Interim Findings Report

Outback Queensland Tourism Association

Destination Management Plan

August 2025

Developed by :

SPARROWLY GROUP

Contents

Document Purpose

This Interim Findings Report provides a summary of the current landscape, key insights and strategic context for the development of the Outback Queensland Destination Management Plan 2025-30 (DMP).

It synthesises critical information from desktop analyses to inform the next stages of planning and development of the DMP, including stakeholder engagement.

1. Regional Context

1.1. Outback Queensland

Outback Queensland stretches across 901,574 square kilometres, approximately 68% of the state.[1] Five regions - North West, Central West, Far West, South West and East - cover 19 local government areas (Figure 1).

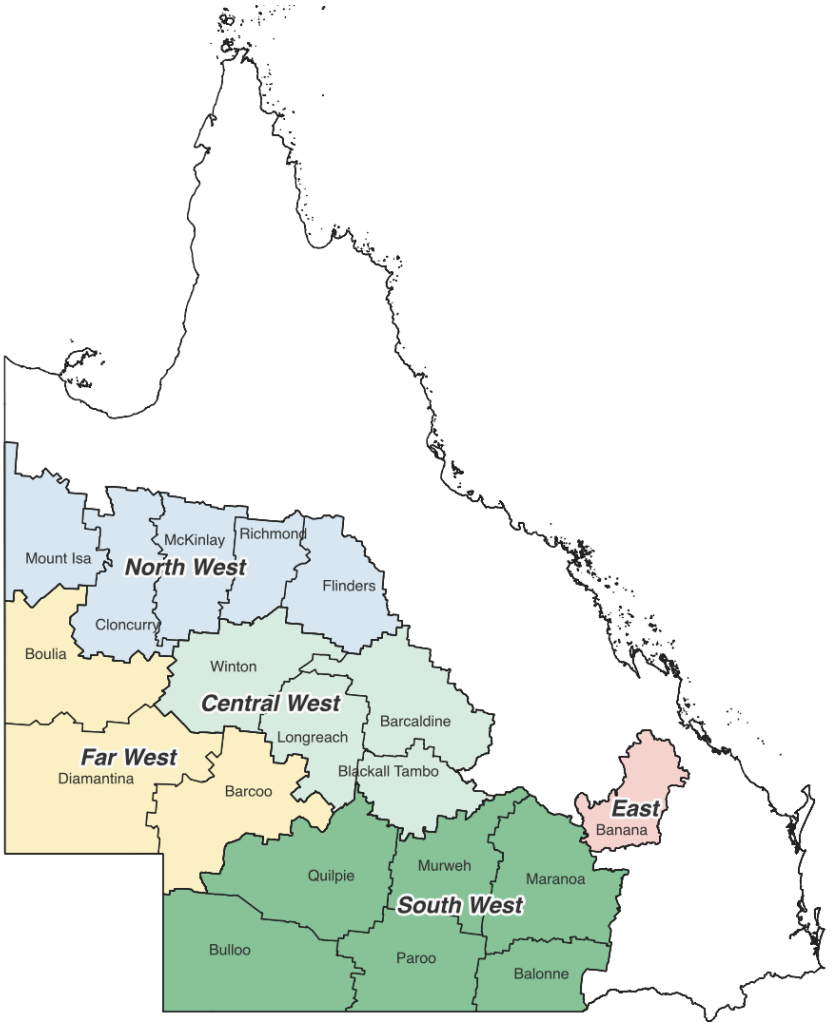

Figure 1 - Outback Queensland regional map.

Access to Outback Queensland is largely dependent on road, with rail and air options. Often transport is affected by weather conditions and availability. The region has a strong drive tourism market due to its well-connected major highways and routes. Outside of tourism, air capacity is important for both residents and medical services, and is constantly progressing with upgrades to airports and more flight routes being added.

[1] Tourism and Events Queensland, 'Welcome to the Outback', https://www.queensland.com/au/en/places-to-see/destinations/outback-queensland, accessed 14 Aug. 2025.

1.2. Industries

Due to the vastness of the region, remoteness is synonymous with Outback Queensland, leading to large-scale industries including mining, agriculture and the emerging energy sector mainstay employers and economic pillars.

Outback Queensland is a significant mining region, known for its diverse mineral deposits and mining towns, especially in the North West. Key resources extracted include copper, zinc, lead, gold, coal and opal.[2] The region also boasts the world's largest remote solar farm, supplying renewable energy to support mining operations. However, mining is a declining industry in some regions, with the recent closure of the largest mine in Mount Isa in July 2025 for example. Many of these regions are looking to identify future industry opportunities including tourism.[3]

Agriculture, forestry and fishing is significant in the region with the production of beef cattle, goats and wool, as well as farming cotton, fruits and vegetables. The South West has a stronger reliance on agriculture, with 23.9% of its population employed in the sector, whereas the North West has 8.3%.[4]

Growth in the energy generation sector for renewable energy is seen by North West Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (NWQROC) and Central Western Queensland Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD) as a key opportunity for leveraging their abundance of land and natural resources.[5] [6]

[2] Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development, 'Explore Queensland: Resources map', https://www.nrmmrrd.qld.gov.au/mining-exploration/investors/map, accessed 14 Aug. 2025.
[3] Glencore Australia, 'Community update on Mount Isa Mines', https://www.glencore.com.au/media-and-insights/news/community-update-on-mount-isa-mines, accessed 14 Aug. 2025.
[4] Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Region summary: Outback - North', https://dbr.abs.gov.au/region.html?lyr=sa3&rgn=31502, accessed 11 Jul. 2025.
[5] Central Western Queensland Remote Area Planning and Development (RAPAD), *Adaption to a Diversified Economy*, https://rapad.com.au/publications/cwq-adaption-to-a-diversified-economy-report/, accessed 8 Jul. 2025.
[6] Mount Isa to Townsville Economic Development Zone (MITEZ), *STRATEGIC PLAN 2022 - 2025*, https://mitez.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/MITEZ-Glossy-Doc-Layout_v3_19012022_PrintReady.pdf, accessed 8 Jul. 2025.

1.3. Positioning and Awareness

Key product experience strengths include paleo and geo tourism connecting visitors to the region's history and mining strengths, rich Indigenous heritage and Australian culture, astrotourism and wide open spaces.

