

2 July 2021

Ms Liz Savage

Chair

Tourism Industry Reference Panel

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Dear Ms Savage

CPAQ's Designing Our Tourism Future Submission

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to the Tourism Industry Reference Panel looking to re-shape the future of the visitor economy in Queensland.

As the peak body for the caravan parks industry in Queensland, the visitor economy and encouraging Australians, and international visitors when those borders reopen, to travel extensively within the state is key to our industry's continued success.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has brought many challenges for the tourism sector, it has also resulted in more regional dispersal by domestic travellers than ever before with Australian's, and especially Queenslanders, rediscovering the beauty, natural attractions, and diverse tourism attractions that regional Queensland offers.

This regional dispersal has also seen more Australians returning to the traditional caravan and camping holiday with many caravan parks in Queensland recording record levels of visitation at present.

Despite this, it is necessary to look to the future to ensure that tourism continues to grow, and that the collective tourism sector does not just return to, but exceeds, previous levels of employment, visitation and expenditure.

Significant investment in tourism infrastructure for commercial businesses, particularly for our smaller participants, will assist tourism to continue to diversify and allow these businesses to attract more markets, however this needs to be coupled with upgrades to road and digital infrastructure to build connectivity between hosts and guests.

Regional tourism faces many issues which are not seen by businesses in metropolitan centres, or are exacerbated in regional areas, including a lack of trained and motivated staff, poor digital connectivity, rising costs for services, lack of options in relation to insurance, and perceptions about road quality along with distance a barrier to travel for many potential guests.

Over half our caravan park members (62%) are small businesses, with over 40% being owner operators. Due to the size and structure of these businesses, many of our members are busy working in their business which leaves little time for working on their business. This coupled with the ever-changing regulatory environment, COVID restrictions and increases in operating costs, has resulted in high levels of stress and significant concerns from our Association over the mental health and resilience of our members.



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• Queensland Tourism Industry Council

Included in this submission are several challenges we believe the tourism industry faces, in addition to those highlighted above, along with proposed solutions for consideration by the panel.

Summary of recommendations

What could be done at a local level to increase the benefits of tourism?

- Promotion of paid accommodation initially over free accommodation
- Encouraging all tourism experiences (particularly accommodation) to be staffed
- Support of and further development of trails/loops and other partnerships across regions (i.e. the Natural Sciences Loop or the Dinosaur Trail)
- Encouraging parents to take their children on an educational holiday
- Support initiatives to drive tourism during shoulder periods
- Improving community understanding of tourism and the benefit it brings to a region through local knowledge programs
- Development of support programs for business owners looking to sell their businesses, and potential owners looking for a sea/tree change into a new community
- Development of more support programs for micro and small tourism businesses in regional and remote Queensland

How do you want Queensland tourism to be defined in the 2020's?

- Queensland Tourism in the 2020's will be defined by diversity, innovation, resilience and culture.

How do we make the best use of our tourism assets?

- Understand the motivations for different travel persona's and create connections with places
- Promote a strong visitor focus on the protection of the environment for nature based experience

What practical measures can and should be taken to ensure tourism helps regenerate natural environments, and bring greater awareness as well as economic benefit?

- Development of a sustainable tourism resource hub
- Encourage increased education about and take up of carbon offset programs
- Encourage better management and policing of unmanaged sites

Do you see any additional trends or emerging changes that we must also consider?

- Increased guest expectations, even with affordable accommodation options
- Increased focus on value for money
- More first time visitors
- Shorter lead times for bookings
- Increased examples of a multi-tiered regulatory environment

What are your ideas for the future of Queensland's tourism industry?

- Encouraging Queenslanders to retain their RV through a tourism rebate
- Increased Road Safety Initiatives to ensure safe and happy travel
- Incentives for businesses to adapt and improve their product offerings to attract more and diverse markets
- Mentoring programs to assist micro to small businesses identify market gaps and to plan for, and managed, associated projects
- Focus not just on high value but also extended stays
- Investment in regional tourism roads in need of upgrading or sealing to support the drive market.
- Creation of enabling tech infrastructure which provides accurate information on road surfaces and road quality to support regional and remote travel
- Evaluating our target markets: Attracting new Winter Nomads for a Queensland winter
- Evaluating our target markets: Getting more Families on the Road for longer

What do you see as the obstacles to progress?

Appealing

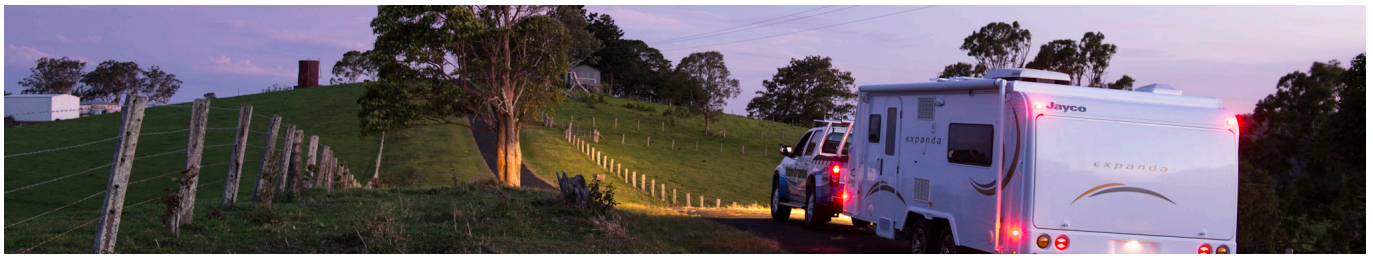
- Repositioning Queensland as an adventure tourism hub with Government intervention to ensure these businesses can get the appropriate insurance to operate
- Investing in home-grown events that drive visitation and stay in Queensland during the shoulder periods

