



28th February 2025

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To Whom It May Concern,

Destination 2045: Queensland's Tourism Future

Outdoors Queensland was pleased to attend some of the Destination 2045 consultation sessions held in January and February 2025, and we appreciate the opportunity to make a submission to Destination 2045: Queensland's Tourism Future.

Outdoors Queensland is the peak body for the outdoor sector in Queensland. We represent outdoor organisations and individuals in Queensland, consisting of a range of outdoor industry stakeholders, covering the five broad pillars of outdoor activities:

- outdoor recreation,
- outdoor education,
- outdoor health,
- nature-based tourism, and
- associated support services.

The mission of Outdoors Queensland is to ensure that all people have opportunities to create connections with Queensland's outdoors. Our vision is to create a world where the outdoors is a vital part of every healthy life - a healthy world comes from a balanced life, incorporating outdoor activities for all people.

Outdoors Queensland serves as the industry peak body for the outdoor sector, with a focus on building capacity and capability of outdoor people and outdoor organisations to help all people make connections with Queensland's outdoors.

Outdoor activities underpin Queensland's tourism sector. We recognise that people travel to and throughout Queensland for various reasons, however we believe that Queensland's natural areas and the available outdoor experiences are what sets Queensland apart as a tourism destination. We note that "Natural wonders", "Enviably climate and lifestyle" and "Adventure and leisure" are 3 of the 5 diverse experiences listed on page 16 of the Destination 2045: Queensland's Tourism Future Discussion Paper. The remaining two experiences "Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games" and "Rich cultural tapestry" also incorporate outdoor experiences, from Olympic/Paralympic sports such as mountain biking, canoeing, kayaking and trail running, through to Indigenous cultural experiences that involve connecting to nature and Country.

Outdoors Queensland works with Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC), Queensland's peak tourism industry body, and we are pleased to have a reciprocal membership arrangement in place with QTIC.



In 2023, Outdoors Queensland conducted the first Queensland Outdoor Censusⁱ to better understand the diverse array of organisations that make up the Queensland outdoor industry. We intend to replicate this census every four years until 2035 to consolidate and promote the value of information to guide decision-making, enhance understanding of the number, type and diversity of organisations actively contributing to the outdoor sector, and to monitor and understand changes over time.

Over 1,000 organisations were identified in the Queensland Outdoor Census contact list - around 35% of those organisations had a tourism component as core or part of their organisation. “Guided tours” was the second most common indicative core business activity identified across the contact list, with 28% of organisations classified in that way.

Many outdoor tourism organisations provide more than just one service:

A regional nature-based accommodation provider actively attracts and services domestic (and international) travellers, providing a range of cabins and camping sites. It also offers guided tours into the surrounding landscape, both on private land and to nearby national parks. It is well-regarded in delivering curriculum-based learning for school camps, delivers interpretive recreational experiences, and contributes to land care and sustainable environmental management.

The Queensland Outdoor Census provided an estimate that Queensland’s outdoor organisations are delivering, supporting or facilitating approximately 1 million participants/clients in an average month. Domestic and international travellers make up a significant number of these participants and clients.

The Queensland Outdoor Census 2023 found that more organisations provide services for domestic travellers (21% of surveyed organisations) than international travellers (13.6% of surveyed organisations), however with this census being conducted in 2023, this response may be impacted by the residue of the international border closures of 2020 and 2021.

This submission focuses on the Driving Forces identified in the Destination 2045: Queensland’s Tourism Future Discussion Paper.

Page 19 of the Destination 2045: Queensland’s Tourism Future Discussion Paper, poses three questions in relation to ecotourism as a driving force for Queensland tourism for the next 20 years.

There are many ways that Queensland can best deliver attractive and adventurous experiences that Queenslanders and visitors are seeking, while showcasing and preserving our natural environments, including the following:

- In addition to public land, outdoor activities take place on private land across Queensland. Encouraging outdoor activities on private land can relieve pressure on public land, allow landowners to generate revenue, and provide wonderful experiences. However, legislative and regulatory constraints that make it difficult for landowners to offer alternative activities on their properties:
 - Outdoors Queensland calls for amendments to Queensland planning laws to recognise ecotourism and agritourism (including provision of outdoor activities) as defined land uses.
 - Outdoors Queensland calls for the development of a program of advice and incentives for landholders to develop infrastructure and provide outdoor opportunities aligned with tourism and conservation goals.