Experiences in the region are becoming more accessible due to the expansion of self-drive itineraries and upgrades to transport infrastructure.[7] This includes ongoing bitumen sealing on the Outback Way through Boulia,[8] road sealing near Quilpie,[9] and the upgrade of the Warrego Highway truck stop in Maranoa to safely accommodate increased passenger and heavy vehicle traffic.[10] For air transport expansion, the Thangool and Taroom aerodromes have upgraded to accommodate larger aircraft and relevant regulations,[11] and Winton upgrading their runway and tarmac.[12]

Outback Queensland has strong brand awareness and recognition for outback adventures in Australia, despite strong competition (see section 2.2). Based on Regional Brand Performance findings, most respondents (87%) have heard of Outback Queensland, with 13% of respondents indicating they visited the region in the past 12 months.[13] Growth was equal to other Queensland regions, including Queensland Country, Capricorn, Bundaberg, Mackay and Gladstone.

The region's brand power is strongest amongst regional Queenslanders, couples and solo travellers. Outback Queensland has increased its 'Meaningful' brand attributes by 21 points, while 'Salience' and 'Difference' both fell. Despite this, Outback Queensland is a highly differentiated brand due to its focus on outback experiences and dinosaur tourism rather than coastal or rainforest experiences.[14]

[7] Tourism and Events Queensland, Self Drive Itineraries, https://www.outbackqueensland.com.au/drives/, accessed 4 Aug. 2025.
[8] Boulia Shire Council, 'Annual Report 2023-2024', https://www.boulia.qld.gov.au/files/assets/public/v/1/council/council-documents/annual-reports/2023-2024-annual-report-and-financials.pdf, accessed 1 Jul. 2025
[9] Quilpie Shire Council, 'Annual Report 2024', https://quilpie.qld.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/New-QSC0007-QSC-Annual-Report-2023-24-UPDATE_FA_WEB.pdf, accessed 1 Jul 2025.
[10] Maranoa Regional Council, 'Operational Plan 2024-2025', https://www.maranoa.qld.gov.au/downloads/file/2901/operation-plan-2024-2025-financial-year, accessed 1 Jul. 2025.
[11] Banana Shire, 'Banana Shire Community Plan 2017 2027', https://www.banana.qld.gov.au/downloads/file/4619/banana-shire-community-plan-2017-2027, accessed 1 Jul. 2025
[12] Winton Shire Council, 'Corporate Plan 2022 2027', https://www.winton.qld.gov.au/downloads/file/2128/corporate-plan-2022-2027, accessed 1 Jul. 2025.
[13] Tourism and Events Queensland, Outback Regional Brand Performance Research Summary - July 2025, accessed 22 Jul. 2025.
[14] Ibid.

2. Visitor Economy Snapshot

2.1. Trips to Outback Queensland

There were 1.127 million trips to Outback Queensland in 2024 (YE Dec), with 1.107 million of those visits being domestic, rising 15% from the previous year (Table 1).[15] The number of domestic nights in the region also rose 5%. International visitors had a slight increase at 5% for trips and 1% for nights. The average length of stay did drop for both groups, at 9% and 5% respectively.[16] Intrastate visitation accounts for 77% of total visitation, along with 21% of visits are from interstate. In 2024, overnight visitor expenditure was $791.2 million, with domestic overnight visitor expenditure rising to $767.6 million.[17]

Table 1 - Domestic and international visitation to Outback Queensland for 2024 (YE December). Source - Tourism and Events Queensland, 'Interactive Regional Snapshots Data Visualiser, Regional Summary, Outback Queensland'.

MEASURE	DOMESTIC	CHANGE FROM 2023	INTERNATIONAL	CHANGE FROM 2023	TOTAL VISITORS
Trips	1,106,964	▲ 15%	20,000	▲ 5%	**1,127,000**
Visitor nights	4,280,325	▲ 5%	490,000	▲ 1%	**4,771,000**
Average length of stay	3.9	▼ 9%	24.1	▼ 5%	**4.2**

2.2. Comparative Analysis

Regions including Australia's Golden Outback (WA), Flinders Ranges and Outback (SA), Country Outback (NSW) and Alice Springs and MacDonnell surrounds (NT) also promote an authentic Outback Australian experience. In 2024, Australia's Golden Outback (WA) was the only region to have growth in all domestic segments of trips, visitor nights and expenditure. Outback Queensland was the next best in comparison, with growth in trips and visitor nights, and the least amount of loss in expenditure (Table 2).

Table 2 - Comparative analysis of domestic visitation to outback regions in Australia. Source - Tourism Research Australia, National Visitor Survey Results, Year ending December 2024.

Domestic visitation	Outback Queensland	Australia's Golden Outback	Flinders Ranges and Outback	Outback NSW	Alice Springs and Surrounds
Trips ('000)	1,107 (+15% y/y)	1,369 (+0.3% y/y)	662 (-9% y/y)	688 (+14% y/y)	229 (+2% y/y)
Visitor Nights ('000)	4,280 (+5% y/y)	8,232 (+7% y/y)	2,726 (-21% y/y)	2,528 (+14% y/y)	792 (+4% y/y)
Expenditure ($M)	768 (-7% y/y)	1,159 (+5% y/y)	437 (-12% y/y)	451 (-11% y/y)	313 (-11% y/y)

[15] Tourism Research Australia, 'National Visitors Survey' year ending December 2024, accessed 5 Aug. 2025.
[16] Tourism and Events Queensland, 'Interactive Regional Snapshots Data Visualiser, Regional Summary, Outback Queensland' (2024) accessed 5 Aug. 2025.
[17] Ibid.

2.3. Product and Experience Audit

A tourism product and experience audit was conducted across Outback Queensland, resulting in 731 products identified (as at August 2025). The majority of these (474) were sourced through the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW),[18] with additional products identified from other sources (Figure 2).