Dynamic

- Simpler project facilitation through harmonised regulations across the state
- Regulatory reform and a review of red tape to enable new products and experiences
- Accelerating innovation in tourism through technology adoption and new ideas with significant support for businesses not yet online
- Continue to fully subsidise Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW) listings

Resilient

- Improving the skills and capability of tourism businesses and their staff with the introduction of a travel subsidy for businesses in regional and remote locations
- Improve the social licence of the tourism sector to address workforce shortages
- Encouraging even higher standards our industry through the ongoing support of industry accreditation programs and recognition of these programs in grant applications
- Investment in improving digital connectivity and reducing black spots
- Ensuring all Queensland Tourism Businesses can access the insurance they need
- Implementation of a marketing strategy to address significant Queensland weather events (and associated media coverage)
- A renewed focus on the forgotten locations
- Equal application of regulatory burden and increased penalties for Local Governments that do not enforce an equal application of their own local laws and planning schemes



Background

The caravan industry in Australia is one of the most important forms of tourism – in fact in 2019 and 2020, caravanning and camping nights were the highest across any accommodation, highlighting that caravan and camping is indeed Australia’s favourite holiday accommodation¹.

In Queensland alone, the caravan industry accounts for 31% of commercial holiday nights². This percentage increases to 37% when we look at just Regional Queensland³. With a longer length of stay and 84% of visitor expenditure occurring in regional areas of the state⁴, our industry is a significant contributor to the success of many towns and regions across Queensland.

To year ending March 2019, the caravanning and camping sector provided accommodation for 12 million visitor nights across the Queensland⁵ from nearly 2.6 million trips. While this number did reduce in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the most recent data from Tourism Research Australia shows we have seen a 40% decline in visitor nights and a 18% decline in trips in our sector⁶.

Prior to COVID, Queensland had the largest fleet of Caravans and Campervans in Australia, with a combined total of 192,751 registered vehicles, equating to 26% of the total fleet⁷. This number is expected to grow significantly with sales of caravans, motorhomes and other recreational vehicles (RV’s) extremely strong with longer than normal lead times for new RV’s and very few second-hand vehicles currently on the market.

This is reflected in Caravan Manufacturing and Import statistics with January 2021 showing an increase on the same period in 2020 of 22.6%⁸ and 52%⁹ respectively, a trend that continued into February with an increase of 10.2%¹⁰ and 88.55%¹¹ respectively.

Eight of the top 10 postcodes in Australia for RV registration density are located in Queensland with Bundaberg (4670) having the highest combined number of RV registrations. Also in the top ten (from largest density of registrations down) are Hervey Bay, Toowoomba, Mackay, Gympie, Gladstone, Maryborough and Caloundra¹².

As a peak body, 82.5% of our caravan park members are located in regional Queensland with these businesses spread the length and breadth of the state, from Stanthorpe and Kirra Beach in the South across to Birdsville and Adels Grove in the West and up to Bamaga at the tip of Cape York in the North.

¹ Tourism Research Australia, National Visitor Survey, YE December 2019 & 2020

² Tourism Research Australia, National Visitor Survey, YE March 2021

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

⁷ BDO, Caravan & Campervan Data Report, 2020

⁸ Caravan Industry Association of Australia, RV Production Report, January 2021

⁹ Caravan Industry Association of Australia, International Trade Report, January 2021

¹⁰ Caravan Industry Association of Australia, RV Production Report, February 2021

¹¹ Caravan Industry Association of Australia, International Trade Report, February 2021

¹² BDO, Caravan & Campervan Data Report, 2020

Our Submission

What could be done at a local level to increase the benefits of tourism?

Promotion of paid accommodation initially over free accommodation

We regularly receive reports of visitors only being directed to free activities in a town, the free camp, free museum, free heritage tour. It is important that visitor information staff, and particularly volunteers, understand the importance of encouraging spend within the community and showcasing all attractions, not just those available for free.

Encouraging all tourism experiences (particularly accommodation) to be staffed

Ensuring that all accommodation, and ideally tourism attractions, are staffed, at a minimum during business hours, encourages conversations about what there is to do in a region.

Hotel, motel and caravan park staff are some of the greatest advocates for other local businesses, whether it be something to do, somewhere to eat, or the road quality for the next leg of your trip, these individuals can be your one stop shop for local knowledge. When visitors to a region don't have the opportunity to speak to anyone on, or soon after, arrival they are unaware of the opportunities for them in the town, reducing visitor expenditure.

The extension of this is tourist attractions that do not keep to their advertised operating hours. We have received many reports over the past twelve months of caravan parks sending their guests to a local winery, attraction or café which is supposed to be open, only to discover they have not opened for the day. This results in a negative visitor experience, reduced visitor expenditure and a possible loss of future visitation.

