

Shared stories connecting diverse landscapes

ECODESTINATION FRAMEWORK

TOWNSVILLE CITY AND SURROUNDS



Acknowledgement of Country

Townsville City Council acknowledges the Wulgurukaba of Gurambilbarra and Yunbenun, Bindal, Gugu Badhun and Nywaigi as the Traditional Owners of this land. We pay our respects to their cultures, their ancestors and their Elders, past and present - and all future generations.



Disclaimer

The information contained in this Framework is intended only to inform collaborators and partnerships and should not be relied upon for investment and business decisions. It is expected that any specific recommended actions should be analysed and appropriate due diligence undertaken prior to making any decisions. This document serves to enhance collaboration in ecotourism and sustainable business and industry.

Recommended actions contained in the Townsville City and Surrounds Ecodestination Framework have been made on the basis of assumptions, methodology and information provided from many sources. The authors, and Townsville City Council, accept no responsibility or liability for any errors, omissions or resultant consequences including any loss or damage arising from reliance on the information contained in this Framework.

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Introduction

The Townsville Ecodestination Framework (EF) has been developed to provide insight, support and opportunity for community, tourism and business for the local sustainable management, development and marketing of tourism across Townsville City and Surrounds.

The EF promotes Ecodestination leadership in connection and support with regional tourism operators. It is a supportive framework that accommodates existing regional development and marketing campaigns and plans including:

- Townsville City Council Corporate Plan 2021-2026
- Up for Unexpected marketing campaign and Townsville, North Queensland Visitor Guide (Townsville Enterprise Ltd)
- Wet Tropics Strategic Plan 2020-2030, and Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998
- Magnetic Island Tourism Masterplan (Townsville Enterprise Ltd)
- Reef Guardian Action Plan 2020-2024 (Townsville City Council)

It provides a snapshot of the unique natural and social landscape of Townsville as well as existing and proposed sustainable management methods, ecotourism infrastructure and growing ecotourism opportunities and sustainable experiences.

The EF works to sharpen the region's experiences and build capacity in people, community and business to further develop and promote ecodestination experiences to sustainably grow the local community and visitor economy.

A strong focus of Council is creating opportunities for community that are:

- Low Cost
- Socially Acceptable
- and that grow Townsville

This EF is a framework that recognises the local efforts for building and managing sustainability initiatives in a destination. It identifies key strengths and challenges faced in our region, and provides a nudge for industry towards sustainable tourism growth in conjunction with actions and planning for a Sustainable Destination. This includes new business models, key marketing messages and product development initiatives which are underway and in development.

A globally connected community driven by lifestyle and nature.

To Grow Townsville.





300 days of sunshine

Townsville is the perfect place to live, work and play! With more than 300 days of sunshine, and a daily rush hour of less than 20 minutes, Townsville’s lifestyle is second to none.

Townsville’s population, currently estimated at 198,000, is projected to grow to 300,000 people by 2036. The Townsville North Queensland tourism industry employs over 6,800 local workers who welcome more than 2.9 million visitors per year. The Townsville Local Government Area (LGA) covers an area of 3,727.8km² (excluding the Marine area).

From the reef and its tropical islands to lush rainforests, and endless

natural beauty – Townsville is all about easy living with plenty of big city benefits. Townsville is home to Australia’s largest garrison city, world-class events, leading education providers, cutting-edge health facilities, affordable housing, and a global bustling port. The city offers a range of diverse experiences, from the awe-inspiring Great Barrier Reef, World Heritage Wet Tropics rainforest to the dirt and dust of the Australian outback.

The Regional Tourism Operator (RTO) representing Townsville and the wider region is Townsville Enterprise Limited (TEL). TEL supports tourism product and experience development in the wider region along with ways to build and improve opportunities in the visitor economy.



The Up For Unexpected brand by TEL holds four position pillars:

Inspire fresh perspectives

Continually learning, evolving and inspiring others by shining a light on nature’s story.

Explore hidden worlds

Keepers and preservers of our authentic Australian history, culture and natural wonders.

Taking it to the next level

Fostering and forging an international profile for the North.

Experience eclectic twists

Natural charm and quirks that make the location unexpected, surprising and fun. Connecting people with the spirit of the place.

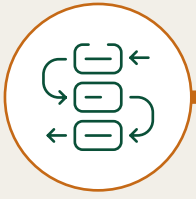


The EF document supports the *Up For Unexpected* marketing campaign which is the leading brand for the Townsville, North Queensland region.

The program highlights the adventure stories that are enjoyed by visiting the region and delivering unique experiences in a new and surprising world. The campaign connects stories, people and place, and aligns with Council’s commitments to building and maintaining a Sustainable Destination into the future.

Council's Ecodestination Journey

"A sustainable destination that embraces and participates in the arts, sports, events and recreational activities" TCC Corporate Plan



Environmental planning, interpretation and strategy

Council has supported management and conservation plans across decades. In the last few years, Sustainable Destination has been incorporated into:

- TCC Corporate Plan (20-24)
- TCC Annual Operating Plan (22-23)
- TSV Reef Guardian Plan (20-24)
- TCC Environmental Policy



Eco-certified Sustainability Tours

Operating for 16 years, local school students and community have discovered Learnscapes across our region through TCC Sustainability Tours.



25+ years of sustainability practice

Council held its first ecotourism workshops in 1998 and produced an ecotourism strategy in 2000. Innovative environmental projects continue to be embedded in the foundation of Townsville.



Certified Businesses

Dozens of local business are joining and participating in programs that support them to achieve sustainable outcomes.



Green Travel Guide

The guide features tourism operators and destination that are eco-certified under Ecotourism Australia. Access greentravelguide.org



Green Travel Leader

Council awarded Green Travel Leader by Ecotourism Australia for providing Advanced Ecocertification product for 10 years.



Top 100 Sustainable Destination stories

Townsville awarded Top 100 Sustainable Destinations in the world in 2020 and 2021 alongside the likes of Galapagos Islands and the Bay of Plenty by global certification group Green Destinations.

Definitions

Nature-based tourism

Nature-based tourism is travel that is undertaken largely for the purpose of enjoying the natural environment as well as enjoying nature-based experiences. This can range from simple natural encounters to more immersive ecotourism experiences.

Ecotourism

Ecotourism is ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation.

Vision

The Ecodestination Framework reflects the vision and goals of the Townsville City Council Corporate Plan and city values to grow Townsville.

Townsville commits to growing the city through world leading placemaking that provides a national and international platform for new opportunities, offerings and creating new landmark regenerative tourism experiences (built, cultural and natural environment). This includes the goal of maintaining Eco-Certified Sustainable Destination status.

The EF includes a snapshot of local actions that support in the recognition and advancement of Townsville City and Surrounds as an ecotourism destination with unexpected surprises while creating:

- Tourism that benefits the environment and attracts visitors.
- Experiences and interactions with visitors that contribute to restorative and regenerative practices across our region.
- Building an interconnected web of business, community and industry participating in authentic sustainability
- A shift in perspective of tourism as part of a greater “living system” in Townsville.



Ecodestination positioning

Townsville’s strategic position allows visitors and locals alike to embrace the diverse natural landscape full of recreational and community-driven opportunities and experiences for sustainability.

There are many benefits of being in nature that are essential for our physical, social, mental and spiritual health and wellbeing. Embedded and intertwined across Townsville are sprawling tropical savanna grasslands, eucalyptus woodlands and four significant areas of international recognition that people can spend time exploring. These include:



**Wet Tropics
World Heritage
Area (WHA)**



**Internationally
protected wetlands
(RAMSAR-listed)**



**Great Barrier
Reef WHA &
Marine Park**



**Migration path of the
East Asian-Australasian
Flyaway Bird Migration**



Townsville City and Surrounds

Townsville is home to world-class, beautiful, and awe-inspiring landscapes that tell unique cultural, environmental and social stories. They are known as the subregion landscapes that attract travellers from across the globe.

The interpretative and educational capacity of these subregion landscapes have the capacity to inspire environmental stewardship and business opportunity in the local community.

