

Future Strategic Priorities

The following strategic priorities have been identified through consultation with key nature-based tourism industry representatives and government stakeholders. These are currently being addressed through key planning documents including the Queensland Tourism Strategy.

1. Leadership on climate change

Climate change is particularly relevant to Queensland's nature based tourism industry. Preparation of the industry for the impacts of climate change, including mitigation and adaptation techniques and education on carbon off-set schemes is considered critical. The mainstreaming of sustainable tourism principles is vital to ensure high environmental standards are embraced by the broader tourism industry.

2. Continued mainstreaming of the nature-based tourism industry

Ongoing incorporation of nature-based tourism planning, development and management initiatives in the general business of tourism agencies, protected area managers, councils and other key stakeholders is required to ensure that priorities for the industry are addressed.

3. Partnerships between protected area managers and the tourism industry

A continued focus on the development of real partnerships between tourism operators and protected area managers is critical. Consultation, communication and cooperation is vital at all levels.

4. Accessing our natural assets

The active implementation of the "Tourism in Protected Areas" (TIPA) initiative has been identified by industry as a high priority to ensure streamlined regulatory systems and the establishment of equitable, effective access to protected areas taking into consideration commercial realities. Further, the prioritised development of high quality Protected Area visitor infrastructure, access and experiences, taking into account consumer demand, is vital. Innovative approaches to the development of experiences need to be identified and real public-private partnerships established to ensure Queensland continues to offer unique natural experiences. The ongoing protection of our natural assets can be facilitated through sustainable nature-based tourism.

5. Visitor satisfaction research

Dedicated consumer research into the satisfaction levels of visitors who participate in nature-based tourism activities is required to inform the development of experiences and appropriate infrastructure at key visitor nodes.

6. Nature-based product development and innovation

A strong focus on product development and innovation is required to broaden the range of high quality nature-based tourism experiences available in Queensland. The implementation of industry innovation initiatives and the ongoing allocation of resources with relevant expertise needs to be ensured to increase product development and innovation.

7. Profiling Queensland's natural adventures

The positioning of Queensland as Australia's premier, sustainable nature-based tourism destination needs to be fostered through world-class international and domestic marketing initiatives targeted at market segments that seek a Queensland-style holiday experience.

Looking Ahead...

While the nature-based industry was in its infancy when the first Queensland Ecotourism Plan (1997–2002) was developed, the focus on the segment over the past decade has resulted in strong understanding, competitive positioning and industry maturity. The growth of this segment through the Queensland Ecotourism Plan 2003–2008 has led to a number of achievements and the incorporation of initiatives for the future into the mainstream business of key government agencies and industry bodies through dedicated strategies including the Queensland Tourism Strategy.

The Queensland nature-based tourism industry is renowned for its professionalism and innovation and the state is now broadly viewed as one of Australia's leading nature-based tourism destinations. Moving forward, each of the above priorities need to be addressed by relevant state and local government agencies and industry bodies, committed to the ongoing success of the nature-based tourism industry.

