

TOURISM  
NOOSA



# DESTINATION 2045: Queensland's Tourism Future

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## Tourism Noosa Submission

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### Introduction

Tourism Noosa, as the region's peak Destination Management Organisation, is delighted to see Ecotourism identified as a Driving Force within the Destination 2045 Discussion Paper. We applaud the State Government for recognising Queensland's nature-based competitive advantage and for bringing together the portfolios of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation to unlock and accelerate the State's tourism potential.

Recognised globally as one of Australia's premier sustainable holiday destinations, Noosa is a unique place where people strive to live in harmony with nature – where the delicate balance between humanity and the environment is collectively celebrated and carefully managed.

In 2007 Noosa Shire became the first destination in Australia to achieve UNESCO Biosphere Reserve status and today is flanked both north and south to form the only place in Australia where three Biosphere Reserves adjoin – uniquely positioning the region as a beacon of global best practice in nature-based tourism.

The Noosa tourism industry and resident community appreciate the need to drive visitor numbers, jobs and economic growth for Queensland (note: Noosa's tourism sector generates a third of the Sunshine Coast's total overnight visitor expenditure and is 7<sup>th</sup> highest contributor to the State's OVE targets) however, we respectfully ask Government to consider its commitment to high value destinations such as Noosa, that are facing increasing pressure to balance a thriving visitor economy the development of quality tourism experiences, a desire to decarbonise and move toward regenerative tourism and nurture a welcoming community.

Tourism Noosa's approach to this submission takes a state-wide perspective but also draws on our local lived experience and aspirations for the future of visitor economies and communities of destinations blessed with spectacular natural assets. Afterall, a biosphere reserve is about more than just our environment: it's about how our community lives and works within the limits of our natural systems, how we use and care for our resources, and how we can sustain our place for generations to come.

Our primary wish of the Destination 2045: Queensland's Tourism Future strategy is for it to leverage the pulling-power of Queensland's existing premium nature-based based destinations, attract the right kind of travel (not just volume) and provide the support needed to enable global leadership in sustainable tourism.

For ecotourism to truly be a driving force for Queensland, sustainable tourism values should form the new baseline underpinning all regions as we move toward the 2032 Brisbane Olympics and leverage the global spotlight cast on Queensland, Australia.

**Q1. How can tourism deliver quality experiences / showcase and preserve the environment.**

- Support regenerative tourism experiences (commercialised tour / citizen science / volunteer programs) that provide opportunities for visitors to 'give back' to their holiday destinations
- Support destination marketing collateral to hero nature and aboriginal culture
- Champion Visitor Information Centres (VICs) to install high tech Interactive, interpretive experiences that showcase and raise awareness of the destination's unique natural assets through storytelling
- Support and accelerate indigenous product development (prioritise destinations with native title in place)
- Ensure social licence maintained and partner with local stakeholders to develop unique visitor experiences

**Q2. How can industry help position Queensland as the leader in eco and nature-based tourism?**

- Every destination to lead with environment – All levels of Government to commit to Sustainable Destination Certification (Earthcheck or Ecotourism Australia)
- Greater uptake of global best practice standard such as Ecotourism eco accreditation by operators to counter greenwashing.
- Develop transformational visitor experiences / meaningful visitor engagement
- Celebrate exemplars – hero our industry leaders
- Elevate plastic free business practises
- Forge commercial partnerships with environmental groups e.g. WWF, QLD Nature Conservatory, Biosphere Reserve Foundations, Landcare, Ecotourism Australia etc..

**Q3. What can government do to facilitate more development of eco and nature-based tourism?**

- Establish environmental benefit fund. Collected via QLD located airports and applied to all inbound (domestic and international) passenger movements.
- Create a grant program to support small tourism businesses adopt sustainable practices and technologies, eg providing funding to purchase solar panels or electric vehicle chargers.
- Provide funding to appoint locally-based resources to support small business' embrace global best practise eco-standards. Set targets by destination linked to tangible rewards.
- Endorse credible certification programs to help Operators and Event Organisers demonstrate their sustainability efforts, including crisis and resilience planning, and reduce their insurance costs.
- Every destination to lead with environment – all levels of Government to commit to Sustainable Destination Certification (Earthcheck or Ecotourism Australia)



## Driving Force: GAMES LEGACY

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### Q1. What tourism-related outcomes would you like to see from the Games?