Over time they have formed identifiable characters such as Magnetic Island, a pristine nature lovers' playground that is home to secluded waterfalls, clear turquoise waters and coral gardens just minutes away for the city. Other

subregions are developing their own hero experiences and opportunities that will grow to become remarkable in their own way such as Paluma, a village in the mist, and the Town Common wetlands, a hidden oasis of bird life and adventure not far from the city centre. This extends to pristine areas such as crystal clear, fresh-water swimming holes near ancient Gondwana Rainforest to dramatic mountain scenery that surrounds Townsville's scenic rim such as The Pinnacles, a

place of towering granite monoliths.

To compliment this, Townsville's community have voted the City's urban green spaces as the biggest asset to health, wellbeing, and lifestyle (TCC Liveability Study 2020). Townsville has a wide network of parklands and natural spaces connecting visitors and locals. This is enabling greater accessibility and range to enjoy the many recreational activities the region has to offer.

- Southern Wet Tropics from Bluewater to Paluma Village

■ The Pinnacles and surrounding conservation areas

■ Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and World Heritage Area

■ Magnetic Island (Yunbenun), a reef island on the Great Barrier Reef
- Bowling Green Bay & Mt Elliot with Wongaloo Ramsar-listed wetlands

■ Townsville City and the Urban Environment including Castle Hill and Mt Louisa

■ Ross River, Ross Dam and the surrounding savannas of Mt Stuart and Townsville

■ Town Common wetlands, Jezzine Barracks and the South Bank wetlands to Muntulunga Ranges

The Bindal people call the country "Thul Garrie Waja". The Wulgurukaba people call the country "Gurrumbilbarra" and Magnetic island is known as "Yunbenun".

A crossroads to different worlds... and untapped potential

Townsville's abundance of nature-based experiences available

□ Southern Wet Tropics from Bluewater to Paluma Village

The gateway to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area

Referred to as the Southern Wet Tropics, Townsville is the southern gateway to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (WHA) and it's the first stop in the WHA by road directly west of the city. It features Paluma, known as the village in the mist, and Seaview ranges which loom above the farming communities on the coastal plain. This is the dry end of the tropics. The forests here are different to those in the north and feature magnificent stands of tall eucalypt forests and dry tropical open woodlands. The most ancient type of vegetation, the Gondwana rainforest of Australia, holds remnants surrounding Paluma Range and in Mount Elliot in Townsville.



□ The Pinnacles and surrounding conservation areas

The Pinnacles are a mountain range that provide dramatic visual amenity in the Townsville landscape with towering granite monoliths (tall rock formations). In March 2011, Pinnacles National Park was the first part of a larger national park proposal designed to protect the scenic rim of Townsville (proposed to be gazetted).. While travelling around Townsville, the Pinnacles provide a scenic backdrop rolling into savanna grasslands and eucalyptus woodlands. It is also a nesting habitat for the endangered Black-throated Finch southern subspecies. The surrounding areas are home to recreational opportunities such as rock climbing, hiking, camping and swimming making it a spectacular half-day or full-day experience.



□ Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and World Heritage Area

The 180km coastline of Townsville runs parallel to the Great Barrier Reef (GBR). The Strand and many beaches have coastal boardwalks for visitors to take in ocean views. Boating, fishing and aquatic recreation opportunities are easily accessible and numerous reef tourism operators provide visitors with the chance to experience famous sites such as the Outer Reef and SS Yongala Wreck, considered one of the most beautiful shipwreck dives in the world. As a bonus, ocean explorers can also visit the newly opened Museum of Underwater Art (MOUA) designed from the world's leading underwater sculptor Jason Decaires Taylor. On top of this, Townsville is home to the #1 university in the world for Marine and Freshwater Biology as well as world-class marine institutions such as the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS).



□ Magnetic Island (Yunbenun), a reef island on the Great Barrier Reef

Magnetic Island is a popular hotspot for visitors to Townsville as it offers stunning island scenery and experiences. The Traditional Owners are the Wulgurukaba People, and the traditional name is Yunbenun. It is characterised by large granite boulders, turquoise waters, coastal pine trees and WWII military base ruins. It has coral reefs and tidal reef flats adjacent to most of its beaches making it a popular snorkel and dive location. It has an abundance of fauna and flora including koalas. 78% of the island is protected National Park and it boasts an extensive trailsnetwork making it the perfect hiking destination



A crossroads to different worlds

cont.

Bowling Green Bay & Mt Elliot with Wongaloo Ramsar-listed wetlands

Bowling Green Bay National Park extends in the South-East and offers incredible mountain views of Mount Elliot, the home of ancient remnant Gondwanan rainforest vegetation. Isolated as a result of a drying climate, Mount Elliot is now evolving independently from other rainforests and is an important local refuge for wildlife, with some species found only here. Alligator Creek is a popular swimming spot nestled in the mountain and accessible to the public. The surrounding wetlands that extend to Cleveland Bay are internationally-listed Ramsar-protected wetlands (under the Ramsar Convention). This includes Cromarty Wetlands conservation area (known as Wongaloo) which is connected to salt plains and biodiverse coastal waterways and mangrove habitats. It's an essential migration path for a plethora of birds who migrate on the great East Asian-Australasian Flyaway migration. Townsville is a well known birdwatching mecca and is named in the Top 55 birdwatching spots in the world.



Townsville City and the Urban Environment including Castle Hill and Mt Louisa

Townsville City boasts a lively hub of restaurants, cafes and accommodation. The city has the iconic Castle Hill that stands above it, which is accessible by car and foot, and has a large network of scenic hiking trails. "The hill", as locals like to call it, draws in around 2,500 locals and visitors per day that climb to its summit and are welcomed to 360 views of Townsville. Back in the city, there are many eating districts such as City Lane and Palmer Street. Weekend markets are spread across town and events draw in crowds throughout the year while pop up food trucks bring foodies in. Townsville has an extensive network of urban parks, esplanades and green infrastructure that encourage active lifestyles and leisurely exploration including The Strand, a 2.2km world-class beachfront promenade custom-built for enjoyment. Ross River, Ross Dam and the surrounding savannas of Mt Stuart and Townsville.



Ross River, Ross Dam and the surrounding savannas of Mt Stuart and Townsville

A popular nature spot in Townsville is the Ross River which runs down the centre of the urban residential centre of Townsville. The river is rich with bird and aquatic life and its freshwater areas upstream are popular places for explorers to enjoy aquatic recreation such as rowing, swimming, and exercise at free outdoor gyms. There are a range of community centres situated along the river that provide essential outdoor education and recreation for residents and visitors. Some notable spots include swimming under large rainforests at Riverway Lagoon and getting lost in the large botanical gardens at The Palmetum. At Mt Stuart, the summit has a peak accessible by car and views that extend past the horizon. It is a popular mountain biking spot as well as the Douglas Hill Mountain Bike Reserve extending off Mt Stuart's foothills.



Town Common wetlands, Jezzine Barracks and the South Bank wetlands to Muntulunga Ranges

South of the urban centre are experiences that immerse visitors into Townsville's unique heritage and nature. Jezzine Barracks is a large memorial park located on the headland connecting The Strand and Pallarenda beaches. It features 33 public artworks created by 13 Aboriginal artists and 11 local artists. Green spaces and active pathways connect this subregion. There are moments of life scattered throughout – a buddy bench sparking friendships, mangrove habitats protecting the shoreline, yoga classes taking in the sunset, and kitesurfers enjoying the long stretches of Pallarenda. The Town Common wetland is situated at the base of the Many Peaks Range at Cape Pallarenda. The park features bird hides and low impact paths that are a trail runners' and hikers' dream.



