



# Strengthening Sustainability of the Indian Ocean Territories Marine Parks and Local Economy, Through Collaborative World-Class Ecotourism

Parks Australia Indian Ocean Territories Marine Parks Grant

Grant Activity ID: 4-17PD8YZ

2023 - 2025

Final Report

30 June 2025





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List of Acronyms

CI	Christmas Island
CRC	Community Resource Centre
CITA	Christmas Island Tourism Association
CKITA	Cocos Keeling Islands Tourism Association
EA	Ecotourism Australia
IOT	Indian Ocean Territories
IOT RDO	Indian Ocean Territories Regional Development Organisation
LTO	Local Tourism Organisation
PRL Group	Phosphate Resources Ltd Group
RTO	Regional Tourism Organisation
S4S	Strive 4 Sustainability
STO	State Tourism Organisation
TA	Tourism Australia
TIC	Tourism Industry Council
UQ	University of Queensland

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# Executive Summary

The University of Queensland, Ecotourism Australia, and Christmas Island Tourism Association partnered to strengthen tourism sustainability within the Indian Ocean Territories (IOT) Marine Parks with grant funding awarded by Parks Australia. Running over two years from April 2023 to May 2025, this project built on existing enthusiasm for tourism initiatives in the IOT by supporting their pathway to sustainability both at the business and destination levels. The project addressed both aims of the grant program, that is, to (1) enhance the protection, promotion, understanding of and local engagement in the marine environment and marine parks; and (2) support local employment and ecologically sustainable economic growth.

The project comprised three sequential stages. In the first stage, tourism operators throughout the IOT had the opportunity to participate in a complimentary Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard, provided by Ecotourism Australia. The Scorecard had been introduced in the lead up to this project, enabling businesses to learn sustainable practices and receive personalised feedback for progressing their sustainability journey. Conversations with stakeholders determined the project's research priority, which was to provide direction for sustainable tourism on Christmas Island by investigating residents' preferences and attitudes towards tourism development.

The second project stage involved the development of a targeted sustainable tourism toolkit to address sustainability gaps and highlight local best practices in the IOT region, as well as the distribution of the tourism future research survey throughout the business and community networks of Christmas Island.

In the third stage, additional coaching was offered to support IOT businesses and organisations through their Scorecard activities. The IOT sustainability leaders were acknowledged and the research results into Christmas Islanders' views on the future of tourism were presented to the community, tourism industry, and relevant government authorities, both on the islands and the mainland.

## The project recommendations are:

1. Ongoing tourism destination development planning and management is imperative
2. Appoint tourism experts within government to plan and manage destination development
3. Provide government tourism support for the IOT, as offered elsewhere in Australia
4. Sustainable tourism development requires alignment with the 'conditional support' of the local people

These project recommendations have been provided to the relevant IOT authorities and stakeholders with the aim of supporting them to plan and realise a sustainable tourism future for the people and the natural environment of the IOT.

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# Project Team

## **The University of Queensland**

Dr Noreen Breakey – Project chief investigator & lead researcher

Dr Wendy Pham – Project research assistant

Dr Thomas Magor – Researcher

Dr Karen Hughes – Researcher

Dr Faith Ong – Researcher

## **Ecotourism Australia**

Elissa Keenan – CEO

Alyssa Sanders – Ecotourism industry expert (resigned 2024)

Shea Wittig – Ecotourism industry expert

## **Christmas Island Tourism Association**

David Watchorn – Chair (from May 30 2024)

Sarah Coote – Marketing Manager (resigned 2024)

Noorisah Bingham – CITA Manager (from 2025)

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# Background

Among the various types of protected areas, national parks and marine parks play a particularly important role as they not only protect natural biodiversity but also contribute economic, cultural and social values to society. A priority concern for park management is to meet the outdoor recreation needs of visitors and the livelihood needs of local communities without compromising its core function of environmental conservation. One way to achieve this is through sustainable tourism development, which necessitates the participation and collaboration of various stakeholders in both public and private sectors.

This project took place in the context of the Indian Ocean Territories (IOT) of Australia, primarily on Christmas Island. The Christmas Island National Park covers 63% of the island, and the Christmas Island Marine Park was recently established in 2022 to increase protection of biodiversity across land and sea. Given the planned phasing out of phosphate mining within the next decade, tourism has emerged as a development priority due to its potential employment and economic impacts.

The IOT offers visitors immersive nature experiences with beautiful beaches and reefs abundant with marine life, a haven for bird watching, and the multitude of crabs, including the iconic annual red crab migration on Christmas Island, all in the multicultural island lifestyle setting. [Tourism Australia's Future of Global Tourism Demand](#) research in 2022 found that more than 75% of travellers from 20 key markets are committed to sustainability in some way. It is integral that small island communities, such as the IOT, are supported and equipped with tools to ensure tourism has a positive impact on their place and people as visitation to the region grows.

Residents in the IOT region work hard to establish themselves in these small and diverse communities. Many people wear 'multiple hats', contributing in a combination of both paid and volunteer roles. As they are busy working 'in' their businesses, there is minimal time to assign to additional projects, which reduces take-up of grants and other government support offerings. There are two Local Tourism Organisations (LTOs), the Christmas Island Tourism Association (CITA) and the Cocos Keeling Islands Tourism Association (CKITA). The tourism businesses, understandably, rely on these LTOs for marketing, product distribution and business support. Tourism in the IOT is at a low level of development; therefore, there is a rare opportunity to place the region on a sustainable growth trajectory. Unplanned, unsustainable, and even unwanted tourism growth commonly occurs if demand directs the development of the destination; and once development occurs it is harder, or more often impossible, to reverse damage. This timely project determined the Christmas Island residents' vision for tourism activities in their precious part of the world, while also equipping IOT tourism businesses with practical sustainability knowledge and capacity building. Recommendations from the project support the relevant IOT authorities in planning and realising a sustainable tourism future.

The project was conducted by researchers at the University of Queensland (UQ), in partnership with tourism experts at Ecotourism Australia (EA) and the Christmas Island Tourism Association (CITA). The University of Queensland – one of Australia's top research-intensive institutions – led the project management and research arm of the project, exploring the topic of Christmas Island residents' preferences and attitudes towards tourism development. Ecotourism Australia's role was to utilise its programs and coaching expertise to support capacity building. With over 30+ years of experience in nature-based and eco tourism, the organisation was well positioned to assist businesses in becoming industry ready, while ensuring experiences are appropriately developed and delivered in a sustainable manner. Finally, collaboration with CITA provided on-the-ground insights and expertise to engage tourism businesses more effectively in the grant initiatives and facilitate stakeholder engagement throughout the project.

# Project Objectives

Funded by the IOT Marine Parks Grant, this project supported both aims of the Grant program, that is, to:

- (1) enhance the protection, promotion, understanding of and local engagement in the marine environment and marine parks; and
- (2) support local employment and ecologically sustainable economic growth.

The project comprised three sequential stages, with corresponding objectives and deliverables.

Project Stage	Timeframe	Site visit dates	Objectives
<b>Stage I:</b> Engagement with IOT tourism stakeholders, and commencement of capacity building and research planning	April 2023 to October 2023	Christmas Island: 02/10/2023 – 08/10/2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with IOT tourism stakeholders (with the focus on Christmas Island) to develop project awareness, understand the local situation, and foster engagement with the project and enthusiasm for the project initiatives</li> <li>• Introduce Ecotourism Australia's Strive 4 Sustainability (S4S) Scorecard and sustainable tourism pathway to local tourism businesses</li> <li>• Determine the tourism research priority based on the local tourism context and input from project partners and stakeholders</li> </ul>
<b>Stage II:</b> Local outcomes based on local input	October 2023 to June 2024	Christmas Island: 15/04/2024 – 20/04/2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress local industry engagement and capacity building through development of a tailored sustainable tourism toolkit, incorporating recognition of sustainability achievements, identification of gaps, and opportunities for progress</li> <li>• Undertake Christmas Island residents' tourism research survey and engage stakeholders in survey dissemination to maximise representative local input</li> </ul>
<b>Stage III:</b> Ongoing engagement for sustainable tourism outcomes	July 2024 to May 2025	Cocos Keeling Islands & Christmas Island: 25/11/2024 – 04/12/2024  Cocos Keeling Islands & Christmas Island: 05/05/2025 – 14/05/2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the IOT tourism industry to progress sustainability through incentives, coaching, training, and rewarding global best-practice sustainable tourism standards</li> <li>• Increase local participation in the research survey, and disseminate findings, alongside project outcomes to interested stakeholders and audiences, through various channels and formats to maximise project impact</li> </ul>
<b>All stages:</b> Project communication	April 2023 to May 2025		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disseminate communication of project activities and outcomes through the multiple marketing distribution channels of the partners</li> </ul>

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# Project Activities and Outcomes

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## 1. Stage I: Engagement with IOT tourism stakeholders, and commencement of capacity building and research planning (April 2023 to October 2023)

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### 1.1. *Desktop research and information sharing between project partners*

An internal report was compiled and shared among the project partners to refine the project scope and gather tourism-related information and data. Key components of this report included:

- details of tourism businesses and key stakeholders engaged in the project;
- summary of the existing plans, strategies and reports relevant for tourism on Christmas Island, and the IOT where relevant, from Parks Australia; Christmas Island Tourism Association (CITA) and Cocos Keeling Islands Tourism Association (CKITA); IOT Regional Development Organisation (RDO); Shires of Christmas Island and Cocos Keeling Islands; Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development; Phosphate Resources Ltd (PRL) Group; and consultants (e.g. DTM Tourism, Deloitte, Mackay Urbandesign, Alan Whitley);
- the main opportunities and challenges identified for tourism development on Christmas Island.

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### 1.2. *Initial engagement with IOT stakeholders*

The project was introduced and promoted through various channels, including:

- [Media release](#) on the 29th of August 2023, was led by Ecotourism Australia (EA) with additional quotes provided by the University of Queensland (UQ) and CITA, and distributed by all project partners. The media release was used to launch the project, initiate contact with key stakeholders, update existing parties, and promote EA's Strive 4 Sustainability (S4S) Scorecard.
- A dedicated [IOT page](#) was added to EA's website and included a unique 'free' link to engage IOT businesses through the S4S Scorecard Expression of Interest opportunity (details below).
- To share the project with the Christmas Island tourism industry, CITA organised their Sundowner event to align with the site visit (further details below).

Online meetings were held with various key stakeholders to develop project awareness, understand the local situation, and foster engagement with the project and upcoming onsite activities. These stakeholders included representatives from the IOT RDO, Shire of Christmas Island, Parks Australia, and the PRL Group, gathering significant interest and support for subsequent project activities.

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### **1.3. *Ecotourism Australia's Strive 4 Sustainability (S4S) Scorecard***

EA's certification programs are globally recognised and the standard is built around the four pillars of sustainability – sustainable business management, environmental, socio-economic and cultural. The suite of programs has been designed for business and destination development, as a benchmarking tool and/or stepping stone towards best practice certification or providing recognition for businesses operating at a high level. With over 600 certified businesses offering 2000 certified products nationally, and 215 Strive 4 Sustainability (S4S) Scorecard completions since the launch in 2022 with SMEs making up the large majority of these numbers, EA understands the time challenges faced with both the application process and pursuing continuous improvement on the sustainability journeys. Those who make this commitment are well on their way to future proofing their businesses and meeting the growing demand from visitors, industry representatives and government mandates which are increasingly seeking out evidence of sustainability initiatives, reporting and certification.

The grant provided IOT tourism operators with access to [EA's Strive 4 Sustainability \(S4S\) Scorecard](#). The scorecard is a benchmarking tool that provides recognition for sustainability efforts and personalised feedback and insights to empower businesses to strengthen their practices, engage eco-conscious travellers and take meaningful steps toward a more sustainable future. Any tourism business or operator can be assessed, with the scorecard provided annually by EA. Such businesses can include cafes, restaurants, bars, breweries, tour providers, activity/attraction providers, accommodation providers, events and festivals, tourism organisations, travel agents, visitor centres and tourism consultants.

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### **1.4. *Tourism research priority***

From the commencement of the project in 2023, UQ's Dr Noreen Breakey engaged with Parks Australia and CITA regarding the focus of the research project. Five potential topics were considered: Position Christmas Island tourism for sustainability - the community's vision; Promote, attract and spread 'travel for good'; Global best-practice marine interpretation; Citizen science; and Eco-voluntourism. The feedback from Mike Misso and Matt Anderson, our grant managers at Parks Australia, after their June 2023 trip and their meetings with the IOT RDO and tourism businesses, was interest in exploring the first research question focused on positioning the IOT tourism for sustainability. This aligned with the desktop research we had undertaken and the input from stakeholders during the pre-visit meetings, which highlighted that while tourism had been identified as a key economic growth sector, the tourism 'visions' were very general, no tourism planning was in evidence, and the needs and wants of the locals were unknown. This research aim to position Christmas Island tourism for sustainability by investigating residents' preferences and attitudes towards tourism development was confirmed, reinforced and progressed during the first visit.

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## 1.5. First site visit to Christmas Island

The first site visit to Christmas Island was undertaken by Alyssa Sanders and Shea Wittig from EA and Dr Noreen Breakey from UQ from Tuesday the 3rd to Sunday the 8th of October 2023. During this visit, the project team engaged with local tourism stakeholders through several events and activities:

- The **Christmas Island Tourism Stakeholder Workshop** was held on the 4th of October 2023 with representatives from the Shire of Christmas Island, PRL Group, Christmas Island National Park and CITA. The project team provided a brief presentation to introduce the project and simulate discussion. While expecting to learn more about the tourism situation on Christmas Island, the team were surprised to discover that these bodies do not regularly collaborate and that the attendees did not already all know each other. This was despite the relatively small island population and the overlapping responsibilities, such as roads being maintained by the Shire, the National Park and PRL. With all parties recognising the value of such discussions and the opportunity to unite over common issues, CITA planned to regularly facilitate these tourism stakeholder meetings (see excerpt from Christmas Island Tourism KPI Report - 1st Financial Quarter 2023). CITA currently has representation on the IOT RDO's Economic Future Working Group and the Shire of Christmas Island's Community Consultative Committee (CCC).
- The **Tourism Industry Sundowner** event was held later on the 4th of October 2023. The purpose of the event, and the presentations by Noreen Breakey and Shea Wittig, was to ensure that those involved in tourism on Christmas Island were informed of the grant project, understood the free sustainable tourism pathway support on offer, knew that the project team were across the many challenges faced by the local tourism industry, that the research priority was to support the sustainable development of Christmas Island tourism, and finally that we were on island all week to hear from them. The event was attended by over 40 CITA members, tourism businesses and stakeholders, which was the largest Sundowner event for many years (see excerpt from Christmas Island Tourism KPI Report - 1st Financial Quarter 2023).
- **15 one-on-one meetings** with industry and key stakeholders, and many more impromptu conversations with business owners, took place throughout the visit.



### August Sundowner Event for NAIF

CITA in collaboration with CIBA hosted a Sundowner Event at the Rumah Tinggi on 16th August. This was an opportunity for tourism operators to meet with senior officers from the NAIF to discuss what they can do to support business and community investment on Christmas Island.

