

Queensland First Nations Tourism Plan

2026 - 2032 Consultation

Discussion Paper



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Acknowledgement of Country

QTIC acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Queensland. We recognise those who shared stories, welcomed guests on Country, and were stewards of the earth for millennia before us, and their continued connection to land, waterways, and culture.

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Queensland First Nations Tourism Plan 2026 – 2032 Consultation – Discussion Paper

As proud First Nations leaders and champions of Indigenous tourism in Queensland, we are honoured to present this discussion paper as the next step in the journey towards a bold and transformative Queensland First Nations Tourism Plan (2026–2032).

Since the launch of the inaugural Plan in 2019, First Nations tourism in Queensland has grown in visibility, vibrancy and strength. Our communities have led the way—sharing culture, preserving language, revitalising country, and creating world-class experiences that educate, inspire, and empower. The Plan has provided the foundation for strategic partnerships, sustainable businesses, and cultural pride that continues to ripple across the state.

This discussion paper marks the beginning of a new chapter. With the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games approaching, we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to elevate First Nations tourism on the global stage. But this next chapter must be written with community at its heart, guided by the aspirations, values and voices of our peoples.

Together, we invite you—Traditional Owners, tourism operators, artists, government partners, and allies—to help shape this new vision. Let us reflect on our achievements, confront ongoing challenges, and reimagine a future where First Nations tourism is grounded in self-determination, cultural authority, and economic prosperity for our communities.

Our stewardship of Country and culture is our strength. Let's walk forward together to ensure our voices continue to lead the way.



Rhonda Appo

Mamu and Goreng Goreng woman

Manager – Indigenous Tourism Programs

Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC)



Developing the New Plan

The development of the next Queensland First Nations Tourism Plan (2026–2032) is being led by the Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC), with funding support from the Queensland Government and the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) through the Strategic Indigenous Tourism Projects initiative.

Building on the success of the 2020–2025 Plan, QTIC has been commissioned to conduct a comprehensive review of the current Plan and engage widely with First Nations tourism operators, Traditional Owners, and stakeholders across Queensland. This process will ensure that the next iteration of the Plan is informed by those with lived experience, cultural authority, and industry insight.

To guide this work, QTIC has established a Strategic Advisory Group composed of respected First Nations representatives from across the tourism sector. This group will play a central role in shaping the Plan's direction, values, and outcomes.

Consultations are being held across the state throughout May to July 2025. These engagement sessions will take place in locations including Mount Isa, Longreach, Mackay, Airlie Beach, Maroochydore, Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Torres Strait Islands, Toowoomba, Hervey Bay, Cherbourg, Townsville, Palm Island, and Bamaga. The regional consultations are complemented by QFNTC Industry Events and Regional Destination IQ forums that bring together government, community, and industry leaders.

The aim is to deliver a Draft Plan for sector-wide comment in mid-2025, with the final Queensland First Nations Tourism Plan 2026–2032 to be launched at QTIC's flagship Destination IQ event in November 2025. This co-designed and community-led approach ensures the Plan reflects the aspirations of First Nations communities and empowers our tourism futures.



About this Discussion Paper

This Discussion Paper has been developed to inform and guide the process of developing the Queensland First Nations Tourism Plan 2026 - 2032. It provides a summary of the status of the First Nations tourism sector in Queensland, including insights into national and state frameworks, challenges, and opportunities.

The Paper reflects on the implementation and impact of the 2020–2025 Plan and offers a platform for feedback and forward thinking. It is designed to prompt discussion, highlight what has changed in the sector, and identify areas that need to be strengthened or newly addressed in the next Plan.

By reviewing progress and surfacing new aspirations, this Paper invites all stakeholders—First Nations tourism operators, Traditional Owners, community members, industry partners, and government agencies—to actively contribute to shaping a refreshed and ambitious strategic direction for 2026–2032.

Background: First Nations Tourism

Across Australia and around the world, the tourism sector is finally recognising the significance of First Nations tourism. As travellers seek more meaningful and authentic experiences, there is a growing demand for First Nations owned and operated tourism businesses that celebrate and share First Nations culture. These businesses encompass a wide range of activities, from bush tucker tours and dance performances to rock art site visits and wildlife experiences. Such experiences not only educate and inspire visitors but also empower First Nations entrepreneurs and communities by creating new employment and start-up business opportunities, while simultaneously showcasing and sharing culture.