Marketing the destination



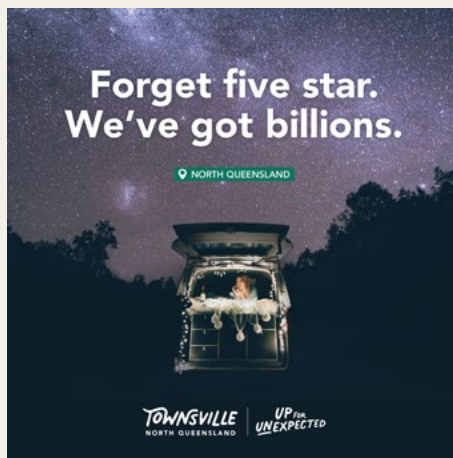
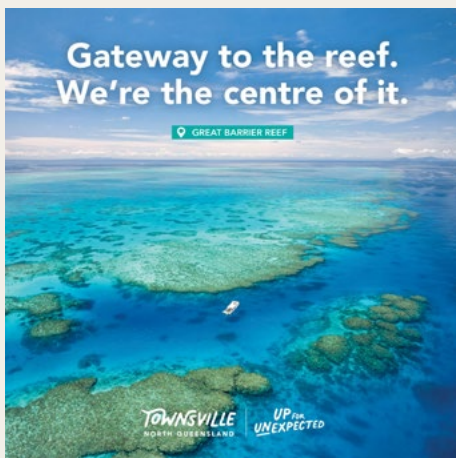
TEL supports tourism product and experience development in the wider region along with ways to build and improve opportunities in the visitor economy.

The organisation is responsible for promoting Townsville, North Queensland to the rest of Australia and across the globe. The current branding for Townsville, North Queensland in both the Australia-wide and international marketplace is called Up for Unexpected.

The program highlights the adventure stories that are enjoyed by visiting the region and delivering unique experiences in a new and surprising world. TEL's marketing efforts have led to an increase in destination awareness for Townsville and moving people to see visiting Townsville differently.

The Brand promise is unique and includes:

- The stuff the best kind of adventure stories are made of and what our curious explores live for! Leveraging our strengths and unrivalled power to surprise and delight our visitors.
- Discovering something you didn't know you were looking for or think is possible.
- Experiencing something new, different, or familiar, but with a twist. Sparking feelings of surprise and delight. Fascination and wonder.
- Opening your eyes to the world around you.



Up For Unexpected campaign

The EF supports the *Up For Unexpected* marketing campaign which is the leading brand for the Townsville, North Queensland region. The program highlights the adventure stories that are enjoyed by visiting the region and delivering unique experiences in a new and surprising world. The campaign connects stories, people and place, and aligns with Council's commitments to building and maintaining a Sustainable Destination into the future. The Up For Unexpected brand by TEL holds four position pillars:

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Taking it to the next level

Fostering and forging an international profile for the North.

Experience eclectic twists

Natural charm and quirks that make the location unexpected, surprising and fun. Connecting people with the spirit of the place.



Gathering interest and action

TEL's marketing efforts have led to an increase in destination awareness for Townsville and moving people to see visiting Townsville differently.

The campaign has demonstrated promising results that will be further built on via the Sustainable Destinations and Ecotourism Certification program.

Analysing over 300,000 data points, the Up For Unexpected brand has been derived from extensive consumer research including online reviews, focus groups, surveys, creative testing and has been guided by an industry-led committee of marketing experts.

Results of the Up for unexpected include:



Destination awareness of Townsville North Queensland improved. **+166%**

70% of respondents took some action because of seeing the campaign.



1 in 4 respondents saying they had spoken to family/friends about Townsville.

24% People are more likely to consider Townsville as a holiday destination.



1 in 5 would now consider visiting Townsville North Queensland in the next 12 months.

There was a **+11%** improvement in advocacy for Townsville.

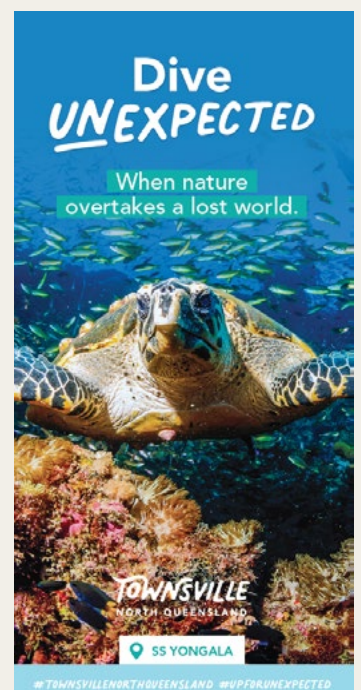
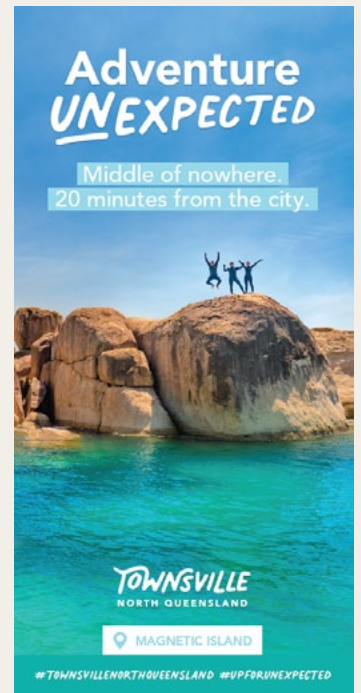
53% of respondents liking what they saw. They liked that the ads showing them features of the region that they didn't know about.



+175% increase in association with 'unexpected'

+100% increase in association with 'offers natural, immersive experiences'

+118% increase in association with 'offers luxury experiences'



Visitor snapshot

The Regional Tourism Operator (RTO) representing Townsville and the wider region is Townsville Enterprise Limited (TEL). TEL supports tourism product and experience development in the wider region along with ways to build and improve opportunities in the visitor economy.

© 2023 Townsville North Queensland, a non-profit run by Townsville Enterprise Limited, is the peak economic development and destination management organisation for Townsville North Queensland Region. They are responsible for industry development and destination marketing as well as advising projects to improve tourism infrastructure and Townsville's economic and visitor profile.

Townsville has been steadily growing its reputation as a highly sought after sustainable destination thanks to its rich and diverse nature experiences and tourism infrastructure and opportunities.

QLD frameworks and strategies:

This EF aligns with wider tourism strategies including the:

- Queensland Climate Adaptation Strategy 2017–2030,
- Queensland Tourism Climate Change Response Plan,
- Tourism and Events Queensland's Nature-based Tourism Strategy 2021–2024.



Townsville's domestic overnight expenditure:

\$1.1 BILLION

46.9% higher than the previous year



Average number of nights visitors stay, increased from:

0.4 nights
4.1 nights



Interstate visitation: **280,000**
ALMOST DOUBLED!

Intrastate visitation:

down 14.4%
864,000



Source: Tourism & Events Queensland (TEQ) 2023



Differing markets and interests

Townsville is well positioned to grow its ecotourism opportunities thanks to its world-class natural environments and accessible locations close to the City.

The city attracts a wide range of people seeking outdoor experiences and niche interests. Thanks to continued and growing collaboration with local sport and recreation groups, community organisations and volunteers, Council and landholders are developing and improving ways for enthusiasts to access activities in more socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable ways.

From all walks of life

A growing market of interest groups, hobbyists and explorers appreciate Townsville's natural and cultural assets. Often, they capture their exciting experiences they encounter or seek in Townsville, such as a sailing adventure around Magnetic Island, and share it with a larger network. Many groups share and blog their experiences on social platforms, review sites and articles that can spread helpful information to others including family members and friends that aren't far away.



The 2024 TEL Townsville North Queensland Destination Tourism Plan has indicated that the key priority markets for Townsville include:

Double Income with No Kids, otherwise known as DINKS, aged between 25-40 years old.

- DINKS prefer a weekend away, a city break. They want to discover things at their own pace, and usually prefer a beach holiday.

50+ aged Empty Nester, commonly travelling in RV's or retired, they are the most frequent visitor.

- The Empty Nester is usually doing a longer trip, but also may pass through Townsville for only a weekend. They go at their own pace and seek resort holidays.