Support of and further development of trails/loops and other partnerships across regions (i.e. the Natural Sciences Loop or the Dinosaur Trail)

Regional partnerships such as the Natural Sciences Loop in South West Queensland and the Dinosaur trail in Western Queensland are a fantastic way of increasing length of stay and regional dispersal. Additional support for partnerships like these also provides a great opportunity to market directly to specific target markets.

Other opportunities may include (but are in no way limited to) indigenous culture, history, and wildlife.

Encouraging parents to take their children on an educational holiday

One of the positive outcomes from COVID was that many families realised that not only could the parents work remotely, but also that home schooling was possible. Educational itineraries and content for local areas encourages families to visit regions in Queensland and to stay for longer.

Support initiatives to drive tourism during shoulder periods

Regional Queensland has a short and distinct season. For some of our members, 90% of their income is received in just a three month period. For the remainder of the year, these businesses run cashflow negative, relying on their strong winter season to see them through to the following year's season.

As these businesses are running at or close to 100% capacity during the season there is not a lot of opportunity for growth during these periods, instead marketing and initiatives should focus on the shoulders of this peak period to drive additional visitation – not only is there capacity during the shoulder period but it will also extend local employment opportunities and increase economic activity in these towns.

Improving community understanding of tourism and the benefit it brings to a region through local knowledge programs

Ensuring that a community understands the benefits of tourism, ensures that any visitors to the region not only have a wonderful experience, but also participate in as many activities as possible. Improving community understanding of the tourism product in their region and the neighbouring regions will encourage linkages between businesses and regions across Queensland.

There are examples of programs across the world which allow residents and business owners/operators to become 'experts' on their town or region, promoting activities and having accurate answers for visitors to the area.

Development of support programs for business owners looking to sell their businesses, and potential owners looking for a sea/tree change into a new community

With the growing insurance issues seen across the state we are increasingly hearing of caravan park operators unable to sell as the purchaser cannot to get insurance. While we have heard this from caravan park operators, we are sure this is not the only tourism sector experiencing this challenge.

Inability to divest your business (which in many cases for small business operators is also their superannuation) has significant negative consequences for a region, including a business that will not reinvest, poor customer service and poor experiences for visitors to the region.

Developing programs designed to support a business owner looking to exit their business as well as potential business owners looking for a sea or tree change may minimise the chances of the decline in a tourism business which in turn impacts the region.

Development of more support programs for micro and small tourism businesses in regional and remote Queensland

The tourism industry in Queensland is made up of a combination of micro, small, medium and large businesses however often the micro and small businesses, especially those outside of South East Queensland, feel that they are the forgotten partner in tourism.

There is stronger support needed for these micro to small tourism businesses, particularly in regional Queensland, to ensure that they are equally represented marketing activities promoting the state and that they have the support they need to grow their businesses.



How do you want Queensland tourism to be defined in the 2020's?

Queensland has some of, arguably, the best natural features in the world. We are a state of diversity, wonderful beaches and the world renown Great Barrier Reef, vast open spaces and the Queensland outback, the world heritage listed Daintree rainforests and the northern most point of the Australian Continent.

Our tourism experiences take advantage of these features and allow our visitors to get closer to nature and to make memories that will last a lifetime.

Tourism experiences and accommodation offerings continue to evolve with many 'unique' offerings now found around the state, from the opportunity to stay in an Airstream Caravan (Brisbane Holiday Village) through to a Glamping tent in amazing locations, from Artesian Bathhouses where you can relax and enjoy the outback sunset (Julia Creek Caravan Park) to the Skyrail where you can travel above the rainforest or one of the whale watching boats that run up the Queensland coast.

We are also home to the world's oldest living cultures with plenty of history and educational opportunities to attract and inspire families and other travellers.

Queensland Tourism in the 2020's will be defined by diversity, innovation, resilience and culture.



How do we make the best use of our tourism assets?

Understand the motivations for different travel persona's and create connections with places

With such a diverse range of tourism assets from natural through to manmade, it is important to have a clear understanding about the reasons each target market, or travel persona, has for experiencing that particular asset.

Having a clear understanding of the different motivators provides the opportunity to effectively tie together different experiences. For example, someone that has heard the dreamtime story of the creation of the reef is likely to see it through a different lens than someone that is only aware of the fact it is a reef.

Promote a strong visitor focus on the protection of the environment for nature based experience

There also needs to be a strong focus on the protection of the environment with nature-based experiences. On a recent visit to Mount Surprise and the Kalkani Crater walk I was amazed at the fact there was no litter, especially when compared to other national parks and similar attractions. The introduction of practices in this National Park have encouraged good behaviour from all visitors, ensuring that each visitor that arrives after them also has a positive experience.



What practical measures can and should be taken to ensure tourism helps regenerate natural environments, and bring greater awareness as well as economic benefit?

Many Queensland tourism businesses are located in areas of great natural beauty and the protection of these assets will support the long-term financial sustainability of these businesses. In speaking to our members, they want to look towards a more sustainable practices, particularly as they apply to protecting the environment, however in most cases are unsure where to start.

Development of a sustainable tourism resource hub

To support these businesses in introducing business practices which support and help regenerate natural environments, a sustainable tourism resource hub needs to be established.

This hub would demonstrate best-practice examples for businesses and destination, identifying examples from around the world. This hub would include tools and business templates that assisted these tourism businesses introduce new business practices.

