

Submission to the **State
Development,
Infrastructure and
Industry Committee**

on the

*Future of land tenure
arrangements in
Queensland*

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August 2012

Introduction

The Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) strongly supports sustainable development and planning for infrastructure in Queensland and welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee on the future of *land tenure arrangements in Queensland*.

This submission aims to provide the Committee with tourism industry intelligence on Queensland's land tenure arrangements and provide opportunities for government to address barriers mitigating against investment, particularly the regulatory and policy environment with a view to maximize opportunities for tourism (as well as other industry sectors), individuals and the broader Queensland community.

QTIC coordinates the interests of industry operators, regional tourism organisations and peak associations by providing advice and advocating for public policy that delivers on the needs of the tourism industry at local, state and national level.

Industry Partnerships

The Queensland Government and the Queensland tourism industry share an ambition to restore Queensland's leadership position as Australia's tourism state. The Newman Government articulated its recognition of tourism as one of 'the four pillars of the economy' in the lead-up to the election in 2012. The newly elected government set about to implement this approach as policy, **with the declared goal of doubling visitor expenditure, to \$30 billion by 2020**. An important aspect of the necessary policy setting to achieving these targets is the land tenure arrangement in Queensland.

In late June 2012, the Queensland Government hosted the Destination Q forum in Cairns. Industry and government discussed the future of tourism in Queensland under six themes, two of these themes focused on Eco-Tourism and Investment, Infrastructure and Access. A set of actions were identified under each theme. The related actions, once formalized through the Working Group, will form an instructive guide to progressing the priorities also identified by the Committee through this review.

QTIC acknowledges the strong cooperation and consistent support offered by the Department of Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and The Commonwealth Games. Agencies and staff have demonstrated an unfailing commitment to work with industry and find solutions to complex challenges. We look forward to working with government to achieve the shared ambitions for tourism in Queensland.

Queensland Tourism Industry Council

QTIC is the State peak body for tourism in Queensland. The voice of tourism, QTIC represents the interests of the tourism industry, including business operators, Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs) and sector associations.

A private sector, membership-based tourism industry organisation; all of Queensland's 14 RTOs are members of QTIC as are 20 of the industry sector associations and in excess of 3,000 regional members, operating in all sectors of the tourism industry. QTIC works in partnership with government agencies and industry bodies at a local, state and national level, to strengthen the voice of tourism in all relevant policy forums.

QTIC remains committed to working with government and industry through the following national and state strategies:

- Australian Government, National Long-Term Tourism Strategy
- Tourism Australia, 2020 Tourism Industry Potential
- DestinationQ Industry Partnership Agreement and 12 Month Action Plan

Tourism in Queensland

The tourism sector is made up of a number of industry participants; including accommodation, hospitality, transport, retail, business and major events, recreation, and educational and cultural services¹ (see Appendix 1), employing over 220,000 people, or 9.9% of all people employed in Queensland.² The tourism industry employs substantially more than the mining sector (43,800 direct jobs) or even agriculture, forestry and fishing combined (81,900 direct jobs)³.

Tourism is a key economic driver in many Queensland regions, supporting regional employment and community growth. The tourism industry in Queensland contributed \$17 billion to Queensland's Gross State Product (GSP), representing 7.7% of total GSP and generated \$3.8 billion in exports in 2010, making it the second largest export earner behind coal⁴.

Key Priorities

The key priorities intend to support the broader policy intent of government, specifically in achieving the target of doubling visitor expenditure to \$30 billion by 2020. QTIC remains committed to working with government and industry to deliver on these targets through the sustainable tourism and recreational use of Queensland's natural assets.

The briefing points provided by the Department of Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games at the public hearing on the 11th of July 2012, are supported by QTIC and some of the points are also included here.