- Prioritise infrastructure development with a lasting legacy for the tourism industry.
- Raise international profile and awareness for QLD across key international markets.
- Create and deliver a lasting connection with QLD for every Games visitor.
- Use the Games as an opportunity to accelerate development of international ready tourism products. Eg: amplify the Trade-ready mentoring program
- Strong events program in the lead-up and post-Olympic Games particularly for regional destinations. Mega events in the capital are important, but the flow on effect does not necessarily extend to the regions in the way we would hope.

### Q2. How can the tourism sector support and leverage infrastructure, event and destination promotion opportunities before and after 2032?

- Strategic coordination of recommendation and placement of International training camps and acclimatation programs linked to target markets and aligned to the assets available for specific sports. For example within the Noosa region – Utilising our world class trail network for mountain biking, tri-Athlon, surfing, ocean swimming, targeting UK, USA, Europe and Singapore based athletes. (Come for the training, stay for/come back for the holiday).

## Focus Area One: INVESTMENT ATTRACTION

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### Q1. What investment opportunities (public and private) do you believe are critical for enhancing Queensland's tourism sector over the next 20 years, such as accommodation, transport infrastructure, attractions, events or technology investments?

#### Transport:

- Investment in high-speed heavy rail and improved road networks to better connect key tourism destinations and improve connectivity within regions – particularly Sunshine Coast (Rail to Maroochydore).
- Fast track Sunshine Coast Airport development – International Airport expansion
- Expansion and modernization of regional airports to enhance accessibility for domestic and international visitors.
- Bruce Highway upgrade – duplication of highway through to Cairns
- Duplication of East Coast rail line Brisbane to Cairns and remove heavy haulage/freight from primary arterials (eg Bruce Hwy)
- Accelerate development of sustainable transport solutions such as electric vehicle charging networks and eco-friendly public transport (micro bus services)

### **Support decarbonising the Tourism Sector:**

- Roll out free sustainability audits / workshops / training for operators
- Prioritise waste management policy and processing capabilities of Councils – organics, better recycling
- Business / Tax Incentives / insurance rebates for early adopters achieving net zero operations

### **Events:**

- Regional events deliver proportionally stronger economic impacts than city-based mega events. Invest in home-grown regional events that promote unique Queensland experiences.
- Mandate sustainability criteria to all Government supported events to ensure diversion of waste to landfill and reduction in CO2 emissions in keeping with State government target of Net Zero by 2050. Best Practise Case Study: Tourism Noosa's Sustainable Event Criteria and supporting guide "50 Shades of Green"
- Event participants should be required to contribute to local regenerative tourism initiatives. Case Study: Noosa's Trees for Tourism program which sees \$1 for every event participant collected and donated in full to Noosa Landcare for local environmental restoration projects.
- Ensure signature regional/rural events operational / governance support to reduce the risk of losing them from the annual calendar. Community social and economic impact of such event losses in regional destinations like Mt Isa, Quilpie etc is significant.
- Investment in convention and exhibition centre for Sunshine Coast to attract business tourism and global conferences.
- Re-assess eligibility criteria for international conference bid funding to attract smaller, high value business events and delegates into regional QLD.
- Incentivise regions working together to secure international business events eg: Brisbane (convention) and Noosa/Whitsundays (incentive travel)

### **Accommodation Development**

- Stimulate investment in quality Eco-sensitive design accommodation to cater to growing eco-tourism demand.
- Extend EOI for development of luxury resorts, eco-lodges, and boutique hotels in high-demand areas such as the Great Barrier Reef, the Whitsundays, and regions with easy access to areas of high environmental value.
- Encourage regional dispersal through world-class hinterland lodge development in key locations (eg: New Zealand wilderness lodges, Great Southern Lodge – Kangaroo Island SA) to activate strategic hiking / overland trail networks.
- Development of affordable and mid-range accommodation options to support budget-conscious and family travellers.

