

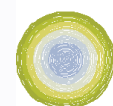
ECO



Indian Ocean Territory Sustainability Toolkit
Your everyday guide to becoming more sustainable | 2024



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA



ECO
TOURISM
australia

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We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing custodianship of the land, waters and culture for over 60,000 years. We pay our respects to them and their elders past and present. We are privileged to learn from them in the way we care for and share Australia's diverse nature and culture, and we strive to walk humbly in the footsteps of those who have walked these paths before us.

We would also like to acknowledge the multicultural diversity within the Indian Ocean Territory community and the importance of acknowledging and respecting all cultures.



Image credit: K Faulkner, Red Crab Migration
Christmas Island Tourism Association

Your Guide to Island Sustainability

Welcome to the Indian Ocean Territory Sustainable Tourism Toolkit, designed for local tourism businesses including accommodation, attractions, tours, cafes, restaurants, retail, transport, or visitor information centre. This is your easy reference guide on how to establish, grow and tell visitors about your involvement in sustainability initiatives on Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

HELLO



Background

Ecotourism Australia, in collaboration with the University of Queensland and Christmas Island Tourism, through Parks Australia funding, aim to strengthen sustainability in the Indian Ocean Territories and the local economy, through collaborative world-class Ecotourism. This project is an industry development program aimed at promoting global-standard sustainable and ecotourism business practices. The project's nature-based tourism approach will contribute to fortifying both the natural environment and the Indian Ocean Territory economy as tourism is an increasingly key economy contributor, and therefore increasing awareness and education is required for sustainable destination and tourism impact management.

Tourism on Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands has increased exponentially in the past five years. To continue to develop as world-class nature-based tourism destinations, it is important that nature-based tourism offerings are enhanced and expanded whilst continuing to protect the nature, community, and history of the island. The community culture and natural environment are the reasons visitors come to region, so it is our shared responsibility, as the tourism industry, to protect the product we rely on.

For example, on Christmas Island as transitions are made away from phosphate mining and the Christmas Island Immigration Detention Centre, and as visitation to the region grows so will the reliance upon the existing National Park and newly formed Marine Park for nature-based tourism activities. Whilst operators on Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands are already operating in a responsible and sustainable manner, this toolkit will help you to understand what it means to deliver sustainability to a global standard in your tourism business, contributing to positive economic, socio-cultural, and environmental impacts.

Purpose of the Toolkit

The toolkit is designed to help Christmas and Cocos 'tourism businesses become more eco-friendly. It is a practical guide that gives clear, simple advice to help operators respond to growing consumer demand for sustainable travel choices. No matter how big or small your business is, you can take practical steps to be more sustainable.

Our hope is that this toolkit will be an everyday guide that you can revisit, and that empowers you to contribute to shaping this region into one which is an incredible place to live and visit - for all creatures great and small and for many generations to come.



Visitors to Christmas Island
Christmas Island Tourism Association

It's important to know what is meant by 'sustainability' and 'ecotourism', and why it is important. This section will help you understand why it is crucial all tourism businesses play a role in protecting the destination visitors come to explore.

What does sustainability mean?

Sustainability is a broad concept that revolves around meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It encompasses responsible practices that address environmental, social, and economic concerns. In essence, sustainability aims to maintain a delicate balance between human activities and the natural world, ensuring the long-term health and well-being of both. This involves careful resource management, minimising environmental impact, promoting social equity, and fostering economic resilience. Whether applied to businesses, communities, or global initiatives, sustainability is about creating a harmonious and enduring coexistence between people and the planet, recognising the interconnectedness of environmental, social, and economic systems.