Heading	Key Priorities
1. Ensuring our pastoral and tourism industries are viable into the future	<p>1.1 Offer commercially viable lease rents that reflect the nature of the operating environment for existing tourism properties.</p> <p>1.2 Encourage tourism-related developments through commercially viable lease terms and tenure that provides for greater investment certainty.</p> <p>1.3 Where appropriate, consider transfer to free hold for leases over land currently used for tourism purposes.</p> <p>1.4 Create new types of leases specifically for tourism use (that may also include special rental concessions etc).</p> <p>1.5 Allow for appropriate diversification of land uses (currently in planning) that supports and encourages investment in the tourism industry.</p> <p>1.6 Address some specific issues on some of Queensland's offshore islands, through amendments of existing lease conditions. For instance, concession for leaseholders who carry additional lease costs over land that provides basic infrastructure services.</p> <p>1.7 Regional Plans, planning schemes and other subordinate planning instruments should be review with land tenure considerations that include provisions for tourism and tourism-related land use.</p> <p>1.8 Tourism should be consistently referenced as an economic driver in regional development strategies and plans, including in its role as a community 'builder' and promoter of environmental objectives.</p>
2. The balanced protection of Queensland's ecological values	<p>2.1 Access and use of protected areas for tourism must be governed by simple, efficient and commercially viable arrangements, focused on agreed outcomes.</p> <p>2.2 Where there are environmental sensitivities for land uses, support for non-permanent accommodation in protected areas, linear infrastructure such as walking trails, overnight huts and other amenity services that can enhance and preserve Queensland's</p>

	<p>ecological values.</p> <p>2.3 Identify priority locations that can support multiple land uses, including those accessible to key growth areas as part of the review process – with a view to maximize synergies and efficiencies in balancing ecological values.</p> <p>2.4 Determine catalytic projects and new projects which may require land tenure considerations to be addressed prior to them becoming investor ready.</p> <p>2.5 Undertake review of local government planning instruments such as Regional Plans with the view to include land tenure considerations that include tourism use.</p>
3. Ongoing and sustainable resource development	<p>3.1 Where there are competing land use needs, local government planning instruments such as Regional Plans, must be reviewed in a manner that allows for responsiveness and takes into account land tenure arrangements for the tourism industry.</p> <p>3.2 QTIC supports the royalties for regions initiative. The role of local government is central to investment attraction and partnerships that drive investment are crucial.</p>
4. The needs and aspirations of traditional owners	<p>4.1 The engagement of traditional owners' interests in all phases of planning and development must be genuine and transparent and centred on inclusion of indigenous people and their local communities.</p> <p>4.2 Identify priority locations that provide for mutually beneficial Indigenous tourism attractions on leasehold land, including those accessible to key growth areas.</p> <p>4.3 Determine mutually beneficial indigenous projects and new projects which may require land tenure considerations to be addressed prior to them becoming investor ready.</p> <p>4.4 Governments can assist in meeting the needs and aspirations of traditional owners by providing for tourism related land tenure acknowledgments in their regional planning instruments. This would facilitate a greater level recognition for traditional owners interest throughout all levels of the development process.</p>

The QTIC document *Game Changing Priorities for the Future of Tourism in Queensland*, Nature Based priorities are also relevant to this review (see Appendix 2).

DestinationQ

Land tenure related issues and actions that were raised at the DestinationQ Forum are summarised here for the Committee's information:

- Crown land rental rates for tourism related purposes;
- Land use planning, tenure and approvals processes for land use adjacent to existing ecotourism experiences/developments;
- Cutting eco-tourism red tape by reducing the current permits required to access National Parks;
- Developing a new Queensland Eco-tourism plan to review the Nature Conservation Act to enable greater access to Queensland's 12 million hectares of National Parks and 72,000m² of Marine Parks, benefitting eco-tourism;
- Commercially viable permit/agreement tenures and fees for commercial tourism operators;
- Active industry involvement in setting visitor carrying capacities at key sites; and
- Recognition and rewarding of high standard/EcoCertified operators and effective enforcement of permit conditions.