### October CITA Sundowner Event for Eco Tourism Australia

CITA hosted a networking sundowner event for Eco Tourism Australia. This gave opportunity for Eco Tourism Australia to meet and greet our tourism industry and provide a platform to present the program. Over 40 members and operators attended to network and meet visiting representatives of Eco Tourism Australia and University of Queensland. It was a successful event with great feedback. Holding quarterly networking events with our members, local businesses and operators on Christmas Island is growing valuable momentum and a great way to bring the industry together.

### Meeting with PRL, Shire of Christmas Island, Parks Australia and CITA

CITA hosted a workshop for Eco Tourism Australia to discuss the sustainability approach for the tourism industry on Christmas Island. It was a very valuable meeting of the island's key stakeholders collaboratively discussing the direction of the tourism industry on Christmas Island. It brought together the values and vision for each stakeholder and allowed for insight into each organization for a deeper understanding of collaborative approaches moving forward. All agreed on the productivity of this meeting and we will be facilitating this regularly.

Post-visit, four businesses registered for the S4S Scorecard, and the team were able to engage the new manager of the Cocos Keeling Islands Tourism Association (CKITA) with the project and they promoted the scorecard opportunity to their members.

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## 1.6. *Communication of the project*

### 2023 media activities

- Media release with social media posts by EA, further distributed through UQ Business School and CITA (August 2023)
- Emails to key stakeholders as an update and engagement tool
- Inclusion in EA's ECO newsletter (September & October 2023)
- Site visit shared on EA's social media platforms – LinkedIn and Facebook (October 2023)

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## 2. Stage II: Local outcomes based on local input (October 2023 to June 2024)

### 2.1. *Tailored capacity building activities – incorporating recognition of sustainability achievements, identification of gaps, and opportunities for progressing sustainability*

#### **IOT Sustainable Tourism Toolkit**

A tailored IOT Sustainable Tourism Toolkit was developed by EA. The first visit to the IOT was crucial in gathering on-the-ground understanding of tourism on the island and to understand how the industry operates, the challenges faced by tourism operators and their current understanding of sustainability. Through industry engagement at organised events as well as one-on-one meetings with tourism operators, the EA team were able to better understand the current stage of development and therefore ensure that relevant information was featured.

During the visit it was apparent that learnings could be drawn from global examples of other islands operating with similar challenges and bodies that were working towards protecting natural assets. Some examples of these are:

- The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA)
  - High Standard Tourism Operator (HSTO) program
  - Master Reef Guide program
- Protected area permit restrictions and regulations enforced in various states around Australia
- Extended permits for certified businesses
- Areas which have established codes of behaviour and visitor pledges, e.g. Palau Pledge
- Visitor caps at islands such as at Lord Howe Island

These examples highlight that there is no reason to try to reinvent the wheel but to lean into the success that has been achieved by initiatives such as these and slowly integrate such best practice into future planning.



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The toolkit was designed to define and provide examples against the four pillars of sustainable tourism, being sustainable management, socio-economic impacts, cultural impacts and environmental impacts. This resource can be used as a roadmap for businesses starting their sustainability journey as it includes tangible ways to establish small, medium and long term goals against the four pillars, along with case studies and relevant best practice examples from other parts of Australia. It was written in a way to be applicable to Christmas Island and Cocos Keeling Islands operators and designed to be long lasting with minimal time specific information.

Identification of sustainability gaps through the Scorecard program was difficult as only one tourism organisation had completed it by this stage of the project. The key challenge was that operators participating in the program were time poor and struggling to make time for the 6-8 hour exercise. They also lengthened the time spent on it as they wanted to get a good score, so they were working on the requirements if they did not already have them in place. The EA team continued to work with IOT stakeholders to promote the S4S Scorecard and Toolkit, such as inclusion on key websites and through marketing avenues.

The toolkit includes:

- Definitions of sustainable and eco-tourism, and a range of Frequently Asked Questions on why sustainability is important to a tourism business in the IOT;
- Christmas Island National Park examples that operators can share or participate in, including: minesite to forest rehab, threatened species breeding, yellow crazy ant biocontrol, and feral cat eradication programs;
- Cocos Keeling Islands work being undertaken within other IOT Marine Park grants, including: monitoring status of sea turtles and coral reef survey;
- Local community projects, including: Green space tech, Eco crab industries, Island Care Christmas Island, Hidden garden sustainable farms, Sea Country Solutions, and Tangaroa Blue Foundation;
- Extensive checklist for tourism businesses to use, across the four pillars of sustainability;
- Case study of the first Christmas Island completed S4S Scorecard, and other similar businesses including Live Ningaloo and Phillip Island Nature Parks;
- More information, weblinks and contacts;
- Next step promoted as participating in the S4S Scorecard.

A [link](#) was added to the dedicated IOT page on EA's website for direct access to the toolkit. The toolkit was also shared with CITA, CKITA, CI National Park and other agencies working in the region, to promote and disseminate to all tourism businesses across the region. A 'postcard' was created with one side promoting EA's S4S Scorecard and Toolkit and the other side promoting UQ's tourism research survey (more details in the next section) (see Appendix 1).

## Supporting CITA's sustainability journey

CITA-led sustainability initiatives were supported by UQ and EA project representatives. CITA requested feedback and suggestions from the grant partners for their new [Sustainable Travel](#) and [Accessible Travel](#) websites. Changes made to the CITA website based on the project team's recommendations included:

- tap water is drinkable
- refill stations are provided to fill up water bottles with free drinking water
- think about waste minimisation when packing so no unnecessary packaging is brought to the island
- bring/buy reusable coffee cups
- stay on designated roads for driving and parking (in addition to stay on the paths)

Furthermore, the timing of the review of the Accessible Travel information aligned with UQ's learning activities. With CITA's permission, the website link was incorporated into a UQ tourism course activity: a Christmas Island Accessibility Audit. In addition to providing the audit findings to CITA, the broader view was relevant to other Christmas Island stakeholders involved with planning and infrastructure. The Christmas Island Accessibility Audit Report was sent to CITA, IOT RDO, Shire of Christmas Island and Christmas Island National Park, as well as being published in full in *The Islander* (May 2024). Later in the year the next cohort of students undertook the Accessibility Audit for the Cocos Keeling Islands and the resulting report was provided to CKITA and the Shire of Cocos Keeling Islands. This year the students focused on Norfolk Island, another Australian territory, and the report was provided to the IOT Branch of the Department of Infrastructure.

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### 2.2. *Tourism research*

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The research team at UQ designed a survey to investigate the opinions of Christmas Island residents (living and/or working on island) regarding the future of tourism on the island. The survey included:

- novel choice experiment method to elicit respondents' key priorities and preferred visions for tourism development;
- questions about attitudes towards tourism and a range of tourist experiences;
- open-ended questions to ensure the opportunity for locals to voice their full opinions.

Project partners and key stakeholders were provided with a draft of the survey, and their feedback was incorporated into the final version.

As mentioned above, a postcard was created with one side promoting the UQ research survey and the other side promoting EA's S4S Scorecard and Toolkit (see Appendix 1). Prior to the research site visit, the postcard was sent to CITA and they used it to initiate survey dissemination by informing all their members and posting in the local residents' Facebook group.

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### 2.3. *Second site visit to Christmas Island*

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A research site visit was undertaken by Dr Noreen Breakey and Dr Karen Hughes from UQ for one week mid-April 2024 to promote data collection, disseminate the Toolkit, and continue engagement with island stakeholders. During the trip, the researchers:

- Provided the printed postcards (made from compostable paper) to stakeholders and local businesses to promote the survey and provide the link to EA's toolkit.
- Attended in-person meetings with various stakeholders, including CITA, Parks Australia, Shire of CI, CI Community Resource Centre (CRC), and IOT RDO, who all were very supportive and assisted with sharing the survey.

During the visit it became clear that to reach the cultural groups on Christmas Island the survey needed to be translated into Chinese and Malay. Therefore, post-visit the UQ researchers engaged translators and incorporated the translated surveys into the online survey system. A multi-language flyer was created and provided to stakeholders on the island to further promote the survey (see Appendix 2). This flyer was posted to the residents' Facebook Blackboard page, put up around town (e.g. cafes and bus stops), and published in The Islander (May 2024). A second 'postcard' was created with the survey details provided in both Chinese and Malay (one side for each language). Both postcards were printed and sent to the key stakeholders who continued to assist by distributing these postcards throughout the island.

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### 2.4. *Communication of the project*

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#### **2024 media activities**

- Case study highlighting completed S4S Scorecard by CITA published on EA's website (March 2024), promoted in ECO newsletter (April 2024) and social media (May 2024)
- Invitations for Christmas Island residents to have input into the tourism research survey – Local Christmas Island Residents Facebook page posts (April & May 2024)
- Post UQ research trip LinkedIn post (April 2024). This led to a contact involved with the pre-Covid Christmas Island branding study by the Australian Tourism Export Council
- Item on development of IOT Sustainability Toolkit included in ECO Newsletter (May 2024)
- UQ's research survey advertised in three languages in The Islander community newspaper (May 2024)
- IOT Toolkit was featured on EA's social media platforms – LinkedIn and Facebook
- IOT Grant Program was featured in EA's [World Tourism Day feature](#) and shared on social media platforms – Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn



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### 3. Stage III: Ongoing engagement for sustainable tourism outcomes (July 2024 to May 2025)

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#### 3.1. *Capacity building activities*

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##### **Webinars**

Two webinars were delivered by EA in order to share an overview on sustainability as well as a detailed look at the Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard. The purpose was to share information relevant to the IOT in a format that offered flexibility for those who could not attend the on-island information sessions:

- (1) [What is sustainable tourism?](#) – 31 October 2024
- (2) [Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard](#) – 12 November 2024

These webinars were promoted to tourism businesses throughout the IOT by both CITA and CKITA (October 2024). Given the technology challenges, the webinars were recorded and the tourism organisations made these available for businesses to access online (February 2025).

They were scheduled for the time recommended by the local tourism organisations, which was after standard business hours for the IOT (three hours' time difference for the EA team who are based in Queensland). Reminders were sent out by the tourism organisations and the links were then added to CITA and CKITA newsletters for operators to view in their own time. Analytics on these links is not accessible.

##### **IOT Sustainable Tourism Toolkit**

The toolkit was printed (in small numbers and on compostable paper) to disseminate during the November-December 2024 site visit to key stakeholders, including CITA, CKITA, Parks Australia, Shire of CI, IOT RDO and engaged tourism businesses.

The toolkit was also promoted on both Christmas Island and Cocos Keeling Islands during the November-December 2024 site visit events and meetings.

##### **Progressing engagement in the S4S Scorecard opportunity**

There were a number of challenges for IOT businesses in completing the Scorecard. Paramount was time, as many business owners wear multiple hats between their own business, working in other businesses and/or in volunteer roles. They are therefore juggling spending time on and in their business. For example, a schoolteacher has a tour business, the local café owner also has a restaurant and a discovery centre and due to this the opening hours vary to accommodate these roles.

Relevance was a second challenge. Many of the businesses operate lifestyle businesses where the opening hours are designed to suit the owner, which can be sporadic, e.g. the local tourism organisation puts out a regular timetable of cafes/restaurants opening hours for visitors to refer to which they hand out at the airport on arrival as this regularly changes.

Many are happy with how their business operates and do not see the value of dedicating additional time for future planning or growth. Many operators were happy with the amount of business they were generating and therefore didn't see the benefit of investing the time in the scorecard.

Conversations included the benefits associated with using the scorecard as a tool to compare where they are sitting in comparison with global best practice, meeting visitors expectations, the move towards emissions reporting and the green claims directive. During the final visit we were able to convey the messages heard at the 2025 Australian Tourism Exchange and how industry is now looking at their supply chain and seeking verification of sustainability reporting. We had feedback from one IOT business that they were required to submit sustainability credentials in order to get a listing on a website.

It was identified that one of the areas of global best practice that business owners related to was the lack of business documentation. Discussions included the relevance of getting plans/policies/procedures in writing to future proof business for unexpected situations where the owner (who has all this information in their mind) is unable to work. Once this has been documented the business can operate with or without them on a day-to-day basis. It is also good to start this when a business is setting up so as/if the business expands there are procedures in place to onboard new employees.

The Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard has been developed as a pathway to certification. The intention was to use the grant to continue to support those operators who achieved a great result with the scorecard, to progress to certification. Noting the challenges and limited ability to complete the scorecard it became evident that certification was not going to be an option at this stage.

### **Additional Scorecard support**

To meet the needs of such a time poor community the scorecard EA representatives offered exclusive access to one-on-one coaching with scorecard applicants to provide extra/additional support. This is something that EA has not needed to add as an incentive with any other partners across Australia.

This one-on-one coaching support for IOT tourism businesses to complete the Scorecard was communicated through

- direct contact to those who already signed up
- in the webinars
- during the November-December 2024 site visit meetings and events

Engagement included regular email check-ins to ensure businesses understood this offer and regardless of no response this was repeated on a monthly basis with all the applicants which began before the 2024 visit and continued right up until the final May 2025 visit. If there was no response a phone message was also used as a communication tool.

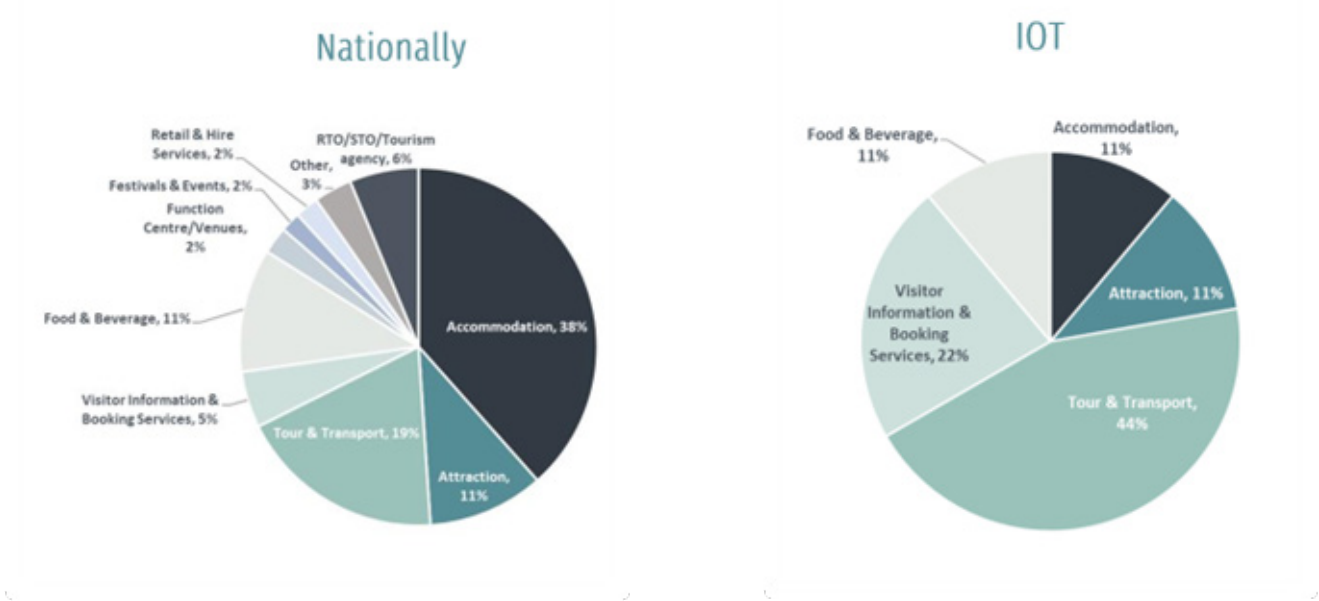
This extended support was effective as out of the nine applicants who had signed up but not yet completed the Scorecard, eight of them took up this offer either online via Teams or by making an appointment with Shea Wittig while on island. Two operators utilised this additional service to its full potential and Shea was able to review the scorecard before submission and in doing so, contributed additional information to them to ensure they were getting the best result possible from the scorecard.