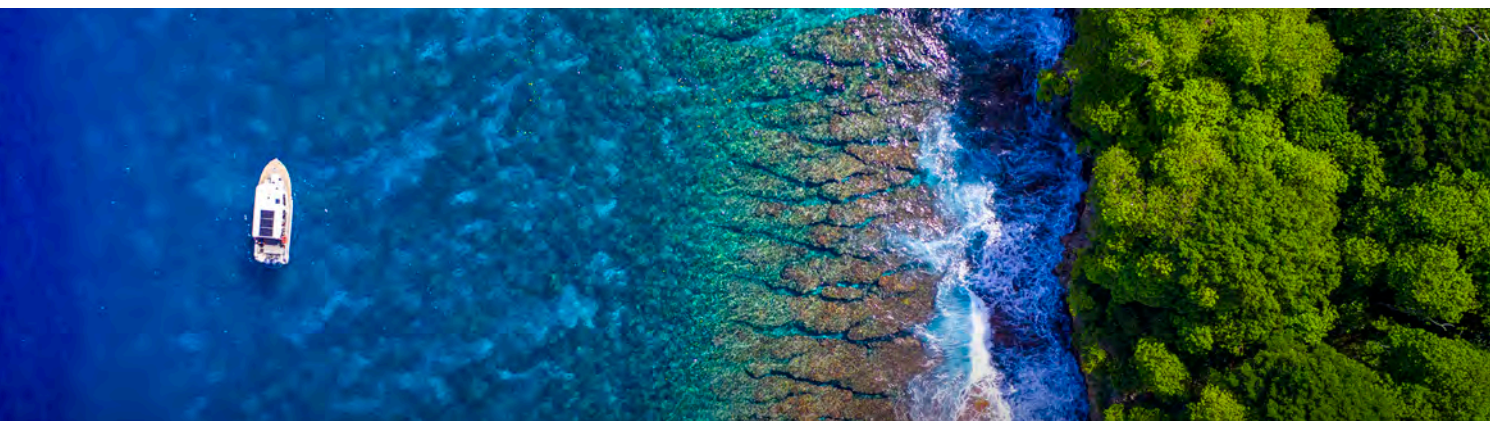
FAQ's

The 4 Pillars of Sustainability

- 1** **Sustainable management** requires a holistic and realistic vision for long-term sustainability and includes the maintenance of environmental, social, cultural, economic, accessibility, risk, and crisis management practices. As with all pillars of sustainability, sustainable management involves striving for continuous improvement.
- 2** **Socio-economic sustainability** ensures local communities receive maximum economic and social benefits from tourism activity. The tourism industry should facilitate decent and ongoing economic and entrepreneurial opportunities for communities and provide equal opportunity without discrimination for sustainable livelihoods.
- 3** **Cultural sustainability** involves recognition of who are the First Nations peoples and local community cultures of the place you are in, the authentic representation of Indigenous and local resident community cultures in tourism activities, and collaboration with those people, organisations, and stakeholders.
- 4** **Environmental sustainability** requires that the needs of the current population are met while ensuring resources are thriving for generations to come.

Ensuring environmental sustainability includes implementing environmental risk management practices, measuring emissions, and working to reduce them, sustainable sourcing, waste management and minimisation, energy efficiency, and nurturing any factors that surrounding natural environments depend on.

Measuring environmental impact is vital to ensuring operations are making a real difference. As Peter F. Drucker (known as the father of modern management) stated, *"If you can't measure it, you can't manage it."*



What is sustainable tourism?

Sustainable tourism goes beyond just enjoying travel; it involves actively protecting and restoring our natural environment while preserving Australia's unique wonders and cultures for current and future generations to enjoy. This approach seeks to create a tourism industry that not only brings economic benefits to communities but also contributes to the well-being of Australia. By fostering a profitable industry within your region, sustainable tourism generates employment opportunities, enhances the tourism experience for travellers, and improves the overall quality of life for the people living in your region. It's about finding a balance where tourism thrives, the environment is cared for, and local communities benefit in the long run, creating a win-win situation for everyone involved.

What is ecotourism and how does it relate to sustainable tourism?

"All ecotourism is sustainable tourism, but not all sustainable tourism is ecotourism."

Ecotourism Australia defines ecotourism as *"ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation"*. It aims to preserve the integrity of the destination and its focus is on conserving the local environment and historical heritage while supporting the culture and encouraging people to look after the natural resources that attract them to the region.



How does eco and sustainable tourism benefit my business?