- Refurbishment of tired infrastructure (strata-titled resorts in particular)
- Retrofit resorts to be more accessible (critical ahead of the paralympic games)
- Support farmers to diversify into agri-tourism (support land use rezoning and assist local government planners and Councils to understand and interpret guidelines under the various regional planning schemes.)
- Worker housing is in critical short supply in almost every tourism town. Partnering with Local Government on innovative solutions for affordable, energy efficient and connected community housing such as <https://passiveplace.com/>. Conversion of above-shop office space into accommodation could also help activate a stronger night time economies for some regional townships eg: Maryborough, Toowoomba.

#### **Technology and Digital Innovation:**

- Support development of smart tourism initiatives, including AI-driven travel planning apps and augmented reality experiences.
- Expansion of digital infrastructure such as 5G connectivity to enhance visitor experiences.
- Investment in virtual tourism experiences to showcase Queensland's destinations to global audiences in unique and transformational ways.

#### **Q2. What are your insights into the process of working with government on tourism investment and how can this be further enhanced?**

Travel and tourism is most connective when allowed to grow organically, reflective of people and place and not contrived. Investment is best directed to support authentic experiences that are 'locally grown' but, often need further incubation capital (difficult to obtain and/or qualify for) to elevate the enterprise to the next level - resulting in enduring local economic uplift and jobs impacts.

- Tourism should be prioritised as a key economic driver
- Apply long-term thinking, invest in multi-generational / game-changing projects (will never be cheaper to build than right now)
- QLD Government has typically been conservative and risk-averse
- Needs greater investment into 'enabling infrastructure' – not just shiny icons
- Grants programs tend to be lead by what governments want and not what's needed by the industry, the business or by the visitor.
- Grants application and acquittal process often onerous and typically short lead-times makes it challenging for small tourism operators (often the ones most in need) to prepare a quality and compelling submission. Most could not afford to outsource to a grant-writing expert.
- Aim to be more entrepreneurial, less bureaucracy – less compliance and regulation would enable operators to focus on innovation, investment in their people and deliver higher quality customer services

### **Enhancing the Process:**

- Streamlining Approvals – Reducing bureaucratic delays through faster and more transparent planning and development approval processes.
- Greater Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) – Encouraging more collaboration between government and private investors to co-develop tourism infrastructure and attractions and unlock new investment and innovation.
- Improved Access to Funding – Expanding government support for small and medium tourism enterprises through low-interest loans, tax incentives, and grants.
- Digital and Data-Driven Support – Enhancing access to local area tourism data, market trends, spend data and demand forecasting to help investors make informed decisions. Should be live time and available to SA2 level for local area comparison and directly accessible, not reliant on third party to share.
- Regional Investment Focus – Providing additional incentives to develop tourism in regional and remote Queensland, ensuring a more balanced and sustainable industry growth.

### **Q3. What is the most valuable role state government can play in promoting and facilitating investment in tourism?**

- Provide rolling grant opportunities for small tourism operators and tourism organisations (not date-restricted).
- Fund DMOs based on contribution to OVE & sustainability targets
- Provide long-term assurance for key investment in tourism and enabling infrastructure
- Support for tourism infrastructure and investment prospectus (by region) and facilitate destination-based investment pipelines
- Commit to growth that is also sustainable underpinned by UN SDGs, with serious investment in low emissions infrastructure. In addition, a focus on underlying community engagement, affordable housing and local hospitality and tourism jobs training with genuine career growth opportunity.
- Policy and Regulatory Support – Creating a stable and business-friendly regulatory environment that encourages investment and streamline approval processes for new tourism projects.
- Infrastructure Investment – Funding and developing key infrastructure such as airports, roads, public transport, and digital connectivity to enhance accessibility and visitor experience. Private investment will follow.
- Financial Incentives – Offering investment incentives, tax relief, and grants to attract private sector participation in tourism-related projects, particularly in regional and eco-tourism sectors.
- Destination Marketing and Promotion – Supporting Tourism and Events Queensland (TEQ) in global and domestic marketing campaigns to boost the RIGHT KIND of visitor and international tourism investment. Need to attract visitors aligned to our values and not just mass or risk losing all social licence.