Progress is made in small communities like the IOT by building relationships. The progress and exchange of information – even getting people to attend industry nights we had scheduled – is all related to building relationships. Due to connectivity issues on the islands and lack of effective WIFI, face to face contact and conversations is invaluable and this was the way the project team was able to make progress with both the scorecard and the survey.

**Scorecard results**

Across the IOT region there were 10 operators who signed up to the S4S Scorecard with four having been completed at time of final grant reporting (details provided in the tables). The completed Scorecards include two tourism organisations and two tour operators – land and marine based.

The below chart shows the types of businesses that have engaged with the S4S Scorecard around Australia and the types of businesses who have engaged with the program in the IOT.









## REGISTERED BUSINESSES

Name of business	Name of person responsible	Date of registration	Location	Business type	Coaching session
Christmas Island Tourism Association	Sarah Coote	January 2023	Christmas Island	Visitor Information Centre	N/A
Extra Divers	David Watchorn	August 2023	Christmas Island	Tour – marine based	Yes - online
Wet N Dry	Teruki Hamanaka	September 2023	Christmas Island	Tour – marine Based	Yes - onsite
The Breakers	Jean Morgan	May 2024	Cocos Keeling Islands	Accommodation	Yes - online
Salted Christmas Island	Sarah Coote	July 2024	Christmas Island	Tour	Yes - online
Island Alchemy Cafe	Casey McDonnell	December 2024	Christmas Island	Café + Restaurant	Yes - online
Indian Ocean Experiences	Lisa Preston	August 2023	Christmas Island	Tour – land based	Yes – onsite + online
Christmas Island Car Hire	Martin Nel	November 2024	Christmas Island	Transport	Yes - onsite
Wild Coconut Discovery Centre	Tony Lacy	January 2025	Cocos Keeling Islands	Attraction	No
Cocos Keeling Islands Tourism Association	Zulaikha Jadah/ Melody Brass	April 2025	Cocos Keeling Islands	Visitor Information Centre	Yes - online

## COMPLETED SCORECARDS

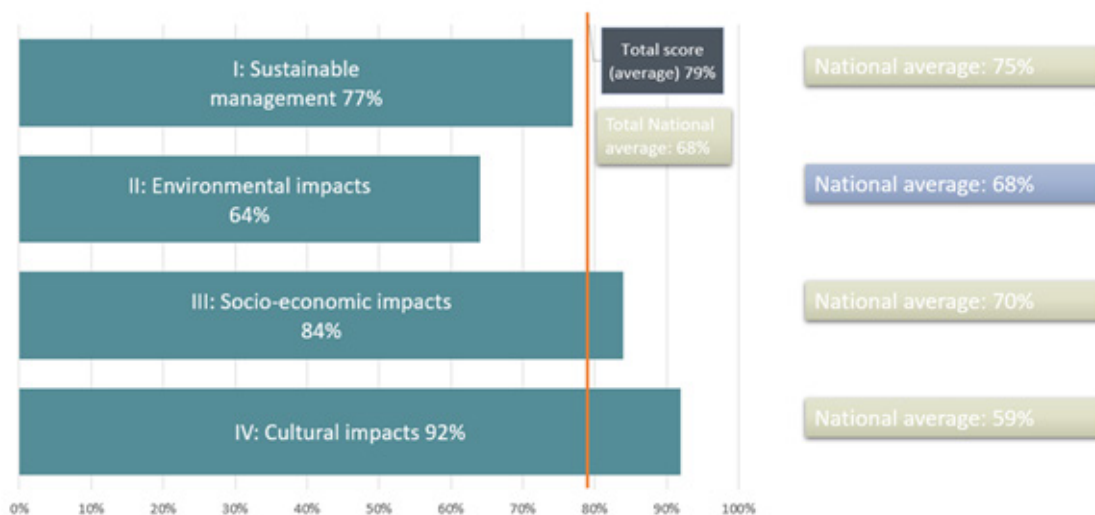
	Business name	Christmas Island Tourism Association
	Name of person completed	Sarah Coote
	Date completed	March 2024
	Case Studies and associated media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case study</li> <li>• Posted on website, social media</li> <li>• Published in toolkit</li> </ul>
	Business name	Extra Divers
	Name of person completed	David Watchorn
	Date completed	July 2024
	Case studies and associated media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case study</li> <li>• Posted on website, social media</li> </ul>

## COMPLETED SCORECARDS

	Business name	Indian Ocean Experiences
	Name of person completed	Lisa Preston
	Date completed	February 2025
	Case Studies and associated media	Offered
	Business name	Extra Divers
	Name of person completed	Zulaikha Jadah/ Melody Brass
	Date completed	April 2025
	Case studies and associated media	In progress

It was wonderful to see how the participating businesses are currently ranking against results across Australia, with the IOT outranking the national averages in three out of the four pillars of sustainability. A clear outcome from the scorecard results shows participating businesses are currently sitting higher than national averages in the sustainable management, socio-economic impacts and cultural impacts pillars. Additionally, the IOT overall average total score was 79% which is 11% higher than the national average.

### IOT scores vs. national average



It was interesting to note that early conversations unearthed the locals' perspective that operators would not score very high in sustainability criteria due to the significant resource challenges faced by the islands. On the contrary, it was found that grassroots sustainability is however grossly under-appreciated here, as it is evident that reduce, reuse and repurpose practices are intrinsically linked with everyday habits without intentionally trying. This is due to the remote location, lack of well-stocked stores and dependence on irregular shipments to deliver supplies. Being resourceful, operating with a circular economy mindset and using items to their end of life are essential on many levels and adopted by most people who call the islands home.

## Operator Feedback from David Watchorn - Extra Divers

*I've completed the project and, from a business perspective – especially as someone who operates internationally and is future-focused – I found it valuable to tick a box.*

*It's useful to go through a structured evaluation and be audited by external bodies. That's the same reason I pursued Quality Tourism Accreditation: getting everything in order and documented.*

*I often say, "If I get hit by a bus, someone should be able to follow the paperwork trail". So, from a systems and governance point of view, the process has been worthwhile.*

*However, has it made a difference to my customers or brought in more business? Honestly, I really don't think so.*

*On Christmas Island, decisions are often made based on relationships and personalities, not necessarily accreditation or professional standards. Operators who are well-liked - regardless of whether they have the right paperwork or compliance - are often preferred. No one wants to rock the boat, so people go along with what feels comfortable, even if it's not necessarily best practice.*

*A good example is the school, they never use us for diving training, yet, we have all the compliance and more.*

*We're effectively one-person operations out here, so the perception of professionalism doesn't always match the actual business practice.*

*For example, a new company could start next week, and offer tours - quite possibly without the required compliance - but if they were friendly and with the in crowd, they'd be widely supported, so the accreditation would mean nothing.*

*That's the reality here. I appreciate the program for what it offers us as businesses internally, but the external impact - at least in this community - is limited so far.*

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### 3.2. Third site visit to Christmas Island and Cocos Keeling Islands

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Two site visits were undertaken in Stage Three to maximise local project engagement and benefits. With the increased support from CKITA, the project team visited both Christmas Island and Cocos Keeling Islands on these last two trips. Each visit included meetings with tourism businesses and key stakeholders, and hosting and/or attending industry/community/stakeholder events.

The November-December 2024 trip was undertaken by Shea Wittig from EA and Dr Noreen Breakey and Dr Faith Ong from UQ. The focus of this trip was to ensure that the perspectives of various sub-communities on Christmas Island were represented in the research survey, with multiple approaches utilised (details in next section). Concurrently, Shea continued to engage and support IOT tourism businesses in completing the S4S Scorecard through coaching and new business contact.

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### 3.3. *Tourism research - survey distribution*

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When the researchers from UQ engaged with the IOT stakeholders during the research planning phase, it was acknowledged that the Christmas Island population is difficult to access and 'over-surveyed', with the prevalence of diverse community groups. Therefore, multiple approaches were utilised by the researchers to maximise the survey response rate and ensure residents were aware of this opportunity to provide their input, including:

- Postcard flyers distributed by:
  - Key stakeholders (internal & external distribution): CITA/Visitor Information Centre, Parks Australia, Shire of Christmas Island, IOTRDO, Christmas Island Community Resource Centre, PRL Group
  - Local shops/services: Supermarkets, Recreation Centre, Post Office
  - Restaurants/cafes: Smash, Tracks, Le CLA, Idha's Kitchen, KookKai, The Island Alchemy, Bakery
- A4 posters displayed at:
  - CITA Visitor Information Centre, IOT RDO, Christmas Island Community Resource Centre, Shire of Christmas Island, bus stops, Recreation Centre, Post Office, Idha's Kitchen, Tracks
- Full page ad in The Islander – in all three languages
- Multiple Facebook posts to multiple groups, including:
  - Christmas Island Blackboard (private local group)
  - Christmas Island Visitor Centre
- Survey details written up on the blackboard at the roundabout
- Met with the Seniors Group – sat with them during the third site visit at their morning get-together and assisted with completing paper surveys
- Approached travellers at Perth Airport IOT flight boarding gate on two occasions: Tuesday 26th and Friday 29th November 2024
  - New contacts included a recently established car hire business owner, President of the Women's Association, and other IOT grant recipients
- Additional email/personal contact:
  - Tourism business owners/CITA Committee members, highlighting the 'need for tourism voice'
  - Other IOT grant recipients
- Community groups/associations, contacted pre and during the third site visit
  - Poon Saan Club
  - Malay Club
  - Women's Association
  - Arts Club
  - Golf Club
  - Church
- Researchers based at Smash – multiple mornings of the second and third site visits, with A4 posters, postcard flyers, printed surveys and Wi-Fi enabled tablets for completing the survey
- Postcards provided to 'Non-tourism' focused businesses – Police station, petrol station
- Event networking:
  - CRC's Christmas in November
  - Parks Australia's Sunset Science Sunday
  - Printed copies of the survey in all three languages provided to Shire, Community Resource Centre and Visitor Information Centre, with reply paid envelopes



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### 3.4. Tourism research - survey findings

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#### Representation of Christmas Island population


In total 142 valid survey responses were received from Christmas Island adults. To put this number into perspective, the 2021 Census recorded [Christmas Island's population](#) as 1,692, with 1,409 aged 15 years and older. However it is acknowledged that the population has declined over the past four years, particularly with the Detention Centre significantly lowering its state of operation in 2023. There were only [545 Christmas Island residents who voted](#) in the Shire election in 2023, and just [390 Christmas Island residents/landlords who voted](#) in the last Federal election in May 2025. This means our survey's sample size represents over 10% of the adult population (based on 2021 data) and more than one-third of the current adult voting population.

Thanks to the researchers' extensive efforts in distributing the survey (as explained in the previous section), the local engagement in our survey has been recognised as impressive by the IOT stakeholders during the research outcome dissemination phase. It is also important to note that, among the respondents, only around 30% are employed in tourism, while nearly half of them (46%) are not involved in tourism at all. Nearly two-thirds (58%) have lived on Christmas Island for four or more years, and 16% use a non-English language at home (Mandarin, Malay, Cantonese, others). The respondents spread across all age groups and genders.

Most interestingly, the last section of the survey included four open-ended questions, and more than two-thirds (70%) of the respondents provided additional, often extended, comments to these questions. The demographic profile of the respondents as well as their enthusiastic engagement show that the survey sample represents the voice of diverse community groups on Christmas Island regarding tourism development on the island, thus the results should be taken into due consideration by relevant stakeholders and agencies.

#### Choice experiment results

To explore the locals' preferred vision for tourism development on the island, each respondent was presented with six choice tasks, asking "*Which option best matches what you want tourism on Christmas Island to be like?*" (see an example below).

 THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND AUSTRALIA

Christmas Island Tourism Survey

1

Option 1	Option 2	Leave things as they currently are
TOURISM LEVEL	TOURISM LEVEL	
Proactively push tourism development	Allow tourism development to continue	
TOURIST ACCESS	TOURIST ACCESS	
Additional domestic flights	Open to Asia via regular flights	
TOURIST ACCOM.	TOURIST ACCOM.	
Resort-style developments	Eco nature-based lodges	
TOURISM IMAGE	TOURISM IMAGE	
Mass tourism destination	Off-the-beaten-track destination	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

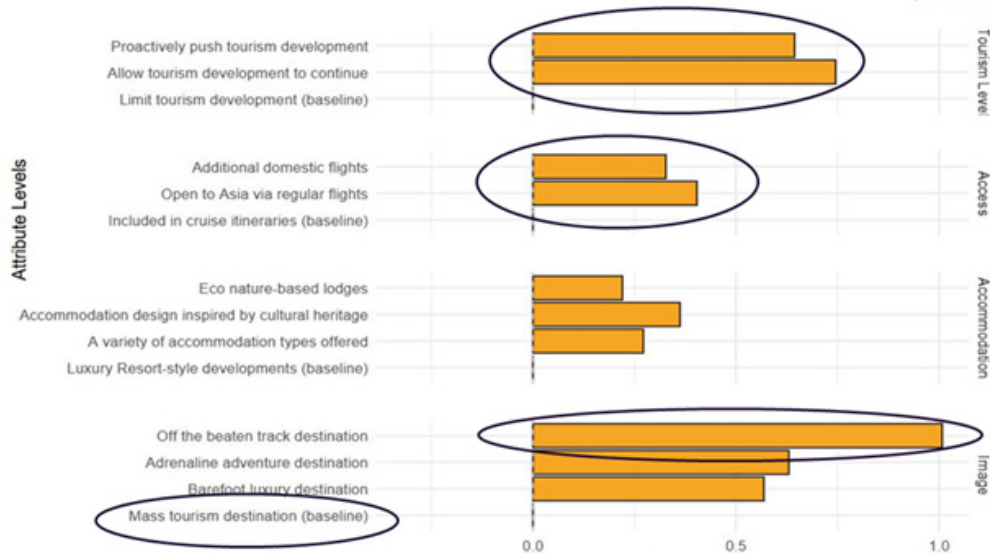
Which option best matches what you want tourism on Christmas Island to be like?

There were different attributes to consider (see table below). Options within the attributes were randomly combined to create unique scenarios of Christmas Island tourism, and the respondents had to make trade-offs when selecting their preferred scenarios.