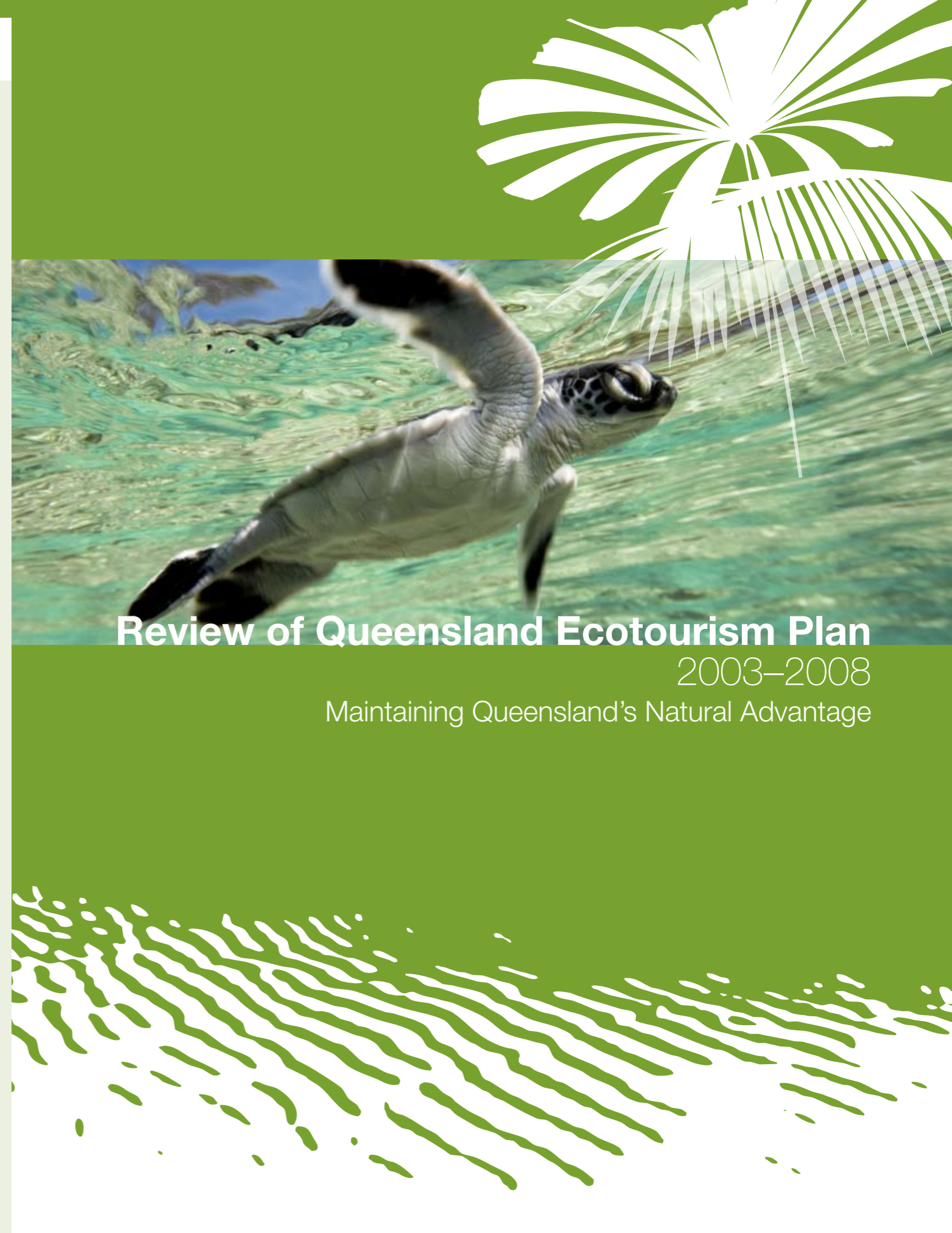
For further information on the Queensland Ecotourism Plan 2003–2008 Review please contact Tourism Queensland:

Ph: 07 3535 3535

Email: info@tq.com.au



4WD Track to Central Station, Fraser Island



Review of Queensland Ecotourism Plan 2003–2008

Maintaining Queensland's Natural Advantage

Vision – Queensland Ecotourism Plan 2003–2008

Queensland will be the world's leading ecotourism destination with government, industry and the community working in partnership and adopting best practice planning, development, management and marketing.

Queensland's natural assets underpin the long-term sustainability and competitive advantage of the state's tourism industry. The nature and style of the Queensland holiday experience is based on a combination of unique and diverse natural attractions and a wide range of high quality nature-based tourism experiences.

Queensland has secured a leading position in the competitive Australian nature-based tourism industry. This position has been developed by virtue of industry achievements and the establishment of strong partnerships between government and industry stakeholders. There is an inherent need to continue to foster innovation and a best practice approach to maintain this competitive advantage into the future.

What is Ecotourism?

Ecotourism encompasses a spectrum of nature-based activities that foster visitor appreciation and understanding of natural and cultural heritage and are managed to be ecologically, economically and socially sustainable.¹

Background to Queensland Ecotourism Plan 2003–2008

Great achievements have been realised in the planning, development and marketing of 'best practice' nature-based tourism over the past decade. Building on the accomplishments of the first Queensland Ecotourism Plan (1997–2002), the Queensland Ecotourism Plan 2003–2008 aimed to further protect and strengthen Queensland's competitive position in the national and international nature-based tourism markets.

The Queensland Ecotourism Plan was designed to outline a clear direction for the future of nature-based tourism in Queensland by providing a framework for planning, developing, managing and marketing the industry. The plan focussed on five distinct themes supported by detailed actions that have been delivered by Tourism Queensland in partnership with key stakeholders including Local and State Government agencies, the tourism industry and community stakeholders.

The plan committed to delivering its vision through the following five key themes:

- Environmental protection and management
- Ecotourism industry development
- Infrastructure development
- Community development
- Market Research



The Boulders, Babinda, Tropical North Queensland

¹ An updated definition of ecotourism was devised to guide the formulation of the Queensland Ecotourism Plan 2003–2008. The definition of the term ecotourism is still debated around the world. In this document, the term "ecotourism" stands for quality nature-based tourism which embraces the above principles. Importantly, ecotourism is not to be seen as a niche market. It is acknowledged that Queensland's tourism industry is based on our natural assets and associated key experiences.