## Focus Area Two: TOURISM EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

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### Q1. What initiatives, including use of technology, are needed to realise our full tourism potential?

- Ensure solid foundation of enabling telecommunications and internet infrastructure. Many popular holiday destinations such as Noosa struggle with digital connectivity during peak holiday periods when demand on the network exceeds capacity eg: retailers unable to complete eftpos transactions, Visitor Centre unable to facilitate tour or accommodation bookings.
- Ability to activate through high-tech interpretation (augmentation) and storytelling. Particularly technology innovation that encourages extending length of stay and overnight stays. Case studies include:

#### QLD -

- Maryborough – The Story Bank <https://storybank.ourfrasercoast.com.au>
- Texas – Rabbit Works <https://goondiwindiregion.com.au/directory/texas-rabbit-works/>
- Roma – Big Rig night show <https://www.bigrigroma.com.au/>

#### Tasmania -

- Shene Estate <https://www.pebblesandpomegranateseeds.com.au/shene-estate-the-spirit-and-soul-of-a-grand-estate-and-poltergeist-gin/>

#### Victoria –

- Bendigo Pottery <https://www.bendigopottery.com.au/pages/our-story>
- Beechworth Gaol <https://www.victoriashighcountry.com.au/listing/old-beechworth-gaol-tours-beechworth/>
- Swan Hill - <https://www.visitthemurray.com.au/places-to-go/west/swanhill/products/heart-beat-of-the-murray-laser-light-spectacular>
- Create hyper-connected experiences – a visitor concierge app, giving real-time travel updates, multilingual guides, and augmented reality (AR) walking tours that turn every journey into an adventure.
- Indigenous & Cultural Connectivity – immersive travel corridors featuring Indigenous-led storytelling hubs, holographic way-finders, and ‘talking roads’ that narrate Dreamtime stories as you drive.
- Strategically identify champion accredited VICs and support their transformation into regional showcases (inspiration centres) providing pathways for new product development (eg: local producers, artisans, designers).
- Invest funds to enable accredited VICs (generally under-funded) to invest in technology and interactive programs to hero their destination stories more effectively, improve the visitor experience and create stronger, long-lasting connections to place.

**Q2. What natural, cultural or historical resources in Queensland are currently underdeveloped or not being used to their full potential as tourism attractions?**

National Parks and heritage assets – look at best practise examples of what other states (and overseas destinations) are doing to manage numbers and provide transformational experiences that are sustainable and low impacting:

WA –

- Kalbarri NP <https://exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au/site/kalbarri-skywalk>

Tasmania –

- Three Capes Walk: <https://www.threecapestrack.com.au/>
- The Female Factory <https://femalefactory.org.au/>
- Willie Smiths Apple Shed <https://www.williesmiths.com.au/our-story>

SA -

- Kangaroo Island; Southern Ocean Lodge  
<https://southernoceanlodge.com.au/destination/>

QLD –

- Cairns Skyrail - <https://www.skyrail.com.au/about/history/>
- Scenic Rim Trail Walk: <https://scenicrimtrail.com/>
- Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre - <https://www.mossmangorge.com.au/centre>
- Maryborough – Bond Store <https://portside.ourfrasercoast.com.au/bond-store>

**Q3. What more can government and industry do to maximise community benefits from tourism?**

- Stimulate development and commercialisation of local regenerative tourism programs / citizen science experiences / immersive experiences – combine environmental education with a holiday experience that enables genuine connection with the local community
- Establish a community benefit fund – tourism-funded contribution back into local community projects (environmental, social, education, medical etc...) managed locally to ensure funds are directed where needed most.
- Ensure event participants are contributing to local community benefit programs eg: Trees for Tourism example by Tourism Noosa
- Help educate local community on the value of tourism (jobs / recreational infrastructure / public amenity / lifestyle)
- Reward/recognition (tax / rate / permit fee concessions) of businesses which embed community benefit programs into their annual operations and can account for this in their BAS statements.