The inclusion of a reporting hub would allow these businesses to benchmark their progress against other tourism businesses, assisting them to report on and improve their metrics. This could then form a part of the Best of Queensland Experiences program run by Tourism & Events Queensland.

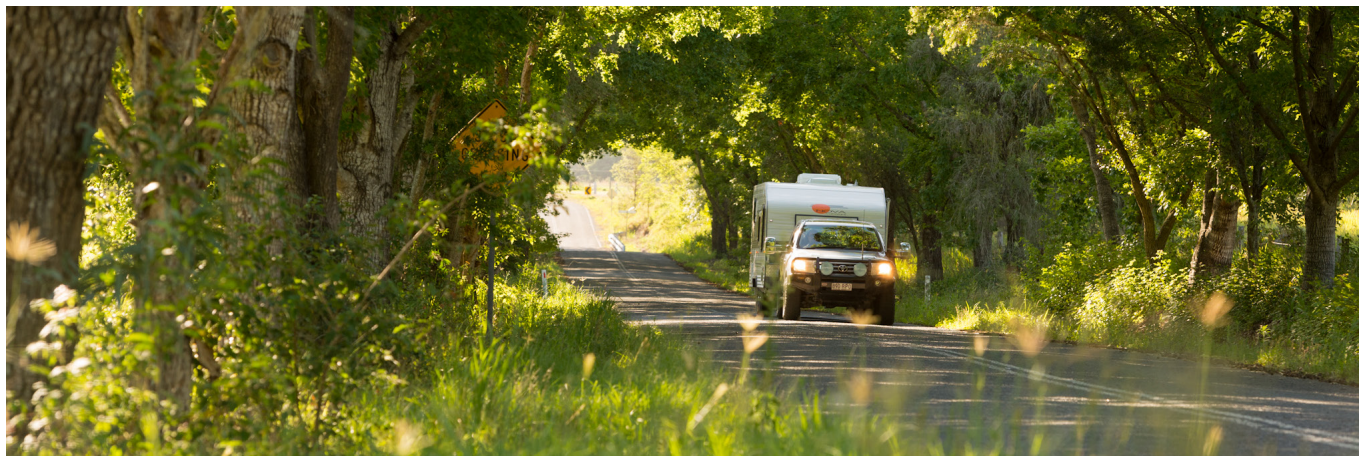
Encourage increased education about and take up of carbon offset programs

There is still minimal take up of carbon offset programs by (particularly small) tourism businesses. Take up of these programs could be increased through education and understanding of how to implement a carbon offset program, best practice methods for encouraging guests to buy into such programs and information about what these programs do to support the local environment.

Encourage better management and policing of unmanaged sites

Unfortunately, there are plenty of examples of unmanaged caravanning and camping around Queensland which has had negative impacts on both the environment and the experience of other locals and visitors.

Encouraging better management and policing of unmanaged rest areas, National Parks and other camping spots will result in more sustainable practices for the region.



Do you see any additional trends or emerging changes that we must also consider?

Increased guest expectations, even with affordable accommodation options

Since leisure travel recommenced in June 2021, caravan parks across Queensland have noted an increase in guest expectations, from arrivals asking where the room service phone is for their powered site through to an expectation for a valet service to park their caravan.

This trend may be a result of a shift in travel experiences, 5-star international travellers purchasing their first caravan and heading to regional Queensland and guests that have previously only ever cruised, either way, it is a trend we are expecting to continue.

This has seen a need for additional education of guests and potential guests to ensure that the industry lives up to their expectations, allowing us to turn them into life long guests.

Increased focus on value for money

This lift in guest expectations has also been seen through a focus on value for money. Caravan parks are reporting that guests are willing to pay more than ever before for their cabin or site however they have an expectation of greater value for money. For many parks this has been achieved through kids club activities, pancake breakfasts and other in park activities.

As a result, we are now seeing some parks measure not only their net promotor score, but also the perceived value for money score for their park.

More first time visitors

With international travel off the agenda for some time, domestic holidays are now more popular than even. Recreational vehicle sales have surged, driven by interest from newcomers to the industry who would normally be taking an overseas cruise or holiday. While it is exciting to see more people travelling in Queensland, with more first-time users on the road, the need for road safety initiatives has never been greater.

Shorter lead times for bookings

Across the industry we have seen a shortening of lead times as identified in the discussion paper. While this has created challenges for tourism businesses when trying to roster staff and plan for their businesses, it has also created challenges for travellers.

Areas in Western Queensland are seeing their highest level of visitation in many years and there are few vacant sites in some key locations around the state during the season. This means that some travellers that have not booked ahead are getting caught out.

The current South East Queensland and Townsville region lockdown has seen many RV travellers stranded as they have been able to enter Townsville for the next night of their booking and the park that have been staying in has no more available sites in order to allow them to stay on for an extra night or two.

Increased examples of a multi-tiered regulatory environment

As travel habits change and new technology, such as booking platforms like Air B'n'B or RV features like onboard toilets and showers, emerges we have seen that existing regulations are not being equally applied to all industry participants.

With lower compliance costs comes a lower cost for the customer, which in principle is positive, however this has a significant negative impact on the traditional tourism businesses forced to comply with the full regulatory burden, the local community and the environment.

