



## Desert Channels Queensland

# Position Paper - Tourism in Desert Channels Region

**November 2018**

Desert Channels Queensland Inc. (DCQ) is a community-based organisation working with landholders on the sustainable management of their land and water resources. Our goal is to have thriving communities with productive industries supported by a healthy environment.

**DCQ** position papers are for general information only. They are not intended to be, and should not be, relied on as a substitute for specialist advice. While every effort is taken to ensure the information is accurate, **DCQ** makes no representations and gives no warranties that this information is correct, current, complete, reliable or suitable for any purpose. We disclaim all responsibility and liability for any direct or indirect loss, damage, cost or expense whatsoever in the use of, or reliance upon, this information.

# Tourism in Desert Channels Region

## The issue

- Access to or developing the skills needed to balance tourism recreational and environmental outcomes and accommodate the travelling public
- Western Queensland may be seen as a significant distance to people to travel, however for some this is the appeal.
- Seasonal conditions are not always favourable for outdoor activities, particularly the heat of mid-summer
- It is possible that the natural environmental values that visitors come to see are not always valued by local people
- Tourism has been seen as an income diversification option for farmers, however this has proven a challenge to make consistent income.
- Access to public land to enable tourism destination development, particularly for the drive tourism market
- An attraction to the region are the wide open vistas, often on private land where landholder may be reluctant to allow public access

CSIRO and the Queensland Government recently identified seven megatrends that are likely to shape the Queensland Tourism sector to 2033. The megatrends<sup>i</sup>, and just some of the implications for the Outback, are presented next:

1. The Orient Express: The world economy is shifting from west to east and north to south. This is creating new markets and new sources of competition.

Implications for the Outback;

- Asian visitors currently make up a very small proportion of Outback visitors<sup>ii</sup>. To capitalise on the anticipated national growth, it must have a clear Asian market strategy including:
  - The need to build understanding and awareness of their needs; and
  - More businesses being 'international ready'.
  - Availability of Mandarin speaking guides and relevant products for Chinese visitors (Tourism Australia, 2011)
  - Cater to group travel and shopping experiences (Tourism Australia, 2011)
  - Encourage businesses to benchmark and improve the quality of their services by participating in Tourism Australia's ADS Scheme and the TQUAL tourism accreditation mark.

2. A Natural Advantage in a world where ecological habitats are disappearing, the unique natural assets of Queensland will become a stronger drawcard.

Implications for the Outback;

- The destination needs to develop tourism experiences in natural areas that are unique and differentiated from competitors to take advantage of this trend; and
- Partners need to develop compelling experiences which stand out in the marketplace.

3. Great Expectations Tourists of the future will have expectations for authentic and personalised experiences often involving social interaction<sup>iii</sup>.

Implications for the Outback;

- Businesses need to respond to the challenge and deliver quality service and experiences.

4. Bolts from the Blue Climate change and infectious disease outbreaks combined with safety concerns will have an increased impact. Economic 'shocks' (whether planned or unplanned) resulting from rapid acceleration or downscaling also will have a significant impact.

Implications for the Outback;

- Businesses and tourism managers need to monitor opportunities and be ready to respond, with imaginative marketing, packaging and pricing offers; and
- Businesses and destination managers need to be 'disaster-ready' and have resilience plans in place.

5. Digital Whispers People are changing the way they access and trust information in an online world.

Implications for the Outback;

- The destination needs to embrace a multichannel approach to communication and promotion. This includes building business skills and capacity and delivering new virtual travel/experiences in the form of providing rich information.

6. On the Move Humanity is increasingly mobile with people travelling further and more frequently for trade, business, events, education and healthcare.

Implications for the Outback;

- Maintaining air, rail and road access is key to maximising the potential of this trend. Particularly for the Outback, it is important to maintain key transport corridors, open new areas for four-wheel driving routes, capitalise on train infrastructure, and invest in regional airports.

7. The Lucky Country Australia and Queensland are increasingly wealthy, but expensive destinations are gifted with cultural and demographic diversity.

Implications for the Outback;

- The need to compete on quality, experience and service will have implications for investment and development decisions and destination and business levels.

Inland freshwater fishing is a recreational activity that can attract tourist to one of the regions natural assets, our rivers.

Approx. 18% of the region's population fish with the most common age being 30 – 44 years old. The highest number of days fished are Jan and Feb, a summer activity that might help promote tourism during the normally low tourist season.

DCQ region has over 261,000 ha's of Reserve and over 17,000 ha's of state land that could hold areas with significant biodiversity values that have nature based tourism destination potential.

## Position statements

Vision:

To be a State leader in showcasing our natural and cultural assets through connecting visitors to our wealth of nature and culture-based experiences.

Leverage significant natural and heritage attractions and third-party partnerships to expand distribution of the key visitor experience messages.

The objective is to facilitate tourism investment into regional landscapes where natural and agricultural world experiences add value to DCQ natural resource priorities.

Valuing flora and fauna species, their communities and ecosystems, and the 'broad - wide' landscapes of the Desert Channels Region can be advanced through tourism.

Building the Desert Channels Region's economy through greater awareness and appreciation for remnant vegetation, native species and wide-open spaces of Desert Channels landscapes, is a strategic means of increasing the community value of the natural environment.