The growth of First Nations tourism in Australia could not have come at a better time. Studies have shown that travellers are seeking cultural experiences during their travels. For instance, UN Tourism have estimated some 40% of visitors participate in cultural experiences, while a 2023 booking.com study found that more than half of all travellers want to travel somewhere with completely different cultural experiences and languages¹. A 2025 Hilton Travel Trends Report found that globally 73% of travellers seek more authentic and local experiences to fully immerse themselves in a culture².

First Nations tourism in Australia

What do these trends mean for First Nations tourism in Australia? In 2023–24, there were a total of 3 million trips that incorporated First Nations activities, the highest annual number of trips on record, a figure that has doubled over the last decade.

Of the 3.0 million trips incorporating a First Nations activity in 2023–24³:

- 63% (around 1.9 million) were by domestic travellers, comprising:
 - 1,223,000 domestic overnight trips
 - 664,000 domestic day trips

¹ <https://news.booking.com/media-library>

² https://envisionitagency.com/blog/destination-marketing-2025-and-the-power-of-authentic-cultural-experiences/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

³ <https://www.tra.gov.au/en/economic-analysis/first-nations-tourism-statistics>



- 37% (around 1.1 million) were by international visitors.



Note: There is no data for international travellers between 2019–20 and 2022–23 as international data was not collected during the COVID pandemic.

Comparing trips between the pre-pandemic peak of the year ending December 2019 and 2023–24:

- domestic day trips are up 17% or 96,700
- domestic overnight trips are up 25% or 248,400
- international trips are up 14% or 138,100.

International Visitor Demand for First Nations Tourism

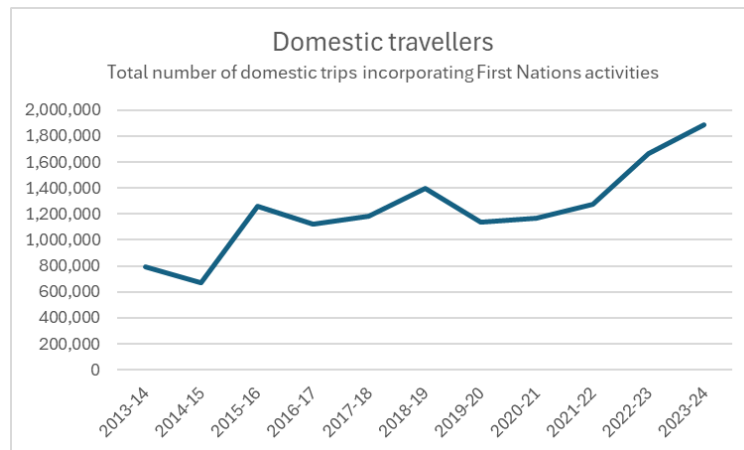
International visitors from Europe (25%), and the USA and Canada (22%) were the most likely to incorporate a First Nations activity in their trip in 2023–24 and they were most likely to experience First Nations art/craft or cultural displays.

Research conducted with international travellers by Tourism Australia in 2024 found that more than 4 in 5 (82%) travellers are interested in First Nations experiences when travelling internationally. They found that 34% look for or consider tours/activities that respect and preserve local cultures and traditions. However, the same study found that awareness of First Nations experiences in Australia was low amongst international travellers with only 12% aware of First Nations experiences offered in Australia⁴.

Domestic Visitor Demand for First Nations Tourism

The largest market for First Nations tourism in Australia is the domestic visitor market. In 2023–24, a total 1.9 million domestic trips incorporated First Nations activities, and this number has grown steadily over the last decade (see Figure 2). Visiting an Aboriginal site or community was the most popular First Nations activity for domestic travellers in 2023–24.

⁴ <https://www.tourism.australia.com/en/insights/consumer-research/future-of-demand.html>



First Nations tourism in Queensland

First Nations tourism provides a key point of differentiation for Queensland's tourism industry. Queensland had the second highest share of trips with First Nations activities with 220,000 trips incorporating a First Nations experience in 2023-24.

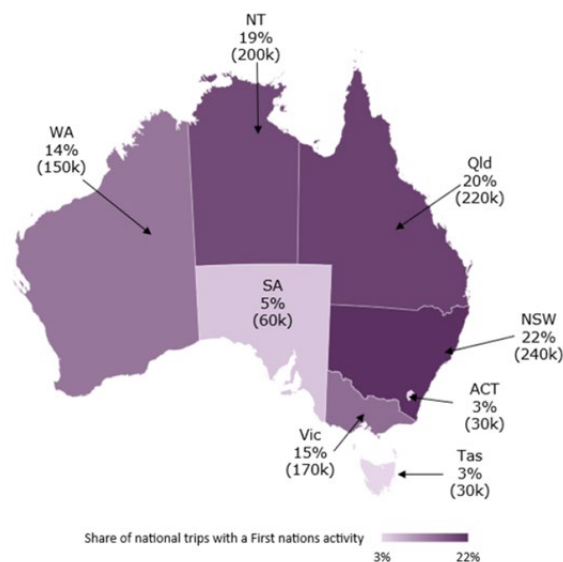


Figure: State/Territory share of domestic overnight trips incorporating First Nations activities in 2011-22 to 2023-24

