

Inquiry into the economic and regulatory frameworks for Queensland island resorts

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No Recommendations

Committee Secretary
Transport and Resources Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Committee Secretary,

RE: INQUIRY INTO THE ECONOMIC AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS FOR QUEENSLAND'S ISLAND RESORTS

I refer to the call for submissions on the 'Inquiry into the economic and regulatory frameworks for Queensland's Island resorts' by the Queensland Parliament Transport and Resources Committee.

Mackay Isaac Tourism recognises and supports the inquiry into the management of island resorts in Queensland and appreciates the opportunity to comment as there are several islands with tourism potential within the Mackay Isaac Region.

This document will be touching on Mackay's rich island history and followed by Mackay Isaac Tourism recommendations to support tourist development operations for Queensland's Island resorts.

Background

Rich Island Industry

- 1.1 Mackay Islands have a significant historical association relating to tourism dating all the way back to the 1920s with commencement of operations at Lindeman Island.
- 1.2 Island tourism was of much significance that Queen Elizabeth II had a royal tour of the Mackay Islands in 1957.
- 1.3 Brampton and Lindeman Island has remained dormant for the tourism industry for more than a decade.

Brampton

- 2.1 Brampton Island is an island in the Cumberland Group, offshore from Mackay in the Mackay Region, Queensland, Australia and lies within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. The island and resort grounds are privately leased and as such cannot be accessed due to the resorts closure.

- 2.2 Brampton Island commenced use in the 1930s and has since had several upgrades and operators. The island resort halted operations in January 2011 to enable a proposed redevelopment of the resort.
- 2.3 The development would still require further approvals for operational works, tidal works, building and plumbing permits to support development. The net result is that the development has not progressed.

Lindeman Island

- 3.1 Lindeman Island is just 35 km off the coast of Airlie Beach. It can be accessed via private or commercial boat from Airlie Beach or Shute Harbour.
- 3.2 Lindeman Island commenced operations in 1923 and has been upgraded several times, with the last of these upgrades in 1992
- 3.3 Currently, it is only open to day visitors and campers with very basic facilities on the island after Club Med Resort closed in January 2012 due to damage from Cyclone Yasi.
- 3.4 In August 2012, the land was sold to a new party and subsequent amendments to the development proposal and Queensland Government approval were supported by Mackay Regional Council

Keswick

- 4.1 Located 34 kilometres north-east Mackay, Keswick Island is part of the Cumberland Islands that consists of St Bees Island, Keswick Island, Aspatria Island, Scawfell Island, Calder Island, Wigton Island and Cockermouth Island. The island is inhabited by a small number of residents and is a semi-popular tourist destination set to expand with development. Visitors can stay in a small number of catered and self-catered accommodation. The island has its own airstrip and is accessible from Mackay Airport by a short plane flight or by private boat.
- 4.2 Further development of the island has not progressed over the remainder of the lease areas. Due to the reclamation works not being completed within the required 10-year timeframe on the reclamation leases, the leases over the three relevant lots have lapsed.
- 4.3 In February 2022, Council held a pre-lodgement meeting for a proposed development of luxury tent lodging (or 'glamping') on the island. However, this would be subject to prescribed tidal works for an associated jetty and boat ramp over one of the term

lease areas that has lapsed. No application to support the proposal has been lodged with Council.

Mackay's tourism development sector supported not only island development but also supported maritime transport to have access to the islands.

History of Roylen Cruises

- 5.1 Roylen Cruises was known to many in Mackay back in the 1900s. It catered to an ever-growing tourist trade. In 1962 the business purchased Brampton Island to use as a destination for day trips and as an accommodation option for passengers on five-day cruises. The business undertook a major refurbishment and expansion of the island's facilities, including a deep-water jetty, a miniature railway to service it, and an airstrip. In 1985, Brampton Island was sold to Trans-Australia Airlines so the business could concentrate solely on cruising.

Wildcat Mackay (Present Day)

- 6.1 Wildcat was made possible by the \$25 million Growing Tourism Infrastructure Fund. The Palaszczuk Government invested \$950,000 to get it into the water and deliver a new visitor experience for Mackay. It was launched December 2021.
- 6.2 Provides day trips and island access to destinations such as Cockermouth, Brampton, Keswick, St Bees, and Scawfell islands. Is predicted to bring an extra 5,600 passengers into Mackay, adding another \$2 million a year to our visitor economy.

In the next few points below, Mackay Isaac Tourism will be highlighting the region's demographic data:

Mackay tourism growth – pre covid 13 quarters tourism growth

- 7.1 In 2019, the region received an estimated 1.8m visits. Most of these visits (68%) were to Mackay LGA, with the remainder (32%) being to Isaac LGA. As of 2019, visits to the region were estimated at 1.80m.
- 7.2 One of the drivers of the decline in visits between 2013 and 2016 was a large fall in domestic day trip visits. Although domestic overnight visits increased over the same period, the growth was not large enough to counter the decline in domestic day visits. International travel to the region has remained relatively static which reflects the importance of the domestic market.

Diversifying industry - Mackay population at a glance

- 8.1 The Mackay region offers a huge diversity of recreational fishing opportunities, with a large number of sites providing access to the region's coastline, dams, islands, rivers, estuaries and reefs.
- 8.2 Mackay has approximately 14,000 boat registrations and represents the largest number of any Queensland council area outside the southeast.
- 8.3 A particular challenge for the region is the limits that the high tidal range places on the region's boat launching infrastructure and access points (all-tide or near all-tide boat ramps).