Increasingly, visitors are demanding authentic, unique, culturally responsible, and environmentally sustainable experiences. Travellers don't just want destinations to say they are sustainable; they want them to demonstrate it. More and more research show a growing demand for genuine ecotourism and sustainable tourism experiences that align with travellers' conscious consumer values.

did you know?

- Global Sustainable Tourism Industry expected to hit \$11.4 trillion by 2032 ([Sustainable Tourism Market](#) report, Travel and Tour World, 2024)
- 74% of visitors are actively seeking sustainability when they travel (Booking.com, 2023 Report)

Eco and sustainable tourism bring significant benefits to the Indian Ocean Territories region, a haven for nature enthusiasts boasting rich biodiversity and unique geology supporting native and endemic flora and fauna. Spanning 85 square kilometres, Christmas Island National Park covers almost two-thirds of the island, emphasising the importance of preserving this natural wonder. Further to this, an additional 744,070 square kilometres of remote deep-water ocean and inshore reef and lagoon habitats, Christmas Island Marine Park, and Cocos (Keeling) Islands Marine Park are the two newest marine parks in the national network of Australian Marine Parks.

Businesses should embrace sustainability not just because it's good for nature but also because it's a smart move for business success. Tourism should protect the environment we rely on; after all, no tourists will come if it's not well looked after. Taking care of the environment, treating people fairly, and supporting the local community are key to ensuring long-term business success and resilience. Simple steps, such as fishing responsibly, promoting eco-friendly tourism, and reducing waste, can go a long way. By adopting these practices, businesses contribute to the health of the oceans, support local communities, and ensure shared benefits for everyone in the future. It's a way of progressing while responsibly safeguarding the incredible natural beauty that makes the Indian Ocean Territories and Marine Parks so special.



Canoe Safari, Cocosday
Cocos (Keeling) Islands Tourism

Who is Ecotourism Australia?

Ecotourism Australia is a non-government, not-for-profit organisation, established in 1991, that promotes and supports the ecotourism industry in Australia through building capacity and actively promoting sustainable tourism operations and systems. As the peak body for ecotourism and sustainable tourism we **connect**, **champion**, **inspire** and **inform** through strategic partnerships and global best practice standards.

Our key program – **ECO Certification** – was the world’s first national ecotourism certification program. Ecotourism Australia’s programs are acknowledged globally for our industry standards and recognised by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC).

At Ecotourism Australia we aim to empower you with the knowledge and tools needed to attain and showcase your commitment to sustainable tourism. From understanding the core principles of sustainability to implementing actionable strategies for your business operations and offering ongoing training and support.

we’ll help guide you through certification **every step of the way**

Existing ecological and sustainability initiatives and programs

Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands are already doing some incredible work around sustainability, habitat management and ecological preservation. Consider ways you and your business can get involved and support local efforts to protect this special region.

Continue reading to learn more about the great initiatives going on across the Indian Ocean Territories and the role everyone can play.

Christmas Island National Park staff are working hard to conserve the natural wonders of Christmas Island. They are collaborating with researchers, local government, and a range of other partners to control invasive species and rehabilitate the island's ecosystems.

Some of their conservation programs include:

Christmas Island Minesite to Forest Rehabilitation (CIMFR)

Program - Aims to restore previously mined land on Christmas Island, which has been heavily impacted by phosphate mining and invasive species. The program focuses on revegetating abandoned minefields with rainforest tree species to create biodiverse and resilient ecosystems that benefit native flora and fauna, particularly land crabs, endemic forest birds, and the critically endangered Abbott's Booby.

The program involves collecting seeds, propagating plants, conducting earthworks, and planting during the wet season. Maintenance is required for several years until a self-sustaining ecosystem is established. Since 2004, the program has rehabilitated approximately 128 hectares, planting over 375,000 saplings and 40,000 seedlings, contributing to the long-term conservation of Christmas Island's unique biodiversity. The replanted areas now host a variety of forest birds, red crabs, and robber crabs, increasing biodiversity and these rehabilitated zones aim to become prime nesting grounds for the endangered Abbott's Booby.