² The ECO Certification program recognises best practice sustainability, natural area management and the provision of quality ecotourism experiences in Australia. The program is administered by Ecotourism Australia.

Key Achievements: Queensland Ecotourism Plan 2003–2008

The following table provides a highline overview of key achievements realised through the implementation of the Queensland Ecotourism Plan. A detailed report card has been developed outlining specific initiatives and outcomes.

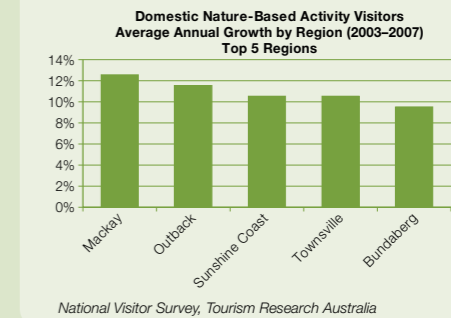
1. Strong growth of nature-based visitor numbers and visitor nights

* The number of international visitors to Queensland who participated in nature-based activities during their trip to Australia increased at an average of 5% per year from 2003 to 2007. During this time the number of international nature-based visitor nights increased an average of 7% per year. (*International Visitor Survey, Tourism Research Australia*)

* The number of domestic visitors who participated in nature-based activities whilst in Queensland also increased at an average of 5% per year from 2003 to 2007, with domestic nature-based visitor nights increasing by 4% per year over the four years. The growth in domestic nature-based visitor nights experienced during 2003–2007 is in contrast to the total number of domestic visitor nights that demonstrated no change over the same period. (*National Visitor Survey, Tourism Research Australia*)

* Research demonstrates that international nature-based activity visitors to Queensland stayed longer in the state than domestic nature-based activity visitors. At the year ended December 2007, domestic nature-based activity visitors to Queensland had an average length of stay of 5.9 nights whilst international nature-based activity visitors who made a stopover in Queensland stayed on average 17.9 nights. (*National and International Visitor Surveys, Tourism Research Australia*)

* Strongest growth in domestic nature-based visitation is demonstrated by the graph below:



2. Increased uptake of Queensland's nature-based products in key wholesale programs

A strong increase in inclusion of nature-based product in key international wholesale programs has been achieved as a direct result of successful product development and trade training initiatives.

3. Formation of networks between protected area managers and industry

Formal consultation frameworks have been established to facilitate collaboration between the tourism industry and protected area management agencies. These frameworks strengthen the cooperation on the development of plans, policies and guidelines that may affect nature-based tourism activities. A more business-like relationship between park managers and tourism operators has been developed and key partnerships formed.

4. Strong uptake of best practise standards among Queensland nature-based operators

A strong, continued focus on the promotion and endorsement of best practice standards has resulted in an outstanding industry uptake of relevant programs and implementation of best practise initiatives. Queensland leads the nation in the uptake of the ECO Certification Program², with consistent 10% growth in the number of certified operators each year since 2005. Queensland's nature-based operators continue to win state, national and world tourism awards.

5. Increased community engagement

Coordinated consultation networks have been established to ensure close collaboration between the tourism industry and community stakeholders. This includes the development of formal working relationships with conservation groups, Traditional Owners and other community groups.

6. Implementation of a focussed research program

Leading research projects have been undertaken that address contemporary issues to ensure ongoing sustainable development of the nature-based tourism industry. This has resulted in the provision and application of key insights into planning, development and management needs of nature-based tourism activities.

7. Improved understanding of our consumers

Major research has been conducted into the needs and aspirations of domestic and international target markets. This has led to a broad understanding of consumer demand in relation to nature-based experiences.

8. Mainstreaming of Queensland's nature-based tourism segment

Critical initiatives focussed on the marketing, planning and development of Queensland's nature-based tourism industry have resulted in the successful mainstreaming of this segment. Nature-based tourism planning and development activity is now incorporated in general tourism development frameworks.

9. Marketing of nature-based tourism

Queensland's brand, marketing strategies and tactical activity embrace Queensland's nature-based experiences, focussing on its world-class "Natural Adventures."

The success of the Queensland Ecotourism Plan 2003–2008, in particular the above achievements have contributed to the recognition of nature-based experiences as the cornerstone of Queensland's tourism industry. This has resulted in nature-based tourism now occupying a prominent position within key regional and state-wide tourism strategies.

Whilst significant achievements have been made, there are critical challenges ahead. These issues require dedicated resources and are being addressed as part of a cross-agency approach to maintain Queensland's position at the forefront of the world's nature-based tourism destinations.