Secondary markets include:

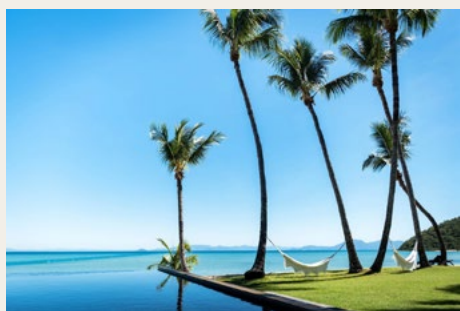
- Single Income with No Kids, known as SINKS, which includes youth adventure.
- Travelling with Children families and groups
- The Asian and European Markets is considered an emerging market for Townsville
- Study abroad students at universities based in Australia
- Sporting groups and recreation groups

A community of residents and travellers with niche interests

People are drawn to Townsville, and often stay, due to it's capacity to provide memorable and consistent nature-based experiences such as:

- Hiking
- Mountain bike riding
- Bird watching
- Rock climbing and bouldering
- Running events and trails
- Social and cultural activities and gatherings
- Camping and staycations
- Diving and snorkelling
- Edutourism
- Voluntourism and citizen science
- Small boating and kayaking
- Kite boarding
- Sailing

Ecotourism-certified tourism operators in Townsville City and Surrounds



Orpheus Island

orpheus.com.au

Operators of Orpheus Island, Northern Escape Collection, are passionate about reducing their impact on the environment. Sustainability is at the core of who they are as a business and use the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals as the framework to help focus efforts.



Townsville Whale Watching

townsvillewhalewatching.com.au

Boasting skippers and guides who are all qualified marine biologists, Townsville Whale Watching's foundations are steeped in environmental preservation and education. Guests take in the picturesque, sheltered bays of Magnetic Island while spotting incredible wildlife like Snub-fin and Bottlenose Dolphins, seabirds, Dugong, Turtles and the chance to meet Humpback Whales.



Mungalla Aboriginal Tours

mungallaaboriginaltours.com.au

Nywaigi Aboriginal people have occupied lands north of Townsville for over 45,000 years. The Nywaigi Aboriginal Land Corporation, which holds the title to Mungalla Station, have a mandate to improve the economic and social position of their people and do this via sharing their rich history and culture through environmental and cultural tours.



Big Mama Sailing

bigmamasailing.com

Focused on providing a unique and authentic experience, Big Mama Sailing provides a sailing experience focused on caring for and protecting the environment. Examples of carbon and emissions reduction emissions are seen throughout their operations. This includes the fitting of solar panels, wind generators, water desalination equipment, LED lights and other innovations.



Adrenalin Snorkel & Dive

adrenalindive.com.au

With a commitment to protecting our natural environment, Adrenalin Snorkel and Dive works closely with conservation groups, researchers and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority to educate the community and monitor the reef.

For over 30 years, Adrenalin have provided eco-education and partnered with researchers to better understand the environment they work in.



Sealink

sealink.com.au

Sealink has taken strides in their business from installing solar-powered car park lights, introducing digital e-tickets and a commuter app reducing the use of paper tickets, purchasing local products to reduce transport emissions, using recycled paper, and being an active member of the Plastic Free Townsville, to ensure they make a positive environmental impact. SeaLink North Queensland deliver sustainable, respectful and high-quality marine transport and tourism experiences that benefit guests, the community, and importantly, the environment.

Ecotourism-certified tourism operators

cont.



Aquascene Magnetic Island aquascenemagneticisland.com.au

Aquascene Magnetic Island is certified through Ecotourism Australia's world leading ecotourism certification program. Using Aquascenes services means you are supporting a business that is backed by a strong, well managed commitment to sustainable practices and high-quality, nature-based tourism experiences. . Aquascene take large steps to reduce their impact while providing meaningful education to guests on the myriad of marine and bird life encountered on their tours.



Billabong Sanctuary billabongsanctuary.com.au

Billabong Sanctuary are committed to achieving best practice by contributing to environmental sustainability. These efforts are demonstrated in several ways including using resources wisely – offsetting energy via the installation of a 25kw solar power system including a solar array of over 150 panels.



Townsville Eco Resort townsvilleecoresort.com.au

Set on 14 acres of naturally landscaped grounds boasting a plethora of bird life and native animals, Townsville Eco Resort is a privately-owned, award-winning eco resort with eco glamping experiences beside a wetland.

The resort's proximity to Bowling Green National Park and Alligator Creek provides Birdwatchers with the opportunity to see a wide range of native birds.

In 2016 and 2021 Townsville Eco Resort was awarded "The Ray Fitton Award" from the Caravan Parks Association of Queensland and obtained star rating from CCIQ Ecobiz for water, waste and energy use.



Townsville City Council Eco Catchment Tours townsville.qld.gov.au

A key concept of Townsville City Council's free community-focused environmental and sustainability education and involvement program is the provision of city-wide, eco-catchment tours.

Local experts and guides provide practical interpretation and provide visitors the opportunity to follow the water cycle from creek to coral. This includes essential infrastructure facilities that integrates with the natural environment. Guests can discover the hidden world of energy flows as well as the wonders of our biodiversity hotspots.

There is a long list of adaptable tours:

- Catchment tours
- Learnscape tours
- Classroom/school visits
- Water treatment plants
- Rowes Bay Sustainability Centre and Wetland boardwalk tours to Loam Island (Ross River) and Ross Dam
- Anderson Gardens (and other botanic gardens) tours
- Waste transfer stations and the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF)

Find out more
about eco
operators in
Townsville in the
Green Travel Guide



Case Study: Rowes Bay Sustainability Centre and Riverway EcoActive Centre

The Rowes Bay Sustainability Centre is a hub of environmental education and interpretation experience built over 20 years ago and the hub of many tours and workshops.

Learn about sustainable living and discover the hidden secrets of Townsville's wetlands. The Centre teaches people how to save water and energy, and utilise natural resources available on site. The Rowes Bay Wetland and Boardwalk enables people to discover how wetlands are important for protecting our precious reefs and gain knowledge

and appreciation of native plants and trees. The Rowes Bay Foreshore nearby allows people to trek the shifting sands of Rowes Bay and learn how coastal dunes are a safeguard against natural disasters.

The EcoActive Centre is an educational hub connected to the Learnscapes network and Rowes Bay Sustainability Centre. It is an

interpretative point located at Riverway Lagoon and provides scenic views across Ross River and river ecosystems. The centre is a gathering place to learn about stories of energy, waste and water from Creek To Coral, and habitats full of biodiverse life located along the Ross including wetland birds, frogs, and reptiles.





Infrastructure that supports a sustainable destination

Townsville City Council is committed to providing an infrastructure base that supports more sustainable, equitable choices, addresses the needs of residents and visitors, engages local business and Indigenous owned business, to Grow Townsville and improves accessibility for all.

Council's budget is continually changing the way people interact with the Townsville landscape, making more sustainable interactions and choices accessible, affordable and optimised. Based on reports by Booking.Com, most travellers prefer sustainable choices, and this local investment will allow less compromise on an individual level, and for more room to explore sustainably. This creates a City that is more attractive to travellers and residents who want to do more good.

City Council is maintaining its strong commitment to the city's unique natural and built environment through an investment of more than \$8 million into sustainable practices in its 2023/24 Budget and Operational Plan.

Council's commitment to innovative solutions is focused on future-proofing Townsville's eco-friendly footprint and boosting the city's sustainability economy with:



\$8.1m Sustainable City. Investing in solar projects, LED lighting, electric vehicles, free green waste, innovative and sustainable energy practices and assets.



Building a circular and regenerative economy

\$3.1 million being invested into renewable energy



Investing more than \$380,000 into battery and microgrid investments



\$375,000 into energy performance contracts, energy efficiency and optimisation tools as well as demand reduction



Committing more than \$900,000 into free domestic green waste services

Industrial ecology - Renewables and Hydrogen

Townsville is poised to become a leader in advanced manufacturing and as a hydrogen and renewable energy hub. Several exciting projects are underway including the Lansdown Eco-Industrial Precinct and \$5 billion CopperString 2032 project.

Lansdown Eco-Industrial Precinct:

- Northern Australia's first environmentally sustainable industrial hub, with the potential to support 15,000-plus good jobs.
- \$74m committed to deliver enabling infrastructure, including road and rail connections.





Supporting Indigenous business

Local business and indigenous business expenditure is important to Council. Council's procurement system is continually making strides to increase the total of spending to indigenous owned business and local businesses. Council has an Indigenous Supply Panel and is continually adding to the Panel.