BACKGROUND

1. Ensuring our pastoral and tourism industries are viable into the future

The operating environment for tourism businesses that rely on access to protected areas is complex, inflexible and costly.

The capacity of Queensland to attract new investment in tourism is dependent on the current commercial operating environment and on the regulatory and planning provisions for such investment. The lack of certainty, lengthy approval processes, multiple agency responsibilities and disproportionate taxes and charges are powerful deterrents for capital attraction. Whilst costs relating to infrastructure services, ability to attract suitable staff and the high cost of employment, access to food supplies and high construction and maintenance⁵ compound the significant impediments to tourism investment in protected areas.

Re-investment or refurbishment of existing product could be stimulated through incentive-based tax relief and land-zoning provisions that would allow for product improvement. Particularly in relation to rent provisions, the state government has the opportunity to seek better outcomes for the tourism industry.

The supply of competitive tourism products and services is dependent on public sector support and investment in major infrastructure. The tourism industry is highly reliant on both public and private investment, however public investment in tourism infrastructure accounts for approximately 40%⁶ of all tourism investment (whilst this share was around 20% for all industries^{*}). Opportunities for sustainable tourism development in protected areas have been missed or ignored through a lack of consistent government commitment to public investment in the tourism sector. On the other hand, massive private sector investment in accommodation and other products is also required.

Strong and more consistent coordination with regional destination development and tourism investment plans would ensure continued success of such public and private investment and would also capture greater regional development opportunities through tourism.

Queensland's land-tenure arrangement system has the potential to accommodate protected land use opportunities for the tourism industry as well as presents an almost unique opportunity to achieve multiple objectives, including regional development, indigenous engagement, the protection of cultural heritage and protection of Queensland's ecological values.

2. The balanced protection of Queensland's Ecological values

Queensland's natural assets provide a substantial part of the overall appeal of the state and its destinations.

The Great Barrier Reef, the World Heritage rainforests of the Wet Tropics, the coastal landscapes and the Outback are some of the state's tourism assets that are of national and international significance. Nature provides not just the images to generate interest and demand from visitors, it also forms part of the tourism experience. Queensland's National parks, marine parks and other

^{*} on average between 1997–98 and 2009–10

protected area are some of the state's biggest tourist attractions, drawing more than 38 million visits per year⁷.

Queensland is rich in opportunities and has the advantage of several natural assets of international significance with high consumer recognition. Queensland and Australia already enjoy a generally high reputation for high standard environmental management and consequent environmental quality and integrity of its biospheres. However, the competitive advantage that Queensland enjoys will remain unrealised in the future if Queensland's regulatory and legislated provisions and land-tenure conditions remain inadequate to balance competing land needs.

Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of tourists and hosts regions while protecting and enhancing the opportunity for the future. Tourism tends to lead the management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled, while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, and biological diversity and life support systems⁸

Greater appreciation of the value of protected areas must be acknowledged through a clear demonstration from government that economic and community benefits can be achieved simultaneously and sustainably through tourism activities, as well as assist in meeting the broader conservation objectives of the state government.

3. Ongoing and sustainable resource development

It has been acknowledged that the tourism industry is suffering from a lack of investment in new infrastructure and a regulatory framework that supports tourism development; and this is being compounded further by rapid expansion and growth in the resources sector.

Partnerships between industry, government and community remain at the core of regional economic development in Queensland, particularly in dealing with sustainable resource development for the state. These partnerships must enable a greater level of responsiveness to increasingly diverse industry and regional needs.

4. The needs and aspirations of traditional owners

The importance of sustaining partnerships with the local indigenous population is critical to the successful development and operation of tourism facilities, especially in remote areas⁹.

Protected areas are a critical investment for the health and wellbeing of Queensland communities, including Indigenous people, for whom the connection with country is both spiritual and a cultural obligation. These lands also make an essential contribution to the commitment of returning Queensland's tourism industry to No. 1 as it supports the four pillar economy for Queensland¹⁰.

