



# **Inquiry into Opportunities and Methods for Stimulating the Tourism Industry in Northern Australia**

## **Committee Secretary**

**Joint Standing Committee on Northern Australia**

**PO Box 6021**

**Parliament House**

**Canberra ACT 2600 |**

## **ABOUT TOWNSVILLE ENTERPRISE**

Townsville Enterprise Limited is the peak economic development agency in North Queensland. Representing the interests of five Local Government Areas, almost 400 business members and the broader Townsville North Queensland community for 25 years, Townsville Enterprise is a not-for-profit, apolitical, membership based organisation. It is also the region's Regional Tourism Organisation and Convention Bureau.

## **ABOUT TOWNSVILLE NORTH QUEENSLAND**

Townsville North Queensland includes the Townsville, Charters Towers, Hinchinbrook, Burdekin and Palm Island regions.

Townsville is the 13th largest city in Australia and the largest city in Northern Australia. With one of regional Australia's most diverse economies, Townsville North Queensland is widely recognised as the commercial hub of Northern Australia, incorporating:

- The epicentre of Queensland's vast mineral and energy wealth
- World-renowned food and agribusiness sectors
- A global research hub for marine science and tropical health
- Nationally significant shipping routes to the Asia Pacific
- Australia's largest Defence base
- A leading reputation for sustainability and environmental management

Over the next decade, Townsville North Queensland will experience significant economic and population growth.

By 2031 it will be Northern Australia's largest contributor to GDP, second only to the Pilbara.

As a place where the rainforest meets the reef and the outback, the region is also home to a stunning natural environment, enviable lifestyle and growing tourism and events industry. The region receives over 1.3 million visitors annually who contribute \$935.3M in overnight visitor expenditure (IVS/NVS survey data year ending September 2016) to the Townsville North Queensland economy.

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE – AREAS REQUIRING FEEDBACK**

### **1. Domestic and international tourism comprising: recreational, environmental, cultural, educational, and industrial tourism;**

#### **Impediments and Challenges**

- No significant investment in tourism infrastructure has occurred in the Townsville North Queensland region for more than 25 years.
- Connections via air into Townsville from capital cities on the eastern seaboard are not as regular or competitively priced as other major regions.
- Townsville's Entertainment and Convention Centre has reached the end of its useful life. The city does not have the appropriate infrastructure to host a conference for more than 700 delegates. This has had a significant impact on corporate visitation into the region.
- Limited internationally recognised brand named hotels are located in Townsville due to consistently declining REVPAR figures over the past five years.
- Limited brand awareness in southern markets of Townsville North Queensland as a leisure destination.
- The region lacks a range of iconic commercialised tourism products, despite having world class natural attractions such as Magnetic Island, the Great Barrier Reef, Wallaman Falls, Hinchinbrook Island etc.
- Limited tourism operators working with trade partners, both domestically and internationally, therefore reducing the region's ability to amplify destination content in new markets.
- Townsville's CBD lacks visual appeal to visitors due to the vacant shop fronts, lack of diversity in retail offerings and the undeveloped garden offerings.

#### ***Opportunities***

The Townsville City Deals Framework, the Townsville North Queensland Destination Tourism Plan and the 2016-2021 Townsville Enterprise Strategic Plan are key documents that address some of these challenges and they have been attached for review.

## **2. The role of peak bodies, local communities, and all levels of government in developing and promoting tourism opportunities nationally and internationally, including regulations and workforce issues that may inhibit tourism development;**

### ***Impediments and challenges***

- Limited and inconsistent funding for local and regional tourism management organisations .
- Limited availabilities of workforce and required skills in rural and remote areas.
- Tourism not seen as a career path.
- Lack of accurate and beneficial tourism data and analysis for Northern Australia.

### ***Opportunities***

#### Townsville City Deal

The Australian Government, Queensland Government and Townsville City Council signed Australia's first City Deal for Townsville on 9 December 2016. The Townsville City Deal will focus on improving the lives of Townsville residents through job creation, economic growth, investment in local infrastructure, a revitalised urban centre, and a more vibrant and liveable city. The City Deal is a 15 year commitment between the three levels of Government to work together to deliver transformative outcomes for Townsville and its residents. The Deal was developed in collaboration with the Townsville community and private sector.

Tourism is a key focus in this document and this roadmap is a step to providing a pathway to align the three levels of Government with industry on a shared vision for the sector.

#### National Visitor Survey and International Visitor Survey Data

National Visitor Survey and International Visitor Survey data for the majority of Northern Australia is inadequate and generalised from unreliable analysis that renders the information virtually void. If reliable data was able to be accessed, potential opportunities to increase overall visitation could be achieved. Ongoing future development and appropriate targeted marketing methods would be realised if digital tracking and collection was established and supported by appropriate stakeholders throughout Northern Australia.

### **3. Communication and transport infrastructure (particularly air, sea, road and rail transport and port infrastructure) which may facilitate and grow tourism.**

#### ***Impediments and challenges***

- Opportunity to increase domestic and international air routes.
- Opportunity to grow white and grey ship visits to Townsville.
- Opportunity to ensure road and rail infrastructure is invested to support trade and tourism.

#### ***Opportunities***

##### Grow Domestic and International Routes

Townsville Airport is North Queensland's major domestic aviation hub servicing more than 1.7 million passengers annually (2011/12), making it the 11th busiest airport in Australia. Townsville Airport was the first regional airport in Australia to be granted international airport status in 1980, servicing international flights from Singapore (via Brisbane) and Denpasar (direct).

Townsville's close geographic proximity to both the growing Asia-Pacific markets, and regional tourism and agriculture industries, combined with strong economic and administrative services, makes it an ideal location to service Asia's growing leisure market and facilitate business and trade links.

There is now an Aviation Committee that is working with the Airport and key stakeholders to target key routes domestically and internationally.

##### White and Grey Ship Attraction Strategy

The cruise shipping industry presents as an enormous opportunity to grow the Townsville tourism industry with a relatively small investment of time and effort to entice the cruise ships to our location. Of the 52 white ships that will sail around Australian waters during 2015/2016, 32 can be accommodated into the Townsville Port (at 238 metres in length or less). The remaining vessels can safely anchor at the two designated anchor points off Magnetic Island and Palm Island, with SeaLink Queensland offering an exceptional standard of tender services, capable of moving up to 300 passengers in air-conditioned comfort on each ferry.

There is now a White and Grey Ship Attraction Committee working towards 18 cruise visits in 2018 and home porting by 2020.

##### Expand the Northern Australia Infrastructure Fund

Expand the Northern Australia Infrastructure Fund to include funding opportunities for smaller Tourism businesses.