In 2021 Financial Year, there was \$2.447M expenditure on Local Indigenous Businesses. Additionally for Council projects, suppliers achieved secondary expenditure of \$260k with Local Indigenous Business in the same year. Council's Sustainability and Environment Section is working closely with multiple Indigenous Owned Business to deliver large-scale landscape management, environmental rehabilitation and landscape regeneration works around Townsville's natural areas, waterways and urban areas.



Supporting an active and engaged city

Council's 2023/24 Budget and Operational Plan includes more than \$13.3 million investment into liveability and lifestyle to further grow Townsville as an active and engaged city.

Council provides more than 500km of footpaths, more than 350 parks and 21 off-leash dog parks and all these assets are maintained

A 2.2km world-class beachfront promenade custom-built for enjoyment and home to bike and walkway paths, safe swimming beaches, picturesque picnic spots, playgrounds, exercise stations, a water park and restaurants and bars with to-die-for water views

Stinger nets at The Strand North and South, Pallarenda, Balgal Beach, Horseshoe Bay and Picnic Bay and continue to fund the provision of lifeguard services at a number of spots across the city



Supporting accessibility for all

Council is proud of its history and efforts in, providing and funding practical services, facilities and infrastructure to improve people's lives.

Townsville City Council is committed to ensuring the city's infrastructure is accessible by all. To achieve this, Council partnered with Spinal Life Australia and the Department of Transport and Main Roads to produce Mobility Mapping to improve pedestrian pathway accessibility city-wide.

Townsville is continually improving the range of publicly Accessible Bathrooms and Changing Places available and strategically located around Townsville that are suitable for all bodies equipped with features. This helps provide locals and visitors with support needs access to suitably equipped bathrooms at key landmarks, public areas, events and tourist hotspots.



Supporting sustainability

Council and partners are investing in infrastructure that supports economic growth, accessibility and environmentally-sound immersive experiences including facilitating the ecotourism sector.

The Ecodestination Framework seeks to enhance and illustrate the connections and importance of quality infrastructure and environmental sustainable design to develop further initiatives in edutourism, ecotourism, voluntourism and other emerging regenerative tourism practices.

Townsville has a wealth of nature-based experiences that is supported by the infrastructure present across the City and Surrounds. This includes well managed sites that minimise social, economic and environmental impacts on the community while providing quality experiences. Building business capacity in sustainability programs and ecotourism will help create jobs, benefit locals and tourists, and beneficially shift general perceptions of Townsville.

There is a network of dedicated interpretative and educational content available that explores the stories that make Townsville. Across the subregions, content is on display and accessible to audiences in many different forms based on a number of factors such as physical location, data and information, and appropriateness of content. The forms that content can be shown often include:

- interpretative signage,
- digital and physical stories,
- tours and tour guided stories,
- audio guides and visual imagery,
- art and cultural shows and exhibits,
- interpretative facilities,
- and eco learning centres.

This soft and hard infrastructure educate people about the natural landscape and unique habitats and other unique environmental issues or topics to the area. Some sites across the landscape that are hotspots for interpretation include Council's Learnscapes network which includes locations such as:

- Ross River pathways,
- Ross Dam Wall,
- Booroona Trail and Loam island,
- Materials Recovery Facility educational tours,
- Wastewater treatment plant educational tours,
- Riverway Eco Activ Centre,
- Louisa Creek,
- Rowes Bay Sustainability Centre and Sustainability Education House,
- Fairfield Freshwater Wetland signs trail,
- Town Common wetlands and bird hides,
- Rowes Bay wetland boardwalk,
- Mt Stuart city-wide viewing platform,
- and Magnetic Island (Yunbenun) trail network signs.

Supporting eco-friendly RV and Camping through the RV Strategy

Council plans to ensure that all ages, abilities and cultural backgrounds can connect, work, live and enjoy, and ensure it is a welcoming, diverse and an inclusive place to be. Some projects include:

- Changing Lives, Changing Communities
- Mobility Mapping
- Inclusive Community Advisory Committee

- Reconciliation/ NAIDOC Week
- Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan 2021-2024
- Indigenous History
- Belgian Gardens Cemetery Project
- Mentally Healthy City
- Beach Access Mats for improved accessibility
- Library services
- Children Services

Case Study: RV Strategy which fosters Sustainable Tourism

Council manages 7 camping, caravan and RV sites at beaches and nature spots with the help of a dedicated RV Strategy that embeds best practice sustainability principles at its core. These include Lake Paluma and the Northern Beaches.

Demand in the RV and camping market is an opportunity for local accommodation providers to adopt sustainable business models that can positively influence the behaviour of travellers. Council supports operators who are committed to working towards zero emissions and minimal environmental impacts. For example, this can include improvement in areas of soil erosion, ground compaction, impacts to native fauna and flora, and more awareness of biosecurity concerns (invasive species, environmental pollution, etc.).

A range of partners, stakeholders and businesses that manage and maintain tourism infrastructure and nature-based areas across Townsville are working hard to continually improve and change with adapting needs of tourism and low impact travel.



Townsville Airport hosts 1.65 million passengers. It is the 11th busiest airport in Australia. The airport is continually undergoing upgrades to cater for the local tourism market



The Waterfront Promenade network project will link the Flinders Street and Palmer Street dining and entertainment precincts and also provide an improved connection between the Queensland Country Bank Stadium Precinct and The Strand.



Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services (QPWS) are continually managing and looking for improvements at National Park facilities across Townsville to cater to tourist numbers, community feedback and suitability of new infrastructure. Recently, Alligator Creek visitor area and camping ground underwent a \$400k upgrade. The upgrade created additional camping spots, improved parking capacity and disability access.



Council is replacing old-style outdoor lighting and upgrading to **LED street lights and energy efficient lighting infrastructure** using advanced network demand management. Marine-friendly LED lighting has recently been installed on waterfront promenades to reduce light pollution to marine life.



Townsville has an extensive network of **Birdwatching facilities** such as boardwalks and bird hides. This includes bird hides on Ross River, Town Common, and Rowes Bay. As Townsville is a Top 55 Bird Watching Spot in the World, providing environmentally-friendly access is a must.



The new **Queensland Country Bank Stadium** is changing the night life scene in Townsville in addition to livening up the central district area and bringing in inter and intrastate travellers to support a range of sporting games. New pathways and bridges have been constructed and are planned to link the Townsville esplanade.



Cycling and mountain bike riding – There are extensive bicycle pathways throughout Townsville. The Townsville Mountain Bike Strategy has been adopted to inform long-term sustainable and ecologically-sound development of mountain bike opportunities in Townsville. Additionally, Council has developed an Active Travel Booklet with helpful guides and resources including cycling maps.



The newly opened **Museum of Underwater Art (MOUA)** from the world's leading underwater sculptor Jason Decaires Taylor with the support and engagement from local community artists.



North Australia Arts Precinct is a concept development Council is pursuing for an international standard, multi-purpose venue which celebrates and promotes First Nations culture through immersive visual and performing art experiences.



There are currently plans to develop additional and interconnected **Hiking trail networks** around Townsville and emerging areas of interest. These trails keep sustainability at their core, championing environmental stewardship among visitors and residents, contribute to nature education and use low-impact, eco-infrastructure. Emerging sites of interest include Cape Pallarenda, White Mountains and Mount Fox.



Council has recently upgraded the **Castle Hill summit walks** with new infrastructure. **Multi-day trails** are additionally highlighted for the local ecotourism industry and stakeholders. This includes plans toward developing 42kms of trail networks that exist between emerging sites, such as the city to Castle Hill, across to Mt Marlow, then over to Paluma-Rollingstone-Bluewater (PRB) Track.



The **Magnetic Island Trails Network** is working creating more visitor-friendly trails on the island.

Sustainability at events

Townsville's long list of events have demonstrated a significant economic and social injection into the region.

Townsville City Council in collaboration with partners and local business have supported a wide variety of big and small events and are making large strides in creating new event experiences to support Arts & Culture. Council are taking steps to reduce the environmental footprint of events with an Environmental Events Policy for stallholders and food vendors as well as a Plastic Free Vendor Guide to help phase out single use plastics.

In 2022/2023 TCC supported 87 local and regional events and delivered 93 civic events. This included building content and opportunities through regular events that engage and connect all sectors of the Townsville Community.