**Q4. What is needed to ensure the tourism industry has a skilled workforce to deliver exceptional visitor experiences?**

- Ensure tourism pathways are introduced in secondary school and that tertiary education programs are contemporary and meet the market need.
- Make tourism/hospitality/event management/marketing courses in TAFE and University Degrees free.
- Provide staff wages tax benefits or cover wages for specific training programs to enable small business to support staff to participate in upskilling.
- Invest in “Welcome programs” initiatives that are tailored for each destination, by the destination & delivered locally (the recent rollout missed the mark – great concept, poor execution) – could be extended to create school ambassadors, tourism trade training and new resident induction to raise awareness of the value of tourism and the importance of a welcoming community.

### **Focus Area Three: EVENTS DELIVERY**

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**Q1. What type of events destination does Queensland want to be? For example; sporting, cultural, festivals, multi-day, multi-location etc.**

Queensland should aspire to be a world-class multi-dimensional events destination, offering a diverse and dynamic calendar of events. This would include but not be limited to:

- Sustainability Leader: Pioneering eco-conscious events that align with Queensland’s natural wonders and conservation values. Government supported (funded) Events should be required to undertake sustainability audits and demonstrate improved performance annually.
- Sporting Spectacle: Hosting major international tournaments, adventure races, and grassroots sports that leverage Queensland’s natural beauty and sporting legacy.
- Cultural Capital: Showcasing rich Indigenous heritage, arts, music, and performance through immersive festivals and global exhibitions.
- Festival Hub: Becoming a hotspot for food, music, and arts festivals that blend local culture with international flair.
- Multi-Day, Multi-Location Experiences: Creating interconnected event series across iconic destinations, ensuring regional communities benefit from tourism and economic uplift.

**Q2. What type of benefits would you like to see from securing and staging events?**

Queensland’s events should be more than just one-off spectacles—they should leave a legacy. Event acquisition/development should have local community support, deliver tangible local benefit and ensure economic leakage is contained.

- Sustainability Leaders: Events should be required to report against agreed sustainability targets for waste management, CO2 reduction and accessibility.
- Economic Supercharger – Events should act as catalysts for tourism, job creation, and local business growth, driving year-round economic dispersal and activity.

- Cultural Renaissance – Events should amplify Queensland’s unique identity, supporting local artists, Indigenous voices, and creative industries to shine on the global stage.
- Innovation Incubator – Large-scale events should attract cutting-edge technology, sustainability solutions, and smart city initiatives, turning Queensland into a showcase of forward-thinking ideas.
- Global Magnet – By securing marquee international events, Queensland can position itself as a must-visit destination, drawing visitors who return not just for the event, but for the destination experience.
- Community Connection – Events should foster a sense of belonging, giving residents more opportunities to celebrate, participate, and take pride in their home state.
- Improved public transport to and from events

**Q3. What can the government do to ensure the success (and in the case of recurring events, the long-term viability) of events?**

To ensure Queensland’s events continue to flourish and evolve, the government can:

- Identify ‘critical events’ ie: those which if folded would have substantial negative direct and indirect impacts on local economies. (Often the impacts are felt most in regional destinations). Provide expert mentoring and auditing support to identify operational, fiscal and governance risks and apply resources to mitigate before impacts become unsalvageable.
- Create a ‘NEW Events Innovation Fund’ – Provide grants and incentives for sustainable, tech-driven, and locally impactful events that push creative boundaries.
- Develop a ‘Festival Trail’ Strategy – Encourage travellers to experience multiple events across different regions, keeping them engaged and extending visitor stays. Introduce Event Passports & reward visitors for attending multiple **regional** events, fostering repeat tourism and long-term engagement.
- Invest in Smart Infrastructure – Develop multi-use venues, seamless transport options, and green energy solutions to future-proof event spaces.
- Forge Public-Private Partnerships – Work with local businesses, tech innovators, and creative industries to co-develop signature events that offer both wow-factor and sustainability.

