadamias Australia, Lady Musgrave Experience. They've put their money, brand power, and commitment into growing Bundaberg as a world-class destination. But for their success to reach its full potential, we need to bridge the critical gap we have in quality accommodation.

Due to high construction costs, new accommodation developments in regional areas often struggle to present a viable business case compared to urban projects. To address this, we seek targeted support and the establishment of a dedicated Accommodation Fund for emerging regions outside South-East Queensland, incentivising investment in much-needed accommodation infrastructure.



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### *Experience development and enhancing visitor experiences*

We all know that exceptional visitor experiences are the cornerstone of Queensland's tourism success. To fully realise the state's tourism potential, **RTOs must be appropriately resourced to lead regionally curated experience development**, working closely with our industry on the ground to enhance existing offerings and nurture the creation of new, world-class tourism experiences.

RTOs are uniquely positioned to drive this growth. With deep regional knowledge, industry networks, and a strategic understanding of market demands, RTOs can provide targeted support to tourism operators - helping them refine, package, and market experiences that align with our destination brand story and consumer demand.

**The Best of Queensland Experiences Program (BOQEP) already provides a strong foundation for assessing and benchmarking success**, ensuring operators meet and exceed customer expectations.

Dedicated resource funding for RTOs will be critical to achieving this vision. By positioning RTOs as the **regional custodians of experience development**, Queensland can create structured pathways for operators to improve product quality, embed sustainability principles, and develop experiences that enhance visitor engagement, length of stay, and regional dispersal.

Additionally, aligning experience development with **climate-conscious tourism strategies** will ensure that future tourism growth contributes positively to the environment, local communities, and the broader economy.

Through targeted investment, strategic industry support, and regionally led innovation, Queensland can elevate its visitor experiences to set new global benchmarks for excellence, and we're excited to work together with government on all of it!

- **Experience Development Support:** Equip RTOs with resources to assist operators in curating world-class experiences. This requires dedicated funding streams to support product and experience development, ensuring that businesses, particularly in regional areas, have the consistent guidance and resources needed to innovate and scale and deliver exceptional visitor experiences at every touch point. This can be done through expanding and integrating existing programs like BOQEP with broader capability-building initiatives.
- **Indigenous Tourism Growth:** Support the implementation of the regional First Nations Tourism Plans, with funding, capacity-building, and marketing support through the RTOs.
- **Agritourism Development:** To enhance agritourism development, planning reforms between state and local governments are needed to better integrate tourism with regional food production. Streamlined regulations and supportive policies will enable producers to create immersive visitor experiences, driving economic growth and regional tourism.
- **Enhance the role of tour guides:** broaden and enhance the Savannah Guides program to elevate an ongoing cohort of well trained, engaging tour guides to meet demand.



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## Event Delivery

We all know events are a powerful driver of tourism, economic growth, and community pride. To establish Queensland as a premier global events destination, the state must take a strategic, long-term approach to event attraction, infrastructure, and capability-building, ensuring that events deliver broad-reaching benefits beyond their immediate economic impact.

**Regional dispersal must be at the heart of Queensland's events strategy.** Investing in regional event infrastructure and supporting smaller, community-led events will drive visitation beyond major cities, creating year-round tourism demand and showcasing the diversity of Queensland's landscapes, cultures, and experiences. An **events bid fund** to attract sporting, cultural, and business events, particularly multi-day and multi-location events, would strengthen Queensland's competitive edge, while greater weighting in funding programs for regionally significant events would help distribute tourism benefits more equitably across the state.

Building **capability at the grassroots level** is equally important. Many regional events rely on small teams and volunteers, who need access to training, resources, and funding to ensure long-term viability. Programs to develop event management skills, streamline funding application processes, and foster public-private partnerships will enhance the quality and sustainability of Queensland's event calendar.

To truly capitalise on Queensland's potential as an events powerhouse, government, industry, and RTOs must work in lockstep to align events with destination branding, infrastructure investment, and regional tourism strategies.

## Access and Connectivity

Seamless access and connectivity are fundamental to Queensland's ability to attract visitors, encourage regional dispersal, and support the sustainable growth of the tourism industry. As one of the most geographically diverse states in Australia, Queensland's tourism future relies on strategic investment in air, rail, and road networks to ensure that visitors can easily travel to, from, and within the state.

A well-funded and expanded **Attracting Aviation Investment Fund** (AAIF) will be critical in securing new domestic and international routes, ensuring regional airports remain viable and well-served, and improving connectivity between Queensland's diverse destinations. Equally, a review of regulated air routes funding is needed to ensure alignment with tourism demand, not just medical and community needs, so that remote and regional areas can thrive.

Investment in critical road and rail infrastructure will further enhance visitor accessibility. Flood mitigation and blackspot projects on the Bruce Highway, coupled with upgrades to Queensland's aging rail network and intermodal connections, will facilitate smoother, safer, and more reliable travel. Additionally, investment in regional sustainable transport options for visitor movement is essential for a climate positive 2032 legacy, with electric vehicle charging networks, e-bike tourism, and rail connectivity embraced.

In the **Bundaberg region**, we need to see the funding to implement the *Bundaberg Integrated Transport Strategy* with particular focus on the connectivity for active transport between Bundaberg CBD and the coastal communities.



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### *Queensland's Regional Tourism Network: A Structure for Performance and Impact*

To deliver the results necessary for a globally competitive visitor economy, Queensland's tourism network must be **strategic, high-performing, and future-focused**. We appreciate the work that went into the recent Queensland Regional Tourism Network Review Report, and the intention of the recommendations. Whilst the report didn't address the structure of the tourism network, Bundaberg Tourism believes the research certainly presents a strong case for the work of tourism organisations in supporting the growth of the industry.

**Regional Tourism Organisations are the critical link between grassroots tourism operators, communities, and state government**, driving industry growth, fostering stakeholder collaboration, and delivering real outcomes on the ground. Strong, well-resourced RTOs demonstrate the value of industry-driven leadership in shaping Queensland's tourism future.

To maximize the impact of tourism investment, funding must be aligned with opportunity, stakeholder engagement and performance, ensuring RTOs have the capacity to not just maintain operations, but actively elevate regional destinations, strengthening the visitor economy, and delivering measurable benefits to industry and communities. This requires collaborative, robust, and productive partnerships with local governments, working together to leverage regional strengths, attract investment, and drive sustainable tourism development.

We are proud of the work we have done at Bundaberg Tourism to be an active part of Queensland's tourism network and deliver for our industry daily. At the coalface of regional tourism, we're uniquely positioned to drive sustainable growth, ecotourism development, and regional investment, and we look forward to continuing to do so in strong partnership with all levels of government and our regional stakeholders.

We welcome the state's commitment to these priorities and urge a bold, future-focused approach that ensures regional Queensland thrives alongside the state's broader tourism vision. By investing in Regional Tourism Organisations, along with fostering sustainable visitor experiences, and amplifying our natural and cultural assets, we can create a lasting legacy that benefits both visitors and communities for generations to come.

The Board of Bundaberg Tourism would welcome further engagement with the Department regarding any feedback put forward in this submission, and future implementation of the 20-year Tourism Plan. We have a bold vision for the future of Bundaberg and the Southern Great Barrier Reef, and we look forward to working collaboratively with our tourism network to deliver for Queensland.

Kind regards,



Katherine Reid  
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