The lack of facilities for consumers or the marketing platform a product is sold on, should actually place a higher regulatory burden on the site as it poses significantly more risk to the environment, the community and to users of the site than a traditional tourism or accommodation product. The costs to the consumer should be irrelevant to the conversation when it comes to these three factors.



What are your ideas for the future of Queensland's tourism industry?

Encouraging Queenslanders to retain their RV through a tourism rebate

More Queenslanders own a recreational vehicle than at any other time in the history of the industry with 1 in every 10 Queensland households owning a recreational vehicle, a number that is expected to rise in 2020.

Reports from caravan parks and dealerships across the state indicate that many of the first-time users within our sector are people who would have traditionally travelled overseas. Instead of investing in their next overseas adventure/s, they chose to purchase an RV with the intention of exploring Australia until the international borders reopen.

While Queenslanders have certainly answered the call to get out and support Queensland tourism, we have concern that this will be a temporary spike that will quickly fall away once the international borders reopen.

There is a clear link between RV ownership and regional dispersal - with over 83% of caravan and camping nights spent in Regional Queensland, compared to just 61% of total tourists.

While the international borders reopening will likely see many of these new RV owners return to their previous travel patterns, if we can get them to hold on to their RV we believe it will encourage them to supplement their big international trip with a number of shorter "weekend away" style trips in regional Queensland, especially if their investment is sitting in their yard as a regular reminder to get out and explore.

This could be encouraged through a voucher or incentive program which provides a tourism spend rebate against the registration cost for the RV annually. This program could be announced ahead of the reopening of the international borders with a commencement date six months after the borders reopen.

With less than 200,000 RV's registered in Queensland, this would have a limited impact on the State budget while offering significant benefits to regional visitation and economic activity.

Increased Road Safety Initiatives to ensure safe and happy travel

Caravanning Queensland is committed to making Queensland roads safer for all users. With Government and stakeholder support, we aim to arm RV owners with the knowledge, skills, and resources to be more confident and aware whilst travelling throughout this state.

In 2021 we are embarking on an ambitious, yet vitally important program of events designed to reach as many RV owners as possible. This will be achieved through a variety of different methods including, caravan shows and expos, live seminars, workshops and masterclasses, digital communication, video and email messaging.

Our overarching objective is simple: **"Zero accidents in Queensland involving caravans and recreational vehicles by 2024"**. This is bold, but achievable and certainly worthy of a concerted effort, however, without additional support we will not be able to deliver this program in its entirety.

Incentives for businesses to adapt and improve their product offerings to attract more and diverse markets.

Most caravan parks in Queensland are micro to small businesses, the owners of these businesses are busy checking guests in, cleaning amenities blocks and ensuring they meet their statutory requirements. By extension this means they rarely have time to work on their business as they are so busy working in it.

Creating incentives for tourism businesses, especially those small tourism businesses, to adapt and improve their product offering will have considerable positive impacts on regional areas, including positive employment outcomes and increased economic activity for these smaller towns and businesses. While the state Government has released several infrastructure grants, these are primarily awarded to larger businesses as they focus on job growth.

To ensure positive visitor experiences it would be good to see grant programs available to micro or small businesses to encourage them to undertake upgrade or beautification work in their businesses, especially in regional and remote areas of the state. This style of program could even be in the form of a low interest loan scheme such as the job support loans that were released at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mentoring programs to assist micro to small businesses identify market gaps and to plan for, and managed, associated projects

Mentoring and coaching programs such as the one rolled out by Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) over the past year have also encouraged capability building and business operator confidence to grow their businesses.

An opportunity exists to create and promote a mentoring program for micro to small tourism businesses. This mentor could assist the business owner to identify market gaps, put together a business plan and figuratively hold their hand through the development process would also encourage innovation by some of the boutique tourism businesses in Queensland. They could also ensure that the business owner stays on track with the project, not getting side tracked with the day to day running of their business.

Focus not just on high value but also extended stays

Traditionally tourism marketing has focused on high value tourist who may only stay a few nights but that spends \$300 or more per night. As an industry, the caravan and camping sector has by far the longest average length of stay and when you consider our winter market that travel for up to three months at a time, can spend significantly more in Queensland than a high value traveller on a short trip.

An opportunity exists to encourage interstate visitors, especially those with time on their hands, to experience a Queensland winter, increasing the number of visitor nights and amount of visitor expenditure in Queensland. As these visitors have more available time and their own transport they will generally disperse further into Queensland, providing much needed economic activity in regional and remote areas of Queensland which often have a very short season with which to earn their annual income.

Investment in regional tourism roads in need of upgrading or sealing to support the drive market.

Queensland is a large state and what many people do not realise is that it is a 20 hour drive from Brisbane to Cairns, with a further 13 hours required to get to Bamaga at Cape York. The fact that our state is so large provides plenty of opportunities; equally the tyranny of distance creates many challenges.

Roads and distance continue to be a major barrier to visitation for many tourism businesses in Regional Queensland. This coupled with the fact that hire cars and campervan/motorhomes are not to be driven on unsealed roads can result in lost bookings for amazing tourism businesses that are located off the beaten track.

We receive regular reports from caravan parks around the state that their guests have severely underestimated the travel time required to get to their destination. This not only creates road safety concerns but also limits the time they have to visit attractions and to experience the region.

Those member parks located outside of major regional centres often report that their guests are concerned about the quality of the roads and their ability to access the park, and surrounding attractions. This is not helped by the fact it is difficult to find information on the road quality beyond the Bruce Highway.