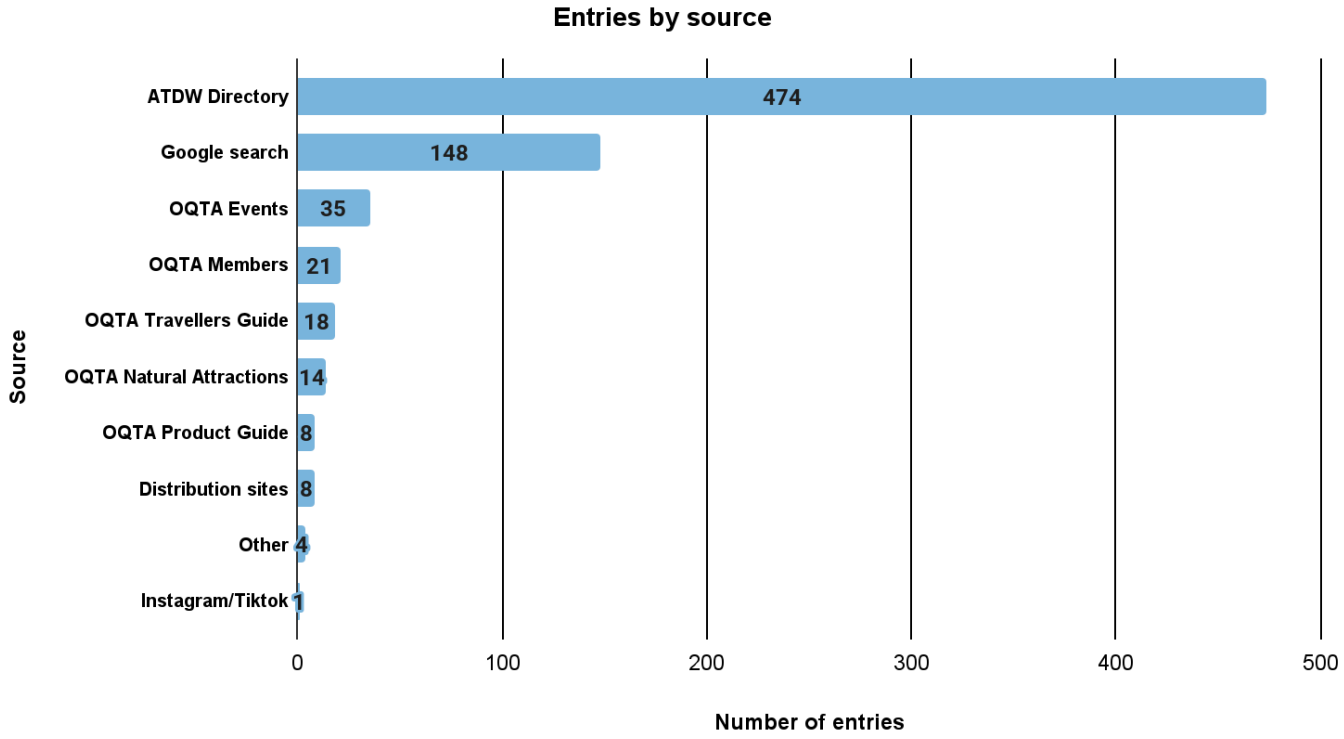

Figure 2 - Outback Queensland product and experience audit sources.

Of the 123 entries that were not included in ATDW, 114 of those entries were accommodation. With the limited options and products available, it is important that as many options for accommodation in the region are shared to drive conversion. Many of these businesses were found through Google search and distribution platforms, with the majority being Hipcamp or Airbnb listings for owners to subsidise income, and their interest in being part of the broader tourism ecosystem may be low.

[18] Based on an audit of live listings in July 2025 of the following categories - Accommodation, Attractions, Food and Drink, Journey, Tour and Transport.

Digital footprint

Of the 731 products, 303 (41.5%) have a website (Figure 3), with accommodation providers the most common experience type to have their own website (186 of 303).

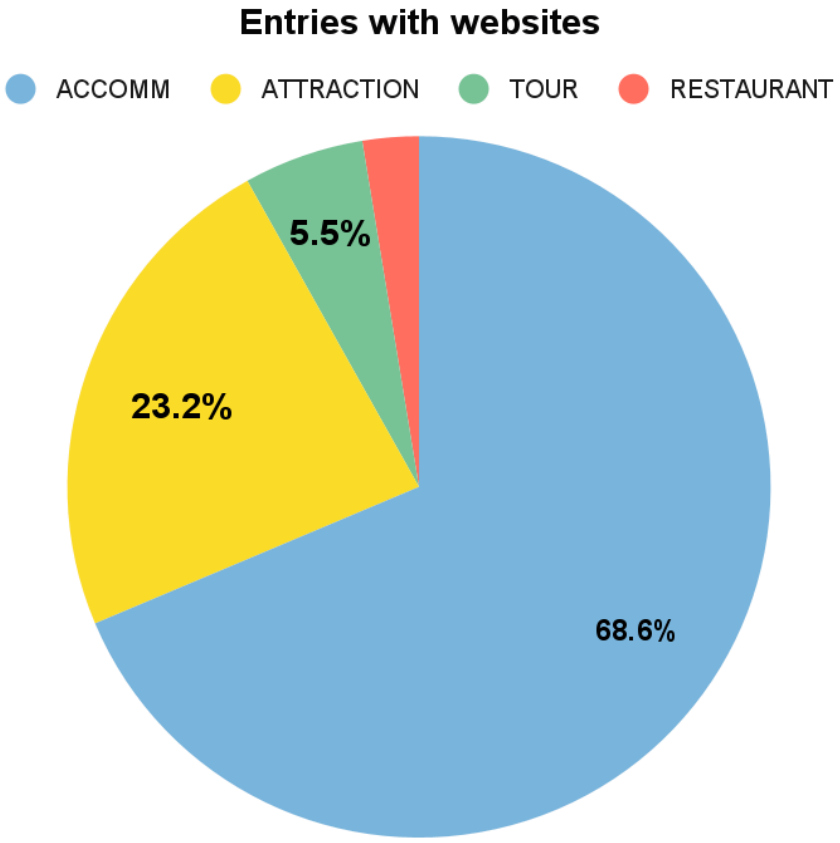

Figure 3 - Products with websites.

One third of these products with a website also have a Facebook or Instagram profile and Google Business profile. This showcases gaps in the digital presence and reach for many businesses being across multiple platforms and channels - fundamental to destination management.

