

Why measure environmental indicators?

Being more environmentally sustainable ultimately leads to increased profitability. This is achieved through:

- better management of resources like energy, water and waste
- reducing consumption and waste
- having a new competitive edge - environmental credentials.

Knowing this, Tourism Queensland developed a suite of environmental indicators to measure and manage the impact of tourism on the environment. These indicators will be used in future state, regional and local planning and development strategies. The indicators look across operators, associations as well as visitors.

The aim this year is to set the benchmark. In future years this study will be Repeated with any improvements noted and targets set.

Indicators describe an environmental factor at a given moment, show trends and track progress to a defined goal. They can be a means by which better discussion are made and emerging issues and impacts identified

Where are we at?

1. Energy saving initiatives - operators

Easier, less costly initiatives have been commonly implemented, such as energy saving light bulbs, energy saving appliances, switching off appliances at the wall and setting air conditioners to 24degrees. One in ten operators surveyed had undertaken more significant activity. Very few operators intend to implement further initiatives in the next 12 months.

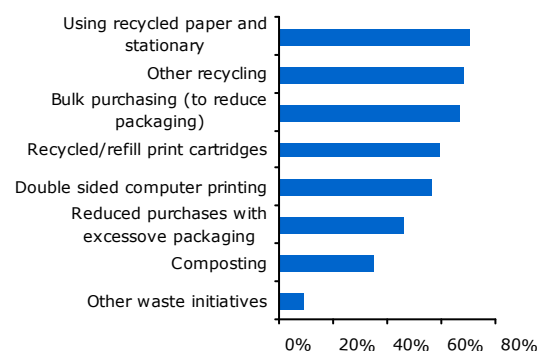
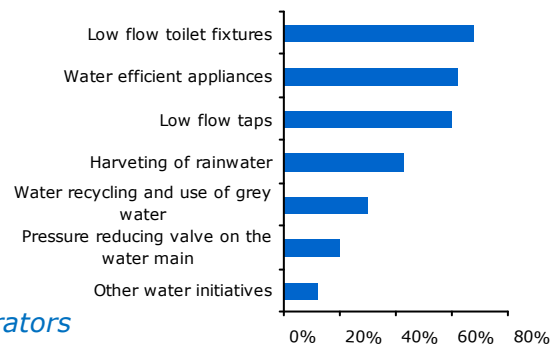
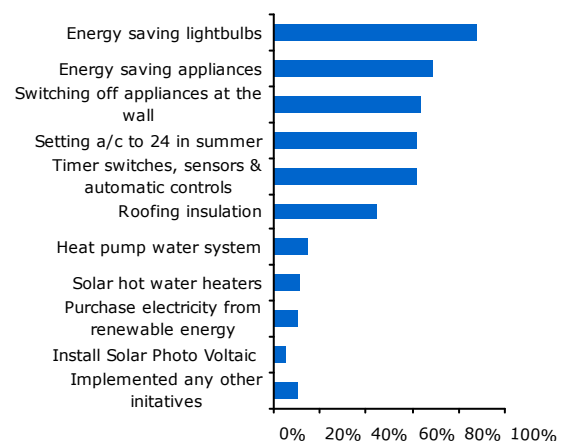
2. Water saving initiatives - operators

Water efficient appliances, low flow toilets and low flow taps have been implemented by most operators surveyed. Few operators recycle water or use grey water. Very few operators intend to implement further initiatives in the next 12 months.

3. Waste management initiatives - operators

Over two thirds of operators surveyed recycle and purchase in bulk. Less than half of operators have reduced buying goods with excessive packaging or are composting. Again, very few operators intend to implement further initiatives over the next year.

The three indicators above look at limiting overall consumption as well as increasing uptake of renewable energy sources.





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4. Implementation of adaption measures – operators

Only 1% of operators surveyed had not taken up any energy, water and waste management initiatives.

Additionally, three in 10 operators surveyed had implemented a formal staff program on environmental adaption. Another 10% indicated that they would do so in the next 12 months.

Two in five operators surveyed indicated they had a formal program to educate customers on environmental adaption, with a further one in ten planning to do so in the next 12 months.

This indicator aims to demonstrate operator commitment to reduce environmental and social impacts.