As the world's attention turns to Queensland in the lead up to and beyond the 2032 Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games, Queensland's First Nations peoples have a unique opportunity to leverage this mega event to position First Nations tourism at the forefront of the State's tourism offering.

Queensland is also well-placed through the advocacy of the Queensland Tourism Industry Council and Queensland First Nations Tourism Council, champions of the sector and guiding its strategic direction through the Queensland First Nations Tourism Plan.

QLD Tourism Ecosystem and Funding



1080 QTIC Membership Businesses (24/25)

Sustainable Tourism Funding 64,000 Tourism, Hospitality and Events Business in Queensland

Investors in tourism infrastructure, Industry Bodies, Environmental Conservation Groups, Professional Services to the sector, QTIC Corporate Partners, Corporate Businesses, First Nations, ATIC and regional communities

\$3.5M ANNUALLY

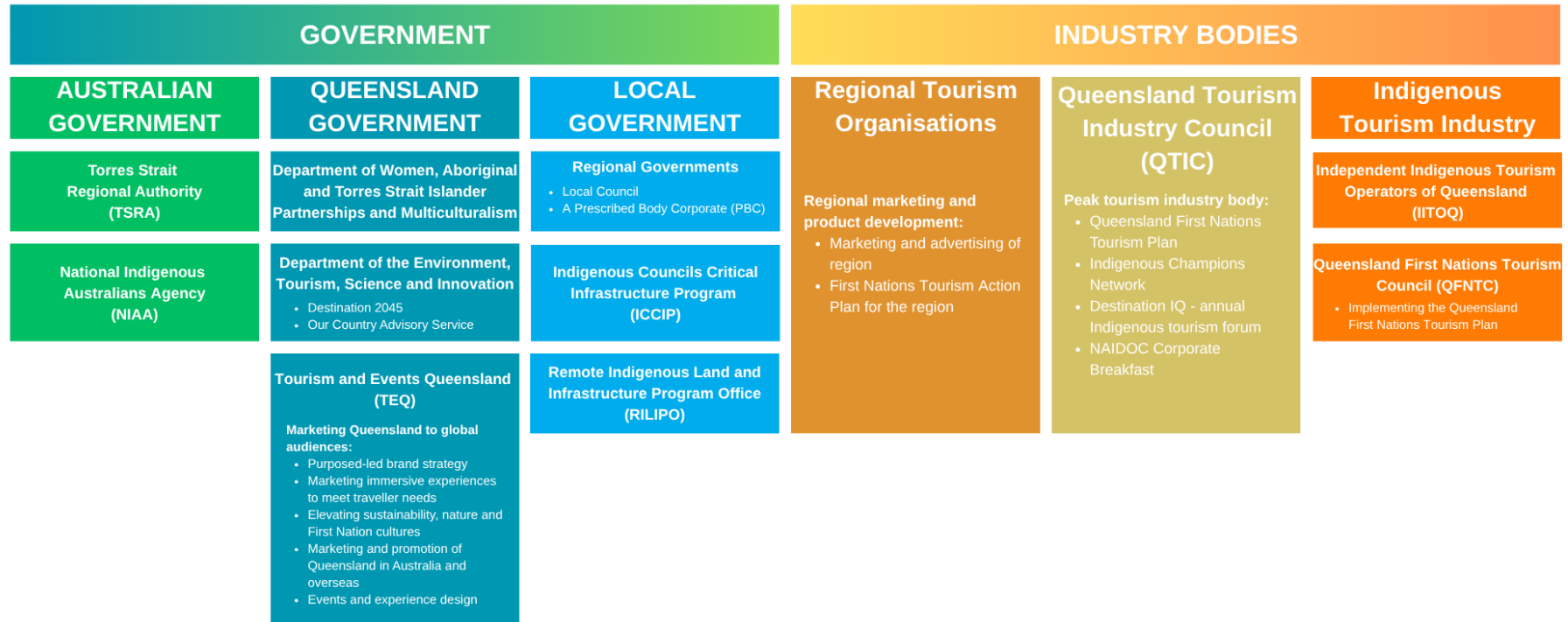


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Other State Departments: Department of Customer Service, Open Data and Small and Family Business, Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Department of Transport and Main Roads, Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning, Sport, Racing and Olympic and Paralympic Games, Trade, Employment and Training, Queensland Treasury, Trade and Investment Queensland