Increasing the tourism potential of the region is a means of targeting Federal, State, Industry and tourist investments in conservation.

Tourism may assist the survival of iconic Australian species high value sites and entire ecosystems.

The focus is the delivery of infrastructure, tourism destinations, habitat management and regional/ local skills development to better target investments in building resilience and conserving Queensland's natural assets.

The program will support:

- Priority landscape scale ecosystems being maintained or improved across Queensland through revegetation, restoration and protection.
- Areas of identified high nature conservation significance being maintained or improved against the Common Nature Conservation Classification System.
- Contribute to halting the decline in populations of 'at risk' flora and fauna species.
- State significant corridors becoming more important. Identification of key areas where corridors are needed should inform priority investment.
- Key locations being developed as tourism destinations.
- Assistance for local and state government in the development of public sites.
- Provide opportunities for state government offset investment to not only achieve biodiversity and vegetation management outcomes but also achieve a growth in tourism infrastructure.

The outcome will be:

- Increased tourism for DCQ Region, including drive, fly/ drive market. Increase the high-end market with glamping options.
- Increase the length of stay through increased number and quality of sites destination, even roadside stops with educational signage.
- Install basic infrastructure e.g. walking tracks, signage such as 'what plant is that?'
- The integration of tourism investment with current scientific and practical conservation knowledge to enhance landscape connectivity, corridor plantings, habitat and regional ecosystem restoration and protection strategies and activities. This will assist conservation planners and practitioners to maximise restoration success by critically evaluating the tourism investment opportunities required to improve the likelihood of success at various stages throughout the planning and implementation process.

## DCQ recommends

- Seek collaboration opportunities with regional tourism bodies
- Seek funding to work with public land managers to assess reserves and other tenures for sites of high biodiversity value and potential tourism destinations
- Destination creation through the development of reserve management plan with a balance of conservation and tourism/ recreation objectives and actions/ works
- Enhance roadside rest stops, education, increase the length of stay

## DCQ will

1. Pursue a formal partnership with Outback Tourism Association
2. Seek opportunities to link tourism outcomes with other funding milestones.
3. Seek resources to make a positive contribution to destination creation where natural resource, biodiversity outcomes can be balanced with tourism/ recreation outcomes.
4. Leverage off the relationship with Local Government and QTMR to look at enhancing the value of public land reserves, including undertaking audits of reserves for biodiversity and tourism potential.

This program will combine multiple sources of spatial information to make decisions that have implications across key economic, social and environmental domains. It will, for example, integrate tourism opportunities, agricultural futures, biodiversity co-benefits, and water risks to identify priority areas for revegetation, conservation and recreation strategies.

Staff will work with local and state government, conservation and tourism operators' groups to develop tourism site management plans. These plans may look at linking up corridors of vegetation, such as along creek lines, revegetating or fencing of important areas, managing fire or weed and pest control.

## References

- Tourism Australia [2020 Summary of Tourism Australia's China 2020 Strategic Plan. Distribution 2020: Situation Analysis](#) (2011), [Market profiles](#).
- Austrade [Accessible Tourism in Australia and Queensland](#). [Outback Queensland Tourism Research Australia summary of results](#)
- Tourism and Events Queensland [Connect with Culture – 50 ways to experience indigenous culture](#); [Queensland: a world leader in fitness tourism](#). [Domestic High Value Traveller Profile 2018](#). [Social Indicators 2017 Outback](#). [Outback Regional Snapshot: Three-year Average, year ending December 2017](#). [Regional Tourism Satellite Account 2016-17](#) (data tables). [This is Queensland App Store](#).
- [Tourist visitation to National Parks](#) – snapshot of the year ending March 2018
- QPWS, DNPSR (2015) [Queensland Ecotourism plan 2015 - 2020](#)
- QDAF [Results of the 2013-14 State-wide Recreational Fishing Survey](#) 15% of Queenslanders 5 years or older were recreational fishers.

---

<sup>i</sup> Megatrends identified in the Queensland Government 2014 report [Destination Success the 20-year plan for Queensland Tourism](#)).

<sup>ii</sup> Visitation currently dominated by western markets in Outback Queensland. Europe, including the UK, was the region's largest source market with 11,000 visitors (Tourism & Events Queensland 2018. *Outback Regional Snapshot*). However, China is Australia's most valuable inbound tourism market, contributing 3.26 billion to Australian economy in 2010. Tourism Australia (2011) has identified faster arrivals growth from China than any other market (24% increase between 2009 and 2010). For more information see the [2020 Summary of Tourism Australia's China 2020 Strategic Plan](#). The current spend per trip for Chinese visitors is \$8,587 per trip, and \$198 per night, many on return visits ([Tourism Australia Market profile](#))

<sup>iii</sup> In the [Outback Destination Tourism Plan 2017-2020](#), Tourism Australia (TA) has defined its international target market as the 'Experience Seeker' who are globe trotters looking for authentic interactions, brag-able locations to get off the beaten track and to immerse themselves in local culture. Experience Seekers are Australia's highest yielding international market and are more likely to increase their length of stay and average spend in comparison to others.