Council has implemented a set of environmental guidelines at council run events. These guidelines are designed to encourage environmentally friendly and sustainable practices by stall holders and suppliers, by applying a fee structure and selection process that promotes recyclable and biodegradable packaging and the use of environmentally responsible products and practices. Council ensures that these guidelines are reasonable and achievable. Council encourage all food vendors and stall holders to consider their environmental impact and work towards making events more sustainable.

Applicants endeavour to carry out environmentally sustainable measures such as:

Reduced power requirements

- Introduction of sustainable environmental practices - introduction of gas cookers / introduction of reusable storage containers to replace disposable products such as cling wrap, alfoil etc / use of environmentally friendly cleaning products / other innovative environmental initiatives

Use of produce

- Products, produce and/or equipment purchased locally (local supply chain means less impact from long distance transport)
- Stallholders and suppliers who actively seek to reduce their environmental impact.
- Encouraging biodegradable products that can be regenerated into healthy soil.



Case Study: A destination that invites wider innovations and change makers in

Council has supported environmental and ecotourism conferences and events that welcomes subject matter experts to explore innovations in the Townsville context. This includes being the host destination for:

- Global Eco annual ecotourism conference in 2018
- ICTC Conference 2019
- EIANZ 2022 Conference
- Global Ecotourism Conference 2006

Additionally Council hosts environmental events such as:

- Ecofiesta (now integrated into Our Townsville)
- Sustainability Open House Days
- World Wetland Day
- Earth Hour events
- Tree planting events

Locals taking initiative now

Townsville has a range of ways visitors can reduce their environmental impacts by participating in local grassroots initiatives as well as larger nation-wide or international initiatives that are represented by locals

Initiatives are often supported by Council's Grants & Partnerships program that are available to people who want to contribute to the community. The Environmental category for grants provides a boost for local initiatives that seek to restore Townsville's ecological landscapes and bring community together. These include:

Buying coffee at a range of responsible cafes
responsiblecafes.org

Buying products from a plastic free business
plasticfreetownsville.org

Participate in a volunteering opportunity
vnq.org.au

Study and more at world leading academic institutions leading in GBR & environmental research and action
jcu.edu.au

Explore a large island community that is on its way to be carbon neutral, climate resilient and waste free
minca.org

Shop sustainably and locally at the Cotters Markets and other events
puftevents.com.au

Shop and interact with an EcoBiz certified business
ecobiz.cciq.com.au/star-partners

Stay or experience Townsville's eco-certified tourism operators
ecotourism.org.au



Case Study: Lessons on ecology, pollinators and grassroots action: Ecosophy Garden

Three for Bees is a partnership project between Townsville City Council, Townsville & District Beekeepers, and the broader community aimed at building awareness and stewardship within the community and contributing towards increasing native and honeybee populations

The Townsville City Council's first Ecosophy Garden launched on 20 May 2022

Each garden was created to reinvigorate and beautify a prominent city garden bed while also showcasing a pollinator-supportive garden that has:

- flowers, herbs and low-growing native shrubs
- a food and nest environment for bees and pollinators
- an educative environment and sustainable information on signage
- native non-sting bees.

The revamped garden beds are a living, breathing, small-scale ecosystem for plants, which attracts bees, ladybugs, worms, snails and microbes.

Case Study: Plastic Free Places Program

This program works directly with food retailers, events, markets and other organisations and assist them to switch from single-use plastics to better alternatives, such as reusable (preferred) or compostable items.

Additionally, they work with councils, suppliers, manufacturers, waste transport operators and composters to deliver real solutions to businesses.

Plastic Free NQ's impact:

- **119 Business members**
- **17 Plastic Free Champions**
- **1,231,095 Pieces of plastic eliminated**

Global tourism impacts locally

Tourism may impact a destination in beneficially and detrimentally

Tourism impacts encompass environmental, socio-cultural, economic and health dimensions. These can happen over a short or long term timespan. Tourism & Events Queensland run a social survey that provide insights and indicators on local perception of tourism in Townsville and the social and cultural impacts. In general, it receives positive feedback, with some areas of concern of tourism on the local community.

However, the agreement level of locals regarding positive interactions and experiences with tourism is higher than state averages, with negative tourism impacts such as disruptions, environmental impacts and local character being lower than the state levels. Townsville faces the challenges and benefits of the booming global tourism industry, and there are many impacts to consider in the local context.



Environmental impacts

Challenges:

- erosion and degradation on trails
- carbon emissions from transport
- harm to animals or plants including feeding or interacting with wild animals
- waste and consumption of resources
- illegal fires and camping
- introduction of invasive pests
- air and noise pollution
- illegal fishing
- other pollution

Benefits:

- environmental stewardship and education
- regenerative tourism activities
- upgrading sustainability infrastructure



Socio-cultural impact

Challenges:

- reckless behaviour from visitors
- social media
- lack of knowledge of cultural sites
- crowding or over tourism
- negative perception of Townsville

Benefits:

- interactions with different cultures and backgrounds
- relationships to each other
- promotion and education of indigenous history and culture
- events and sense of community
- expanding awareness and views of what Townsville has to offer
- building capacity in landholders
- develop placemaking experiences across new sites different from hotspots



Economic impact

Challenges:

- fluctuations in tourism seasons and visitation
- property prices increasing linked to tourism hotspots
- Short-term accommodation impacts to housing (airbnb, etc.)

Benefits:

- improved revenue
- income and job growth
- enhanced living standards
- upskilling youth in ecotourism projects
- local and indigenous business opportunities to develop authentic, high-quality sustainable experiences



Health impact

Challenges:

- risk of disease transmission
- mental health strain to locals from tourists
- scooter and vehicle incidents due to different driving norms
- increase traffic congestion
- air, dust and noise pollution from vehicles and events

Benefits:

- improved social interactions
- improved active transport infrastructure
- increased accessibility toilets and infrastructure at events and facilities
- sunscreen and water stations available at events

City and surrounds facilitation and support

To protect natural areas, Council and local partners build plans, policies, processes, and systems that deliver improvements to tourism practices and visitor management.

Effective infrastructure and planning is critical to building Townsville's positioning as a regenerative, low carbon and climate resilient destination. Stakeholders and industry operators have developed high-level visitor management tools that are tailored to the region and its natural assets. As well-established provider of ecotourism products, the industry is able to adapt, evolve and be agile with changing expectations as travellers seek new and more sustainable travel options. A key driver to this is their local knowledge and expertise.

Local Management

Council is responsible for managing Council land and often share responsibilities with other landholders. Management plans, processes and maintenance schedules play a large role in how Council manage natural areas and parklands. This includes routine management strategies such as bushfire mitigation, pest and weed control, environmental monitoring and response, and infrastructure management. To manage tourism numbers, Council regularly monitor and maintain visitor hotspots such as tracks and trails, educational and directionary signage, and install appropriate facilities at tourism hotspots such as toilets, accessibility infrastructure, lighting, water stations and safety barriers

TCC Environmental Policy

Townsville City Council (Council) recognises environmental sustainability as a guiding principle in its Corporate Plan and is committed to either avoiding or minimising and mitigating adverse environmental impacts associated with its operations. Council will continually improve its environmental performance, seeking opportunities to achieve positive environmental

outcomes, reduce impact and waste and encourage a culture of sustainability among its workers and the community. Council is committed to creating a sustainable future for Townsville through the protection, maintenance and enhancement of our unique, natural and built environment. To achieve this Council will:

1. Plan, design and deliver sustainable development and support this by actively managing the natural environment and increasing green energy and infrastructure, at a city, suburb and place level.
2. Develop and implement long term waste and water security solutions that are socially, financially and environmentally sound.
3. Champion sustainable solutions, environmental systems and innovative technologies, which encourage resilience.

Council is committed to:

demonstrating environmental leadership and encouraging its workers and the community to adopt more sustainable lifestyles;

- effective management and protection of the natural and built environment through the implementation of sustainable growth and development patterns; and,
- carrying out its operations in an environmentally sustainable manner and integrating sustainability into its processes and decision making.