Key Stakeholders for First Nations



Note: see Appendix 1 for further information of National and State Context for Queensland First Nations Tourism Plan 2026–2032

Review of Queensland First Nations Tourism Plan 2020-2025

In 2019, the QTIC Board established an all-First Nations Strategic Advancement Group (SAG) to develop the inaugural Queensland First Nations Tourism Plan. Initial stages of the plan saw a rigorous process of extensive, state-wide consultations with First Nations stakeholders and the broader tourism industry.

The final plan was formally launched in November 2019 at DestinationIQ by the Honourable Kate Jones MP, then Queensland State Minister for Tourism.

Backing from the State Government to implement the Plan, included assistance with costs to establish a Peak Body recommended by the Plan, and led to the inception of the *Queensland First Nations Tourism Council*, as well as approval of QTIC's proposal to the Premier of Queensland to declare 2020 the *Year of Indigenous Tourism* (announced at the 2019 Queensland Tourism Awards), and concomitantly providing \$10 million in investment initiatives to support plan-related activities during this period.

The Queensland First Nations Tourism Plan 2020-2025 focused on creating an innovative and sustainable First Nations tourism sector in Queensland by drawing on our stewardship of culture and country to foster the development of authentic, engaging and sustainable tourism experiences that respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, knowledges and connections to country. The plan was underpinned by the [Six Larrakia Declaration Principles⁵](#)

Consultations across the State to develop the Plan identified a range of benefits of First Nations Tourism including: the revitalisation and maintenance of culture and language; a vehicle for creating business opportunities; reconciliation; sustaining tangible and intangible cultural heritage; preservation of traditions; and, revitalization of language, among others.

First Nations businesses and stakeholders also identified challenges for the sector some of which included: strengthening the profile of First Nations tourism; increasing coordination across the sector; upskilling the workforce; increasing awareness of authentic First Nations tourism product offerings; enabling access to business capital and sustainable support; and increasing compliance with cultural license and intellectual property.

The opportunities were seen to include:

- Leverage Queensland's market share of international and domestic tourism to grow awareness of, and demand for, First Nations tourism in Queensland.
- Build on existing strong support foundations to leverage new and established market ready First Nations tourism experiences in Queensland.
- Secure long-term and sustainable start-up funding support from government and through mutually beneficial partnerships.
- Build on the momentum generated by the 2018 Commonwealth Games and be well positioned to leverage future mega events in the State.
- Increase product offerings by supporting Indigenous tourism businesses to become market-ready and/or export-ready by drawing on best practice and research.
- Expand First Nations tourism networks and develop mutually beneficial private/public partnerships with the broader tourism sectors.

⁵ World Indigenous Tourism Alliance 2012



- Exploit the increasing interest in First Nations tourism experiences in Queensland by travel trade and tour operators to lift the sector's profile in the marketplace.
- Utilise Queensland's natural assets and resources, together with our First Nations cultural heritage, to strengthen Queensland unique point of differentiation in the marketplace.
- Foster and support strong industry leaders to champion the sector.
- Develop tourism business opportunities by leveraging Native Title
- Leverage as a unique selling point that Queensland is the only State that is home to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

The Queensland First Nations Tourism Plan 2020-2025 was guided by the following vision, goals and enablers:

VISION

Queensland will be a global hub for First Nations' tourism by 2030

GOALS

1. We will offer First Nations tourism experiences that are Indigenous owned and operated and/or are based on mutually beneficial partnerships.
2. We will create quality employment and career opportunities for First Nations peoples through tourism development that reflects the aspirations and desires of Indigenous people and communities and generates sustainable socio-economic outcomes for Indigenous communities
3. We will develop First Nations tourism experiences that are authentic, innovative, diverse and sustainable.
4. We will support new and existing high-quality experiences that are viable, world-class, market-ready and meet market expectations and visitor demand.

ENABLERS

The tourism industry will:

- Value and respect First Nations intellectual property rights, cultures and traditional practices and increase cultural awareness in the marketplace.
- Optimise the development of equitable and sustainable public/private partnerships between the tourism industry and First Nations peoples.
- Increase leadership, advocacy and network support to enable First Nations businesses to operate effectively and efficiently with other tourism sectors.
- Create opportunities for training and skills development in business planning, marketing to facilitate the development of market and export ready product.
- Embrace the diversity of the tourism supply chain to fully leverage the opportunities tourism can provide Queensland's First Nations peoples.