Attributes	Levels
Tourism level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proactively push tourism development (e.g. double the number of tourists by 2030)</li> <li>Allow tourism development to continue (i.e. no additional encouragement, support or funding)</li> <li>Limit tourism development (e.g. cap the number of tourists)</li> </ul>
Tourism access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additional domestic flights</li> <li>Open to Asia via regular flights</li> <li>Included in cruise itineraries</li> </ul>
Tourist accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resort-style developments</li> <li>Eco nature-based lodges</li> <li>Accommodation design inspired by cultural heritage</li> <li>A variety of accommodation types offered</li> </ul>
Tourism image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mass tourism destination – standardised, commercialised, highly developed facilities &amp; services; offering a variety of experiences (e.g. nature, culture, events, adventure)</li> <li>Off-the-beaten-track destination – adventurous individualised exploration in nature; dispersed visitation; limited facilities &amp; services; catering to niche markets (e.g. diving, engaging with wildlife)</li> <li>Adrenaline-driven destination – commercialised adventure experiences (e.g. sky-diving, zip-lining); specialised facilities &amp; equipment; appealing to youth market</li> <li>Barefoot-luxury destination – experiencing nature in comfort; exclusive offerings; high standards of facilities &amp; services; catering to higher-spending tourists</li> </ul>

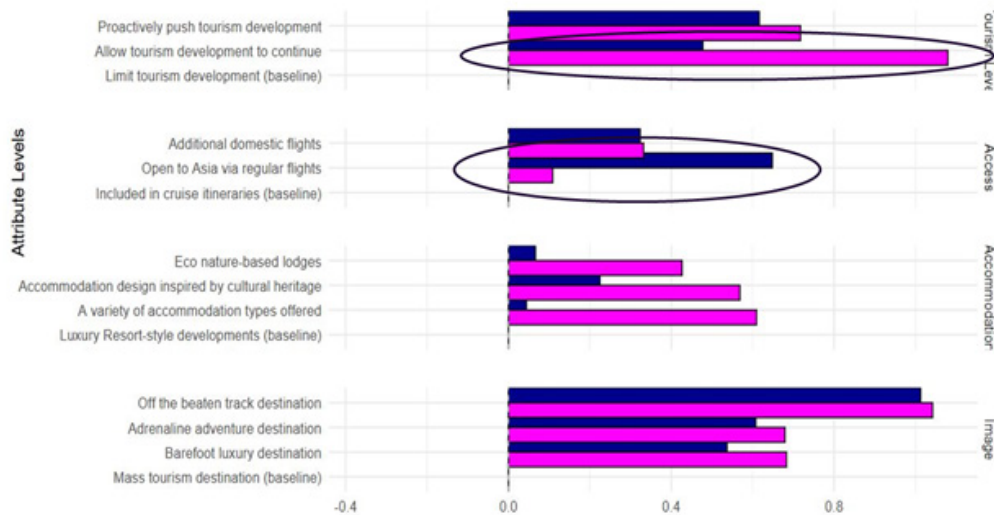
Results from the choice experiment revealed that Christmas Island residents would prefer to push or allow tourism development rather than limiting it or leaving it as is. They were also in favour of opening more flights over cruise ships, with slightly more preference for flights to Asia than domestic flights. No clear preference was given to types of accommodation. Finally, 'off-the-beaten-track destination' was the most preferred tourism image.

## Scenario Selection – Priorities

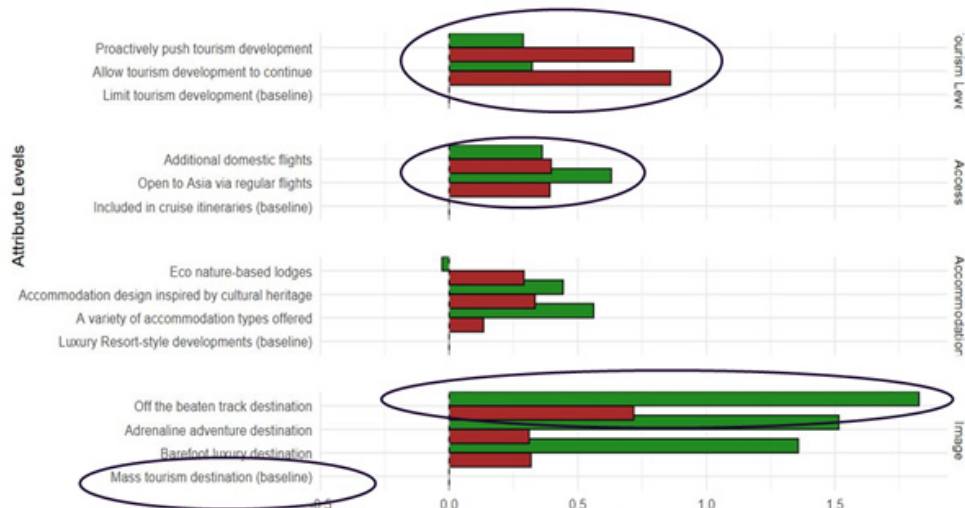


Due to the diverse profile of the respondents, the researchers were able to conduct some further analysis to reveal the differences in preference among various sub-groups of the community.

## Long-term vs Short-term Residency



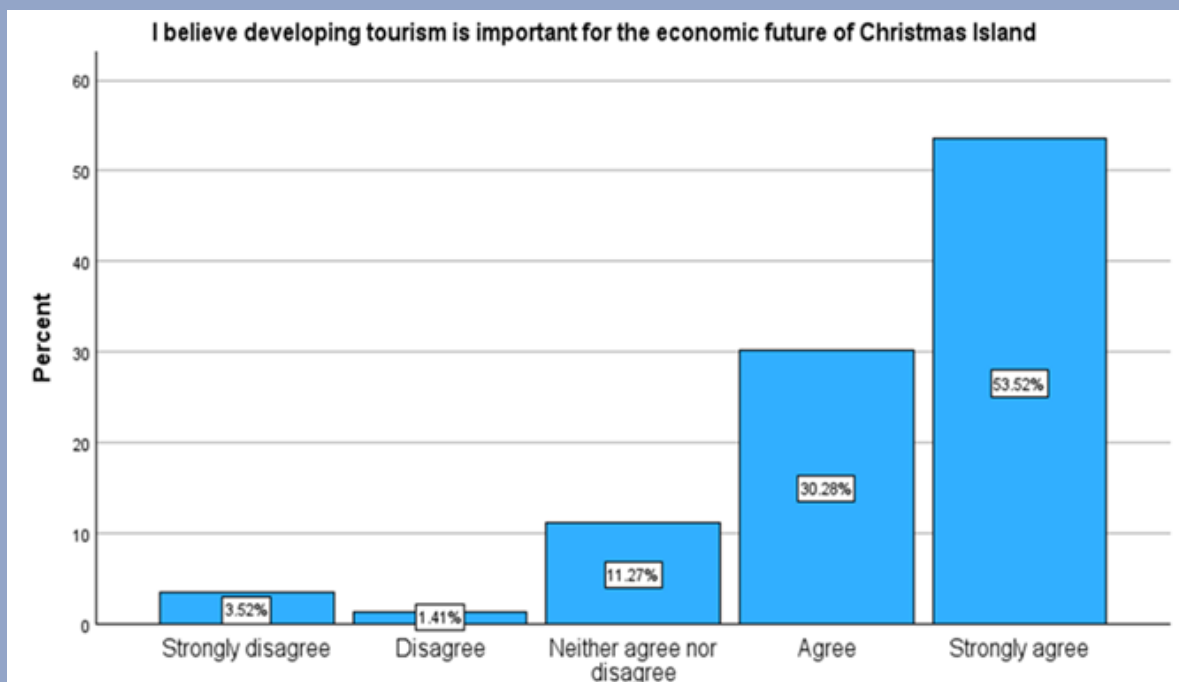
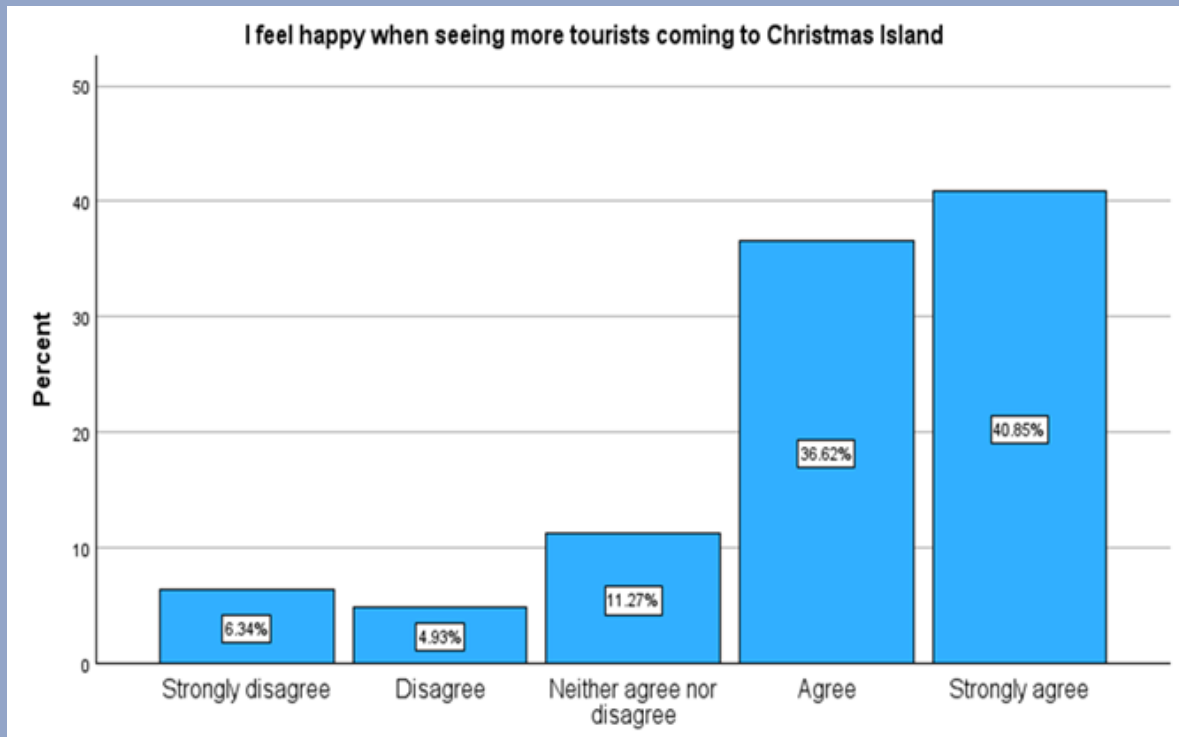
## Employed vs Not Employed in Tourism



## Attitudes towards tourism development

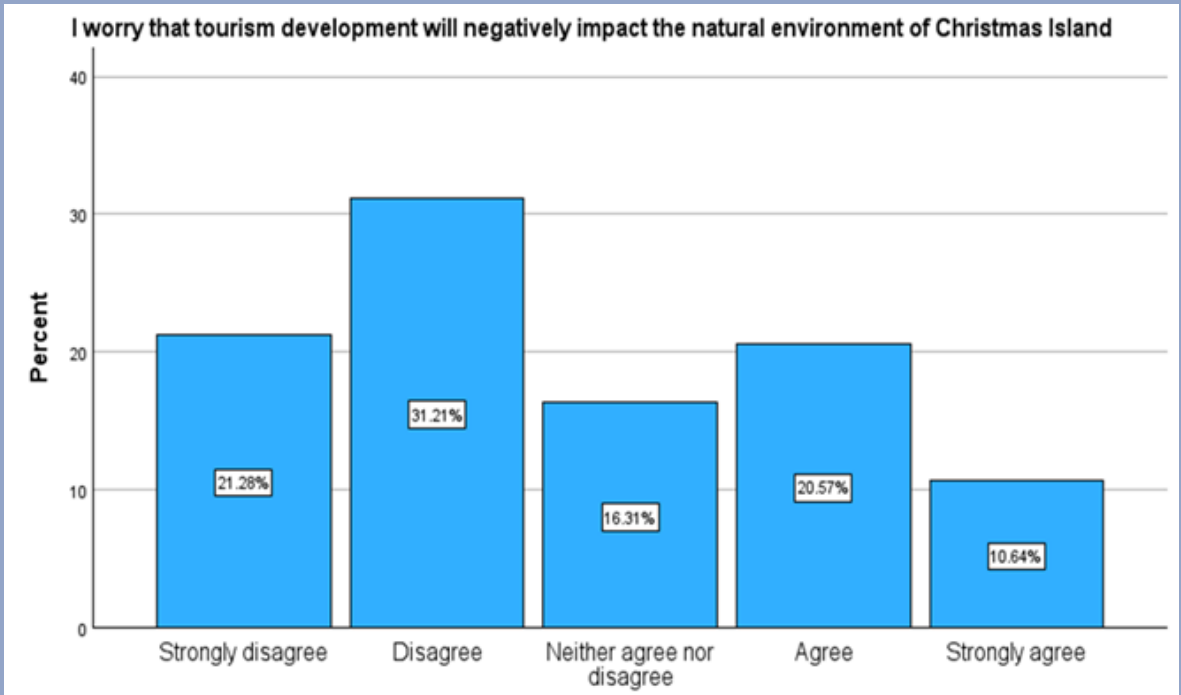
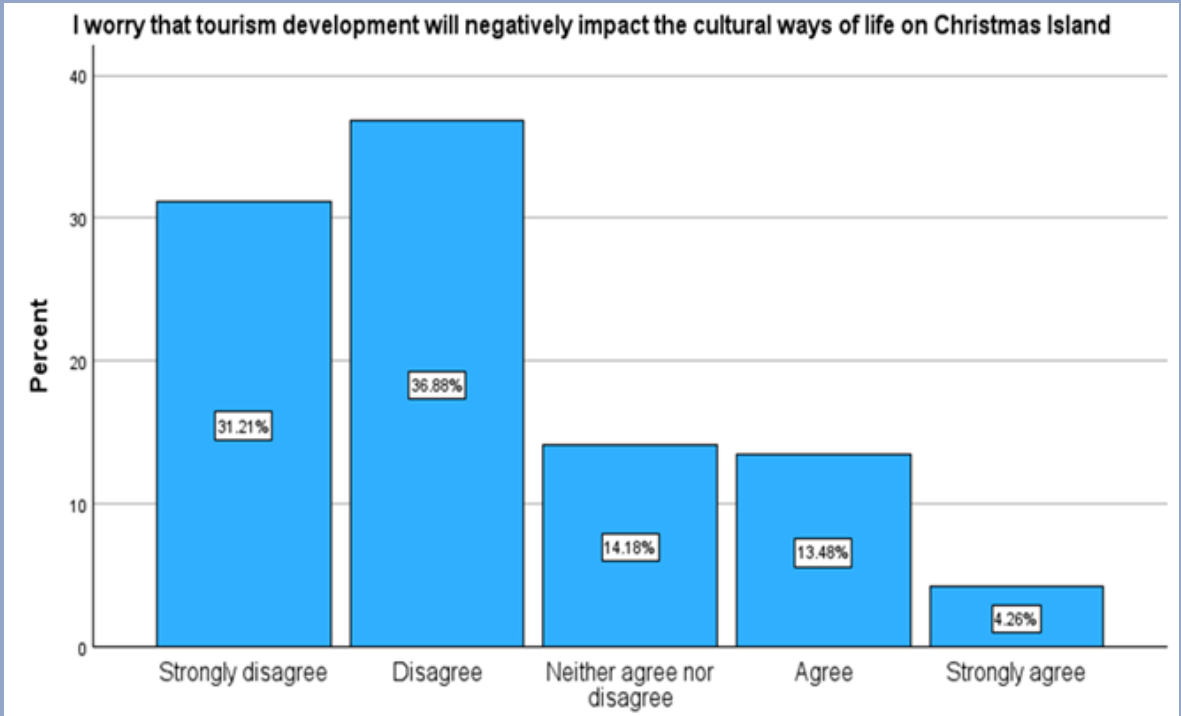
To reveal the respondents' attitudes towards tourism development, they were asked to indicate their agreement (from strongly disagree to strongly agree) to five attitudinal statements.

