



Mackay

Social Indicators 2010

This study examines the social impacts of tourism on the local communities, as perceived by its residents. The research is intended to inform the decision making of state and local authorities, as well as tourism bodies. It looks at the social, geographic and economic circumstances of respondents in order to give a context to the findings.

The Mackay region is an economic powerhouse for Queensland. Blessed with a diverse range of natural and agricultural resources, it is the giant of the state's coal and sugar industries. From the rich deposits of the Bowen Basin coal belt, the region generates 85 per cent of Queensland's coal, making it the largest coal mining area in Australia.¹

The region is the biggest sugar producing area in Australia and the city boasts the largest bulk sugar terminal in the world.¹ Added to these are a strong beef cattle industry and burgeoning tourism sector. As a coastal city, Mackay flanks the World

Heritage Listed Great Barrier Reef and is a major point of access for the Whitsunday Island group.

The upshot of all this prosperity is that, Mackay's estimated 147,000 residents¹ commonly work in service industries such as education, accommodation, hospitality and foodstuffs to support the largest industry of the region - coal.² Few work in the tourism sector. In fact, only one in 10 residents actually benefits personally from tourism, which makes Mackay somewhat of an exception to the Queensland average.

The findings of this and other studies, by Victoria University's Centre for Tourism and Services Research, show that communities view tourism in a more positive light if they derive financial benefit from it. In the case of Mackay, for the Year Ending December 2009, only four per cent of Queensland's domestic visitor market (590,000) and three per cent of the international market (55,000) made the visit.³

64% of residents feel that their local area should be trying to attract more tourists

Feelings about local area and tourists

		Queensland %	Mackay %
Feelings about local area	I like it, I can't think of anywhere else I would rather live	37	28
	I enjoy living here but can think of other places I would enjoy equally	50	59
	I only live here because circumstances demand it and would prefer to live somewhere else	13	14
Feelings about the number of tourists	Fewer	8	5
	About the same	50	31
	More	43	64

■ = statistically significant difference

Nevertheless, residents canvassed for this study were upbeat about tourism. The majority indicated that they "really liked" tourists, wanted to see more coming to the area and thought the city should be doing more to attract visitors. They thought tourism improved the local economy, and lead to increases in the region's profile and feelings of local pride. Other positives included facilities maintenance and new infrastructure. Residents were less likely, than other Queenslanders to agree with the following negative impacts of tourism – increase disruption to local lives, negative impact on the environment, negative impact on local character and lack of access for locals. Overall, their stance was more neutral on both the positive and negative impacts of tourism.



"More facilities for tourists would mean better facilities for locals. Quality of life would, I think, improve."

Mackay Social Indicators Respondent 2010

Opinion diverged only marginally and then amongst residents who thought that tourism lead to increased prices. This group was also more likely than average Queenslanders to agree that tourism had a negative impact on both their personal quality of life and the community as a whole.

Overall, on the question of how tourism

affected the personal quality of life only nine per cent of residents stated moderately to very positive. This figure is perhaps indicative of the low level of employment or engagement in tourism. For the most part though (51%), residents thought tourism had a moderate or very positive affect on the community at large.

In relation to how Mackay's population stacks up compared with the Queensland average, a greater proportion of its residents are under 45 years. People are more likely to work full time and earn more than \$100K per annum. Most residents have lived in the area for longer than 10 years and the vast majority, on the whole, enjoy the lifestyle and living in their local area.

The city landscape tends to reflect the nature of its roots - a service town to strong traditional industries and

until very recently, with little focus on tourism development. Change has come though, in the form of the Mackay Marina Village, a new convention centre and modern art gallery.

Residents are keen to see tourism development continue and are also clear about how they want that growth to occur.

Sensitive to the fact that tourists may only see the city as a gateway to the Whitsunday islands, many residents

said they'd like to see greater emphasis on the natural attractions of the area: the reef; beaches; fishing and wildlife, as well as educational and/or historical tours of important coal, sugar and gold sites.

This stands to reason given that when people were asked what words first came to mind when they thought about their local area, the most common responses were mining and sugar cane, and to a lesser degree, beaches, sunny and tropical.