Environmental adaption encapsulates all activities that make your business better suited to its environment including energy saving initiatives, water saving initiatives and waste management initiatives

5. Positive policy environment - operators

One quarter of operators surveyed have a sustainability policy.

Further, the majority of operators surveyed (85%) were not a member of any environmental benchmarking or certification programs. Environmental benchmarking and certification programs aim to help operators on their path to sustainability and therefore are indicative of sustainability policy up-take.

A sustainability policy is a statement of commitment to improve environmental and social sustainability over time

6. Average energy use, water use and waste sent to landfill - operators

This information has been supplied by EarthCheck. EarthCheck provides tourism operators with an environmental management framework to help them achieve sustainability. Caution is advised when interpreting this information as operators surveyed have already committed to better management of their resources. This indicator aims to encourage more sustainable use of non-renewable resources.

Queensland Accommodation Operators		
Energy	Water	Waste
190.0 mega joules per guest night	400.1 litres per guest night	12.8 litres per guest night

7. Sustainable use of protected areas – operators

This information has been supplied by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. Between 01 October and 31 December 2009 21 fines were issued to tourism vessels operating on the Great Barrier Reef.

Minimal fines being issued in protected areas such as the Great Barrier Reef is an indicator of sustainable use of protected areas.

8. Sustainability policy – tourism associations

Just over one third of tourism associations surveyed, indicated that they already have a sustainability policy. A similar proportion intends to write a sustainability policy in the next 12 months. Tourism associations include regional tourism associations, local tourism associations and Tourism Queensland.

If associations that have a sustainability policy is an indication that they are proactive in their approach to sustainability and encourage members to be proactive.

9. Appreciation of conservation - visitors

48% of Australians surveyed agree that they 'prefer to travel to places that show an appreciation for conservation i.e. an appreciation of preservation, management and care of natural and cultural resources'.

In addition, 14% indicated that they participated in a conservation activity on their last holiday.

This indicator looks at the involvement of visitors in conservation activities as well as operator's efforts to educate visitors.

10. Carbon offsets – visitors

55% of Australians surveyed indicated that they are aware that some organisations offer voluntary carbon offset payments. However, only 18% did so on their last holiday. The vast majority of carbon off-sets were made with Qantas or Virgin Blue.

It is important to monitor consumer concern for the environment. This also indicates that greater promotion of carbon offsetting is needed.

11. Carbon footprint – Queensland tourism industry

This indicator looks at the whole Queensland tourism industry. The Queensland tourism industry carbon footprint is 13.9 million metric tonnes (Mt) of green house gas (GHG) emissions. It consists of 6.6 Mt of direct GHG emissions and 7.3 Mt of indirect GHG emissions.

Queensland's greatest consideration for the future is private motor vehicles. Visitors using cars to travel to their Queensland holiday destination contributes 2.5 Mt of direct GHG emissions. If Queensland were to become a carbon-constrained economy (an economy that demands reduction of GHG), distribution of visitors across the State could undergo significant change.

Things that were taken into consideration when measuring the carbon footprint:

- It is based on expenditure by both international and domestic visitors to Queensland.
- It includes direct as well as some indirect emissions.
- It takes the Kyoto Protocol into consideration. The Kyoto Protocol seeks to reduce annual GHG emissions in developed countries.
- It includes emissions produced by international visitor's flights to and from Queensland. Queensland's distance from key international markets means that emissions from international flights can be substantial. This inclusion helps to mitigate future risk as official international aviation rules are yet to be determined.
- 2003-4 was the last year all of the measures needed for this calculation were available.

What should we think about?

- Results suggest that operator uptake of initiatives to limit consumption or to increase use of renewable resources has reached an impasse. Most have implemented the more affordable options. Further, they have indicated that additional initiatives would be too hard or that the cost savings are not substantive enough.
- Relatively few tourism associations or operators have a sustainability policy - a statement of their commitment to improve their sustainability. Although, three in ten operators have implemented a formal environmental adaption program with staff and two in five have implemented a program with consumers.
- Most Australians agree that they prefer to travel places with an appreciation of conservation and are aware of carbon offsetting. However, in practise few participated in a conservation activity or purchased carbon off-sets on their last holiday.
- If Queensland were to become a carbon constrained economy, distribution of visitors across the State could undergo significant change.
- These results will have a different impact for each region and industry subsector. For instance rules and regulation vary across Queensland and will impact results.



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