Experience pillars

Figure 4 categorises the products by ATDW category type, with the most common being attractions and accommodation offerings.[19]

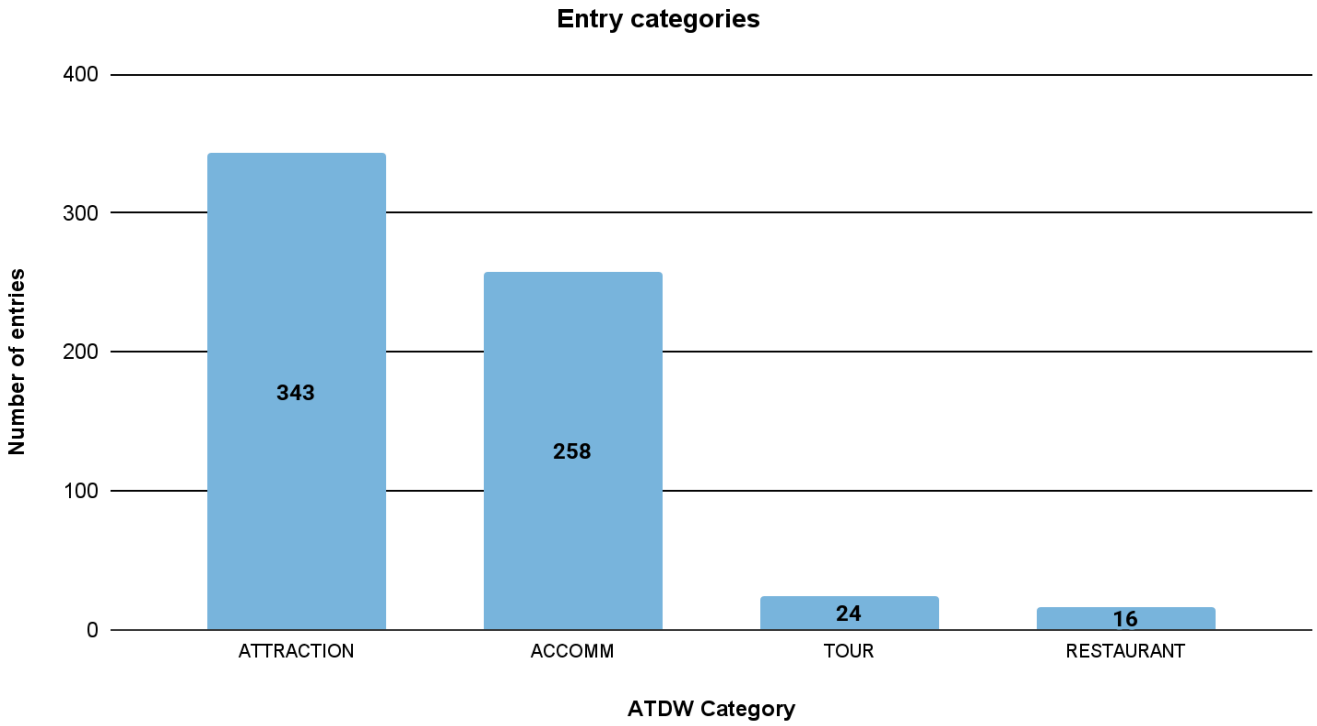

Figure 4 - Products and their ATDW categories.

The majority of the attractions include natural attractions, national parks, landmarks and places of interest for visitors on their holiday throughout Outback Queensland. While these are not all 'businesses' that have an experience (paid or bookable), they have ATDW profiles to provide inspiration to visitors when researching and planning. Some are also council-owned and managed assets. Typically bookable experiences fall under the tour category, with some attractions also offering a bookable experience.

There are 103 Best of Queensland operators across Outback Queensland, however in the audit multiple experiences at the one attraction has been counted once (for example The Big Rig in Roma has three experiences and offerings, but has been counted once).

[19] 'Events' and 'Journey' categories are excluded here and reviewed separately as visitation drivers. ATDW categories 'General Service', 'Hire', 'Info', 'Transport' and 'Journey' are excluded and only products and experiences are counted in this chart.

Further alignment of the products to the Tourism and Events Queensland Experience Framework (noting pillar 'Reef, Islands and Beaches' is not relevant to this region) and the Outback Queensland Experience framework (from the 2021-24 Destination Management Plan) are outlined in Figures 5 - 6.

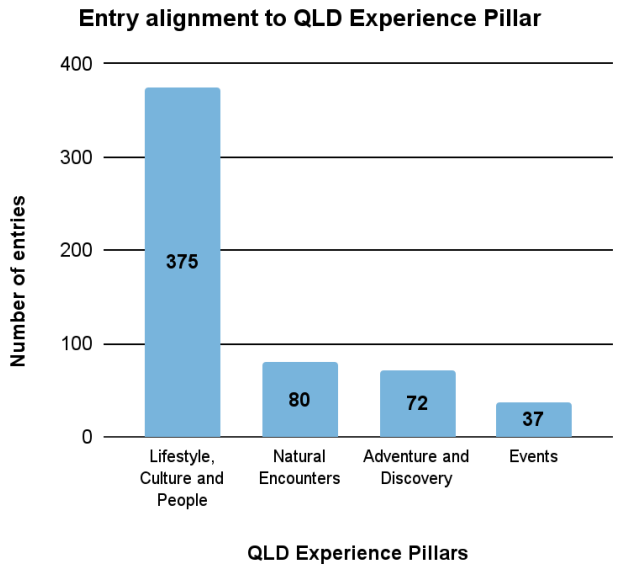

Figure 5 - Products aligned to Queensland Experience Framework.

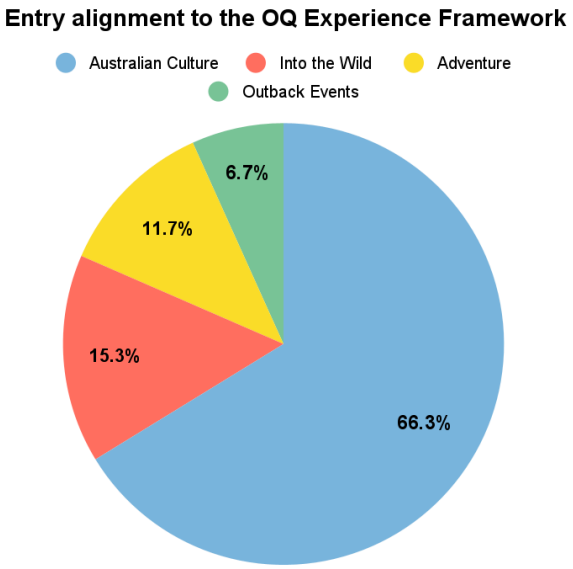

Figure 6 - Products aligned to the Outback Queensland Experience Framework.