- Queensland's protected area estate, which includes national parks and conservation parks, is critical to Queensland's tourism offerings, and must be expanded to meet demand and enhance Queensland's ecotourism reputation. Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services (QPWS) has been described as Queensland's largest tourism operator, however QPWS requires additional funding to manage increasing visitation, on top of other critical responsibilities.
 - Outdoors Queensland calls for the establishment of an annual acquisition fund of \$100 million to grow the protected area estate and create more national parks and conservations parks.
 - Outdoors Queensland calls for increased investment in QPWS rangers and visitor management to ensure essential land management, infrastructure, and visitor services, with an additional \$32 million annually for 200 additional ranger positions.
 - Outdoors Queensland calls for permits for tourism, events and other associated activities in the protected area estate to be longer term to provide increased investment certainty.
- State Forests present a currently untapped opportunity where tourism, outdoor activities and conservation can drive economic growth. Transitioning State Forest land to conservation parks and establishing trail networks in appropriate areas could create outdoor recreation hubs and deliver ongoing tourism benefits for future generations.
 - Outdoors Queensland calls for the transition of State Forest land into conservation parks (and national parks where appropriate), with funding to be allocated for the establishment and maintenance of visitor infrastructure.
- Re-purposing disused rail corridors is an elegant way to reconnect towns across Queensland and provide significant tourism assets. However, Queensland currently has a disconnected network of completed, partially completed and proposed rail trails across the state.
 - Outdoors Queensland calls for new Queensland government funding dedicated to completion and maintenance of rail trial projects across the state through to 2045. This fund could be jointly managed by the Department of Tourism and Department of Transport and Main Roads (which currently oversees rail trails across the state).
- Queensland should actively manage Reserves for Recreation and Recreation Areas to ensure that these places work for outdoor adventure activities, rather than outdoor activities being considered a secondary, competing priority by the land manager. Across the State, Reserves for Recreation are regularly left undeveloped, with the land being used for other purposes such as grazing, which often excludes recreational use.
 - Outdoors Queensland calls for an overhaul of the Recreation Areas Management Act 2006 (Qld) to ensure that the Act delivers on its purpose for various tenures of land used for outdoor activities.
- The Queensland Stock Route Network is the State's largest trail network, comprising of 72,000 km of roads, reserves and corridors on pastoral leases and unallocated State land, including reserves for camping. The stock route network is often overlooked, even though it provides amazing access to country Queensland and outback Queensland, in addition to its primary purpose of movement of stock.
 - Outdoors Queensland calls for the tourism values and recreation opportunities of the Queensland Stock Route Network to be recognised, and for funding to be allocated to its promotion and management as a unique Queensland experience.
- There is a need for more dedicated places for "difficult-to-locate" activities, including trail bike riding, quad-bike riding, four-wheel driving, hunting, shooting, powered water activities, and aviation activities such as hang-gliding, para-gliding, fixed wing planes, ultra-lights and model aeroplanes.



These adventurous activities can be difficult to locate due to noise or other impacts or safety requirements associated with the activities. State and local governments have done planning for these types of activities, however there is no clear solution provided to move them from difficult-to-locate to attractive activities for locals and tourists alike.