Blue Tail Skink
Cocos (Keeling) Islands Tourism

Threatened species breeding program - Parks Australia's most successful captive breeding programs, led by Christmas Island National Park staff, has saved Lister's Gecko and Blue-tailed Skinks from near extinction. The decline in these species, attributed to introduced predators, prompted the capture of Lister's geckos and Blue-tailed skinks in 2010 for a captive breeding program. The program has been hugely successful in boosting the numbers of these threatened reptiles with captive bred populations held at both Christmas Island and at Taronga Zoo in Sydney. While reintroduction to Christmas Island is hindered by predators, future translocations to Cocos (Keeling) Islands are planned. Parks staff run tours of the reptile facility once a week for tourists and visitors so they can learn about the program. They also run twice weekly seabird rehabilitation bird feeding tours so tourists can meet some of the islands threatened bird species.

Contact the National Parks office or the Christmas Island Visitor Centre to arrange a tour for yourself or your guests.

Yellow crazy ant biocontrol – The yellow crazy ants (*Anoplolepis gracilipes*) are a highly destructive invasive species, originally from unknown origins, spreading aggressively in tropical regions, proving highly aggressive in dominating food resources by out-competing other insects. They form super-colonies with no natural predators, posing a serious threat to local crab populations, especially red crabs crucial for the island's ecosystem health. Parks Australia and La Trobe University aim to control them through a new biocontrol method, addressing a critical need for Christmas Island's unique flora and fauna preservation.

Feral cat eradication - Feral cats are a major threat to many of Christmas Island's small native animals, including reptiles, the critically endangered Christmas Island flying fox and birds such as the Emerald Dove, Christmas Island Thrush and Red-tailed Tropicbird. Parks Australia is working with local council, businesses, community groups and the West Australian Government to eradicate feral cats on Christmas Island.

If you would like to find out more or get involved with the Christmas Island National Parks conservation efforts. Click [here](#).



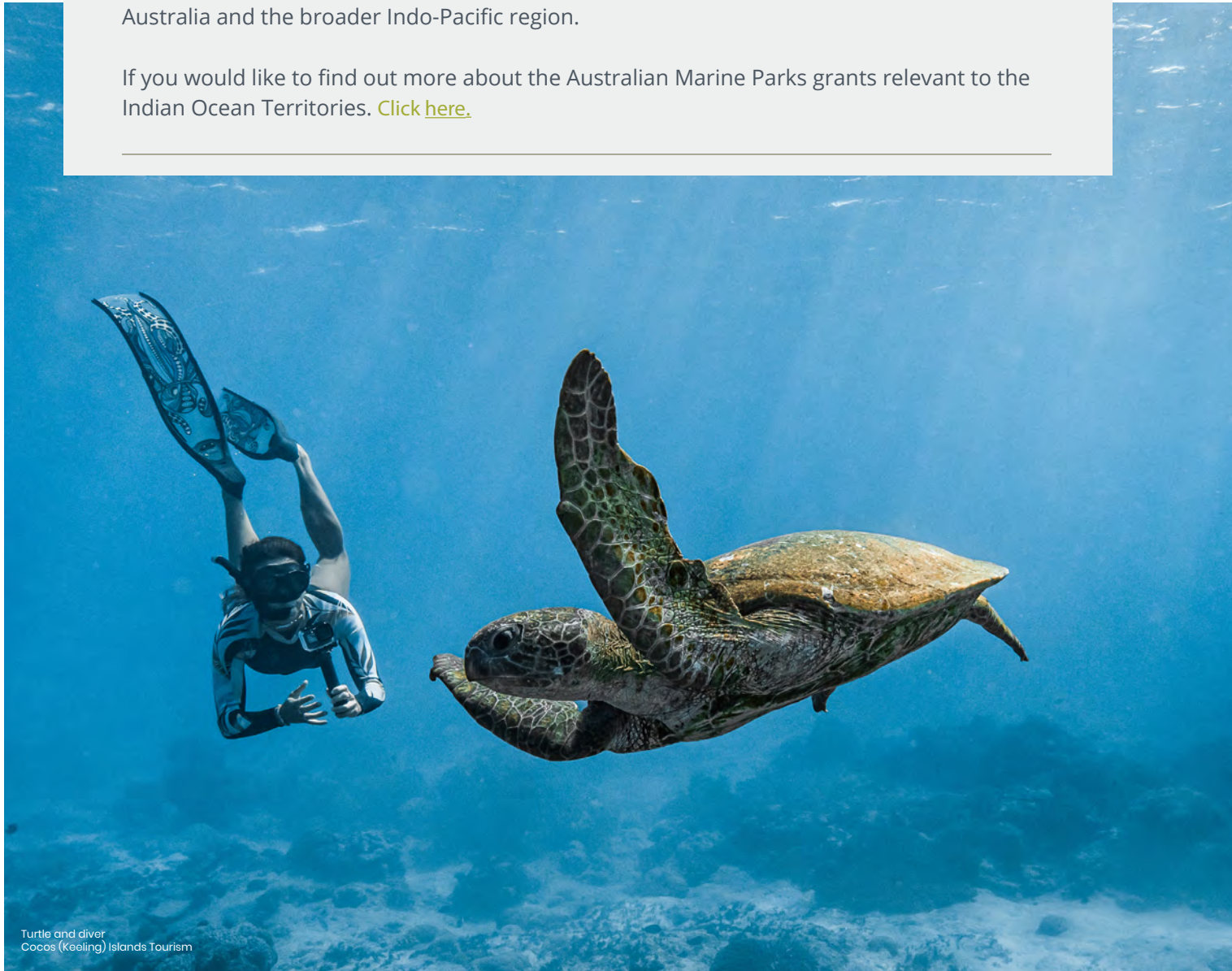
Image credit: Erica Harrison, Red Crab, Ethel Bevan, Christmas Island Tourism Association

