



## Briefing Note

### Delivering More Protected Areas and Nature-Based Tourism in Queensland – A “Win-Win” Opportunity

11 June 2025

#### Summary

The Queensland Tourism and Conservation Alliance is a non-partisan group advocating for greater, strategic investment in protected area growth, management and ecotourism opportunities.

This briefing note articulates the common ground between the Tourism and Conservation sectors’ interests and identifies policy synergies under the Protected Area Strategy and the Destination 2045 Strategy and ahead of the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Our combined expertise could help government deliver policy and election commitments through effective collaboration.

**Recommendation:** *Recognise and utilise the advisory potential of QTCA expertise in relation to further policy development, delivering interim protected area targets and the growth of sustainable tourism across Queensland.*

#### Background

The Queensland Tourism and Conservation Alliance (QTCA) is a non-partisan alliance of peak tourism and conservation bodies advocating for increased and strategic investment in protected areas. QTCA supports the Queensland Government’s vision of a world-class protected area system and a thriving nature-based tourism sector. We were established in 2022 with representatives from the Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC), National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ), Ecotourism Australia, Queensland First Nations Tourism Council, Queensland Conservation Council (QCC) and The Pew Charitable Trusts. Our collective expertise provides a unique opportunity for government to effectively deliver policy priorities and election commitments within a collaborative framework.

#### Context

Tourism contributes \$23 billion annually to Queensland’s economy and sustains over 174,000 jobs across 60,000 businesses. Nature-based tourism is a high-growth sector delivering strong returns on public investment.

Queensland is home to some of the most iconic protected areas on Earth—K’gari, the Daintree, the Great Barrier Reef and Gondwana Rainforests. These assets are central to Queensland’s international tourism brand and biodiversity legacy.

As of June 2025, Queensland's protected areas encompass only ~8.6% of its landmass (~15 million hectares). The Government has made a long-term commitment to increase this to 17% but is not tied to a timebound deadline.

However, at a press conference on 1 June 2025, Premier Crisafulli made the commitment to deliver nearly 2 million additional hectares in this term of government (i.e. by Oct 2028).

Concurrently, the Federal Government has announced a \$250 million investment to support protected area expansion across Australia. Queensland is well-placed to secure a significant share of this funding, particularly if it accelerates land acquisition and boosts ranger numbers, park management and visitor infrastructure.

### **Protected Areas Underpin Queensland's Visitor Economy**

Public protected areas sustain tourism, recreation, conservation and community health. Delivering the 17% land protection target will unlock new tourism opportunities across the state, especially in regional and First Nations communities.

Public demand for access to protected areas is growing. Well-managed tourism activities can deepen public appreciation for nature and generate stronger community support for conservation.

To ensure tourism benefits protected areas rather than harms them, associated infrastructure and activities must meet high environmental and cultural standards.

International tourists demand genuine environmental credentials, and the government's ambition for 45 eco-tourism products by 2045 will only succeed if there is carefully planned and coordinated investment in product development and protected area growth and management.

### **Tourism as a Conservation Ally**

When designed responsibly, tourism supports conservation through education, monitoring, restoration and community stewardship.

Tour operators have already demonstrated value—e.g. post-flood clean-up efforts on K'gari by adventure tourism operators.

The Great Barrier Reef High Standard Operator Program provides a global benchmark for tourism-conservation integration. A similar model should be expanded to other protected areas.

### **The Opportunity of the Decade**

With the 2032 Games on the horizon, Queensland has an unprecedented opportunity to show global leadership in conservation and sustainable tourism.

Expanding, investing in, and responsibly managing protected areas can help Queensland meet both its biodiversity obligations and tourism ambitions. [QTCA stands ready to assist.](#)

### **Further Information:**

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