When asked if they feel happy when seeing more tourists coming to Christmas Island, more than three quarters of respondents (77%) agreed or strongly agreed, and the vast majority of respondents (84%) recognised the potential economic importance of tourism.

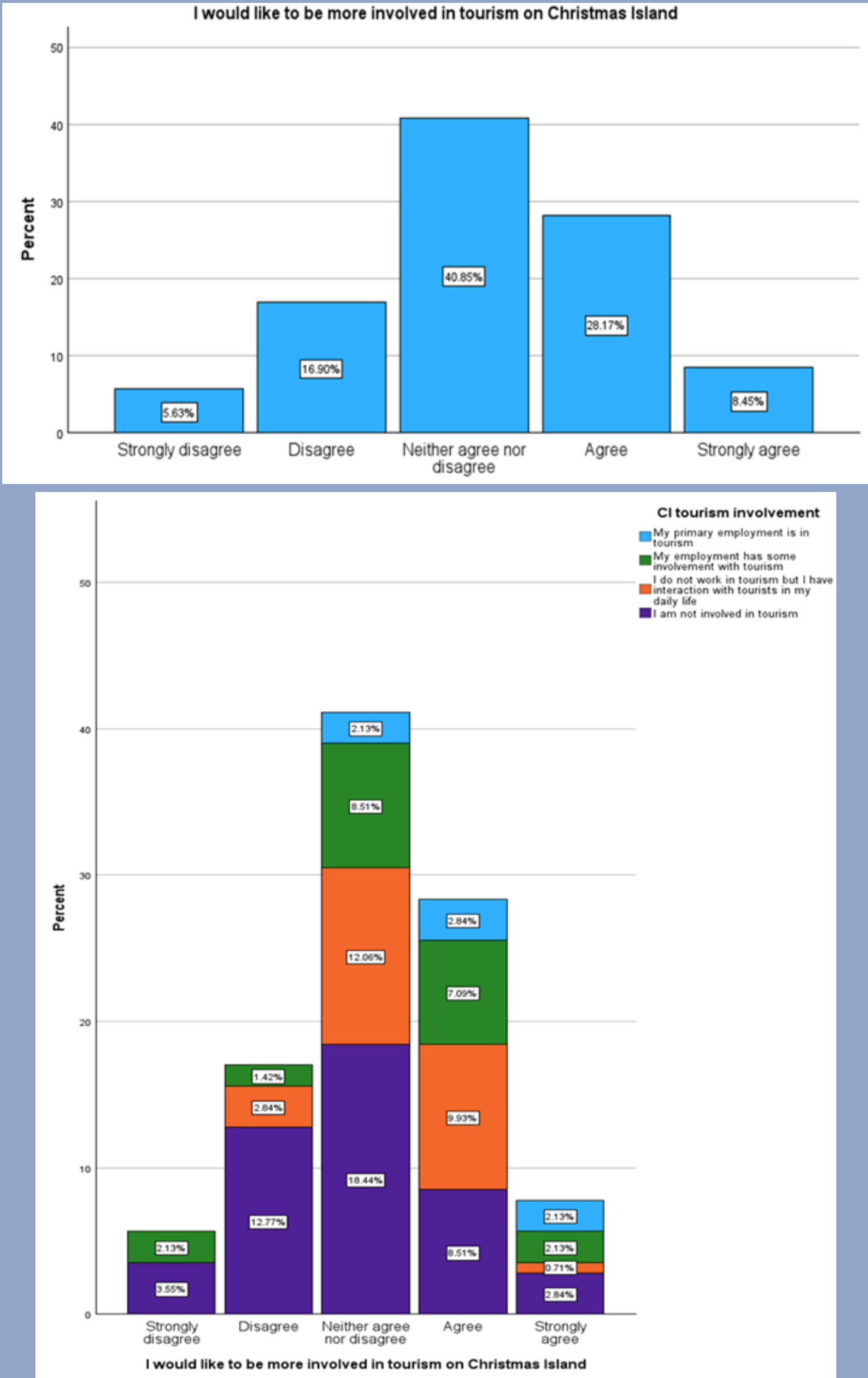




Respondents did not have concern about the negative impact of tourism on cultural ways of life. However, there were varied opinions regarding the tourism impact on natural environment.



More than one third of respondents (37%) expressed wanting to be more involved in tourism on Christmas Island, many of whom are not currently employed in tourism.



## Preferences for tourist experiences

Respondents were asked to indicate their approval for a list of 20 tourist experiences, which were drawn from [Tourism Australia's Experience Sector Mapping](#). Results indicated a strong preference for the development of cultural/social experiences, including historical/cultural sites & stories (70%), cultural/religious events & festivals (63%), and socialising activities & classes (e.g. cooking) with locals (60%). This is consistent with the attitudinal results above that the respondents generally did not have concerns about tourism having negative impacts on their cultural ways of life, and that they would like to be more involved in tourism, potentially by showcasing their cultures/heritage and through socialising activities with tourists. Nature-based experiences were also favoured, such as up-close animal encounters (65%), photography (64%), trekking/camping (63%), and scuba diving (62%). Meanwhile, nearly half of the respondents (46%) expressed disapproval of bar hopping/nightlife/clubbing.

It is also worth noting that activities such as extreme sports, aerial tours and water sports were not wanted by over half the respondents. This aligns with the choice experiment results which showed low support for Christmas Island developing as an adrenaline-driven adventure destination (albeit still well above the mass-tourism image option). Marketing messaging will need to be carefully considered to ensure the adventurous off the beaten track experiences are about, for example, scuba diving and heading off to explore the island in a 4WD having collected your emergency personal locator beacon from the local police station, rather than the typical hard adventure adrenaline-seeking experiences, such as bungee jumping and zip-lining. Relatedly, respondents commented on the limited medical resources and the significant costs incurred when medivacing a tourist back to the mainland.

Experiences	Want		Do not want		No opinion OR missing	
Historical/cultural sites & stories	99	70%	8	5%	35	25%
Dining out	97	68%	6	4%	39	28%
Up-close animal encounters (e.g. seeing crabs, birdwatching, snorkelling)	93	65%	8	6%	41	29%
Photography	91	64%	5	4%	46	32%
Trekking/camping	90	63%	14	10%	38	27%
Cultural/religious events & festivals	89	63%	12	8%	41	29%
Scuba diving	88	62%	13	9%	41	29%
Citizen science (e.g. visitors help collect data on the environment)	86	61%	10	7%	46	32%
Socialising activities & classes (e.g. cooking) with locals	85	60%	9	6%	48	34%
Volunteering/working holiday/workcation	80	56%	16	11%	46	33%
Wellness retreat & spa treatments	76	53%	15	11%	51	36%
Red crab migration	76	53%	24	17%	42	30%
Fishing	64	45%	35	25%	43	30%
Shopping	62	44%	31	22%	49	34%
Extreme sports (e.g. ATVs, ziplining, abseiling, bungee jumping)	58	41%	38	27%	46	32%
Aerial tours (e.g. scenic flights, helicopter rides, hot air balloon)	58	41%	36	25%	48	34%
Water sports (e.g. sailing, parasailing, jet-skiing)	56	40%	33	23%	53	37%
Glamping/campervan	53	37%	35	25%	54	38%
Homestays with local families	51	36%	20	14%	71	50%
Bar hopping/nightlife/clubbing	28	20%	66	46%	48	34%

*"What do you want tourism on Christmas Island to be known for in 10 years?"*

[illegible]

There was also a strong presence of culture, history and heritage, highlighting the multiculturalism ('Asian-Western fusion', 'melting pot of cultures') and local lifestyle and community ('laid back feel', 'back to nature', 'no consumerism or capitalism') on the island. This again is consistent with the residents' preferences for developing cultural/social tourist experiences, as reported above.



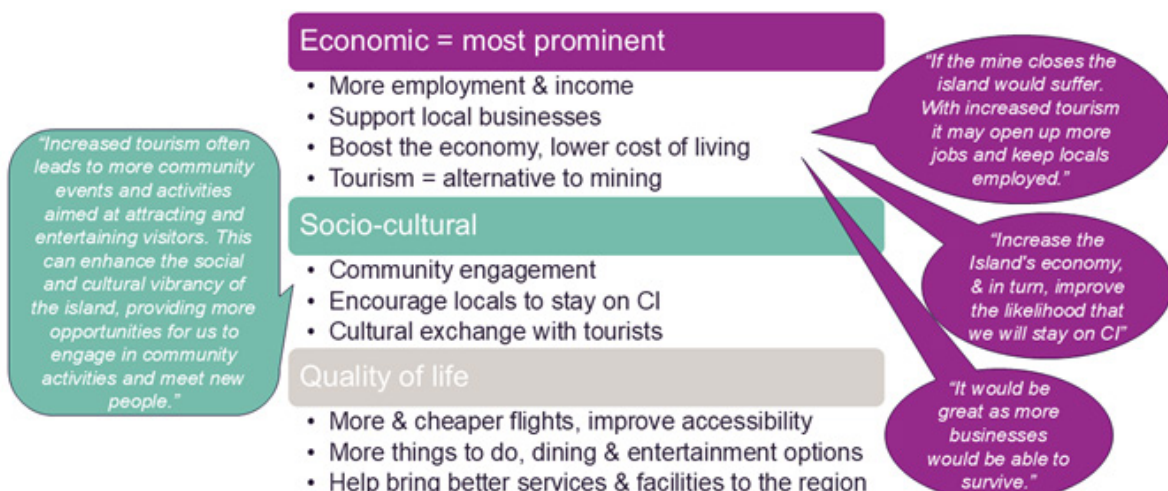
*"How would an increase in tourist numbers to Christmas Island affect you personally?"*

Responses to this question demonstrated that Christmas Island locals have a clear understanding of the realities of tourism development, both in terms of positive and negative impacts.



On the one hand, there was strong recognition of the positive economic contribution of tourism, including more employment and income, supporting local businesses, boosting the economy, and lowering the cost of living. Tourism was seen as a good alternative to the declining mining industry. An increase in tourist numbers was also associated with socio-cultural benefits (more community engagement, encouraging locals to stay on island, cultural exchange with tourists) and improved quality-of-life (improved accessibility, more supplies, more dining and entertainment options, helping to bring better services and facilities to the region).

## How would an increase in tourist numbers to CI affect you personally? – POSITIVE



On the other hand, a key negative impact was reported to be increased competition between residents and tourists, both for flights on/off island and for other necessities such as food and housing/accommodation. A range of other potential negative impacts were also identified, including crowding issues, ruining island lifestyle and culture, economic leakages, and damage to the natural environment and resources.

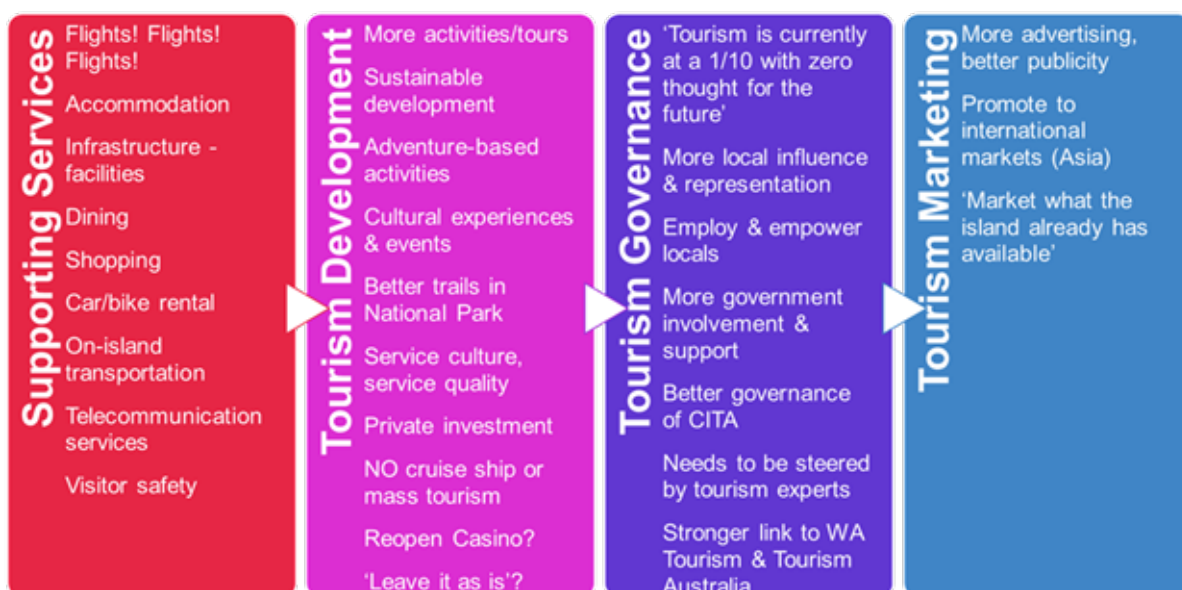
## How would an increase in tourist numbers to CI affect you personally? – NEGATIVE



This provides further evidence that residents recognise the potential economic benefits of tourism but support for development is conditional, as one resident summarised: 'as long as food security, flights and nature are not impacted'.

*"How can tourism on Christmas Island be improved?"*

For this question, respondents' suggestions for tourism improvement can be categorised into four main topics: supporting services, tourism development, tourism governance, and tourism marketing.



In terms of supporting services for the tourism industry, flights and accessibility were the most prominent themes of suggestions, reflecting the current inadequate services. Respondents asked for cheaper airfares, no issues with luggage being off-loaded, more frequent flights, more international flights (from/to Asia), better services by airlines, and better infrastructure at the airport. In addition, the need for more and better accommodation options was highlighted, though with no strong preference for any particular type of accommodation. There were also suggestions to improve existing infrastructure and facilities (National Park tracks, road signage, public amenities, waste disposal and recycling, plus access to water); more dining and shopping options with businesses opening for longer hours; and better on-island transportation, including safe car/ bike rental and public transport.

As for tourism development, respondents suggested there should be more and better activities/ tours on offer, for both tourists and locals to enjoy. Some also highlighted the potential of leveraging the unique culture and history of Christmas Island to generate new tourism experiences. There was considerable emphasis on sustainable development and building a strong service culture/service quality. There was also clear opposition to mass tourism and cruise tourism.

With regard to tourism governance, respondents reported a lack thereof. Respondents noted there was no tourism specialised person/agency to make executive decisions on tourism development for the region, and that the current tourism industry had too many barriers to entry, plus a lack of support from the government. Some general recommendations on governance include:

- 'Employ and empower our real locals'
- 'More local influence in tourism'
- 'Separation of the Department of Infrastructure's control over flight numbers and itineraries'
- 'More cohesive organisation with off-island managers'
- 'Simplifying government rules and regulations'
- 'Utilisation of the various empty government controlled accommodation'

There were also a few CITA-specific recommendations:

- Better managed visitor centre
- More tourism operators represented on CITA board who have historically not participated
- Ensure the CITA committee follows governance procedures
- Stronger link to WA Tourism & Tourism Australia

For tourism marketing, respondents suggested to carry out more advertising and better publicity for Christmas Island tourism, to promote to international markets (Asia), and to 'market what the island already has available'.