Thanks to Australian Marine Parks government grants there is some great research being done in the Indian Ocean Territories Marine Parks. We have listed a couple below:

The Status of Resident Sea Turtles at Cocos (Keeling) Islands - This project lead by Biomarine International - Scott Whiting, will document the population and health status in the context of seagrass loss and potentially long-term habitat changes at this key Indian Ocean location. A team of multidisciplinary experts will use innovative techniques and technology to establish multiple lines of evidence for their current status. The results will inform local Custodians, park managers, the CKI Shire and various stakeholders, all of which highly value turtles as a prominent feature of CKI.

Coral Reef Survey and Taxonomy of the Indian Ocean Territories - The project lead by Queensland Museum will conduct a comprehensive survey of the coral fauna of the Australian Indian Ocean Territories to provide fundamental baseline data on the region's marine ecosystems, inform ongoing ecosystem monitoring, and to examine the distinctiveness of the Indian Ocean Territories' fauna compared to reefs elsewhere in Australia and the broader Indo-Pacific region.

If you would like to find out more about the Australian Marine Parks grants relevant to the Indian Ocean Territories. [Click here.](#)



Turtle and diver
Cocos (Keeling) Islands Tourism

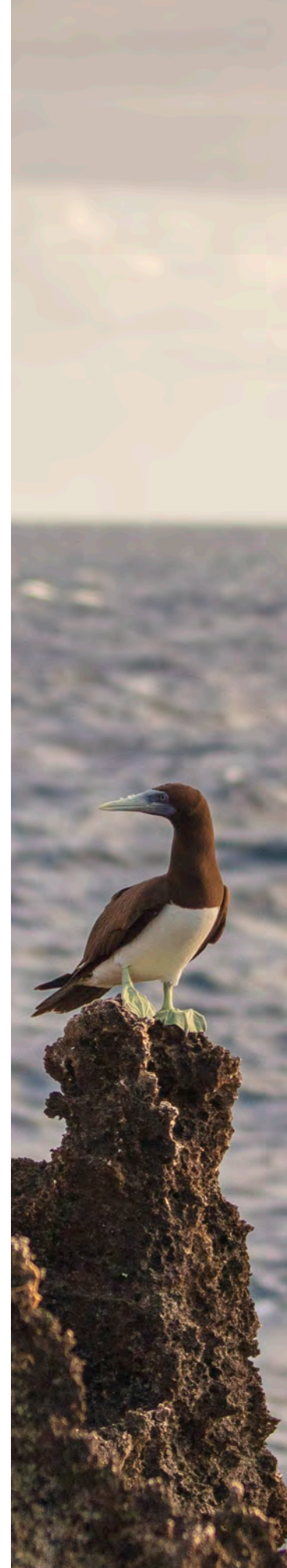
It's not just National Parks and Marine Parks that are playing a role, Christmas Island is home to some great community-led initiatives that support conservation and sustainability on the island. We have listed some below:

[Green Space Tech](#) – Provide fresh food for the Christmas Island community. They employ climate-controlled propagation techniques and utilise protected-environment hydroponic greenhouses to enhance the availability and quality of locally grown produce. If you are a restaurant or cafe and want to collaborate to bring fresh food to your tables, get involved.

[Eco Crab Industries](#) – Engage in various initiatives to assist Christmas Island in overcoming its plastic pollution issues. Efforts involve setting up recycling bins for plastic waste, conducting regular beach cleanups, and transforming collected plastic into useful recycled goods. The distinctive products they craft contribute to the community's ongoing endeavours in building a sustainable future. Have you got guests looking to purchase meaningful products made from recycled rubbish, look no further.

[Island Care Christmas Island](#) – Aim to preserve and protect the unique environment and encourage people to learn about, value and care for Christmas Island. They organise regular beach clean ups, and host events and information sessions for the community. Your visitors may like to consider contributing to their cause or participating in an event.

[Hidden Garden Sustainable Farms](#) – Is a project on Christmas Island, making strides in sustainable organic farming. Providing fresh, chemical-free produce, it addresses the island's food security issues. Founded on rehabilitated mine sites, it also contributes to waste management by converting organic waste into a valuable resource. The farm's growth has the potential to diversify the local economy, moving beyond phosphate mining. The project is committed to environmental sustainability, using organic techniques, and creating Bio-Vital™ compost from community-generated organic waste. It incorporates a mix of open-air row cropping, permaculture food forests, and flexible poultry systems. The farm plans to establish a trust fund for local community projects and contributes to the Shire's waste management strategy. Additionally, the project offers educational workshops, courses, and internships to promote permaculture and sustainable living.



There are several other organisations partnering with Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands to support them in their sustainability and conservation efforts.

[Sea Country Solutions](#) - Specialise in creating actionable solutions for complex ocean-related challenges, the team is experienced in social science, marine ecology, policy strategy, marine spatial planning, facilitation and community engagement. With an expansive network of leading scientists, policy advisors and communication specialists, they work with local communities, the not-for-profit sector, government, industry, and research institutions to help bridge the gap between traditional knowledge, science and policy to create effective, shared solutions.

The [projects](#) involve in supporting Cocos (Keeling) and Christmas Island are listed below.



Cocos (Keeling) Island

This project focus' on community-led initiatives for marine and fisheries management. Through comprehensive community consultations, marine park planning, seagrass monitoring, and collaboration with government agencies, the aim is to develop sustainable fishing regulations and conservation plans, particularly for the southern atoll, in partnership with Parks Australia.



Christmas Island

This project focus' on community-led efforts in marine and fisheries management. This involves conducting community consultations, planning marine parks, collaborating with government agencies to establish fishing regulations, and providing expert guidance to ensure sustainable and effective management of fisheries for the future.

[Tangaroa Blue Foundation](#) – is a nationwide non-profit dedicated to tackling marine debris, a significant global environmental concern. Through their Australian Marine Debris Initiative (AMDI), they mobilise volunteers, communities, and organisations to collect data on marine debris and develop solutions to address its root causes. The AMDI supports coastal communities with resources and programs while partnering with industry and government to drive systemic change. Their efforts extend to engaging communities in Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands through beach clean-ups and citizen science initiatives. [Read More](#)

If you are aware of any other great initiatives driving sustainability across Christmas or Cocos (Keeling) Islands, make sure you send information through the Christmas Island or Cocos (Keeling) Visitor Centres so that they can share the message with all of Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands operators and visitors.

How can I build a more sustainable business?

