Global Eco Asia-Pacific Tourism Conference

David Edwards
Projects Chief Executive
Special Projects Unit

26 November 2018
Vision for ecotourism in Queensland

Queensland is an internationally celebrated ecotourism destination, delivering world-class interpretation and experiences that support the conservation of our special natural places and unique Indigenous and cultural heritage.

Source: Queensland Ecotourism Plan 2016-2020, Department of National Parks, Sport and Racing
About adventure and nature based ecotourism

- Ranks among the top travel motivators for international visitors to Australia
- Domestically the number of Australians visiting national parks and taking bushwalks has increased 14% - up to 12 million people according to Tourism Research Australia’s National Visitor Survey for 2017-18 FY
- Generates economic and social benefits in regional communities, creating resilience with sustainable local employment opportunities
- Development of ecotourism products that engage with the cultural heritage of a region, provide visitors with meaningful connections with Traditional Owners and their communities
- Queensland Ecotourism Trails program established to deliver adventure and ecotourism experiences at iconic Queensland destinations
- Tropical North Queensland has a distinct competitive advantage
About Queensland Ecotourism Trails

- Queensland Government is committed to **progressing iconic new tourism experiences** in the regions – attract growth in the domestic and international visitor markets

- One of the five Queensland Ecotourism Strategy 2016-2020 strategic directions is **stimulating investment in new and refurbished ecotourism opportunities**

- Cross departmental project team established to **deliver adventure and ecotourism experiences** at iconic Queensland destinations, including within or adjacent to national parks
Queensland Ecotourism Trails program - Benefits

- A confidence-building reassurance for internal (Government) and external stakeholders in the Government’s ability to **partner with industry to deliver new tourism experiences** across the State

- Provide an **opportunity to educate and inform** people about the natural values and cultural heritage of the area to increase public support for preservation of natural areas

- Position regional Queensland to capture the **socio-economic benefits** associated with the increasing demand for adventure and nature-based tourism opportunities in and around national parks

- Ensure ecotourism operations make a fair and reasonable **contribution back to the conservation and management** of national parks and to the local community

- Offering significant regional and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander **economic jobs and opportunities**

- Aid in developing a **more sustainable and diversified ecotourism industry** in Queensland - especially in the regions
Queensland Government’s Ecotourism Trails Model

**Government builds**
- track, accommodation pads and public facilities

**Private Sector builds**
- accommodation and operates the walk
Queensland Ecotourism Trails - Opportunities

**Thorsborne Trail**
- Hinchinbrook Island National Park
- 32km walking track
- Commercial operators present, no leased areas on island
- One of the top 10 multi-day hikes in the world
- Located on Australia’s largest island national park

**Whitsunday Island Trail**
- Whitsunday Islands National Park
- 20km connection trail between four existing tracks
- Brand new track will connect world-famous Whitehaven Beach, rated as Australia’s #1 beach and as the fifth best in the world
- Located in the heart of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area

**Cooloola Great Walk**
- Great Sandy National Park
- 102km walking track
- Trail passes 500,000 year old Cooloola Sandmass
- Located close to international airports and Noosa

**Indicative timeline**
- 12 October 2018: EOI Document Release
- 16 November 2018: Final date to access EOI Document
- 30 November 2018: Closing date to submit EOI Proposal
- 1-7 December 2018: Proponent Presentations
- Q1 2019: Shortlisted Proponents notified
- Q2 2019: Applications for RFDP
- Q3 2019: Closing date for RFDP response
- Q4 2019: Binding documentation process
A new world-class trail for Australia

Proposed 96km dual use track between
Palm Cove in the south and
Port Douglas in the north

Queensland Government announced support for
the preparation of a detailed design and business
case for the
Wangetti Trail in May 2018

Expected to attract around 9,000 walkers and
19,000 mountain bikers to the region each year

Trail’s namesake - Wangetti Beach – is a culturally
significant place for the Yirrganydji People

Indicative timeline
30 May 2018
Government support for trail announced

Q2 2018
Feasibility study – trail alignment

Q2 to Q3 2018
Site studies

Q4 2018
Project approvals

Q4 2018 to Q2 2019
Detailed design

Q1 2020 to Q4 2021
Construction with early works from 2019
Wangetti Trail - Benefits

- Presentation of a world heritage area, supporting world heritage values
- Sustainable employment and cultural opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Investment in improved environmental outcomes supported by successful commercial operator
- Significant regional economic benefits and opportunities for Tropical North Queensland residents and businesses
- Benefits are largely captured by local communities as ecotourism expenditure tends to be relatively more concentrated and regional
- Benefits are expected to exceed costs over the life of the project by up to $300 million - depending on visitor demand and the value-added by tourist operators
- Increase in job creation across Tropical North Queensland throughout all phases of the project lifecycle
- Growth in existing sectors including tourism accommodation, food and transport
Wangetti Trail - Proposed Design

- 96km two-way route from Palm Cove to Port Douglas
- Features including lookouts 400m above sea level, beach walks, suspension bridges, mangrove boardwalks and croc sightings
- Full trail designed to be completed over multiple days for walkers and mountain bike riders
- Proposed to establish multiple accommodation nodes along Trail to allow enroute overnight stays – may include camping, glamping or eco lodges
- Traditional Owners of the land on which the Wangetti Trail passes, have been, and are being, engaged and will have an active role in the Project’s design, development and operation
- Approximately 75% of the Trail is located in Douglas Shire and the remaining 25% in the Cairns Regional Council
Wangetti Trail - Real Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander opportunities

- Construction phase activity (Business as usual)
- Ongoing service provision to operator
  - Guiding
  - Cultural interpretation / presentation
  - Accommodation
  - Retail
  - Trail maintenance
- Incorporate into commercial model
Current operators/attractions
- leveraging off the trails

- Regional trail assets attract a market that stays longer and spends more
- 5 day walk means a 7 - 8 day stay in the region
- Add on experiences:
  - Great Barrier Reef
  - Rainforest
  - Cultural
  - Food
Queensland – an adventure and nature based hub

5 out of 19 Australian World Heritage Sites are in Queensland

45% of all international visitors to Australia visited a national or state park.

Source: Tourism & Events Queensland, March 2018
North Queensland – a land and water adventure hotspot with an international airport at the centre

DITID is working with North Queensland councils to develop regional scale integrated adventure and nature based tourism attractions.