Outback Queensland relies on events to drive demand and dispersal across the region and increase length of stay and spend. While there is a large event calendar of more than 250 regional and small community events, 37[20] events have been identified as significant and demand driving across arts and culture, festivals, music, participation and spectator sports. Important to note, there is still a lack of products and experiences to pair with these events and optimise dispersal, length of stay and spend, with choices in quality accommodation limited.

Similarly, road trips (one category from the Outback Queensland Experience framework) and journeys (ATDW category) are important for the region to encourage regional dispersal, increase visitor spend and showcase experience clusters. 50 journeys were identified through the ATDW audit, with many of these significant and iconic drive routes connecting across Outback Queensland, the state and into other states (e.g. The Savannah Way, Matilda Way). Through the Drive Queensland initiative, there is dedicated marketing and awareness activity underway for road trips led from a state partnership.[21]

[20] Two additional events from the OQTA provided list here include OQTA Members 'The Gully Sessions' and 'Paint and Laughter Dinner'.
[21] Drive Queensland, https://www.drivequeensland.com

Table 3 further outlines the alignment to the experience pillars and hero experiences to the state.[22]

Table 3 - Outback Queensland products aligned to the Queensland Experience Framework.

EXPERIENCE PILLAR	HERO EXPERIENCE	OUTBACK QUEENSLAND COUNT
Reef, Islands and Beaches		N/A
Natural Encounters	Natural landscapes	67
	Wildlife experiences	13
	Marine life experiences	-
Adventure and Discovery	Adventure experiences	10
	Dinosaurs and fossicking	12
	Theme parks	-
	Journeys	50
Lifestyle, Culture and People	Food and beverage	14
	Indigenous experiences	5
	Local characters	18
	City experiences	-
	Outback and country life	338
Events	Participation events	6
	Food and beverage events	-
	Music events	7
	Festivals	11
	Arts and culture events	5
	Spectator sports	8

[22] Tourism and Events Queensland, 'Queensland Experience Framework', https://teq.queensland.com/content/dam/teq/corporate/corporate-searchable-assets/industry/what-we-do/marketing/Queensland-Experience-Framework.pdf, accessed 14 Jul. 2025

Booking and distribution

Being bookable direct online and working with distribution partners adds further amplification for businesses. 263 of the 731 (36%) businesses have booking capabilities via their own website, either using an online enquiry form, online cart or using a booking platform. The majority of bookable products and experiences are accommodation (193), attractions (34) and tours (24). This is considerably a low number of bookable experiences for visitors travelling to Outback Queensland.

For distribution and trade, 50 businesses are featured in the 2025/26 Outback Queensland Trade Manual in regional itineraries and 34 businesses have their own product page. These businesses offer a commissionable experience, are working with trade and the majority participated in trade mentoring programs. Key distribution platforms that businesses and their experiences are featured on include:

- Klook (37)
- Get Your Guide (11)
- Viator (9)
- Expedia (5)
- Red Balloon (1).

There are some tour operators who are featured across multiple distribution platforms and position their experience differently on each to align to their relevant markets, including **Outback Aussie Tours, Outback Pioneers, Boobook Explore** and **Red Dirt Tours**.

3. Destination Management Plan 2021-24 Performance

The 2021-24 Destination Management Plan (DMP) focused on resilience, reopening and recovery during COVID-19.

The strategic pillars were positioned as:

3.1. Destination Stewardship

OQTA continues to maintain strong stakeholder engagement with councils, government and industry. They delivered mentoring programs and industry development workshops providing leadership in regional collaboration including the implementation of the 'Queensland Welcomes You' program. OQTA have secured strategic partnerships (e.g. Opera Queensland, Dinosaur Tourism Roadmap), actively lobbied for funding and policy, and contributed to state tourism strategy discussions.

3.2. Destination Marketing

OQTA continues to implement multi-channel campaigns with significant reach including consumer competitions, cooperative marketing with partners, developed regional content assets and collaborated on regional drive initiatives (e.g. Drive North Queensland, Drive Queensland). This has resulted in substantial growth in social media presence and website traffic and strong media and PR relationships leading to extensive coverage.

3.3. Product Development and Experience Delivery

OQTA supported event development and created itineraries and promotional packages, built industry capability through programs (Transformational Experiences Mentoring and Agritourism Accelerator) and new product and event development (Wellness Way). They launched the OQ Assist business unit to support businesses and destinations, and have secured awards and recognition for Outback Queensland.

3.4. Visitor Services and Trade Readiness

OQTA have participated in consumer and trade shows, organised industry events (Outback Queensland Muster) which has generated significant operator leads. To encourage trade readiness, they have trained trade agents and engaged with travel trade professionals, partnered for online bookings (Bookeasy), developed trade resources (Trade Product Manual) and supported international buyer famils.

3.5. Enabling Environment

OQTA actively engage in significant lobbying and policy influence with government bodies and participated in discussions on access and transport (Outback Way Forum, Qantas) providing industry networks and leadership. They maintained strategic partnerships with other RTOs and government departments and actively secured contestable grants. To keep engaged and informed with industry they conduct industry sentiment surveys and workshops.

Most of the DMP actions have been completed (Table 4), whilst some continue as ongoing and always on focus areas. OQTA committed resources (personnel and time) to maintain engagement across local governments and representation from an advocacy perspective to implement on the DMP and broader regional and state initiatives. However, progress and implementation of the DMP was constrained by access into the region, capacity and investment cycles with many conditions (see section 5) impacting overall growth and initiatives being reprioritised.

Table 4 - DMP 2021-24 implementation progress. Source - Outback Queensland Tourism Association.