TCC Environmental Monitoring, Planning and Management

Council is responsible for managing Council land and often share responsibilities with other landholders. Management plans, processes and maintenance schedules play a large

role in how Council manage natural areas and parklands. This includes routine management strategies such as bushfire mitigation, pest and weed control, environmental monitoring and response, and infrastructure management. To manage tourism numbers, Council regularly monitor and maintain visitor hotspots such as tracks and trails, educational and directionary signage, and install appropriate facilities at tourism hotspots such as toilets, accessibility infrastructure, lighting, water stations and safety barriers.

Case Study: Fairfield Waters Freshwater Wetland Environmental Management Plan

Unique natural environments such as the Fairfield Waters Wetland is an oasis for migratory bird species include the rare Rufous-Throated Honeyeater. Council carefully manages the competing interests of urban environments and natural ecosystems by developing robust and comprehensive Environmental Management Plans (EMP). The Fairfield Waters Freshwater Wetland EMP includes best practice management, monitoring and improvements developed as a framework to maintain a healthy wetland that faces natural seasonal changes.

This involves the recent installation of an educational signage trail where visitors can learn more about their fishy, floaty and feathery neighbours.



QPWS managing regional parks

In Townsville, Regional Park Management Statements (RPMS) have been developed by QLD Department of Environment and Science to outline strategic directions, general park values, uses and management, as well as priorities for park management.

These parks are managed on ground by Park Rangers from QLD Parks and Wildlife Service's (QPWS) and GBR Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA). These parks intertwine with Council land and often professionals work together to manage tourism impact concerns or build capacity in tourism experience.

Regional Park Management Statements protected areas and forests under legislation such as:

- *Nature Conservation Act 1992*
- *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003*
- *Forestry Act 1959*
- *Marine Parks Act 2004*
- *Fisheries Act 1994*
- *Recreational Areas Management Act 2006*
- *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*
- *Native Title Act 1992*
- *Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area*

Regional Parks Management Schemes



Pinnacles

Pinnacles National Park covers 1,137ha of area. The RPMS highlights that the Pinnacles NP is a juncture of ecological bioregions with seven regional ecosystems present. The landscape and catchment values are undisturbed. The Park is the first part of a larger National Park proposal designed to protect the scenic rim of Townsville. The RPMS also includes the National Recovery Plan for the Black-throated Finch southern species *Poephila Cincta*. The park has no formed access, tracks, campgrounds, or facilities. It offers a series of regionally significant rock-climbing opportunities, and QPWS is developing a visitor management strategy. The Pinnacles is designed to protect the scenic rim of Townsville.



Pallerenda

Cape Pallarenda Park RPMS covers 44ha. The park protects regional ecosystems with species of conservation significance along with cultural heritage. The Park has a former quarantine station and WWII gun emplacements and search light towers. It adjoins protected zones of the GBR Marine Park. The priorities for QPWS are largely fire, pest and visitor management.



Bowling Green Bay

Bowling Green Bay RPMS covers 3,380ha and is a site of high conservation value 21 bird species that are listed on international agreements. It is a bird haven and a well-known bird watching area. It holds cultural heritage include a lighthouse located in the park on Cape Cleveland, which is a heritage-listed building. It is in a declared Fish Habitat Area (FHA) adjoined to the DBR Marine Park. The park currently has low levels of visitor use. Visitors have access to a moderate level of infrastructure to support safe and sustainable use.



Magnetic Island

Magnetic Island (Yunbenun) RPMS encompasses 3,637.14a of land. It encapsulates the Wulkuraka Indigenous Land Use Agreement, Florence Bay Management Plan 1992, and the Trustee Management Agreement for Bolger Bay Conservation Park. The RPMSs goal is to provide opportunities for visitors and residents to experience nature-based recreation in a natural setting. This recognises the very high scenic coastal scenic landscape values of the island. QPWS and stakeholders help maintain the islands rich cultural heritage and shared-history cultural heritage places. There is education signage throughout the island at sites such as the Forts Walk and trail network, bird hides, waterholes and beaches, and cultural sites.



Town Common

Townsville Town Common RPMS covers 3,301a. The park is a high priority for management as it adjoins with protected ecosystems. It is host to 17 protected regional ecosystems as well as 39 bird species of conservation importance. Pest and fire management is conducted by QPWS as part of the parks regular management schedule. The park has high levels of visitor use and has educational and directional signage at each access point.



Paluma Range

Paluma Range Regional Park overlaps the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and follows the World Heritage Convention and legislation and policies relating to this designation. QPWS, Council and stakeholders monitor and managed natural and cultural values closely including its many hiking, camping and active recreation sites extending through the range and its numerous forest habitats including ancient rainforest - which is host to endemic species and birds of paradise. It's expressed in the RPMS that current and future recreational opportunities generally require a high amount of self-sufficiency in the Paluma Range. Management includes delivery of routine fire and pest management and strategies.



Education and interpretation

The city is a learnscape

Leading us to think and act

Spread across Townsville is a network of educational and interpretative facilities and people utilising world-leading thematic communication methods based on cognitive psychology which is about how the human brain works.

This includes visual, audio and sensory signage along boardwalks, viewing platforms and sites of significance. Building on Townsville's credentials as a training hub for thematic communications, Townsville educators utilise behavioral science techniques to create engaging content that influences and inspires people to think more deeply about the places they visit. This leads to increase environmental stewardship and positive environmental behaviours as well as increased likelihood of sharing this knowledge with others.

Igniting what is already there

Educators in Townsville are building a suite of communications targeting a diverse range of audiences including locals and visitors to share fascinating stories and help important local causes. These communications are integrated into the visitor experience.

As Townsville has a large workforce that have built capacity in Thematic Communications, as well as home to many world-class environmental organisations and institutions, the quality of educational content about our environment is always improving. Collaborative approaches are taken to share knowledge and information about our natural areas and building our stories to be more relevant, organised, and enjoyable for audiences. Using the TORE (theme, organisation, relevant, enjoyable) technique from Thematic Communications training, they help spark curiosity and deeper through processes in audiences.

More than another sign

Signage installed across the landscape is shifting and changing through time as we learn more about our environment and how we interact with it. Council often collaborates with local experts, Traditional Owners and research institutions to develop up to date, engaging content for readers. Many signs scattered in popular ecotourism and nature spots are utilising strong themes to communicate important topics.

With the help of creativity, these have made visitors think, sense, feel and view things differently.



Case Study: We are a training hub for thematic communications

Townsville has secured a license to deliver Thematic Interpretation educational training and learning experiences in Townsville that are accessible to all.

Sam H. Ham is a professor emeritus of communication

psychology and conservation social sciences. He has delivered comprehensive training for professionals and change makers in Townsville, transforming the communications space over the past 15 years.



A network of landscape education

We are Reef People that connect through environmental stewardship

Learnsapes are scattered across the catchment from Creek To Coral. The network of learnscape communications - from the upper catchment down to the lower catchment and out to the Reef - educate visitors on the many ecosystem services that our diverse landscapes provide.

This includes our native woodlands and grasslands abilities to absorb water, improve drought resilience, and reduce the impacts of flooding as well as their ability to filter pollutive runoff from reaching waterways, the Reef and the seagrass habitats along our coast.

Enabling Frameworks

Changing the way we collaborate

Townsville City Council and stakeholders will continue to uphold best practice solutions to tourism impacts and challenges and build frameworks that enable positive outcomes and accessibility for all.

There are systems in place to ensure ecotourism developments are a priority to stakeholders and benefit the community and local business.



Silos

A rigid and inflexible model where things are uncertain, isolated and decontextualised.



Collaborative

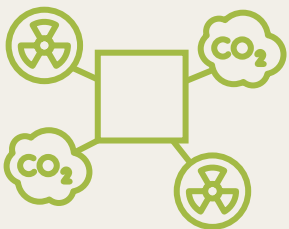
An adaptive, living and self-sustaining network of skill, information, sharing and relationships.



Shifting perspectives

Another framework is cultural change and a perspective shift in the ideas that individuals, community and travellers have on Townsville when they think of sustainable travel and eco tourism opportunities.

This involves more of a cultural adaptation and shift of perspective of how people see Townsville.