Creation of enabling tech infrastructure which provides accurate information on road surfaces and road quality to support regional and remote travel

An opportunity exists to develop an easy to navigate system which provide accurate information on road surfaces (sealed or unsealed) and local conditions (flooded areas etc) for drive visitors within the state.

On a recent trip into North West Queensland, I personally discovered the difficulty finding accurate information on the road surfaces and quality as I travelled in a hired vehicle which limited my travel – accurate and easy to find information may have seen me travel further afield to some of Queensland’s amazing bucket list locations.

Accurate and easy to access information on road quality is necessary to support regional and remote locations in Queensland and in turn encourage increased expenditure and length of travel due to the distance that must be travelled to reach these aspirational locations (e.g. Birdsville or the tip of Cape York).

Evaluating our target markets: Attracting new Winter Nomads for a Queensland winter

Each winter Queensland sees an influx of “grey-nomads” travelling north to escape the cooler winters of their home states, looking to stay for up to twelve weeks in Queensland. Over the past five years we have seen a shift in these visitors with (anecdotally) the average age of these guests lowering and a shift from the term “grey-nomad”.

While the average daily spend of these guests may not be as high as the traditional Queensland visitor, due to their increased length of stay, their overall spend is significantly higher.

This market is heavily influenced by traditional media reports about weather events, and a flood or cyclone early in the year can have a significant negative impact on the winter visitation for the year as these travellers head to Western Australia or the Northern Territory instead.

An opportunity exists for TEQ (and the Queensland Government) to run marketing campaigns targeting this cohort, showcasing what a Queensland winter looks like, and in the years where there are media reported weather events, showing that the state is open for business and that any damage has been cleaned up.

Evaluating our target markets: Getting more Families on the Road for longer

One of the positive outcomes from COVID was that many families realised that not only could the parents work remotely, but also that home schooling was possible.

We have seen increased reports of families hitting the road full time and exploring areas previously to remote or busy for a school holiday visit. This provides an excellent opportunity to highlight the many educational experiences that Queensland has to offer such as the Natural Sciences Loop or the Dinosaur Trail.

An opportunity exists to develop educational itineraries and content for families travelling Queensland, encouraging regional dispersal and extended length of stay.

What do you see as the obstacles to progress?

Appealing

Repositioning Queensland as an adventure tourism hub with Government intervention to ensure these businesses can get the appropriate insurance to operate

While we are fully supportive of the idea of repositioning Queensland as an adventure tourism hub we believe this will required Government intervention in order to ensure that these activities are able to access the public liability insurance required to operate.

Access to public liability insurance is the equal second biggest concern for our members at present, following only access to business insurance and the impacts of COVID-19.

Many caravan parks across Queensland have invested heavily in facilities to entertain their guests. These facilities include water parks, jumping pillows, peddle karts and more. In the past eighteen months these businesses have been informed that their insurer is no longer willing to provide Public Liability cover for their facilities, or that if they will it is at an extreme premium increase and subject to increased supervision and monitoring.

This is resulting in services and activities being removed, not just in our sector but also by other tourism operators across the state.

Investing in home-grown events that drive visitation and stay in Queensland during the shoulder periods

Regional Queensland has a strong tourist season and the development of events during these periods does not increase visitation. Any events program should focus on the shoulders of the season rather than peak periods. This would ensure that the event takes advantage of the good weather while also ensuring that the regional community has the capacity to host the event.

Multi-day events which attract a drive market have the additional benefit of supporting the surrounding towns leading up to the event and off the back of it. A great example of this is the town of Roma which receives an influx of visitors leading up to both the Big Red Bash and the Birdsville Races, and again after the event ends.



Dynamic

Simpler project facilitation through harmonised regulations across the state

Until five years ago there had been very few new caravan parks developed for the simple fact that the cost to develop a greenfield site was unviable.

While the last five years have seen a small number of operators develop new caravan parks each of these operators has reported that the process was overly complicated and that they experienced red tape at both a state and local government level.

With more people travelling than ever before in the caravan and camping sector and a 5% year on year increase in RV registrations over the past ten years there is more need for additional capacity than ever before however due to the high cost and challenges associated with developing, very few people are willing to build a new site from scratch.

When speaking with member businesses that are in a position to build a new caravan park, or to redevelop an existing park, they note that the differing rules across each local government area in Queensland are a significant deterrent for them.

While we understand that the development of a block of land in South East Queensland is quite different to the development of a block of land in North West Queensland, the harmonisation of both Planning Schemes and Local Laws would support developers and operators from across the state to look at other regions.

Regulatory reform and a review of red tape to enable new products and experiences

Caravan parks are subject to some of the most significant and complex regulation of any tourism business in the state. Not only are they required to comply with state legislation, they are also required to comply with a range of Local Laws, including (but not limited to) Operation of a Caravan Park.

In developing this submission, we used the Australian Business License and Information Service (ABLIS) to identify the licences, permits and other information relevant to a caravan park in the Brisbane City Council region and it returned 42 results (please see the end of this submission for the full report). On review of this report we identified 14 additional piece of legislation that a caravan park operator may be required to comply with.

For micro and small businesses, this is both overwhelming and excessive.

There is need for a significant review of red tape in Queensland, especially as it applies to tourism businesses with a focus on harmonising rules across all local government areas where possible.