- Outdoors Queensland calls for the Queensland government to work with the outdoor industry to provide dedicated well-managed places for “difficult-to-locate” activities in various regions across the state.
- The Great Walks of Queensland offer an entry point into some of Queensland’s best natural areas, including some World Heritage areas. It is suggested that the Great Walks concept could be expanded into Amazing Adventures, which would be a list of world-class nature-based activities on various tenures, not just in national parks. This could include walking, cycling, horse-riding or paddling. In addition to the existing Great Walks, other examples include the Wangetti Trail, the Paluma to Wallaman Falls Trail, the Thorsborne Trail on Hinchinbrook Island, the Boonah Ipswich Trail, and the Brisbane River Paddle Trail.
 - Outdoors Queensland calls for the creation of Queensland’s Amazing Adventures as a way of promoting nature-based activities on various land tenures across the state.
- Guided tours and instruction are a cornerstone of nature-based tourism experiences, however there is a dramatic shortage of workers across the tourism industry. Training opportunities must be prioritised for tourism workers, especially in ecotourism and outdoor leadership.
 - Outdoors Queensland calls for prioritization of training opportunities for tourism workers, especially in ecotourism and outdoor leadership.
- Conversion of currently under-utilised government land to Reserves for Recreation or other suitable tenures – for example, Back Creek Gorge at Beechmont, which is currently under stewardship of the Department of Defence.
 - Outdoors Queensland calls for under-utilised government land to be converted to Reserves for Recreation or other suitable tenures.

Six Secret Waterfalls of Back Creek Gorge - Beechmont’s hidden gem

Located just thirty minutes from the Gold Coast, and an hour from Brisbane, Back Creek Gorge, Beechmont, is an important corridor linking Lamington National Park in the South, with Coomera River at the foot of Mount Tamborine to the North.

A popular destination with day trippers, bush walkers, fossickers and students for over 100 years. The Gorge contains at least 6 waterfalls, a heart shaped pool at the base of Killarney Falls, the Beechmont Amethyst fossicking area and a range of rare flora and fauna.

Listed by the National Heritage Commission for its environmental, historical, and social significance in 1997, Back Creek Gorge is now under control of the Australian Department of Defence, and is officially closed to the public, from Lip Falls to Killarney Glen and the Coomera River

There are several critical roles that the tourism and outdoor industry can play to help Queensland be positioned as the leader in ecotourism and nature-based tourism. Government support could be provided to incentivise these outcomes:

- Industry engagement is critical to ensure the industry is working collectively towards shared goals. In an industry like tourism with so many micro- and small-businesses, organisations such as QTIC and Outdoors Queensland have key roles in industry engagement.



- Industry accreditation schemes such as QTIC's Quality Tourism Accreditation Program, Ecotourism Australia's programs, and Savannah Guides' training programs provide certainty for tourists and develop capacity of operators.
 - Outdoors Queensland calls for the government to support industry accreditation schemes and training programs.
- Compliance with industry good practice creates quality experiences and assures responsible delivery on the part of our industry. All tourism operators offering outdoor activities can ensure compliance with the Australian Adventure Activity Standard and Good Practice Guides.
 - Outdoors Queensland calls for government investment in an awareness campaign and implementation program for the Australian Adventure Activity Standard and Good Practice Guides for tourism operators.

Governments at all levels can facilitate more development of eco and nature-based tourism experiences through:

- Offering and facilitating experiences in nature that create advocates for the environment and give people increased personal connections to nature.
 - Government documents should treat ecotourism and outdoor activities as a key ally of conservation, rather than continually presenting ecotourism and outdoor activities as threats to the environment.
- Appropriately funding outdoor activities and natural areas, whether in the protected area estate, local government lands/waters, or other places.
 - Outdoor Queensland calls on governments at all levels to appropriately fund outdoor activities and natural areas.

Page 21 of the Destination 2045: Queensland's Tourism Future Discussion Paper, poses questions in relation to the 2032 Games Legacy as a driving force for Queensland tourism for the next 20 years. Outdoors Queensland believes that the expansion of Queensland's protected area estate before 2032 would be a legacy outcome that would benefit future generations across Queensland. By including messaging about Queensland's protections for natural areas and the environment in Games tourism promotions, it could be shown that the aspirations of "climate positive" Games are being implemented in practice, not just spoken about.

We understand that this submission may be published as part of the consultation process.

If you have any queries, please contact Executive Officer, Dom Courtney, on 0419 976 800 or eo@outdoorsqueensland.com.au.

Yours sincerely,



Dom Courtney
Executive Officer / Company Secretary

ⁱ Report available at outdoorsqueensland.com.au/queensland-outdoor-census-2023/

ⁱⁱ More information available at <https://outdoorsqueensland.com.au/time-to-re-open-beechmonts-waterfalls/>