Extractive

Traditionally Townsville has been seen as an “extractive” centre of business with associations with mines, railroads, cattle, and heavy industry.



Regenerative

It is an intersectional hub of emerging and innovative industries including regenerative industry, modern technology, renewable energy, tourism, plastic-free hospitality, and world-class education.

Case Study: Weeds to healthy soils

Council is getting to the future first by reimagining waste. Using circular economy principles, the Weeds to Healthy Soils program is a transformative business model that treats ecological resources and transforms them into a value-based products and services.

Weeds to Healthy Soils uses specifically formulated microbial catalysts that accelerates a 50-year process to just 6 months, after which it is left with a high-quality soil additive. This process not only reduces waste that would otherwise end up in landfill at high cost, but improves soil quality, crop resilience and reduces fertiliser runoff to the Great Barrier Reef.

As Reef people and a Reef Guardian Council, we are making strides to protect our marine neighbours.

We are listening to stories and building local capacity

Together, with the Townsville community, we are collaborating in new ways to redefine business-as-usual.

We are undertaking meaningful actions with the vision to create new landmark circular economy and regenerative tourism projects (built, cultural and natural environment).

Townsville is exploring ways that travellers can be involved in regenerative travel. It provides the opportunity for travellers to give back

to the places and communities they visit and opens up offsetting capacity to reduce travel-based environmental footprint.

Building an interconnected web of business, community and industry is essential in leading us to authentic sustainability.

Case Study: Smart Precinct NQ

Smart Precinct along with TCC are supporting the shift to a circular and regenerative economy through workshops and networking events bringing together local changemakers.

Circular economy is an innovative approach that aims to minimise waste and maximise resource efficiency. Unlike the traditional linear economy, which follows a “take-make-dispose” model, a circular economy focuses on maintaining the value of products and materials throughout their lifecycle.

Thanks to funding from the Queensland Government, Smart Precinct NQ has access to a new grant Fund to activate and develop a minimum of 8 innovative ideas over the period of 2023 and 2024.

This Fund aims to support the development of new innovative ideas, technologies, and prototypes that embody or have the potential to embody the values of circular economy.

Case Study: Collective social learning

Council and partners have utilised the Collective Social Learning (CSL) methodology and workshop process developed by Emeritus Professor Valerie Brown for addressing larger problems facing our society.

CSL is a structure for uncovering perspectives and insights from each stakeholder group, to uncover challenges to be addressed, and key strategies and opportunities to enable this to occur.

CSL workshops have been at the forefront of many of Townsville's greatest sustainability achievements. Participating in CSL's have also built partnerships and lead to action across the landscape, and has been an integral part of building and maintaining a Sustainable Destination.

Recently, it has been utilised by Smart Precinct NQ in Circular Economy workshops (see below).





Building the confidence of the City

Ecotourism demand

Eco tourism asks industry, government, local communities and tourists to work together to make tourism more sustainable.

An increasing number of tourists are looking for sustainable travel experiences.

- **More than 70% of travellers** would make more effort to travel sustainably on their next holiday
- **81% confirm** that sustainable travel is important to them.

The plan

Already Council, residents and many businesses have been implementing sustainable practices to cut costs, optimise operations and reduce their environmental footprint. Something as simple as sending coffee grinds to a compost pile, recycling or reducing energy consumption helps.

The plan is to build a regenerative tourism economy that is a part of a larger regenerative and restorative destination.

To do this, collaboration is key along with “Collaboratively Learning Together” ... about our environment and opportunities for us to:

- Learn and support regenerative sustainability
- Grow Townsville tourism and jobs
- Allow locals and visitors to discover new ways of experiencing the nexus of dry tropics, wet tropics, wetlands and marine

A project to position Townsville as a globally recognised leader in sustainability and ecotourism.

How we achieve this:



Advanced Ecotourism Certification (Townsville)



Ecotourism Capacity and Capability Building



Education, Engagement and Support

Where we are going

The City continues to grow environmentally along with modern industries, information technology and sustainability initiatives.

Council are working to amplify the opportunities available for nature-based, regenerative tourism experiences that integrate global best practices.

Nature Tourism Destination

Council is on its way in being recognised for its efforts to become a Nature Tourism destination with Ecotourism Australia. Following the Global Sustainability Tourism Criteria (GSTC), Townsville is on its way to fulfil what is needed to demonstrate Townsville's commitment to nature tourism. The label of a Nature Tourism Destination allows Townsville the evidenced agility and flexibility to promote and enhance the experiences available.

A Regenerative and Restorative Tourism Destination

Thriving into the future following practices that align with global standards for regenerative and sustainable tourism.



Amplifying Business and Community

Bringing business, industry and community along the journey in ecotourism and sustainable destination.

Advanced Ecotourism Destination – Combined Recognition

A futurestep in the Ecotourism Destination certification program is achieving Advanced Ecotourism Destination status which requires largescale actions and gaps to be addressed with strong collaboration as well as recognition of Townsville as a Ecodestination supporting its environment, community, visitors, local business and residents.

9 Key actions

1. Achieve globally recognised certification as an ECO Destination through Ecotourism Australia showcasing
2. Townsville's commitments to actioning global sustainability practices.
3. Support job growth, employment and innovation while building capacity in job opportunities, business potential, nature tourism and sustainable business.
4. Support local community and business with engagement and funding of coaching and support packages to undertake eco tourism certification along with recognition for efforts
5. Developing Codes of Practice and implementing Environmental Standards and Best Practices
6. Continue to engage with and support Traditional Owner representatives and groups in coaching and support with sustainable tourism-based endeavours and addressing gaps.
7. Empower, engage and encourage a community-based approach to sustainable tourism and sustainable destination
8. Continue providing and producing educational and well-designed infrastructure to encourage visitors to practice sustainable behaviours and actions.
9. Empower and explore aspirational projects with new recreational and nature-based opportunities and experiences across Townsville; diversifying the recreational landscape.

Plans, strategies and references supporting this shift

Council and partnerships documents:

- Accessible Townsville Guide
- Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2020-2024
- TCC Corporate Plan (2020-2024)
- TCC Annual Operating Plan (22-23)
- Townsville Solar City Renewable Energy Framework
- Enterprise Wide Energy/Environmental Management System (EEMS)
- Townsville Water and Waste Integrated Management System
- Vision and Transition Strategy for a Water Sensitive Townsville
- TSV Reef Guardian Plan (20-24)
- TCC Environmental Policy
- Integrated Environmental Management System Framework (TCC) Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)
- Townsville City Council Energy and Resource Management Framework (ERMF) Townsville City Council Energy and Carbon Management Framework (TECMF)
- Townsville Smart Infrastructure and Sustainable Energy Framework
- Achieving certification by international Green Destinations
- TCC Event Environmental Guidelines
- Undertaking Eco-certification Destination application (Nature Tourism) with Ecotourism Australia in 2022
- RV Strategy: Environment management and sustainability
- Creek To Coral Program
- Revitalising the Town Common Plan

External references:

- Australian Government National Sustainability Framework
- Tourism Australia Sustainability Toolkit
- Up for Unexpected Townsville Visitor Guide
- Green Travel Guide: Advanced Ecotourism Certification for Environmental Education Eco-Catchment Tours
- Ecotourism Australia website and resources
- Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010-2030
- ISO 14001:2015 Environmental Management Systems
- ISO20400:2017 Sustainable Procurement
- NQ Regional Waste Reduction and Recycling Plan
- Plastic Free Places Initiative
- Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategy
- Tourism and Events Queensland's Nature-based Tourism Strategy 2021-2024.
- Queensland Waste Avoidance and Resource Productivity Strategy 2014-2024
- Queensland Climate Transition Strategy – Pathways to a clean growth economy
- Queensland Climate Adaptation Strategy 2017-2030 – Pathway to a climate resilient Qld
- Queensland Ecotourism Plan State Planning Policies (relevant to council operations)
- Sustainable Packaging Guidelines 2019
- Wet Tropics Management Plan
- Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan
- Global Top 100 Sustainable Destination 2020
- Sustainable Story 2021
- Magnetic Island Tourism Masterplan
- Townsville Dry Tropics Waterways Report Card; Dry Tropics Partnership for Healthy Waters





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