## Focus Area Four: ACCESS AND CONNECTIVITY

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### Q1. What are the major barriers to access and connectivity for tourists travelling around Queensland, and how can these be addressed?

- **Barrier: The Great Divide Dilemma**

Queensland's vast geography makes it challenging for travellers to reach remote and regional gems.

**Solution: Sky and Sea Express**

Introduce more regional air passes with budget-friendly multi-leg options and expand fast ferry routes connecting coastal hotspots. (eg Brisbane to Sunshine Coast/ Brisbane to Gold Coast)

- **Barrier: Limited Public Transport in Tourism Hubs**

Many key tourist areas lack seamless transport links, making it hard for visitors to explore without a car.

**Solution: Micro electric transit systems**

Remove large CO2 emitting buses from the tourism precincts and replace with Micro Shuttle options. Case Study – Lake Tahoe, USA <https://ltva.org/lake-link-transportation/>

**Solution: Hop 'n Go Tourism Pass**

All-in-one integrated tourism transport card covering public buses, trains, ferries, and transfers across key destinations.

- **Barrier: The Digital Dead Zones**

Spotty internet and lack of smart navigation in remote areas can make self-driving trips risky.

**Solution: Wi-Fi Highway**

Expand smart tourism zones with free Wi-Fi and AI-powered travel assistants at major stopovers, helping travellers stay connected and informed.

- **Barrier: Sustainable Travel Gaps**

Limited eco-friendly transport options mean travellers often rely on high-emission vehicles.

**Solution: Green Wheels Initiative**

Accelerate installation of EV charging networks on scenic drives, launch solar-powered e-bikes, and introduce eco-shuttle loops within high traffic tourism destinations.

### Q2. How can we improve transportation options (e.g. air, rail, road) to enhance connectivity between key tourism destinations in Queensland?

- **Air Bridges for the Outback**

Expand regional air routes and scenic flights to better connect remote wonders like the Great Barrier Reef, the Daintree, and the Outback through expanded AAIF program.

- **Queensland Scenic Rail Reviva**

Develop luxury and budget-friendly rail routes connecting Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Cairns, and beyond - offering immersive, slow-travel experiences.

- **Adventure Highways**  
Enhance iconic self-drive routes with smart wayfinding, curated road trip itineraries, and digital storytelling hubs along the way.
- **Island & Coastal Connect**  
Investigate viability of high-speed ferry networks linking the Whitsundays, Fraser Island, and other coastal hotspots, reducing road congestion and offering scenic travel alternatives.
- **On-Demand Smart Transport**  
Roll out app-based, on-demand electric shuttle services for tourists in high traffic areas, reducing reliance on car rentals and reducing traffic and CO2 emissions.

**Q3. What is the most valuable role government can play in improving access and connectivity for visitors to easily travel to, and within, Queensland?**

Government can facilitate the reimagining of Queensland as the world’s most seamlessly connected tourism playground—where every journey, from the first Google search to the final farewell, is effortless, immersive, and unforgettable. ‘Queensland: The Smart State of Travel’

- **Sky-High Innovation** – Partner with airlines to launch ‘Queensland Express’ routes, offering direct, affordable, and eco-friendly flights from key global markets, paired with AI-driven /Destination Specialist itineraries tailored to visitor preferences.
- **Seamless Transit, Zero Stress** – Introduce a QLD Travel Pass: a single digital ticket unlocking all transport options: flights, high-speed rail, e-bikes, ferries, and more... Tap once, travel anywhere.
- **Eco-Mobility for All** – Electrify transport with solar-powered ferries, autonomous electric shuttles in national parks, and an expanded Great Barrier Reef-friendly underwater transport system (submarine shuttle?).

By transforming Queensland into the world’s most frictionless and connected tourism destination, the QLD Government can ensure visitors don’t just come—they flow effortlessly, stay longer, and return for more.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute.

Sincerely



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