STRATEGIC PILLAR	ACTION	STATUS
Destination Stewardship	Develop and communicate a COVID-19 Tourism Recovery Strategy covering the next 6 months to the LGA's, members and operators with updates	Completed
	Survey and track operator and community sentiment and share this with members.	Completed
	Establish renewed partnership agreements with LGAs and Outback regions to agree on roles and responsibilities for tourism development and shared destination performance outcomes that go beyond visitor numbers. Determine primary point of contact and frequency of contact. This will need to be aligned to TEQ contract negotiables.	Completed
	Align the OQTA development and marketing plans with the North West Queensland Economic Diversification Strategy, Northern Australia & Building Better Regions and TEQ brand strategy.	Completed
	Strengthen stewardship of tourism by working with RAPAD, MITEZs and ROCs to ensure that regional and LGA economic development plans recognise and support the tourism distribution system and supply chain.	Always on
	Resilience, sustainability and low carbon tourism need to be factored into the long term planning for tourism in the region These issues are already picked up in the forward plans of agriculture and mining. Sustainable tourism products and events represent an opportunity for the region.	Always on
Destination Marketing	Develop recovery campaign for 2021 season. Strong tactical focus with bookable products.	Completed
	Target drive market to increase dispersal and length of stay. Content creation to include website, itineraries and trade partner activities.	Completed
	Determine source markets - specifically to differentiate the Queensland Drive market into primary source markets for the different regions.	Always on
	Undertake refreshed image audit of the entire region (images and video shots).	Completed

STRATEGIC PILLAR	ACTION	STATUS
	Use Neural Digital to determine marketing footprint for campaigning and measurement of time spent in regions (phone technology).	Not completed
	Refresh website presentation and include new digital content delivery.	Completed
	Create a series of hero videos for each theme.	Not completed
	Develop a social media plan to support tactical plans.	Completed
	Council partnership/s to be developed to deliver recovery funding opportunities with TEQ.	Completed
	Content is king - OQTA needs current imagery and blogs to showcase broad traveller segments, and upgraded experiences suitable for FIT and Groups.	Completed
	Content needs to overcome news media that predominantly cover the Outback in times of crisis.	Completed
	Content needs to support new and emerging experiences and events.	Completed
	Create Outback Drive brochure for distribution to target audiences. Brochure to include themed drives, events, iconic attractions and key drive information.	Completed
	Develop OQTA program of tactical partnership activities (newsletters, social media, with trade including QRail, QF Airlines, THL, FC, Helloworld and agents.	Always on
	Establish trade heroes in each region	Completed
	Develop Outback billboard strategy.	Not completed
	Build a portal of regional digital data with trade partners, VICs and Neural Digital.	Completed
	Maintain caravan and camping shows with key partners.	Always on
	OQTA program of co-op marketing campaigns with RACQ etc.	Always on
	Trade famils and partner activities to be maintained, including hosted trade events and sales calls.	Always on
	Support implementation of Drive North Queensland Initiative.	Always on

STRATEGIC PILLAR	ACTION	STATUS
	Develop and deliver paddock to plate initiative for the region.	Completed
Product Development and Experience Delivery	Confirm and agree on destination hero experiences (drive, dinosaurs, events & culture) and core themes for each Outback region.	Completed
	Undertake competitor analysis to identify points of difference and target markets.	Always on
	Align product development with TEQ transformational experience guide and provide train the trainer sessions to operators in each region.	Completed
	Develop and align hero experiences around quick escape packages and prepare packages for target markets.	Completed
	Align and leverage Year of Indigenous Tourism events and funding packages.	Completed
	Bookable products are essential and will align with the Best of Qld program where visitor satisfaction is measured.	Completed
	Focus on reviews - Trip Advisor and Google for younger markets.	Always on
	Deliver with partners the Paleo tourism strategy for the region.	Always on
	Roadtrip: - Differentiate to suit family needs and over 55's - Develop short and long itineraries - Everyday car versus Caravan and Camping - Align to Drive North initiative.	Completed
	Support the delivery of the Outback Educational Experience Program (training, packaging, education handbooks, student fact sheets, itineraries and packages for schools).	Completed
	Roll-out training for TEQ transformational experience program to Outback operators.	Completed
	Host media famils to hero products (TEQ Qld Rail, THL, airlines) and focus on high value travellers.	Completed
	Drive tourism initiatives. Develop themed drive loops and tours building on the project undertaken by RAPAD in 2016 for the North West.	Completed

STRATEGIC PILLAR	ACTION	STATUS
	Reimage and position the role played by Accredited Information Centres. This includes building digital bridges with visitors to compliment face to face service delivery, and creating a collegial network which can collect and share data on visitors flows and activity sets. The concept of renaming the VICs Discovery Centres has great merit and is in keeping with the Outback brand and product positioning for adventure.	Always on
	Work with LGAs to present Outback Culture including arts, story telling, characters, heritage experiences.	Always on
	Update tourism priority roads infrastructure plan with LGAs.	Always on
	Review certification options to support and recognise sustainable tourism and quality service delivery to build a quality culture.	Completed
	Review status of Outback Camping options policy.	Not completed
	Review options for social media training.	Completed
	Review OQ Assist program and determine forward business plan.	Completed
Visitor Services and Trade Readiness	Maintain 'Operator Readiness Program' to support the upskilling of businesses in trade and digital engagement.	Completed
	Develop new packages / bookable products to increase OVE and encourage pre-bookings.	Completed
	Implement local campaigns with Outback regions and LGAs.	Always on
	Develop enhanced new packages and itinerary strategy*	Completed
	Identify and support Outback Queensland trade heroes.	Always on
	Work with QTIC to establish and deliver training in service quality.	Always on
	Support the development of a closely aligned Visitor Centre network throughout the Outback region	Always on
	Offer training in storytelling and interpretation. This can be aligned with the Transformation Experiences work being undertaken by TEQ.	Completed
	Support operators to understand the importance of trade ready packages and commissionable products.	Always on