One recent example of red tape preventing innovation is the introduction of the requirement for the Check in Queensland App to be mandatory for caravan parks from 9 July 2021.

Several caravan parks have moved to frictionless check in. This process not only prevents the need for guests to come into the office, it also streamlines the guests arrival at the park. The park sends a text message to the guest with a boom gate code, site number and park map prior to arrival. When the guest arrives, they enter the boom gate code (which lets the office know they have arrived) and head directly to their site. The park manager or representative then walks down to the site an hour later, ensures they are all set up and shares information about the park and the region.

With use of the Check in Queensland App now mandatory, the park has had to put the frictionless check in on hold as they have to ensure the guest checks in with the app on arrival.

Accelerating innovation in tourism through technology adoption and new ideas with significant support for businesses not yet online

The capability of tourism businesses in Queensland varies significantly with some very tech savvy businesses and others which still do not have an email address. There is a need for business coaching for some tourism businesses in Queensland to support their transition online and to ensure they are confident using technology.

Continue to fully subsidise Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW) listings

This year Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW) listings have been fully subsidised by TEQ to encourage as many businesses as possible to be listed on Queensland.com. We would encourage the Queensland Government to continue funding these listings in our state.



Resilient

Improving the skills and capability of tourism businesses and their staff with the introduction of a travel subsidy for businesses in regional and remote locations

When we survey our members one of the messages that comes through consistently is that regional, and even more so, remote businesses, feel forgotten when it comes to most skills and capability programs.

While COVID has seen an increase in the number of online programs available to these businesses, the many blackspots in Queensland and the fact that the internet can be unreliable in the regions means that often these businesses are unable to take advantage of these opportunities.

The introduction of a travel subsidy to allow business owners, or their employees, to travel to Brisbane or their nearest major regional centre to participate in face to face training would be highly beneficial in improving the skills and capability of tourism businesses in regional Queensland.

Improve the social licence of the tourism sector to address workforce shortages

Workforce shortages in the industry are limiting the growth of existing business and the development of new experiences and operations. Building a strong and adaptive labour force by developing the attractiveness of the industry, particularly for young people, remains a crucial cog in the broader success of the industry.

The development of the Work in Paradise program and associated jobs board is one step towards addressing workforce issues however there is still work to be done.

Improving the social license of the sector is another way raise the profile of the industry amongst young Australians who are increasingly looking for purpose alongside profit in their careers. This may include developing volunteer programs in regions to not only address local issues or natural disaster recovery, but to also expose these travellers to the tourism businesses in the region and the lifestyle benefits of Regional Queensland.

Encouraging even higher standards our industry through the ongoing support of industry accreditation programs and recognition of these programs in grant applications

Industry accreditation programs encourage good business practices and regular reviews of these practices. As well as providing these businesses with the tools and guidance to develop and grow, accreditation assists them to meet and exceed their customers expectations.

For the caravan industry we have the “Accreditation Key”, an industry specific scheme specifically for the caravan industry with multiple arms, including a program for caravan/holiday park operators designed to improve business standards within the industry. Other arms of this accreditation program include a compliance program for manufacturers, a dealership program, a service and repair program and a program for industry suppliers.

Continued support of the tourism Industry accreditation programs (those recognised through the Queensland Tourism Awards program) will allow even more businesses to participate in the programs.

Placing greater value on industry accreditation for grant applications in addition to industry awards may encourage more businesses to consider becoming accredited.

Investment in improving digital connectivity and reducing black spots

The introduction of cloud-based property management systems has had positive impacts on caravan parks located in major metropolitan and regional centres, particularly in relation to productivity.

Many regional and remote caravan parks have indicated a desire to move to cloud-based systems however due to their lack of digital connectivity have not had the confidence to do so. Other's report that they have made the move to this cloud-based software only to discover that the unreliable internet and services in their region makes it untenable – impacting not only their productivity but also the guest experience in their park.

Further as more travellers come to expect quality internet and phone coverage as they travel, the large number of black spots is impacting the visitor experience in regional Queensland.

Ensuring all Queensland Tourism Businesses can access the insurance they need

As climate change continues to lead to more extreme weather events, the institutions that underpin a business need to be reframed and adapted. Insurance is core to this as it provides the necessary confidence to business to invest in products and experiences that attract and retain consumers, while mitigating the risk associated from insurance claims.

Extreme weather events are becoming more common and damaging in Queensland which has resulted in insurers determining that the risk is now undesirable. This decision has seen a significant number of businesses being unable to attain adequate coverage from insurers, particularly in the regional Queensland. While insurance is acknowledged to be cyclic, climate change exacerbates the issues of access and cost for businesses.

We are hopeful that this will, in part, be mitigated by the creation of a reinsurance pool for cyclones and cyclone related flooding in Northern Australia, however this does not provide protection for the flooding that occurs in Queensland because of heavy rains or from bushfires.

Further, access to Public Liability insurance (as mentioned previously) has now reached a point where it is causing businesses to close or to remove facilities and experiences from their business.

Ongoing challenges accessing insurance will continue to limit the growth of existing business and the development of new experiences and operations as well as impacting the transfer of ownership of businesses.

We believe that access to insurance in Queensland has now reached a point of market failure and needs Government intervention in order to ensure the long-term viability of tourism businesses in our state.