Outdoor lifestyle

- 9.1 The region's residents consider sport and recreation to be key contributors to their quality of life. Emerging Sports and Changing Participation
- 9.2 The last 10 years has seen some shifts in the social factors affecting sport and recreation participation. These include:
 - A generally ageing and growing population of active and financially independent retirees who readily participate in outdoor recreation and travel.
 - Increased "sea change" activity with lifestyle and affordability driving interstate migration.

Importance of tourism in the Mackay Region

The importance of the Tourism industry to the Mackay region

- 10.1 Mackay has 1,152,000 visitors which contributes \$588.7 million in overnight expenditure. This demonstrates significant tourism social benefits.
- 10.2 Mackay community's positive views on tourism scored well above the state average with 54 per cent of respondents agreeing that tourism has a positive impact on their community, compared to 45% for Queensland.

The importance of diversifying the Mackay economy currently driven by resource sector

- 11.1 Diversification: Seek to grow our economy in a more diversified and resilient manner into the future, embracing new industries, technologies and markets.

- 11.2 Sustainability: Establish a more sustainable economy, which will then contribute to a more sustainable and healthy community.

Growth opportunities

- 12.1 By growing traditional industries as well as a variety of new growth opportunities that can add value and continue to an evolution of a more sustainable and diversified economy.
- 12.2 Given the volume of natural beauty and tourism assets in the region, tourism provides a considerable opportunity for the Mackay region. The development of commissionable product will be important to growing the local tourism sector.
- 12.3 Mackay City Centre also provides opportunity to develop as a tourist destination through its growing arts, culture and dining scene. Public arts projects such as the Fifth Lane Art Project will continue to support the City Centre's sense of place, identity and community making it an attractive place to live in, work in and to visit.
- 12.4 Visiting the Great Barrier Reef is a good thing however, there needs to be an appropriate development to showcase, protect and educate visitors about the Reef. Experiencing the GBR up close in all its glory, visitors will be more inspired to help protect it.

Island access

- 13.1 Island access is minimal or doesn't exist. Reason being, there is minimal maritime infrastructure (jetties, boat ramps) or transportation and accessing these islands can be quite difficult.
- 13.2 If there is good accessibility in the movement of goods, services and people and the availability of adequate transportation infrastructure, there is a potential to develop and improve the welfare of society and the regional economy.
- 13.3 Majority of Mackay's islands are national parks and due to the limited access, public are not able to appreciate and experience the region's assets. Lack of visitation has led to the national parks not being maintained to a tourism standard.

Recommendation

Mackay Isaac Tourism recommends that the below aspects be considered to support tourist development operations for Queensland's island resorts:

Government role

- 14.1 Allow public access to remain available to community / locals. Possibly even free public space projects to be included in works to be made mandatory - Public Infrastructure such as roads, airports and boating terminals.

Government Accountability

- 15.1 A policy/contract that ensures Council and State Government work closely together on an agreed timeframe which guarantees that the project is running smoothly and stays on track.
- 15.2 Have an approval process-flow which will allow management team to remain productive and keep the project moving forward. It also helps to keep things on budget.
- 16.3 Government to appoint an official authoritative officer that will oversee that entire project and ensure that the project and island is being maintained to a standard local or state.

Support product development

- 17.1 Ability to rejuvenate product development as it allows business to develop new strategies and promote the overall success of the product in region which essentially lead to revisitation of the islands.
- 17.2 The ability to cross level project manage as it will help to better monitor and control each stage of the project to ensure its progressing according to prescribed timeline. By collaborating on the issues encountered it will allow for better risk management and the validity of tasks to the project's current scope.
- 17.3 Facilitate development and investment aspirations through identifying preferred tourism development opportunities that align with the current and future tourism and investment market and the community's vision for the island
- 17.4 Identify priority common-user infrastructure for improving island accessibility, amenity, appearance, sustainability, operability and supporting tourism opportunities.
- 17.5 Facilitate tourism development and deliver the supporting infrastructure that will help grow tourism on the island and essentially help with generating jobs and expenditure in the islands so that it will sustainable

Support after natural disasters

- 18.1 Assist in post-disaster recovery plan - Resilience can be greatly helped if robust social protection systems already in place. In addition, investments in disaster risk reduction and disaster management can result in massive savings to government, communities, and businesses.
- 18.2 Support islands to develop a strong business continuity plan which identifies the relevant risks that could cause issues such as weather events or technological problems. Each identified risk should be accompanied with a set of temporary measures or quick fixes that ensure the most important business operations remain functional.
- 18.3 Support small-scale and community contractors in building and maintaining public infrastructure resilient to natural disaster. Infrastructure designed with resilience in mind is better able to cope with shock events, such as extreme weather. Effective risk management helps to prepare for predictable events and disruptions experienced in the past, such as coastal flooding from climate-change-induced sea-level rise.
- 18.4 Assist organizations to support their members to re-establish their operations. Jointly assess the impact of disasters in terms of employment and livelihood losses and needs.

Mackay Isaac Tourism supports the inquiry into Queensland's Island results and any actions that will lead to any improvements that relates to the management of leasehold land, new investment in island resorts and the sustainable development of the Mackay islands.

Yours sincerely,



Tas Webber

Chief Executive Officer

Mackay Isaac Tourism