STRATEGIC PILLAR	ACTION	STATUS
	Track visitor flows, spending and satisfaction. Mobile data technology needs to be used to better understand visitor markets.	Always on
	Trade famils and partner activities to be maintained, including hosted trade events and sales calls.	Always on
Enabling Environment	Maintain advocacy with State and Federal recovery agencies and continue to champion the Outback region. Establish agreed priority areas with LGAs.	Always on
	Work in partnership with aviation partners to develop and maintain aviation routes/schedules.	Always on
	Work with Local Government to ensure road infrastructure upgrades and maintenance.	Always on
	Work with Queensland Rail and partners for rail upgrades in the SW region.	Always on
	Take action with LGAs to develop a digital coverage strategy for the region.	Always on
	Work with RAPAD, MITEZ, ROCs and Local Government to identify road access priorities.	Always on
	Work with State and Federal Government to enhance regional connectivity (e.g. blackspot program).	Always on
	Develop a program to support workforce development across Outback Queensland and to address skills shortages. Current skills and labor shortages need to be monitored and tracked.	Always on
	Work with State and Local Government Agencies to ensure that tourism is aligned to wider community and economic infrastructure plans.	Always on
	Continue to leverage existing plans, strategies and funding opportunities including Northern Australia Infrastructure Fund and Building Better Regions.	Always on
	Continue to align with the North West Economic Development Strategy: - Progressing priority local government tourism projects (Outback at Mt Isa and virtual reality fossil experience) - Developing itineraries and new tourism packages - Delivering local economic action plans that increase workforce participation - Mapping digital coverage.	Always on

4. Strategic Alignment

Table 5 provides an overview of key state, regional and local strategies that have been reviewed and their relevance and alignment with Outback Queensland for the DMP. There are other key strategies and plans currently being developed which will be important for review and alignment for the DMP, including the Queensland First Nations Tourism Plan and Outback First Nations Tourism Action Plan.

Table 5 - Summary of strategies and plans including focus areas and DMP alignment observations.

STRATEGY	KEY FOCUS	ALIGNMENT OBSERVATIONS

Destination 2045 Plan	• Roadmap to unlock the full potential **of ecotourism**, support the **transformation and development** of **visitor experiences**, and enable **investment** in **world-class tourism offerings and events**.
	• Key pillars:
	  ○ Ecotourism
	  ○ Events
	  ○ Connectivity
	  ○ Experiences
	  ○ Brand
	  ○ Industry.
		• Commits to responsible, sustainable ecotourism and showcases Outback Queensland's natural assets while enhancing visitor experiences.
		• Investment in world-class events.
		• Improvement and advocacy for increased connectivity.
		• Elevates Queensland's brand position as a unique experience destination, only found in Outback Queensland.
		• Industry capacity and capability building.
		• Contributes to 2045 growth targets and aligns with the Plan pillars.

Towards Tourism 2032	• Elevate international and domestic marketing. • Developed experience and event offerings. • Aims to double visitor overnight expenditure by 2032.	• Leverages the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games through marketing, events and experiences. • Understands clearly defined roles for TEQ, QTIC, Department and RTOs.
Tourism and Events Queensland Blueprint	• To inspire travellers to visit Queensland to double expenditure by 2032. • Build a $2 billion global events calendar. • Deliver cutting-edge marketing campaigns to drive consumer demand.	• Global events growth for Queensland complements the strong events sector for Outback Queensland. • Grow Overnight Visitor Expenditure (OVE) through marketing campaigns and increasing supply.
Nature Based Tourism Strategy 2021-2024	• Aims to revitalise Queensland's nature-based tourism. • Acknowledges the pivotal role of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and communities.	• Aligns with the demand for open spaces and wild places. • Emphasises the unique attractions only found in Outback Queensland. • Links and enhances assets through wellness tourism, agritourism, paleo tourism, minerals and artesian, night

STRATEGY	KEY FOCUS	ALIGNMENT OBSERVATIONS
		sky and Aboriginal experiences.
Drive Queensland Marketing Strategy 2024	• Goal of Drive Tourism contributing $4.5 billion in OVE by 2032. • Being the #1 leader in 'Road trips' in Australia.	• Focuses on multi-destination trips to extend road trips and journeys. • Growth in globally recognisable specific hero journeys, including the Matilda Way and the Great Inland Way.
Regional Organisation Council Strategies	Plans include Strategic Plans, Prospectus' and regional studies, including 2032 Games Assessment, and other plans if available.	• Central West Queensland Remote Area Planning and Development (CWQ RAPAD), South West Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (SWQROC) and Mount Isa to Townsville Economic Development Zone (MITEZ) articulate the importance of growing tourism and the visitor economy across the Outback Queensland region. • North West Queensland ROC has a dedicated Indigenous and Regional Tourism Investment.[23]
Local Government Area Strategies	Plans include Tourism, Events and Economic Development Strategies and Plans, Council Community Plans and other plans if available.	While a number of councils[24] from across the region work on a dedicated tourism strategy, others have tourism intertwined with their economic development and strategic plans[25] or simply mentioned in their annual reports.[26]

[23] Gulf Savannah and North West Outback Queensland Tourism Opportunities Analysis Action Plan and Key Projects Report (December 2022), accessed 29 Jul. 2025
[24] Councils including Balonne Shire, Quilpie Shire, Banana Shire, Flinders Shire, McKinlay Shire, Cloncurry and Mount Isa.
[25] Councils including Bulloo Shire, Barcoo Shire, Diamantina Shire, Winton Shire, Longreach, Blackall-Tambo, Barcaldine Shire and Richmond Shire.
[26] Councils including Maranoa Shire and Boulia Shire.

5. Current Conditions

There are many significant factors and conditions impacting tourism development and growth across the Outback Queensland region, and broader state and country (Table 6). Many of these factors are outside of direct control of OQTA, however are within the remit of raising awareness and continuing to advocate with government and industry bodies.

Table 6 - Overview of conditions and factors impacting Outback Queensland and Australia more broadly.

