

Executive Summary

This report summarises the Health, Environment and Innovation Committee's consideration of Queensland Audit Office Report 12: 2022-2023: Growing ecotourism in Queensland (Report 12).

Report 12 identified several issues which are explored in this report. One key issue was the lack of a clear, statewide ecotourism policy. Such a policy would define how tourism and environmental agencies work together and support the Queensland Government's vision to become a world leader in ecotourism. This vision includes conserving natural and cultural assets and partnering with Traditional Owners.

Report 12 also recommended changes to address fragmented agency responsibilities, inconsistent planning approaches between protected and non-protected areas, and regulatory processes that were overly complex and burdensome for stakeholders.

The report made 4 recommendations emphasising the need for a coherent statewide policy, an implementation roadmap, alignment of agency plans, and simplified regulatory processes with greater support provided to proponents.

The QAO's *Report 1: 2024-25 Status of Auditor General's Recommendations* was tabled on 20 September 2024, and identified that DES and TEQ had either fully, or partially implemented the Report's recommendations. The Department of Tourism and Sport had not implemented any of the recommendations at the time of reporting. However, machinery of government changes at the beginning of the 58th Parliament consolidated the environment, tourism, science and innovation portfolios, which are now overseen by DETSI, including TEQ. Through this restructuring, DETSI became the principal entity responsible for the implementation of the Report 12 recommendations and oversight of ecotourism developments both within, and outside of, protected areas.

The Queensland Government's new tourism strategy, *Destination 2045*, together with Queensland's Ecotourism Policy, *45 by 45: Getting Ecotourism Moving in Queensland*, both released in mid-2025, directly addresses the recommendations made in Report 12, including the need for a clearly defined statewide ecotourism policy (recommendations 1 and 2), alignment of agency strategies, investment priorities and having clear goals, measurable indicators of success and performance targets (recommendation 3), and the simplification of regulatory frameworks to provide greater support to proponents (recommendation 4). The strategy's long-term vision, measurable indicators of success, and interagency delivery mechanisms also responds to concerns raised in Report 12.

The committee made 1 recommendation, that the House notes the contents of this report.