Six tourism pillars emerged from the extensive consultations with First Nations people of Queensland over a 12-month timeframe. The six pillars were underpinned by our stewardship of Culture and Country and the Larrakia Declaration.



The First Nations Tourism Plan 2020 - 2025 Recommendations Review:

Recognition and Respect: Promote recognition and respect for First Nations culture, stories and connection to country



- The tourism industry recognises Traditional Owners and respects our connection to country, cultural protocols, traditional knowledge and intellectual property.
- Traditional Owners are supported to develop tourism products and experiences as a vehicle to practice and revitalise cultural traditions and languages and derive economic benefits from their traditional lands.
- The opportunity for tourism to support Reconciliation is acknowledged and encouraged, particularly for operators working on country.

Engagement and Partnerships: Encourage the creation of mutually beneficial and strategic partnerships to grow the First Nations tourism sector



- First Nations tourism operators are supported to engage in strategic partnerships and joint ventures to facilitate the development of competitive and sustainable tourism enterprises.
- Government agencies provide sustainable support and reduce barriers to investment for First Nation business development.
- The tourism industry, particularly regional and local tourism associations, engage and support First Nations tourism operators and start-ups.

Strategic Coordination and Structure: Create an entity that gives voice to the First Nations tourism sector and provides advocacy and support



- Recognising international best practice, a First Nations tourism body is established to drive the vision of First Nations tourism in Queensland, providing a coordinated voice for advocacy, leadership and representation.
- First Nations tourism businesses have the opportunity to collaborate on destination, business and product development with other First Nations tourism businesses and the tourism industry.

Education Training and Skills: Ensure the First Nations sector is driven by a skilled workforce engaged in quality employment



- First Nations tourism businesses are supported to invest in education, training and skill development for their employees.
- Increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders employed in the sector, particularly in quality employment that can lead to successful careers in the tourism sector.
- Entrepreneurship and innovation are supported and encouraged, particularly for Indigenous owned and operated tourism businesses.

- First Nations businesses are supported through business development and mentoring, with access to current research, best practice and market trends to support sound business decisions.

Authentic Product Development: Develop and deliver authentic, quality First Nations products which are export-ready and meet market demand



- Develop quality, export-ready products that are authentic, unique and engaging experiences for visitors that are guided by and involve First Nations people in the development and delivery of the experience.
- Understand consumer demand trends and develop innovative and differentiated products that address gaps in the broader tourism supply chain.
- The tourism industry understands and practices cultural protocols and supports First Nations suppliers in delivering authentic products to the market.

Marketing and Awareness: Position and promote First Nations experiences as a must-do experience while visiting Queensland



- Increase levels of positive awareness of, and respect for, First Nations cultures and languages, to facilitate increased awareness within the domestic market.
- First Nations tourism adopts a more prominent position within the destination marketing narrative to increase top-of-mind awareness for international and domestic visitors.
- Support tourism marketing agencies in the marketing and positioning of First Nations tourism experiences and the development of target priority markets.

Queensland First Nations Tourism Plan: 2026 – 2032

The inaugural Plan has provided a guiding framework for the sustainable growth of the First Nations sector over the last five years

Summary

The Queensland First Nations Tourism Plan 2026–2032 is a vital opportunity to position Queensland as a national and global leader in Indigenous tourism, particularly in the lead-up to the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Led by the Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) with funding from the Queensland Government and the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) under the Strategic Indigenous Tourism Projects initiative, the development of this Plan will play a critical role in shaping a more inclusive, culturally rich tourism landscape.

As the successor to the 2020–2025 Plan, this refreshed strategy will be informed by a comprehensive state-wide consultation process and a review of achievements to date. Central to this work is deep engagement with First Nations tourism operators, Traditional Custodians, and community leaders—ensuring the Plan is grounded in cultural authority and practical industry insight.

To steer the Plan’s development, a Strategic Advisory Group of highly respected First Nations leaders from across Queensland has been convened to guide priorities, values, and outcomes. From May to

July 2025, extensive consultations will take place in regional centres and communities including Mount Isa, Palm Island, Cherbourg, Torres Strait Islands, and the Gold Coast, among others—complemented by key industry events and Destination Indigenous Queensland forums.