FACTOR	DESCRIPTION
Macroeconomic and external pressures	• Increasing costs of essential goods and services, such as energy, food, fuel and insurance, are affecting both businesses and visitors. • Increased frequency of natural disasters leads to higher operational costs, decreased visitor confidence, and reduced operator motivation.
Infrastructure and connectivity	• Tourism growth is impeded by ageing infrastructure, insufficient accommodation and unreliable transportation. • Visitors, especially roadtrippers, face accessibility challenges due to inconsistent internet, limited EV charging stations and unreliable maps. • Smaller airline cuts, such as those by Bonza and Rex, along with unreliable flight schedules and heat-related load restrictions, are severely impacting regional air access. • Better coordination between state agencies on tourism mapping and road conditions is needed, along with improved roads and expansive regional rail.
Workforce and industry capacity	• Workforce shortages, reliance on transitional workers and mental health concerns have significantly stretched operators, particularly during peak seasons. • A critical housing shortage limits the ability to attract and retain staff. • Many local, often family-run, operators struggle with developing innovative experiences or expanding commercially due to a lack of structured support and capacity. • Business capability education for innovation of digital products and AI is lacking, hindering product distribution.
Market, positioning and product issues	• Peak season limits year-round tourism profitability. • Outback Queensland faces challenges in appeal and brand familiarity due to competition from other destinations. • Challenges in encouraging regional visitors to extend their stays, as many areas struggle to convert drive-through traffic into longer visits. • Maintaining a consistent quality of experience delivery and presentation, including transformational experiences, is essential. • Limited trade and digital-ready experiences and products. • Tourism outcomes and funding are heavily reliant on councils, with a lack of private investment.

6. Outback Queensland Opportunities

Outback Queensland's tourism strengths lie in its authentic country history and heritage, diverse landscapes rich in wildlife and geology, and warm, engaged local communities. The region offers iconic experiences such as dinosaurs and fossils, dark-sky astronomy, accessible desert adventures, a unique events calendar, and iconic drive routes, supported by proactive council engagement and strategic tourism planning.

Further opportunities to be considered for the next DMP are outlined in Table 7, noting that many of these opportunities are already underway and in progress. These opportunities have been identified and summarised through desktop analysis, as well as strategic planning with the OQTA Board earlier this year.

Table 7 - Summary of opportunities relevant for Outback Queensland.

OPPORTUNITY	OVERVIEW
Ecotourism and nature-based tourism	Develop and expand immersive experiences that connect visitors with nature, increase access to national parks and work collaboratively with Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services.
Product diversification and experience development	There is significant potential to enhance Outback Queensland's appeal year-round by expanding niche offerings that leverage the region's unique assets and stories. Opportunities include: ● Paleo-tourism - storage and redistribution of collections, create new exhibitions, and showcase local dinosaur experiences (The Dinosaur Collective). ● Dark sky tourism - create premium stargazing and viewing events and link evening activities to increase night time events. ● Industrial tourism - activate old mine sites and interpretative centres to educate and encourage visitation. ● Agritourism - activate agricultural land and develop farm tours, on-farm retail, educational experiences and activate assets (e.g. saleyards). ● Indigenous tourism - advocate for authentic First Nations-led cultural experiences working in collaboration with Traditional Owners. ● Arts and cultural tourism - harness creativity and cultural stories through artists in residence, arts trails and pop-up cultural events. ● Wellness tourism - develop higher-end health and wellness products, leverage artesian springs and hot springs.
Leveraging major events	Leverage the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games for global exposure and investment. Boost the regional profile for pre/post-Games visitation by showcasing Outback recognised products and encouraging itineraries into the region.
Infrastructure investment	Increase grant funding thresholds and create an Outback-specific infrastructure stream to address high regional costs.
Economic diversification	Encourage diversifying regional economies into tourism from traditional industries.
Transport improvements	Improve and increase access and connectivity to the region, including upgrading the Spirit of the Outback rail experience and funding EV charging networks.

OPPORTUNITY	OVERVIEW
Digital enhancement	Raise awareness of website improvements, robust social media and improved online booking capabilities with operators.
Workforce development and business support	Develop tailored business capability programs and promote mentoring for career changers.
Collaboration and partnerships	Foster greater unity across councils and industry to leverage shared resources and expertise.

7. Strategic Priorities

The OQTA Board identified the following strategic priorities for the development of the new Destination Management Plan for Outback Queensland. These priorities will guide the planning and implementation of the new DMP:

- **Advocacy and lobbying** - strengthen efforts to secure funding and resources by working with Regional Organisations of Councils (ROCs) and industry stakeholders. This includes advocating for policies supporting workforce development, housing and disaster resilience.
- **Data-driven decision making** - improve access to quality data for the industry to support business cases and strategic planning, enabling more informed decision-making and creating a data-sharing culture.
- **Destination marketing** - focus on driving impact through targeted campaigns, particularly for self-drive and fly-drive markets. Leverage storytelling to change perceptions and promote Outback Queensland as a destination for wellness, nature and cultural tourism.
- **Product and experience development** - emphasise unique selling points including dark skies, agritourism and wellness, and refreshing existing offerings to encourage repeat visitation. Investment in developing unique, high-value, multi-day immersive experiences is crucial, ensuring a balance between marketing and on-the-ground support for product enhancement.
- **Visitor services and trade readiness** - enhance cross-region education for Visitor Information Centres (VICs) to improve distribution and visitor servicing. Support operators in achieving trade readiness, particularly for international markets.
- **Event design and delivery** - develop a coordinated approach to maximise visitation, improve funding access and support infrastructure for events. This includes leveraging data to design events that yield maximum visitation.
- **Destination stewardship** - align stakeholder efforts and strengthen the OQTA Board's active role in delivering strategic outcomes. This involves strengthening coordination of events and major projects, unified regional messaging and advocacy for infrastructure upgrades.
- **Partnerships and collaboration** - foster greater unity across councils and industry associations to leverage shared resources and expertise, ensuring cohesive regional efforts.
- **Sustainability** - promote practices that balance economic growth with environmental and cultural preservation. This includes encouraging investments in ecotourism and sustainable infrastructure.
- **Workforce and housing solutions** - address workforce shortages through work and stay programs and seasonal housing solutions. Partner with educational institutions to create pipelines for tourism roles and improve training opportunities.

8. Next Steps

The previous DMP has laid a robust foundation for Outback Queensland, excelling in stakeholder engagement, multi-channel marketing and initial product development initiatives.

The new DMP must address infrastructure, access, workforce, housing and digital connectivity challenges, alongside product diversification to meet state-wide visitation targets.

To become the preferred Outback Australian experience, the DMP should prioritise high-yield product development, digital readiness for operators, and strategic advocacy for infrastructure and workforce solutions.

Data-driven decisions and cross-regional collaboration are key for sustainable visitor economy growth, as well as leveraging the 2032 Olympics for marketing and long-term investment.