



Liz Savage
Chair
Tourism Industry Reference Panel
Email: tourismrecovery@dtis.qld.gov.au

28 June 2021



Dear Ms Savage

On behalf of Moreton Bay Region Industry & Tourism (MBRIT), we wish to offer this submission to inform Queensland Government's 'Designing our tourism future' discussion to develop a comprehensive *Action Plan for Tourism Recovery*.

About MBRIT & the Moreton Bay Region

Established in 2015, MBRIT is a not-for-profit organisation that exists to promote, benefit and grow the Moreton Bay Region. Recognised as the official local tourism organisation, MBRIT is responsible for promoting the Moreton Bay Region as an attractive and desirable visitor destination. MBRIT's core KPIs focus on attracting more visitors to the region, increasing overnight visitor spend and length of stay, and dispersing visitors across the region.

MBRIT is Moreton Bay Regional Council's official economic development partner and delivers a suite of initiatives, programs, and events on behalf of Council across community engagement and lifestyle, tourism and destination management, and business and industry development. MBRIT's stated purpose is 'to increase the prosperity of the Moreton Bay Region.'

Attracting 4.1 million visitors, Moreton Bay's tourism industry generates 4.4 million visitor nights and \$1.1 billion visitor expenditure, up from a value of around \$600 million just three years ago, whilst supporting over 5,300 jobs.

Traditionally characterised by the pristine sands of Bribie Island, idyllic family offerings on the Redcliffe peninsula, and the hinterland region including townships of Samford, Dayboro, Mount Mee and Woodford, visitor spend has increased by over 80% in the past three years and surged over the past 18 months as COVID-19 changed people's travel and consumption behaviours.

In early 2021 Moreton Bay Regional Council, the third largest local government area in Australia, released the [Regional Economic Development Strategy \(REDS\)](#), a 20 year blue print that sets out the region's economic growth potential and targets. In this strategy tourism, sport and events was identified as one of four core priority industries, amongst food and agribusiness, advanced manufacturing, and knowledge, innovation and entrepreneurship.

Tourism Industry Reference Panel Consultation

We congratulate the Tourism Industry Reference Panel for undertaking consultation to help inform Queensland Government's development of an Action Plan for Tourism

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Recovery. It is imperative that the Queensland tourism industry has a clear roadmap towards recovery and reopening of borders.

A comprehensive strategy will enable the sector to position itself as a competitive and highly desirable destination, ready to welcome visitors, host major events and conferences, and deliver exceptional experiences. However, to do so the sector needs clearer pathways towards securing and accessing funding, facilitation and championing of projects and attracting a skilled workforce.

MBRIT Response to the Discussion Paper

MBRIT provides our response to the 'Designing our tourism future' discussion as follows:

1) Leveraging Natural Assets

The Moreton Bay Region is fortunate to have considerable nature-based tourism assets including the Bay, coastline, beaches, national parks and state forests, waterfalls and hiking trails. In addition, the region has a rich indigenous culture, home to Kabi Kabi, Jinibara and Turrbal Traditional Custodians.

The opportunity exists to further leverage these remarkable assets to deliver exceptional experiences and tourism products that attract visitors, capture spend and create jobs. Increasingly we are seeing adventure, nature and culture rank as highly desirable experiences visitors seek when coming to our region.

However, delivering new products and experiences that seek to leverage these nature-based assets needs greater coordination and championing. For example, our region has the pristine Moreton Bay on our doorstep, however the Bay does not solely sit in the jurisdiction of one local government area (LGA), but five LGAs including the Sunshine Coast, Moreton Bay, Redlands, Brisbane and Gold Coast.

To attract and deliver new experiences and products that meet future visitor appetite, and are financially viable for an operator and investor, the need exists for a single body that coordinates and leverages activity. To that end, MBRIT would welcome the **establishment of a 'Bay Taskforce'** or like body to look at this asset holistically and works with LGAs to attract, facilitate and deliver projects and experiences, including new product and infrastructure. It is envisaged that a 'Bay Taskforce' would work to champion the Bay, capitalise on opportunities and navigate barriers.

In addition, the **region's national parks and state forests** cross LGA boundaries however industry increasingly report that navigating the frameworks that manage these assets is opaque with limited visibility of process, to enable new products and experiences to be established, and ultimately create new jobs.

2) Funding & Assurance

The tourism sector has often encountered barriers when seeking to access traditional sources of capital and debt. This issue has been exacerbated with the impacts of COVID-19, with lenders and investors shying away from the tourism industry given the existing uncertainty and limited visibility of boarder reopening targets.

As such, many operators and tourism asset owners have limited avenues to access long and short-term operational or infrastructure funding. Accordingly, MBRIT encourages



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the State Government to consider releasing **grant funding opportunities** for the sector that enables strategic projects to be identified and delivered, as well as operational funding to enable businesses to continue to adapt as the tourism landscape evolves.

MBRIT also seeks to point out that many operators have been forced to reduce their workforce sizes, hence many business owners are working 'in the business' as well as 'on the business'. As such, MBRIT encourages the State Government to look at opportunities to **simplify the grant funding process** and requirements to enable funding to reach at-needed businesses.

In addition, MBRIT calls on the State Government to deliver more equitable funding allocation and governance around **destination marketing funds**. The current funding structures lacks transparency, and governance at times minimises the flow of funds and benefits to local tourism organisations.

Lastly, assurances and guarantees such as **public liability insurance** continues to be a major prohibitor for the tourism sector. Many operators within our region have reported difficulties in securing a renewed insurance policy, and where they have operators are reporting a 300%+ increase in premiums.

3) Service & Visitor Experience

Workforce shortages in tourism and hospitality is increasingly placing pressure on operators to meet and deliver service expectations of visitors. Operators have reported difficulties with attracting and retaining a skilled workforce across all areas of the sector including chefs, cleaning and front of house staff.

Accordingly, operators and asset owners are often unable to deliver products and experiences, or operate week-round, despite visitor demand. MBRIT calls on the State Government to look at **initiatives and programs that help to attract new talent** to the sector, as well as look at measures to maintain the existing workforce to alleviate increased 'brain drain' from the sector.

Lastly, it is important that the value of tourism and its contribution to the economic and social fabric of Queensland is understood by all State Government departments. Any future strategies that seek to address and support an Action Plan for Tourism Recovery needs a **whole-of-government approach** from development, endorsement, and implementation.

4) 2032 Olympics Bid

The 2032 Olympics bid provides an immense opportunity for the SEQ region in Queensland. MBRIT is buoyed by the State Government's commitment to endorse and back the 2032 bid. To enable the region to benefit from this major sporting event, in particular Moreton Bay, investment in and facilitation of supporting infrastructure and products will be paramount. Specifically, access infrastructure into the region via water and road, hotel accommodation and commissionable trade-ready experiences and products.



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Thank you

We thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission to inform the strategy. We welcome further opportunities for involvement in the new tourism strategy development and implementation.

Should you wish to discuss our response further please do not hesitate to contact Oriana Wyrozebska, General Manager – Tourism & Investment on 0434 567 171 or oriana.wyrozebska@mbrit.com.au.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shane Newcombe".

**Shane Newcombe
Chief Executive Officer**