This work is more than a policy exercise—it is a foundational step in ensuring First Nations culture is celebrated, elevated, and economically empowered as part of Queensland’s broader preparations for hosting the world in 2032. A Draft Plan will be released for public feedback in mid-2025, ahead of the official launch at Destination IQ in November 2025.

Next Steps

We would like for you to consider the following questions in preparation for your participation in the consultations. We will have two options for your participation:

1. Attend a regional consultation event in person
2. Submit a submission to Rhonda.appo@qtic.com.au

Questions to consider:

- Are there benefits of First Nations tourism that are not in the 2020-2025 plan that should be included?
- Are the challenges identified in the 2020-2025 plan still relevant today? Consider what the next 5 years looks like.
- What are the new opportunities for First Nations tourism which were not included in the 2020-2025 plan including preparations for the 2032 Olympics and Paralympics
- What changes have you seen in the sector over the last 5 years good and bad?
- What should our vision and intent be for the First Nations sector in Queensland over the next 5 years and as we look towards 2032 and beyond? These could be included as a boxed example (or not):

Larrakia Principles

1. Respect for customary law and lore, land and water, traditional knowledge, traditional cultural expressions, cultural heritage that will underpin all tourism decisions.
2. Indigenous culture and the land and waters on which it is based, will be protected and promoted through well-managed tourism practices and appropriate interpretation.
3. Indigenous peoples will determine the extent and nature and organizational arrangements for their participation in tourism and that governments and multilateral agencies will support the empowerment of Indigenous people.
4. That governments have a duty to consult and accommodate Indigenous peoples before undertaking decisions on public policy and programs designed to foster the development of Indigenous tourism.
5. The tourism industry will respect Indigenous intellectual property rights, cultures and traditional practices, the need for sustainable and equitable business partnerships and the proper care of the environment and communities that support them.
6. That equitable partnerships between the tourism industry and Indigenous people will include the sharing of cultural awareness and skills development which support the well-being of communities and enable enhancement of individual livelihoods.



Appendix 1 Key Stakeholders for First Nations

National and State Context for Queensland First Nations Tourism Plan 2026–2032

PART A: Government

1. Tourism Australia – Discover Aboriginal Experiences

Tourism Australia is the Australian Government agency responsible for international tourism marketing. It promotes Australia as a travel destination and supports the tourism industry in attracting visitors. The 'Discover Aboriginal Experiences' program showcases a curated collection of over 45 Aboriginal-owned and operated tourism businesses offering cultural and immersive experiences. Queensland participants include Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel (Cairns), Walkabout Cultural Adventures (Port Douglas), and Aboriginal experiences at Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary. Tourism Australia also runs the Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE), the nation's largest tourism trade event. In 2025, eight Queensland Indigenous tourism operators participated in ATE, showcasing their experiences to global buyers and media.

2. Austrade – THRIVE 2030 and First Nations Visitor Economy Partnership

Austrade (Australian Trade and Investment Commission) is the national agency for advancing Australia's trade, investment, and education sectors. It delivers the THRIVE 2030 strategy, which includes a focus on inclusive and sustainable growth of the tourism industry. The First Nations Visitor Economy Partnership (FN-VEP), established in 2022 and formalised in 2025 as a national Indigenous tourism body, advises Austrade on unlocking opportunities in the Indigenous tourism sector. This advisory group includes First Nations leaders and operators, including Queensland representatives.

3. National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA)

The NIAA is the lead Commonwealth agency for Indigenous policy, programs, and engagement. It delivers the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS), which supports economic development, cultural preservation, and Indigenous tourism initiatives. The NIAA works closely with Indigenous Business Australia and the ILSC to fund and facilitate culturally appropriate tourism activities.

4. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)

DFAT is responsible for managing Australia's international relations, trade, and cultural diplomacy. It supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and performers through cultural exchange programs and overseas showcases. In 2023, DFAT established the Pilot First Nations Trade and Investment Advisory Group to inform trade policy and support Indigenous economic inclusion. The Department also hosts Australia's First Nations Ambassador and Unit, which leads efforts to elevate Indigenous voices in international diplomacy and trade.

5. Creative Australia (formerly Australia Council for the Arts)

Creative Australia is the national arts funding and advisory body. It invests in First Nations-led arts and culture and funds creative enterprises that intersect with tourism, such as music festivals, dance, and storytelling experiences. Many Queensland-based Indigenous artists and cultural projects receive support to contribute to regional tourism offerings.



6. Tourism Research Australia (TRA)

TRA is a branch of Austrade that provides research and data insights to support tourism policy and strategy. It collects and publishes statistics on Indigenous tourism participation, market demand, and economic contribution. Its data supports state-based initiatives such as those in Queensland that track growth in cultural tourism.

7. Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA)

TSRA is a statutory authority that represents Torres Strait Islander people. It promotes sustainable economic, environmental, and cultural development in the Torres Strait. Its Economic Development Program provides grants for community tourism ventures, cultural heritage protection, and arts-based tourism in Queensland's island regions.

8. Indigenous Business Australia (IBA)

IBA is a federal agency that supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to own and operate businesses. It provides business finance, support services, and mentoring, including tailored programs for tourism enterprises. IBA has helped establish multiple successful Indigenous tourism ventures in Queensland, including eco-lodges and cultural tours.

9. Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC)

The ILSC assists Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in acquiring and managing land and sea country for cultural and economic purposes. It funds tourism infrastructure and supports enterprises such as cultural centres and guided experiences. In Queensland, ILSC has backed projects on Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island) and Cape York. Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia is a wholly owned subsidiary of the ILSC. Voyages operates tourism assets such as Ayers Rock Resort at Uluru, Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre in Queensland, and manages training programs for Indigenous staff.

PART B: Industry

1. Australian Tourism Export Council (ATEC)

ATEC represents Australia's export-ready tourism operators and provides access to international distribution channels. It has established a First Nations Tourism Panel and delivers capacity-building programs to support Indigenous businesses. Queensland members include cultural tour operators in Brisbane and Cairns. ATEC also supports inbound training and mentoring.

2. Tourism and Transport Forum (TTF)

TTF is a national advocacy body focused on tourism and transport policy reform. It supports Indigenous tourism by influencing national investment and infrastructure planning that benefits remote and regional tourism experiences. TTF has advocated for better access to country for cultural tourism initiatives, including in Queensland.

3. Australian Tourism Industry Council (ATIC)

ATIC manages national programs such as the Quality Tourism Accreditation and Australian Tourism Awards. The Awards include an Indigenous Tourism category. In recent years, Queensland winners of this category include Jellurgal Aboriginal Cultural Centre (Gold Coast) and Mossman Gorge Centre (Far North Queensland), recognising excellence in cultural and sustainable tourism.



4. Ecotourism Australia

Ecotourism Australia promotes sustainable tourism, including Indigenous-led ecotourism. It manages the ECO Certification and Respecting Our Culture (ROC) Program, which supports First Nations operators in Queensland such as Talaroo Hot Springs and Mossman Gorge Centre.

5. Supply Nation

Supply Nation certifies and promotes Indigenous-owned businesses in Australia. It provides procurement pathways for First Nations tourism enterprises, including those operating in Queensland's reef, rainforest, and outback regions. Several Indigenous-owned Queensland tourism businesses are listed on the Supply Nation directory.

6. EarthCheck

EarthCheck provides global sustainability certification and capacity-building services. It works with destinations and Indigenous communities to ensure sustainable planning and environmental responsibility. EarthCheck has collaborated with Queensland Indigenous operators on tourism master planning and visitor management strategies.

PART C: Queensland Government

1. Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI)

DETSI leads Queensland's tourism development and environmental protection efforts. It houses several initiatives that support First Nations tourism:

- The On Country Advisory Service provides cultural advisory support to Indigenous tourism operators and ensures tourism ventures align with Traditional Owner aspirations.
- The Strategic Indigenous Tourism Projects (SITP) initiative funds regional cultural tourism plans and capability development.
- The Deadly Innovation Strategy promotes Indigenous entrepreneurship across sectors, including tourism, supporting innovation-led cultural tourism enterprises.
- Minjerribah Futures Program supports the Quandamooka People through tourism, infrastructure and cultural projects on Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island).

2. Trade and Investment Queensland (TIQ)

TIQ facilitates international trade and investment for Queensland businesses. It supports the export-readiness of First Nations tourism operators and arts centres, connecting them with overseas markets through trade missions and cultural diplomacy. Queensland Indigenous art centres such as Girringun Aboriginal Art Centre and Yarrabah Arts Centre have benefited from international exposure through TIQ support.

3. Arts Queensland – Backing Indigenous Art Program

Arts Queensland supports cultural expression and Indigenous arts initiatives. The Backing Indigenous Art (BIA) program has funded over 14 Indigenous art centres across Queensland, including Lockhart River Art Centre, Badu Arts, and Waringarri Aboriginal Arts. These centres play a significant role in cultural tourism, offering workshops, exhibitions, and festivals. It supports events including the Cairns



Indigenous Art Fair, Winds of Zenadth Cultural Festival, the Laura Aboriginal Dance Festival, and the Quandamooka Festival.