Sustainability is an ongoing journey, that will require changes to your practices to benefit the community and environment, while also ensuring the long-term viability of your business. Whether making substantial changes or small adjustments, the checklist below offers practical sustainability measures for implementation, whether short, medium, or long-term. Tick off completed actions, as you may be further along the sustainability journey than you think. Remember, there's no rush to address everything at once, but periodic check-ins can guide your next sustainability initiative.

Once you feel like you have done all you can on the checklist and are looking for more, we recommend Ecotourism Australia's Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard and certification programs, to receive recognition for your efforts and continue on your sustainability path, learning more as you go.

This checklist is divided into five major sections and features short-, medium- and long-term goals to strive for.

- 1 Business Management and Operational Planning
- 2 Environmental Management and Planning
- 3 Emissions Monitoring and Implementing Reduction Strategies
- 4 Waste Minimisation and Management Strategies
- 5 Community and Culture

CHECKLIST

1. Business Management and Operational Planning

Short Term

Customer satisfaction Collect customer feedback and reviews in multiple ways (through visitor questionnaires or monitoring trip advisor reviews)
Continuously monitor, respond to and act upon (positive and negative) feedback
Establish goals to improve your current level of customer satisfaction
Seek feedback from tourism professionals (e.g., operators, industry organisations), suppliers and staff.

Responsible marketing & communications Ensure accurate depiction of the products and experiences you offer (e.g. only use images taken of your experiences not from other locations)
Provide useful information about the natural and cultural environments in which you operate. Below are some examples of information you may like to provide to your visitors and customers:

Environmental examples:

- Indian Ocean Territory is one of 60 Australian Marine Parks
- Christmas Island has some of the biggest drop-offs in the world for free diving
- The Dales' is classified as a Wetland of International Importance by the Ramsar Convention
- Natural wonders like The Blowholes, Merrial Beach and Hugh Dale Waterfall
- Red Crab migration: timeframe, restrictions on travel and its significance
- There is a long list of endemic plants and animals only found in the Indian Ocean Territory

Cultural examples: The island has many culturally significant sites for the Chinese, Malay and Muslim communities. Islanders love a celebration, and being on the island for one of its many festivals is a memorable experience for tourists. Christmas on the island is an extra-special event as the island was named on the 25th December 1643. Other celebrations include:

- Chinese New Year
 - Vesak Day – Buddha's birthday
 - Hari Raya Puasa – marks the end of Ramadan
 - Hungry Ghost Festival
 - Moon Festival, plus [more](#)
-

Responsible marketing
& communications cont.

Highlight your sustainability initiatives onsite through signage, talking to guests and in your communications channels like your website, emails or social media.

For example, do you:

- Offset any of your emissions
- Choose energy-efficient equipment
- Support local within your supply chain
- Provide a shuttle service
- Use eco-friendly products
- Offer plastic-free options
- Have a no-print policy

If you have completed your Ecotourism Australia - [Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard](#), or [certification](#) are you displaying your certificate?

Ensure sustainable claims made in marketing and communications content are true and based on records of past performance (to avoid [greenwashing](#)).

Setting visitors' expectations before they arrive. You should be communicating to your guests the uniqueness of your destination and the challenges they may face before arriving. With the right information, including behavioural expectations, these can be turned into an opportunity for a unique experience rather than be seen as a negative. Some examples include:

- Indian Ocean Territory Islands are considered an international destination which means awareness is needed regarding passports, arrival, and departure details, as well as what is and isn't accepted in carry-on luggage. More information can be found [here](#).
- Due to the remoteness of the island everything is freighted which is expensive and deliveries can be irregular. Inform visitors about caring for the island by helping to minimise waste. For example: packing reusable bags, drink bottles and coffee cups for their stay and to be mindful when ordering at cafes and restaurants to avoid food waste.
- As there are currently no recycling facilities on the island visitors are asked to make considered choices about what they bring. Limit items that may need to be disposed of during their visit and/or consider taking recyclables back to the mainland on their return trip to dispose of appropriately.
- As a large portion of the food on the island is freighted in, it can be expensive and people with dietary requirements may find choices are limited. Make visitors aware they can bring certain foods (with fresh produce needing WA state receipt).