Implementation of a marketing strategy to address significant Queensland weather events (and associated media coverage)

The impact of significant weather event is not limited to insurance, it also has a significant impact on interstate visitation over the following twelve months, and sometimes longer. Visitors from the Southern States, generally have no concept of how large Queensland is, and when there is a weather event the media often just refer to it as an event that is impacting Queensland, for example "Cyclone to hit Queensland coast". This results in potential visitors rethinking their travel plans and instead travelling to another location.

While we understand that it is difficult to undo the damage that has been done through the news reports about weather events, we would strongly encourage marketing activities which showcase how quickly Queensland has bounced back following a weather event, and how wonderful Queensland is looking as it recovers.

We have found that traditional media does not provide the cut through necessary to reassure winter guests that their destination has recovered however with newer, more targeted, marketing opportunities we believe the opportunity here should be carefully considered.

A renewed focus on the forgotten locations

While the Regional Tourism Organisations do a wonderful job of encouraging visitation in their region, there are several regions around the state which feel like the “forgotten locations”. Most notably these include Cape York, the Gulf, businesses along the Savannah Way (west of the Tablelands).

While these destinations are bucket list destinations, due to their distance from a major airport they rarely get any significant exposure.

Featuring regions like these more often ensures that that these tourism businesses do not feel forgotten, while also encouraging greater regional dispersal by visitors as to get to these amazing locations you must travel through several other regions first.

This could be achieved by greater funding focused on supporting these locations.

Equal application of regulatory burden and increased penalties for Local Governments that do not enforce an equal application of their own local laws and planning schemes

As travel habits change and new technology, such as booking platforms like Air B’n’B or RV features like onboard toilets and showers, emerges we have seen that existing regulations are not being equally applied to all industry participants.

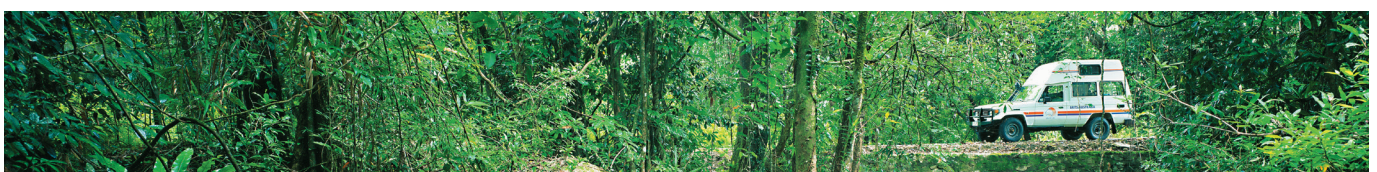
The equal application of the planning scheme, and state and local laws has, in the past, encouraged significant private investment in new and existing tourism product, ensuring repeat visitation and a high level of visitor satisfaction.

The introduction of new product which does not meet this same regulatory burden, such as the development of a caravan park/RV park that can offer low-cost sites by virtue of a lower regulatory burden, creates a multi-tiered regulatory environment to the detriment of fair competition.

With lower compliance costs comes a lower cost for the customer, which in principle is positive, however this has a significant negative impact on the traditional tourism businesses forced to comply with the full regulatory burden. This does not only impact business confidence, employment, and reinvestment in the region, it also has the potential to put the guest or visitor and environment at risk.

The lack of facilities for consumers or the marketing platform a product is sold on, should actually place a higher regulatory burden on the site as it poses significantly more risk to the environment, the community and to users of the site than a traditional tourism or accommodation product. The costs to the consumer should be irrelevant to the conversation when it comes to these three factors.

In addition to addressing the issues associated with short term accommodation, Local Governments should be required to equally apply their own local laws and planning schemes, to their own parcels of land, crown land and private land and there should be increased penalties where they do not.



Conclusion

As an industry we welcome the challenges that the coming decade will bring and look forward to engaging with the panel, the Queensland Government, and the broader tourism industry in meeting these challenges and evolving tourism in Queensland can flourish.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any additional information.

Kind regards



Michelle Weston
Chief Executive Officer

About Caravan Parks Association of Queensland

Caravan Parks Association of Queensland Ltd (CPAQ) is the peak industry body representing caravan parks in Queensland. Established in 1966, we provide a united and informed voice for the Queensland caravan parks industry.

As a professional, solution focused association, we encourage and support industry best practice across all areas of business by providing our members with leadership, support, networking, professional development, and promotional opportunities.

There are currently 445 full and associate members of CPAQ, made up of caravan parks (catering for tourists and residents) and campgrounds, large and small, from all corners of the State, industry suppliers, tourism businesses, plus regional and local tourism organisations.

We seek to work with both state and local governments to balance the needs of the consumer with those of the Government and industry. Further we actively strive to ensure not only that minimum standards within parks are met, but that over time these industry standards are in fact driven higher.

Caravanning Queensland

We trade under the brand **Caravanning Queensland** which joins the two related but separate peak industry bodies in Queensland:



Caravan Parks Association of Queensland (CPAQ) the voice of the caravan park owners and operators and the associated supply chain in Queensland.

Caravan Trade & Industries Association of Queensland (CTIAQ) the voice of the trade sector in the caravan and camping industry in Queensland with a membership made up predominantly of retailers, manufacturers, hirers, repairers, and suppliers in the caravan and camping industries.