APPENDIX 1

Industry	Rationale for inclusion
Hospitality (Accommodation & Food Services)	By definition Accommodation Services are provided to tourism ie. They are spending a night away from their usual place of residence. Food Services are provided to both tourism and local residents.
Retail Trade	Tourists go shopping, includes motor vehicle retail eg. Petrol, motor vehicle servicing etc for self-drive market
Transport	Except for self-drive market, tourists use transport (airlines, train, bus, taxi etc)
Cultural & Recreations Services	Tourists visit museums, art galleries, theatre, go to the movies or sports events play golf etc
Personal & Other Services	Tourists have hair-cuts, massages, beauty therapy. Spa tourism market
Manufacturing	Manufacturers selling product and tours to tourists eg; Buderim Ginger, Bundaberg Rum, Wineries, Cheese Factories. Food and Wine tourism market
Education	Tourism doing education/training courses, emerging education tourism market
Wholesale Trade	Distribution channel – the wholesalers sell holidays in Australia to Travel Retailers
Health & Community Services	Tourists requiring ambulance, medical services using child care services. Emerging health tourism market eg; people having elective surgery in a cheaper country
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	Farm stay tourism
Property & Business Services	Motor vehicle hiring, property operator eg; time share, tourism renting houses/apartments through real estate agents
Communications	Tourist using phone and internet
Government & Defence	Local government services eg; visitor information centres, beach inspectors parking attendants
Finance & Insurance	Tourists taking out travel insurance and using bank services

PLATFORM 4 – NATURE BASED FOCUS

Create community wealth from the sustainable tourism and recreational use of Queensland's natural assets.

Realise economic, community and conservation benefits of Queensland's protected natural assets through tourism opportunities and sustainable use.

Priorities:

4.1 Effective and responsive leadership

- The state government has an opportunity to show **leadership and support** for innovative and sustainable use of Queensland protected natural assets through appropriate tourism and recreational opportunities.
- Without compromising broader conservation objectives, the state government must actively engage in partnerships with tourism stakeholders to build on Queensland's competitive advantage in this area and create optimal **economic, community and environmental outcomes**.
- The tourism sector expects the state government to approach conservation from a holistic perspective, **balancing competing land use demands** and impacts from other industries, including resources and agriculture and delivering outcomes that are optimal for the community.

4.2 Sustainable use of natural assets

- The state government to engage in transparent and effective consultative process in **long-term planning for protected areas** with reference to the state's broader economic, social and environmental aspirations.
- Access and use of protected areas for tourism operators must be governed by **simple, efficient and commercially viable arrangements**, focused on agreed outcomes.

4.3 Innovation

- Access and use provisions imposed by management agencies must **support innovative solutions** that can deliver better outcomes for conservation and for business sustainability.
- Government should engage in pro-active partnerships with industry that can deliver sustainable benefits by being **responsive to nature-based market opportunities**, including non-permanent accommodation in protected areas, linear infrastructure such as walking trails, overnight huts and other amenity services.

ENDNOTES

¹ Service Skills Australia, Tourism, Hospitality and Events Environmental Scan 2011

² Tourism Research Australia, Tourism Key Economic Facts December 2010

³ *ibid*

⁴ Tourism Queensland, Tourism Economic Key Fact December 2010

⁵ Best Practice Model For Low-Impact Nature-Based Sustainable Tourism Facilities in Remote Areas, STCRC 2006

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ Dr John Glaister, Acting Director General, Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing

⁸ World Tourism Organisation, 2003.

⁹ Best Practice Model for Low Impact Nature-Based Sustainable Tourism Facilities in Remote Areas, STCRC 2006

¹⁰ Dr John GLAISTER, Acting Director-General, Department of National Parks, Recreation , Sport and Racing