Contact with Tourists, Feelings and Development

		Queensland %	Mackay %
Feelings about tourists	I really like tourists	49	68
	I tolerate tourists	35	23
	I adjust my lifestyle to avoid tourists	10	3
	I stay away from places tourists go	5	7
Contact with tourists	I never come into contact with tourists	18	19
	I see tourists around but don't usually talk to them	52	54
	I often interact with tourists as part of my job	13	11
	I often meet tourists around town and talk to them	14	12
	I have made friends with tourists during their stay but have not kept in contact	7	6
	I have made friends with tourists and kept in contact after they have left	5	5
Preferred development growth	Happy with continued growth	59	63
	Happy but no more growth	25	13
	Want less tourism	6	5
	More growth different direction	10	19

■ = statistically significant difference

Overall Impacts of Tourism

	Queensland		Mackay	
	% positive affect	% negative affect	% positive affect	% negative affect
Overall impact on personal quality of life	11	4	9	3
Overall impact on local community	50	2	51	3

% positive affect is based on the proportion of respondents who cited the top two ratings on a seven point scale ranging from very negative (-3) to very positive (+3).

% negative affect is based on the proportion of respondents who cited the bottom two ratings on a seven point scale ranging from very negative (-3) to very positive (+3).

Positive Impacts of Tourism

Because of tourism there is...	Queensland			Mackay		
	% agree	% positive affect on personal quality of life	% positive affect on community as a whole	% agree	% positive affect on personal quality of life	% positive affect on community as a whole
Improved economic benefits	87	16	58	88	17	59
Increased regional profile	76	16	52	76	9	51
Increased local pride	65	20	50	69	16	49
Improved facility maintenance	60	25	53	63	18	51
New infrastructure	60	36	65	53	27	65
More interesting things to do	54	35	65	44	36	61

% positive affect is based on the proportion of respondents who cited the top two ratings on a seven point scale ranging from very negative (-3) to very positive (+3).

■ = statistically significant difference

Negative Impacts of Tourism

Because of tourism there is...	Queensland			Mackay		
	% agree	% negative affect on personal quality of life	% negative affect on community as a whole	% agree	% negative affect on personal quality of life	% negative affect on community as a whole
Increased prices	53	20	18	47	40	30
Increased property values	45	22	25	41	34	30
Rise in delinquent behaviour	36	15	31	30	15	25
More disruption	31	19	24	17	29	34
Negative impact on the environment	29	12	31	20	20	34
Negative impact on local character	29	9	11	21	13	15
Increased opportunity costs	25	19	24	20	33	32
Lack of access for locals	16	28	28	8	80	69

% negative affect is based on the proportion of respondents who cited the bottom two ratings on a seven point scale ranging from very negative (-3) to very positive (+3).

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Demographics

		Queensland %	Mackay %
Gender	Male	50	53
	Female	50	47
Life stage	Under 45 years, no children	29	21
	Under 45 years, with children	26	36
	45 years or more, no children	32	30
	45 years or more, with children	13	13
Years of residence	Less than 2 years	9	13
	2-5 years	21	18
	6-10 years	15	12
	11-20 years	19	14
	More than 20 years	14	18
	All my life	22	25
Place of birth	Within 50km of where you currently live	22	25
	Elsewhere in Queensland	24	28
	Elsewhere in Australia	34	32
	In another country	21	15
Education	Completed Year 10	11	15
	Completed Year 11/12	18	20
	Finished technical education	15	17
	Tertiary diploma	12	9
	Finished university degree	14	12
	Finished post-graduate degree	5	4
	Other	26	24
Employment status	Working full-time	41	51
	Working part-time	17	11
	Unemployed, looking for work	4	4
	Unemployed, not seeking work	1	0
	Retired	14	12
	Student	5	0
	Student/part-time work	3	0
	Home duties	10	16
Other	Other	4	7
	Personal benefit	10	10
	Family benefit	10	5
Directly benefit from tourism (e.g. work in or own a business that profits from tourists or rent a property to tourists)	No benefit	83	87
	Less than \$60,000	40	27
	\$60,000 - \$99,000	26	21
	\$100,000 or more	15	31
Income	Prefer not to say	18	22

■ = statistically significant difference

1. [Mackay Fast Facts](#), Winton Group

2. Census Data 2006, Australian Bureau of Statistics

3. National Visitor Survey and International Visitor Survey Year Ending March 2010, Tourism Research Australia

Base: Queensland n=3834; Mackay n=175