4. Tourism and Events Queensland (TEQ)

TEQ is the state's lead destination marketing and events agency. Its 'Best of Queensland Experiences' program certifies high-quality tourism offerings. Indigenous tourism operators accredited under this program include Mossman Gorge Centre, Mandingalbay Yidinji Eco Cultural Tours, and Yagurli Tours. TEQ also funded Indigenous tourism infrastructure projects through the Growing Indigenous Tourism in Queensland Fund.

5. Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP)

DATSIP leads Queensland Government engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It supports policy, planning, and funding for Indigenous economic development, including tourism. DATSIP facilitates cultural heritage protection and contributes to land use planning frameworks that enable Indigenous tourism.

PART D: Queensland Industry Agencies

1. Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC)

QTIC is Queensland's peak tourism industry body. It advocates for and delivers programs supporting Indigenous tourism, such as the Indigenous Champions Network and Tourism Indigenous Mentoring Program. QTIC has supported operators like Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel, Janbal Gallery, and Jellurgal Aboriginal Cultural Centre. QTIC runs the Queensland Tourism Awards, which include an Indigenous Tourism category. Past winners include Jellurgal Aboriginal Cultural Centre, Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel, and Mossman Gorge Centre.

2. Queensland First Nations Tourism Council (QFNTC)

QFNTC is a dedicated First Nations-led organisation representing Indigenous tourism interests across Queensland. It provides cultural governance, policy advocacy, and coordination of state-wide Indigenous tourism priorities. It plays a central role in implementing the Queensland First Nations Tourism Plan.

3. Independent Indigenous Tourism Operators Council (IITOC)

IITOC is a cooperative network created to unite and support Indigenous operators across Queensland. Guided by self-determination, cultural integrity, and empowerment, IITOC advocates for tourism created *by* Indigenous people—not *for* or *about* them. It promotes financial independence, collaboration, and sustainable growth while honouring responsibilities to country, community, and family. The Board works to elevate members' voices at all stages of their tourism journey and collaborates with key stakeholders to strengthen and grow the Indigenous tourism economy.

4. Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO) Network

Queensland's 13 RTOs work regionally to develop and market tourism. Many RTOs partner with First Nations operators and festivals. Examples include:

- Tropical North Queensland supporting Yarrabah Music and Cultural Festival.
- Outback Queensland supporting the Boulia Camel Races



- Southern Queensland Country assisting cultural tourism projects in Toowoomba and the Western Downs.

5. The Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC)

The Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC)⁶ was established in 2001 as a not-for-profit, private sector, membership-based organisation representing the interests of Queensland's tourism and hospitality 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 has an extensive reach, and more than 1,000 tourism businesses across the state. QTIC also works alongside the 13 Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs) in Queensland which collectively represent more than 3,000 regional businesses and 18 industry sector associations.

QTIC has played a major role in supporting First Nations tour operators. As of 2021, QTIC represents the interests of 66 First Nations members (5% of overall membership for 2020-21), has a dedicated Indigenous Project Officer, and a First Nations Board Member appointed by its members since 2019. The very successful *Destination IQ* is one of the premier events for First Nations tourism operators drawing delegates from across the State and Australia.

In a milestone for the tourism industry, in 2019 the QTIC Board endorsed the *Larrakia Principles*⁷ and in embracing them, empowered a First Nations Strategic Advancement Group to develop the plan. As part of this process, QTIC empowered its First Nations members to decide their 'voice' through the development of a new Peak Body. The QTIC Board established a First Nations Tourism Working Group to lead and implement the process. The Working Group meets regularly and is comprised of respected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who cross-represent the range of tourism stakeholders. These stakeholders range from individual tourism operators, artists, festivals, tourism asset owners, the legal sector and accommodation providers, while also accounting for gender balance.

6. The Queensland First Nations Tourism Council (QFNTC)

The Queensland First Nations Tourism Council (QFNTC) is the independent peak industry body for First Nations Tourism in the state of Queensland. The QFNTC is a not-for-profit association formed as a result of a major initiative of the Queensland First Nations Tourism Plan 2020-2025 undertaken in the Queensland Year of Indigenous Tourism, delivered through the Indigenous Working Group of the Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) and funded by the Queensland Government.

⁶<https://qticazure.blob.core.windows.net/crmblobcontainer/Version%206%20-%20FNTC%20Final%20Version%20-%20High%20res%20Web.pdf>

⁷<https://www.qtic.com.au/year-of-indigenous-tourism/first-nations-tourism-potential-plan/Larrakia-Principles/>