### **Secondary analysis: Christmas Island vs Rottnest Island tourism planning comparison**

From the initial review of relevant IOT tourism plans and strategies in Stage I, through the multiple site visits, to the analysis of the Christmas Island tourism survey results in Stage III, it became evident that the tourism industry on Christmas Island (and in the IOT region) is situated in unique circumstances that make it different, and disadvantaged, compared to the rest of Australia's tourism destinations. To highlight these differences in the level of tourism planning activity, the tables below compare Christmas Island and Rottnest Island, which share some similarities in terms of island boundedness.

<a href="#">(Source: Destination Perth)</a>	Christmas Island	Rottnest Island
<b>Local Tourism Organisation (LTO)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>usually membership-based bodies</li> <li>responsible for promoting their local area &amp; its members</li> <li>provide opportunities to get involved in marketing campaigns</li> <li><b>supporting role</b> in tourism initiatives, e.g. essential infrastructure, event delivery, attractions &amp; experiences, approvals of tourism development, &amp; policy &amp; planning for a sustainable tourism future</li> <li><b>can help liaise with regional tourism authorities &amp; state authorities on behalf of operators</b></li> </ul>	Christmas Island Tourism Association	Rottnest Island Authority (RIA)
<b>Visitor Information Centre (VIC)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provide tourist information to visitors to encourage them to stay longer, spend more money, experience more attractions &amp; revisit</li> <li>they can help promote local product directly to visitors &amp; sell tourism products</li> </ul>	<b>(CITA)</b> ~ 2 FTE staff Volunteer Committee	

	Christmas Island	Rottnest Island
<b>Shire</b>	Shire of Christmas Island	RIA
<b>Other</b>	IOT RDO / Administration / Department	RIA
<b>Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO)</b>	-	Destination Perth
<b>State Tourism Organisation (STO)</b>	-	Tourism Western Australia
<b>Tourism Council WA</b>	<b>Occasional support</b> provided to IOT tourism industry	Responsible for WA tourism industry: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Industry representation</li> <li>● Industry development &amp; accreditation</li> <li>● Industry events &amp; networking</li> <li>● WA Tourism Awards</li> </ul>

<b>Colour key:</b>	<i>Tourism body</i>	<i>Body with some tourism specialists</i>	<i>Body with no tourism specialists</i>
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This comparison summary was included in the presentations of the research results to the tourism-related stakeholders, on-island and online (details below). Following the presentation, the full version of the comparison, included as Appendix 3, was requested by the Assistant Director of the IOT Branch of the Department of Infrastructure in Canberra. In the interests of equitable disclosure this full version was also provided to Parks Australia, CITA, and the other IOT government bodies.

### Research communication

- The preliminary research results were presented to an academic audience at the 35th Annual Council for Australasian Tourism and Hospitality Education (CAUTHE) Conference in Brisbane, Australia in February 2025.
- The full research results were presented to the IOT locals and relevant stakeholders during the last site visit to Christmas Island and Cocos Keeling Islands (details in the next section).
- Post trip, the full results were presented online (21 May 2025) and the presentation sent to those invited, including:
  - o Eve Cullen and team, IOT Branch at the Federal Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
  - o Office of The Honourable Marion Scrymgour MP, Member for Lingiari
  - o Sharmaine Sho, Executive Assistant, Shire of Christmas Island
  - o David Lee, Strategic Advisor, PRL Group
  - o Parks Australia (IOT, Tourism, Grant Team)
- The Final Report Recommendations have also been provided to the relevant stakeholders on and off island.
- The key results were included in the Tourism Grant Project outcomes published in English, Chinese and Malay in *The Islander* (30 May 2025).
- The UQ research team is preparing academic manuscripts to be submitted and published in academic journals.

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### 3.5. *Fourth site visit to Christmas Island and Cocos Keeling Islands*

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The fourth and final site visit in May 2025 was undertaken by Shea Wittig from EA and Dr Noreen Breakey from UQ. The focus of this trip was to disseminate the project outcomes to the IOT residents and relevant stakeholders. The project team hosted and presented at several events:

- **CKITA Industry Event** - 7 May 2025: Attendees included CKITA Chairman and Committee representatives, CKITA managers, and tourism business owner/managers. It was a relaxed event where the results from the completed scorecards and broader industry updates were shared, alongside the key Christmas Island survey results that are relevant for the IOT. This event provided the opportunity for discussions on the benefits of the scorecard along with addressing any questions.
- **Industry Drop-in Session** - 8 May 2025 in the CRC conference room: Business owners were invited to drop in for one-on-one coaching sessions to either answer questions or start to work through the Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard in more detail. This was advertised through CKITA channels, discussed at the above industry event and an email reminder was sent out the day before. No business representatives were able to attend.



- **CITA Sundowner Event** - 9 May 2025: Both Shea Wittig and Noreen Breakey presented to the attendees, who included CITA Committee representatives plus Manager, Parks Australia representatives, tourism businesses, and the marketing consultant to CITA who had just arrived on-island. This was ideal timing as any new branding, promotion, etc can be based on the locals' views on tourism.
- **Parks Australia's Sunset Science Sunday** - 11 May 2025: Open to the public and over 30 people attended. Dr Breakey was one of three presenters providing research updates. Lin Gaff, who organised the event, sent through the following message afterwards: *"Thanks again for sharing your findings with us - I love the way you captured the key findings into digestible images. Very enjoyable."*
- **Christmas Island Stakeholder meeting** - 12 May 2025: The full research results were presented by Dr Breakey to the meeting attendees, who included:
  - o Farzian Zainal, The Administrator, Indian Ocean Territories (IOT) Regional Development Organisation (RDO)
  - o John Buncle, Executive Officer to the Administrator, IOT RDO
  - o Carolin Buncle, Director, IOT RDO
  - o Oliver Lines, Director, Shire of Christmas Island
  - o Ian McKendrick, Director, IOT Administration
  - o Hafiz Masli, Coordinator, Christmas Island Community Resource Centre
  - o Zoey McMillan, Community & Stakeholder Engagement Lead, Christmas Island Phosphates (CIP)
  - o Ken Hawkins, Manager, Green Space Tech, CIP
  - o Lisa Preston, Owner/Manager, Indian Ocean Experience and Committee Member, Christmas Island Tourism Association (CITA)
  - o Noorisah Bingham, Manager, CITA
  - o Linda Wayman, Marketing Consultant, contracted by CITA
  - o Azli Albashri, Community representative, IOT RDO Economic Future Working Group

Those invited to the meeting were subsequently sent the research results

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### 3.6. *Communication of the project*

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#### **Late 2024 media activities**

- Case study highlighting completed S4S Scorecard by [Extra Divers Australia](#) published on EA's website (October 2024)
- Site visit shared by EA and UQ on social media platforms (LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram)
- Invitation to attend the Sundowner event shared in the CKITA Newsletter (November 2024)
- Acknowledgment of the industry event shared in the CKITA Newsletter (December 2024)
- CITA social media post during visit (December 2024)

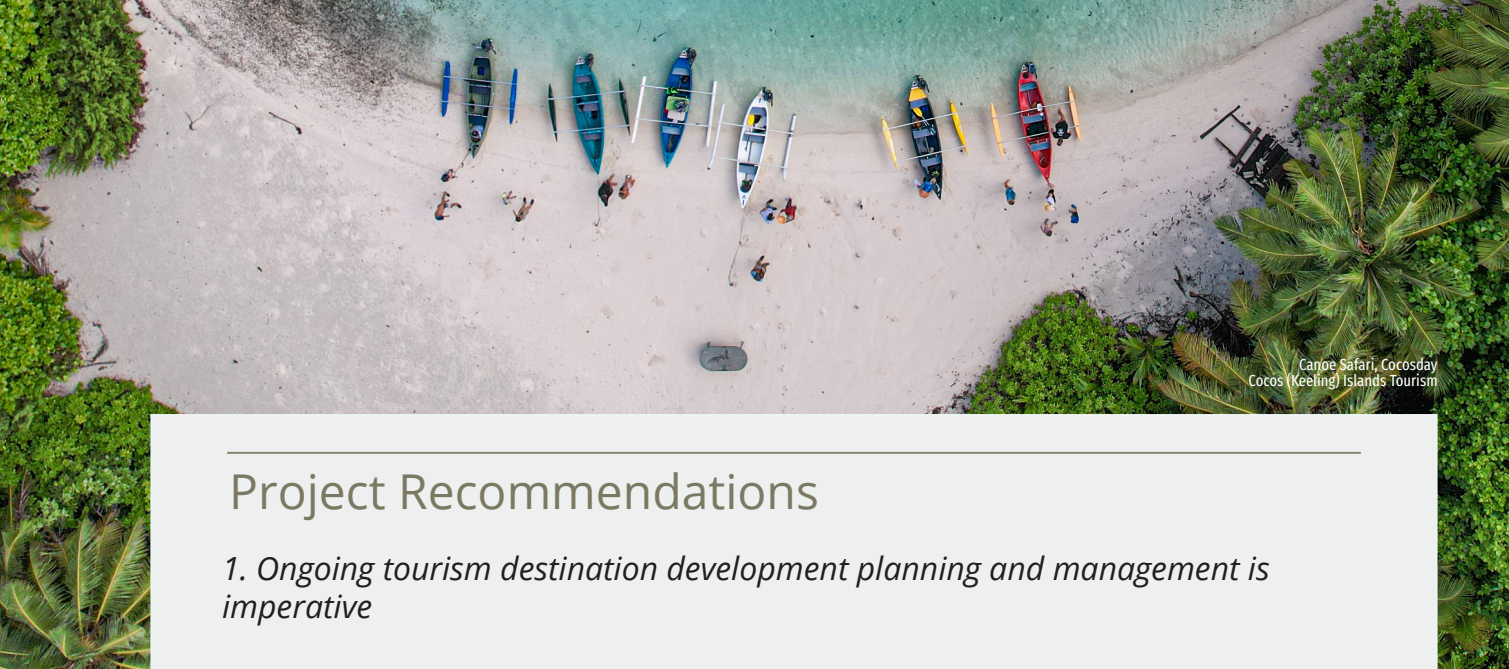
#### **2025 media activities**

- Grant project visit and update shared in the CITA Newsletter (January 2025), including the 'last chance to complete the survey' messaging
- Case study highlighting completed S4S Scorecard by Indian Ocean Experience in progress and to be published on Ecotourism Australia's website July 2025

- Invitation to attend the exclusive webinars hosted by Ecotourism Australia featured in the CKITA Newsletter
- Site visit shared by UQ on LinkedIn (May 2025)
- **Grant Project Outcomes nine-page colour publication in The Islander** (May 2025) congratulating those who completed the S4S Scorecard and providing the key tourism survey results (three pages provided in each of the three languages)
  - o To maximise reporting the results back to the local people, emails about this inclusion in The Islander were sent to key community leaders, including the Christmas Island Community Resource Centre (CRC), the Poon Saan Club, and the Women's Association
  - o We discovered that the results had already been pinned up on the CRC information display board and copies printed for handing out to all the Aunties and Uncles visiting the OpShop
- Grant project completion details included in the UQ Business School Research Newsletter (June 2025)
- Ecotourism Australia to publish article on website summarising key outcomes - July 2025







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## Project Recommendations

### *1. Ongoing tourism destination development planning and management is imperative*

Tourism on Christmas Island in 10 years time can be the magnificent, untamed, laid-back, Asian-Western fusion, 'off the beaten track' destination that offers visitors those once-in-a-lifetime experiences, in balance with local communities needs and protection of this little piece of paradise, as envisioned by the local people.

Such a locally-driven vision for sustainable tourism growth aligns with the stated government economic development agenda and the conservation of the island's land and sea. However this will not just 'happen'. While many tourism businesses are responsible and sustainable, unfortunately the mass tourism industry, left to its own devices, will prioritise return on investment within the legal requirements and base their commercial decisions on simulating and satisfying immediate demand from accessible markets.

There is no detailed Christmas Island, or Indian Ocean Territories (IOT) Tourism Development Plan, with funded actions that have the authority to direct related bodies. As highlighted in the Tourism Planning Island Comparison, the IOT governance arrangements have resulted in a complete lack of tourism planning and management authorities. Unlike other local areas throughout Australia, the IOT has none of the following: Tourism division with Local Government, Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO), State Tourism Organisation (STO), State Tourism Industry Council (TIC), or State Department responsible for Tourism. These authorities have teams of tourism experts involved in planning and managing their destinations.

It is vital to understand that such an approach is beyond marketing or general 'tourism' plans or strategies, which commonly include an overarching vision, available visitor data, challenges and opportunities, and the usual aims, such as increase visitor numbers, without funded deliverable actions that will direct change across, for example, access, investment, accommodation capacity and type, sustainability standards, labour supply, as well as addressing red and green tape.

Illustrating this difference, in the IOT there are two Local Tourism Organisations (LTOs): the Christmas Island Tourism Association (CITA) and the Cocos Keeling Islands Tourism Association (CKITA). Their remit is marketing and visitor information services. They have no authority to change the flight service contract arrangements or requirements, and no plan they produce will force change. Instead, their limited resources are required to provide support for visitors, whether tourists or business travellers, who exit the airport looking distraught as their luggage was offloaded.

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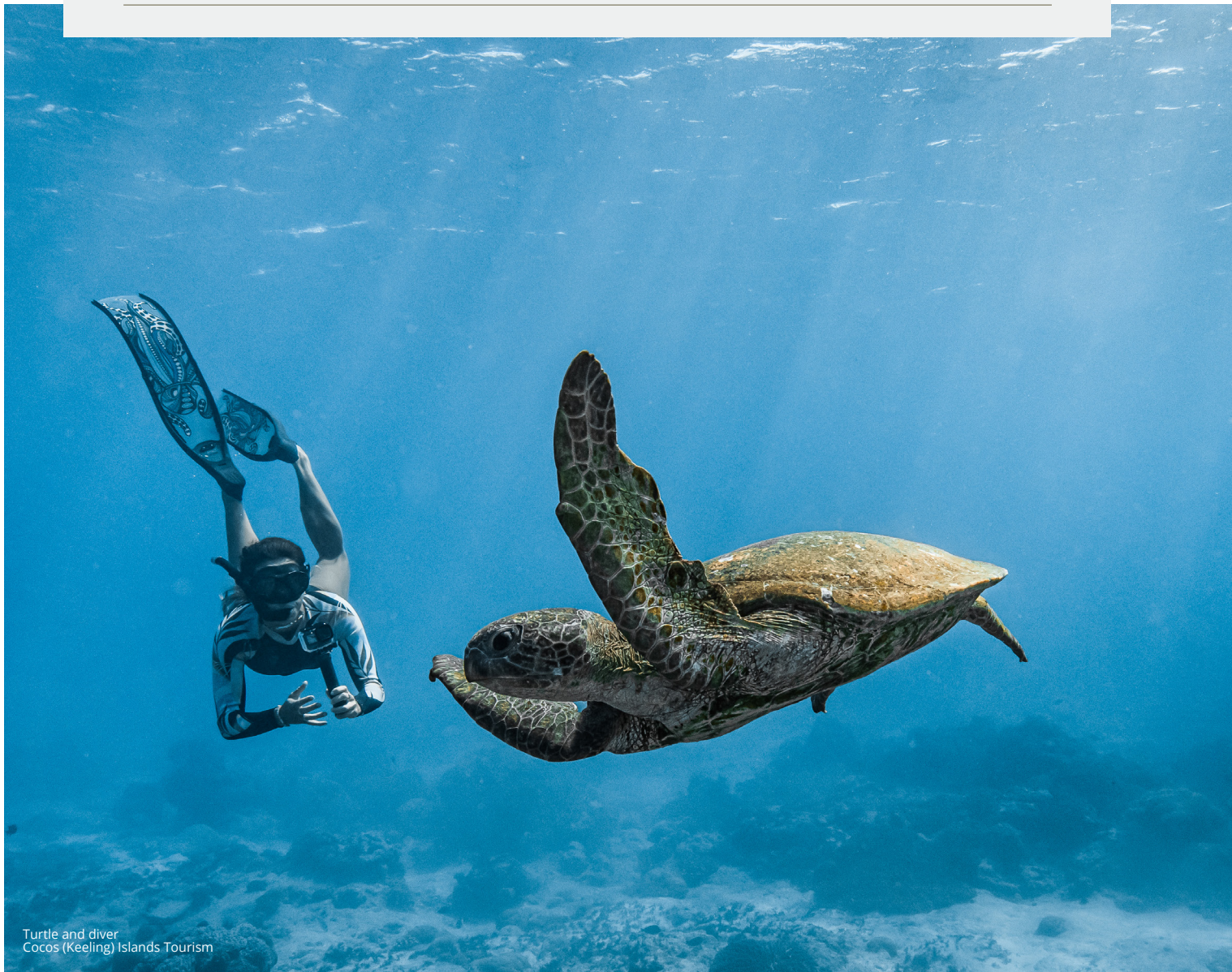


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## *2. Appoint tourism experts within government to plan and manage destination development*

Tourism professionals have been undertaking destination planning and management in dedicated tourism departments, authorities, divisions, and teams for decades. This wealth of expertise can be drawn upon to plan tourism development for Christmas Island - and the broader IOT region. Christmas Island focused destination planners can draw from existing tourism solutions and best practices across, for example: ecotourism, tourism in protected areas, island tourism, post-mining destinations, and wildlife tourism. For optimal outcomes, this dedicated tourism planning needs to be part of the IOT economic development decision processes.

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Turtle and diver  
Cocos (Keeling) Islands Tourism



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### 3. Provide government tourism support for the IOT, as offered elsewhere in Australia

If tourism is actually expected to be a significant economic sector on Christmas Island as mining reduces then the government must at least support it to the level commonly offered around the country. As previously noted, the IOT has the two LTOs (CITA and CKITA) without the rest of the usual network of tourism bodies. In addition to the tourism planning functions, highlighted above, such bodies also provide marketing and business level support.

With support, opportunities can be capitalised upon. For example, the survey highlighted the significant level of interest of Christmas Island residents in being more involved with tourism, and support for developing visitor experiences that offer socialising activities and classes with locals. Numerous programs have been developed worldwide to support locals to become more engaged with tourism, whether it be through local cultural events, offering cooking classes, setting up a homestay, or making souvenirs. Tourists seek novelty and the opportunity to 'travel for good', so purchasing a colourful bowl made from the plastic rubbish collected from local beaches appeals, but many such business start-ups have failed.

#### Proposed Solutions:

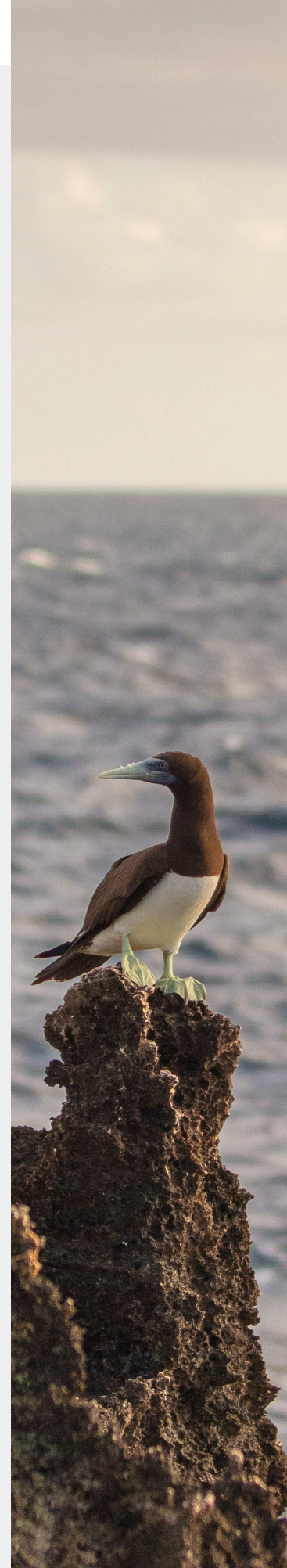
\* *Official inclusion in the Western Australia (WA) government tourism network* – given the location, extending the existing government arrangements to include tourism could address this issue. Why, for example, does a taxi operator on Christmas Island need to adhere to WA state regulations, but is not supported with the capacity building and promotions provided to other WA taxi operators? and/or

\* *Appoint a 'Tourism in the Territories' team* – as the IOT is not the only remote island territory of Australia there would be advantages in ensuring that these destinations are planned, managed and supported inline with mainland destinations.

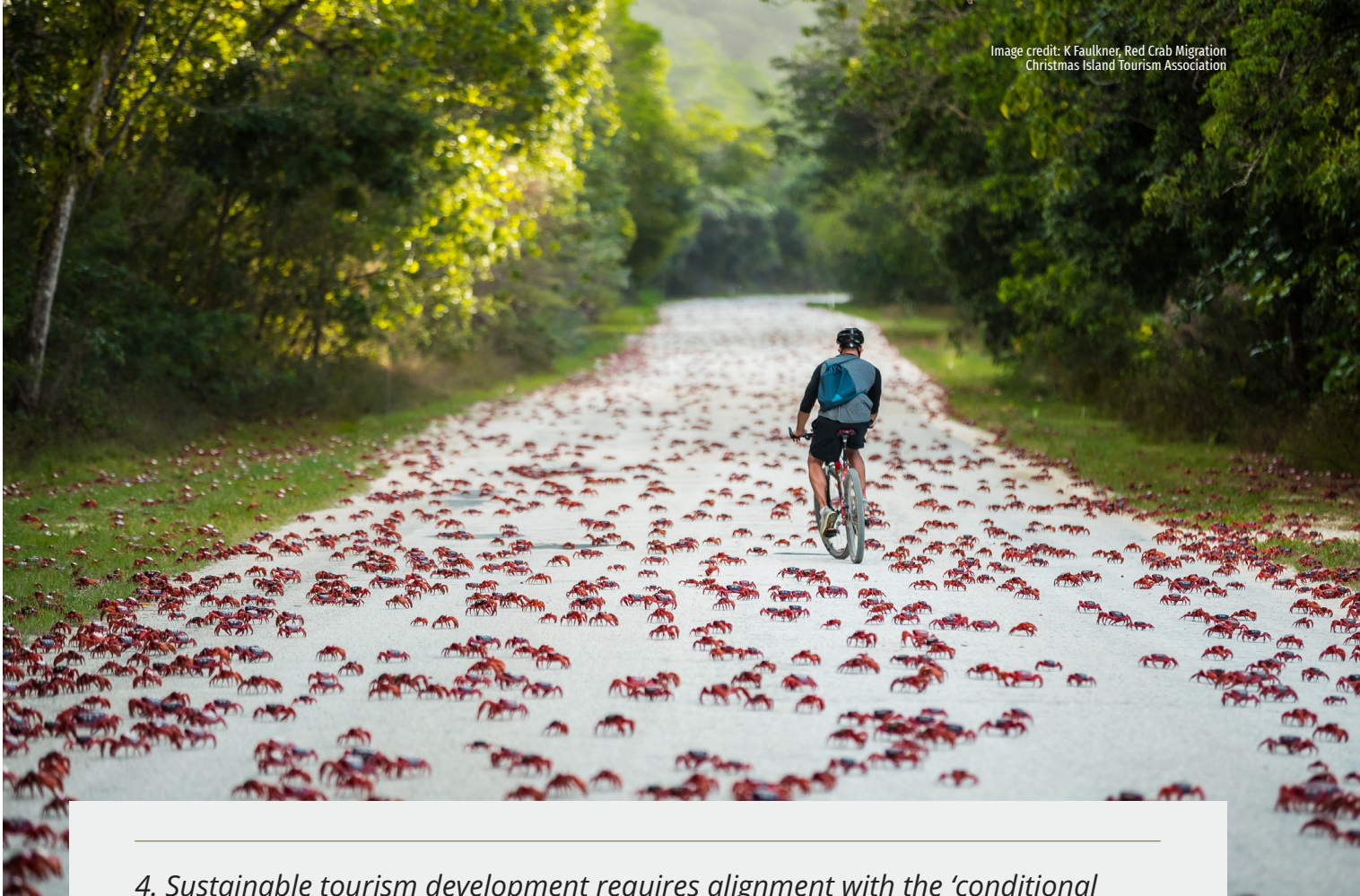
Furthermore, existing government tourism support and expertise can be directed to the IOT, such as:

\* *Create a senior ranger in visitor management IOT role* – Parks Australia is to be commended for their grants program which extends beyond the boundaries of the IOT Marine Parks in recognition of both the positive and negative impacts on protected areas that can occur from local community and economic activities. As tourism in the IOT develops, the number and type of visitors will change. Margaret Knoll Lookout on Christmas Island is spectacular and the recent upgrade was clearly professionally designed. However, on arrival there was already one vehicle parked on the roadside and our two vehicles had to be carefully positioned so as not to block their limited turning space. It is vital that in-house experience, such as visitor management strategies and tourism operator regulation systems, are applied in the IOT prior to increased visitation.

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#### *4. Sustainable tourism development requires alignment with the 'conditional support' of the local people*

Tourism success in the long-term must be acceptable to the local people. Internationally, overtourism and resident backlash against tourists is again building as pre-Covid travel levels return. Fortunately, the Christmas Island residents are conditionally supportive of tourism development and realistic about its potential economic, cultural and environmental impacts. Their voice has been clear – support depends on the extent, type and impacts of tourism, as well as the visitors' behaviour. Understandably, the locals will not accept tourists being 'treated as a priority' over the well-being of the locals. In this developed country, 'food security' is a real and serious issue for the people on Christmas Island. Locals will be well aware of any impacts increasing tourist numbers has on their food shortages, safety, price and quality. Managed tourism growth that has been planned by tourism professionals and utilises existing best practices will be well-placed to maximise the positive impacts of tourism while minimising the potential key negatives that are important to the local people.

It became abundantly clear during the data collection process that the locals have grown frustrated by having input into numerous surveys and never knowing the results or seeing evidence that government decisions have been informed by such research. This led to the decision to present the results in person on island in a public forum and subsequently publish the key findings in the main local publication – The Islander. Importantly, this messaging highlighted that their voice has been communicated to those at various government levels both on and off island. Demonstrating local-level support for this aim, was the unsolicited tabling of the research presentation to the Shire of Christmas Island's Community Consultative Committee (CCC) meeting by the CITA Chair to ensure that the results are officially on record.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1 – Project Postcard



### What is the future of tourism on Christmas Island?

This is the opportunity for locals to direct Christmas Island tourism development.

Have your say at: [business.uq.edu.au/iottourism](https://business.uq.edu.au/iottourism)

Any queries to: [noreen.breakey@uq.edu.au](mailto:noreen.breakey@uq.edu.au)



CRICOS 00025B • TEQSA PRV12080

### Start your sustainability journey now in just 2 steps

Every tourism business (restaurants, accommodation, tours, retail, and transport) has a role to play to protect the environment and community that they rely on.

**Step 1: Download the sustainability toolkit**

For sustainable tourism ideas, local and national examples and a 'how to' sustainability checklist.

**Step 2: Start the Strive 4 Sustainability scorecard**

In less than a day, complete and receive recognition against global standards with a personalised feedback report to improve and a scorecard to display to guests.

Limited free scorecards available for IOT businesses thanks to a Parks Australia grant.



This postcard is made from compostable paper.





### What is the future of tourism on Christmas Island?

This is the opportunity for locals to direct Christmas Island tourism development.

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Any queries to: [noreen.breakey@uq.edu.au](mailto:noreen.breakey@uq.edu.au)

### 圣诞岛旅游的未来在哪里？

这是当地人指导圣诞岛旅游业发展的机会

发表您的看法: [business.uq.edu.au/iottourism](https://business.uq.edu.au/iottourism)

如有任何疑问，请联系: [noreen.breakey@uq.edu.au](mailto:noreen.breakey@uq.edu.au)



### Apakah masa depan pelancongan di Pulau Krismas?

Ini adalah peluang untuk penduduk tempatan mengarahkan Pembangunan pelancongan Pulau Krismas.

**Berikan pendapat anda di:** [business.uq.edu.au/iottourism](https://business.uq.edu.au/iottourism)

Sebarang pertanyaan kepada: [noreen.breakey@uq.edu.au](mailto:noreen.breakey@uq.edu.au)



# Tourism Planning Comparison: Christmas Island & Rottnest Island

Dr Noreen Breakey & Dr Wendy Pham  
The University of Queensland

Presentation prepared as part of the  
Indian Ocean Territories Marine Park Grant Project

May 2025

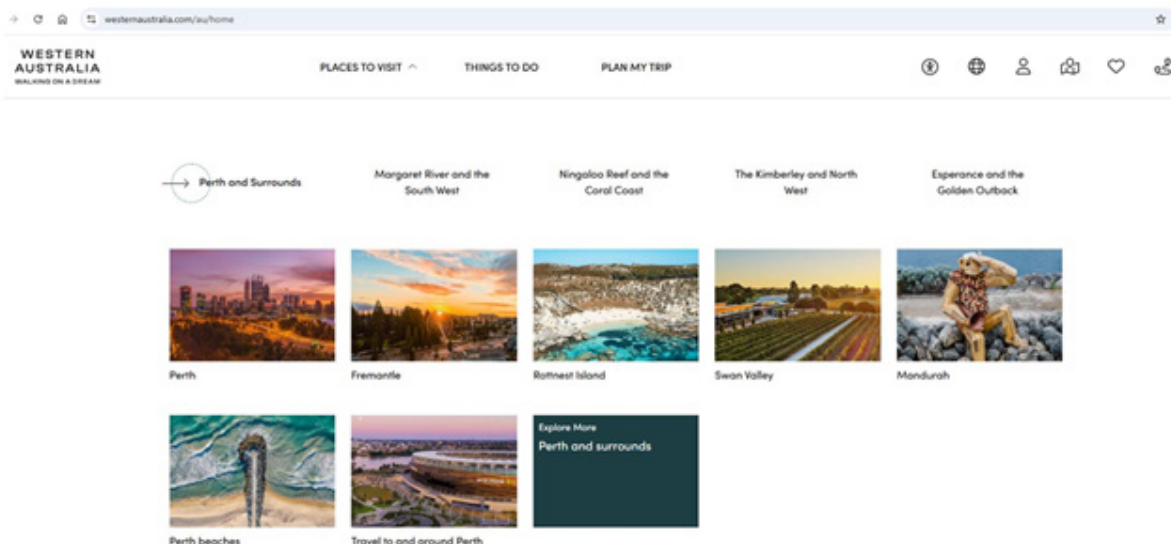
Following is a youtube video provided by  
Tourism Western Australia, on:  
“Who’s who in tourism”

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S\\_K24mkTNh0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_K24mkTNh0)

Outlining the ‘network of support’ for tourism that exists in  
Western Australia, and is similarly replicated throughout  
most of Australia

	Christmas Island	Rottneest Island
<b>National Tourism Organisation (NTO)</b> <i>Tourism Australia</i>	Federal Gov agency responsible for <b>attracting international visitors</b> to Australia	
	Featured on TA's <b>marketing</b> website: <a href="#">Guide to Christmas Island   14 incredible days on Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands</a>	Featured on TA's <b>marketing</b> website: <a href="#">Guide to Rottneest Island</a>
<i>Australian Tourism Export Council (ATEC)</i>	ATEC represents <b>Australia's international tourism industry</b> & helps brings together buyers & sellers to grow the tourism export sector through the Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE)	
	CITA is a member, so they can attend ATE, but are not always able to be there	Rottneest Island represented by their STO & RTO
<b>State Tourism Organisation (STO)</b> <i>Tourism Western Australia</i>	<b>Information</b> can be found via the search function: <a href="#">Christmas Island – WA page</a>	<b>Featured</b> on their <b>marketing website</b> as one of the key destinations, easily seen from the homepage: <a href="#">Rottneest Island – WA page</a>
<i>Tourism Western Australia + State Tourism Department</i>	-	<b>Strategic plans</b> for state's tourism development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Western Australia Visitor Economy Strategy 2033 (WAVES2033)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Tourism Western Australia – A Vision for Dream Events</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">WA Aboriginal Tourism Action Plan 2021-25</a></li> </ul> <b>Minister</b> for Tourism

## Rottneest Island – Tourism Western Australia (STO) Marketing





# Rottnest Island – Tourism Western Australia (STO) Planning



**Renata Lowe**

Executive Director, Destination Development

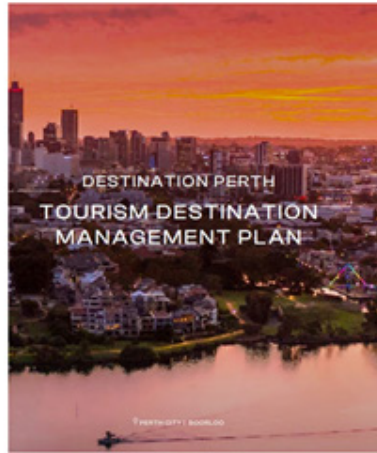
Renata Lowe is the Executive Director of our agency's Destination Development division, which focuses on the development of tourism experiences and destinations.



	Christmas Island	Rottnest Island
<b>State Tourism Industry Council (TIC)</b> <i>Tourism Council Western Australia</i>	Occasional support provided to IOT tourism industry	Peak body for WA regional & industry tourism associations Membership-based, responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Industry representation</b></li> <li>• <b>Industry development &amp; accreditation</b></li> <li>• Industry events &amp; networking</li> <li>• WA Tourism Awards</li> </ul>
<b>Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO)</b>	-	<b>Destination Perth</b> Featured on DP's <b>marketing</b> website as one of the key destinations, easily seen from the homepage: <a href="#">Rottnest Island – Destination Perth page</a>
	-	<a href="#">Destination Perth Tourism Destination Management Plan</a> Tourism <b>development &amp; marketing plan</b> for Perth Region, with significant consideration for Rottnest Island
	-	Also provides a range of <b>toolkits &amp; resources</b> for tourism operators through its corporate website  <b>Support STO with interstate &amp; international marketing</b> <b>Connect STO with LTOs &amp; local businesses</b>
Non-tourism specific body	<b>IOT Regional Development Organisation (RDO)</b> <a href="#">2030 Strategic Regional Plan</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support sustainable growth and development, and improve <b>liveability</b> for our communities</li> <li>• Achieve reliable, competitive, &amp; cost-effective supply chains (freight and flights)</li> <li>• Support environmental &amp; sustainability initiatives</li> <li>• Develop regional capability</li> <li>• <b>Maximise</b> sustainable tourism growth potential for long-term business viability</li> </ul> <a href="#">Annual Business Plan 2024-2025</a> Top five key business activities for <b>upcoming</b> year Strategic Regional Plan focus area 5.1	



# Rottnest Island – Destination Perth (RTO)



## FREMANTLE & ROTTNEST: CONSOLIDATION TO REJUVENATION

Continuing to enhance and promote Fremantle and Rottnest as must-see destinations for visitors to Perth and Surrounds is key to increasing visitor expenditure, by extending length of stay. Continued collaboration between the Rottnest Island Authority, local governments (City of Cockburn, City of Fremantle, Town of East Fremantle) and local tourism organisations is essential for avoiding stagnation and achieving growth.

Fremantle, a historic and culturally rich destination, continues to attract visitors with its vibrant markets, heritage buildings, maritime history and unique atmosphere. Recent redevelopment efforts, such as the redesign of Bathurst Beach foreshore, significant hospitality venues at Victoria Quay, and the repurposing of heritage assets into unique hospitality and accommodation offerings, have successfully revitalised the city.

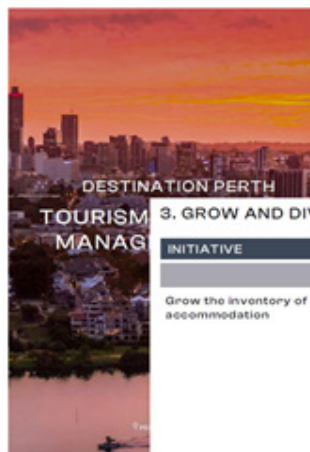
To maintain this positive trajectory, supporting the new investments with a well-planned calendar of events is crucial. This should include a balance of signature events, mid-tier events and regular local events to enhance the visitor experience and promote community involvement. Continuing to attract major cultural and sports events will help

to distribute visitation outside the city and further enhance the vibrant and unique world-class destination.

Identifying development opportunities to further emphasise Fremantle from its convict history to a Victorian and art deco era built visitor dispersal into the suburbs. Implementation of the Fremantle Master Plan (2022), which development of the harbour will enhance tourism amenity improved visitor access to the suburb. The relocation of Kwinana through the Westport opportunities to plan for the future. This should include tourism as a key industry in North Port, including developing accommodation and attractions. Government investment into precinct, including infrastructure Fremantle Port, will be critical enhanced tourism activities continued cruise ship arrival unique tourism assets in it will leverage the unique identity and support the growth and destination.



# Rottnest Island – Destination Perth (RTO)



## 2. INCREASE CAPACITY AND CONNECTIVITY TO SUPPORT ACCESS TO AND WITHIN THE REGION

INITIATIVE	PARTNERS	ACTION	SUBREGION
<b>ADDRESSING SUPPLY ISSUES</b>			
Pursue airport upgrades and additional air services to grow leisure visitation.	Perth Airport, State Government, TWA, Perth Airport	Support the implementation of the Perth Airport Master Plan, including the construction of a new runway, airport hotel, terminal upgrades, and consolidation of services at the Airport Central Precinct. Continue to pursue direct flights from identified source markets and build capacity on existing routes.	Perth City
Support upgrades to connectivity through transport infrastructure and signage to facilitate visitor dispersal.	LGAs, DfT, TWA, DP, DfT, LGAs, DBCA, PS, DP, TWA	Investigate the feasibility of new transport options such as mid-tier rapid transit to Scarborough, providing enhanced connectivity from Perth Airport to the coast. Develop consistent, brand-aligned wayfinding and signage that incorporates local heritage, stories and imagery of key attractions. Encourage private operators to establish transport services to and from the subregions including airport transfers and coordinated transfers/hours to tourism attractions from public transport hubs.	Sunset Coast Throughout region

## 3. GROW AND DIVERSIFY THE ACCOMMODATION OFFERING BY ADDRESSING GAPS AND PRIORITIES

INITIATIVE	PARTNERS	ACTION	SUBREGION
<b>ADDRESSING SUPPLY ISSUES</b>			
Grow the inventory of short stay accommodation	TWA, LGAs, DP, LTOs, DBCA, TWA, DBCA, TOL, ACL, PS, LGAs, RSA, PS, TWA, LGAs, PDC, PS, TWA, DBCA, Cof, PS, TWA	Encourage operators to renovate/renew existing accommodation offerings and seek the development of more diverse accommodation including eco, glamping, trail-based or farm stays. Work with Traditional Owners and the private sector to realise the development of accommodation offerings in and around national parks and reserves. Support the development of a range of additional accommodation on Rottnest Island as identified in the Rottnest Island Management Plan (RIMP) 2023-28. Seek the development of experiential accommodation (e.g. glamping, tiny houses and nature-based) offerings to support and activate the Dwellingup, Jarrahdale, Bibbulmun and Munda Biddi trail networks. Seek the development of a higher capacity branded hotel in Fremantle to address constraints and enable further opportunity for business events. Explore opportunities to plan for new waterfront short stay accommodation at Fremantle's North Port once freight operations are relocated through the Westport precinct.	Throughout region Fremantle and Rottnest Perth Hills, Peel Fremantle and Rottnest

# IOT RDO Annual Business Plan 2024-2025

Top five key business activities for upcoming year

1. Support the implementation of the independent critical review and analysis of the supply chain management model and system for the IOT; advocate for the recommendations for improvement; and monitor and evaluate to inform ongoing improvements.
2. Seek Australian Government commitment to engage in and co-fund a co-design process to develop a robust regional engagement framework with the IOT RDO and other key regional stakeholders; and engage external specialist consultants to support the development and implementation of the framework.
3. Explore holding a regional economic forum with key regional stakeholders in 2025 to discuss the barriers and challenges that are hindering sustainable economic development in the region, and to propose a prioritised pathway forward for the lessening or removal of these barriers.
4. Support the Shire of Cocos (Keeling) Islands to develop a Digital Action Plan that provides a baseline and forward plan for telecommunications, to achieve the best possible telecommunications outcomes for the local community.
5. For Christmas Island, develop a Digital Action Plan that provides a baseline and forward plan for telecommunications on the island.

? Tourism

# IOT RDO Annual Business Plan 2024-2025

Strategic Regional Plan focus area 5.1 – Build the visitor economy, while respecting social, cultural and environmental needs of the community and other key regional stakeholders

What will we do?	Anticipated role	Timeframe	Expected outcomes	Regional Investment Framework priority focus area	Funding required
Activity 5.1.1: Support efforts to improve experiences, lengthen the tourism season, and target higher yield tourists to build the visitor economy.	Contribute to	Jul-24 to Jun-25	Initiatives that improve experiences, lengthen the tourism season and target higher yield tourists to build the visitor economy in a sustainable way are implemented.	Investing in Industries and Local Economies - Investment to help activate economic and industry growth; Supporting the conditions needed for regional industries to diversify and grow.	No

# Rottnest Island – Rottnest Island Authority



# Rottnest Island – Rottnest Island Authority

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# Rottnest Island – Rottnest Island Authority



## KEY INITIATIVE

### 4.5 Manage Island Recreation

RIA will strategically manage recreational activities across the island's reserve.

RIA will ensure a range of opportunities and experiences can be enjoyed by all visitors, while minimising conflict between recreational user groups and providing a safe, sustainable, engaging, and positive visitor experience.

The dispersal and management of visitors in a site-specific context will enable RIA to preserve the environmental values of the island, while enabling visitors to engage with the environment.

#### Key Outcomes

- Strategic recreation management
- Improve management of specific island sites and their unique environmental values
- Increase sustainable recreational opportunities, while minimising user conflicts

4 STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA 2  
5 Deliver Sustainable Island  
Infrastructure and Services

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA 3  
Explore a  
Island's 3

RIA employs approximately 130 Full Time Equivalents (FTE) staff, based in Fremantle and on Rottnest Island, to manage and operate the island. The RIA Executive Director is responsible for reporting to the RIA Board and CEO.

## KEY INITIATIVE

### 5.5 Research Leading Tourism Island Operations

Whilst Wadjemup / Rottnest Island is unique in many ways, it also faces similar operational challenges to many other island tourism destinations. Gathering research and learning from other islands gives RIA insights into what initiatives work and what to avoid. Efficiencies and improved outcomes can be achieved from leveraging practices used by other island operators from the private and public sectors.

#### Key Outcomes

- Ensure island best practice
- Guide island investment based on leading tourism island demonstration sites and project outcomes

5.1 Value  
5.2 Build  
5.3 Upgr  
Com

5.4 Foster Strong Stakeholder Partnerships 43

## Arvid Hogstrom

### DIRECTOR, ENVIRONMENT, HERITAGE, AND PARKS

Arvid has spent more than three decades managing marine and terrestrial reserves, and has done extensive work overseeing the day-to-day management of the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Area, with a focus on joint management with traditional owners and the development and management of new coastal reserves. He has significant experience in working with tourism enterprises and tourism-based infrastructure in conservation estates, as well as overseeing conservation and land management programs.

	Christmas Island	Rottnest Island
<b>Visitor Information Centre (VIC)</b>	<a href="#">Christmas Island destination page</a> <a href="#">CI Visitor Centre – run by CITA</a>	<a href="#">Rottnest Island destination page</a> <a href="#">RI Visitor Centre run by RIA</a>
<b>Local Tourism Organisation (LTO)</b>	<b>Christmas Island Tourism Association (CITA)</b> Membership & government funded to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote &amp; market CI</li> <li>• Help facilitate the development of sustainable tourism</li> <li>• Represent the interests of CI tourism industry</li> <li>• Promote the interests of the Association &amp; its members</li> <li>• Provide visitor &amp; member services</li> </ul>	Rottnest Island Authority (RIA) includes LTO activities (see below)
<b>Non-tourism bodies</b>	<b>Shire of Christmas Island</b> <a href="#">Strategic Community Plan 2023-33</a> Tourism: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "This CITA aspirational statement concisely identified ten years ago the challenges and expectations that are remaining unresolved before the community today."</li> <li>• "In conclusion, without additional air connectivity, focusing in the first instance towards Singapore, none of the economic engines identified to transition from mining and immigration being tourism, high education and food/agribusiness can realistically be considered sustainable"</li> </ul>	<b>Rottnest Island Authority (RIA)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rottnest Island does not have a local council &amp; is administered by the state's RIA</li> <li>• Responsible for <b>managing the island</b> as a Class A Reserve for recreational purposes, maintaining &amp; enhancing the island as a <b>signature tourism destination</b> in WA</li> <li>• Six operational areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Visitor services</li> <li>o Marketing &amp; events</li> <li>o Contracts &amp; planning</li> <li>o Infrastructure</li> <li>o Environment, heritage &amp; parks</li> <li>o Corporate services</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <a href="#">Rottnest Island Management Plan 2023-28</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Community development plan with strong focus on tourism development</li> </ul> </li> </ul>