[More info here.](#)

Responsible marketing
& communications cont.

- As the Island has a culturally diverse community it is important to communicate to visitors about respecting and embracing cultural diversity by dressing modestly as a sign of respect for cultural sensitivities both when visiting cultural sites, and enjoying landmark areas and precincts, including the beach.
- As transport can be irregular on the island it is recommended visitors hire a car to get around the island. Visitors will need to familiarise themselves with petrol station operating hours to align with departures and refueling for car hire.
- A lot of places prefer cash, so recommend visitors have some on hand just in case.
- The island is Telstra connected and those on the OPTUS network or other providers will not get service. It is also running on 2G and therefore, there are many areas where good connectivity is not available. Ensure you inform visitors about this before they arrive so they can make alternate arrangements if necessary. Provide information regarding connectivity and onsite availability of Wi-Fi at the time guests are booking accommodation or services.

Medium Term

Accessibility

Respect and celebrate diversity by identifying barriers such as language and cultural differences to your guests.

Consider your physical environment and how this may or may not be suitable for visitors that have accessibility needs such as families with prams, those in a wheelchair or other limiting mobility challenges, sight or hearing impaired, sensory sensitivities etc.

Ensure meaningful participation by offering tours and activities suitable for all abilities.

Add an [accessibility statement](#) to your website and clearly identify accessible products in your descriptions as well as barriers (maps, photos and videos are useful).

Medium Term

Business planning

It is important for operators to have business processes and procedures documented to ensure business resilience. Are you prepared for someone to take over business operations if you need to step away from the business for a period of time? Documentation like this is also important if you are applying for bank loans, grants, or awards.

Develop business and operational plans and policies and review annually:

- Business Plan

- Marketing Plan

- Operational Management Plan (incl. HR, risk management and customer service standards)

did you
know?

If you are in one of Ecotourism Australia's [certification programs](#), you will receive templates for the above plans, kick starting your business planning and resilience building.

2. Environmental Management Planning

Short Term

Green Supplier Policy

Implement a green supplier policy that highlights your commitment to choose suppliers who are taking action to reduce emissions and/or waste. List your preferences of supporting local and businesses with ethical practices that align with your own. You can even include a procurement checklist to guide your purchasing choices.

Think before you buy – do you really need it? Can I buy this in bulk? Does the product have a reuse/multiuse compatibility? How will this be disposed of at end of life? Can I grow or make this myself?

Reduce packaging and transport miles by purchasing from local and sustainable businesses and brands such as Eco Crab Industries or growers in the region such as Green Space Tech and Hidden Garden Sustainable Farm.

Prioritise collaboration and seek partnerships with businesses that share your values. For instance, as a tour company, consider how you can mutually benefit from collaborating with another provider. Perhaps you can recommend each other's services to your respective clients. By working closely with like-minded partners, you can embark on a journey together toward shared success.

Medium Term

Staff Training

Nominate a passionate team member as Sustainability Officer. Form a Green Team or assign responsibility to key employees to set goals and drive new initiatives – like progressing through this checklist or completing the Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard. Include environmental initiatives and policies in staff induction procedures and training. Offer certified [ECO Guide training](#) for guides.

Environmental management plan (EMP)

Develop an EMP that documents your environmental goals, considers environmental risks, and ensures strategies are in place to minimise negative impacts to your business. Conduct an Environmental Risk Assessment of your operations and activities and implement strategies to reduce those risks on the natural assets (e.g., littering, site damage, reef mooring, wildlife disturbance, reef-friendly sunscreen, over packaging in supplies). Marine-based operators offering diving and snorkeling experiences should be aware of and adhere to the appropriate [codes of practice](#) and implement a compliance checklist. Involve staff in the development and implementation of sustainable practices and encourage them to provide feedback. Monitor your impacts and strategies on an annual basis and adjust if needed.

3. Emission Monitoring and Implementing Reduction Strategies

Short Term

Monitor & record emissions

Start compiling a list of where your business' emissions are coming from (water, waste, energy, travel (flights), fuel etc.) Use free online resources such as [Austrade Sustainability Toolkit](#) to ensure you have considered all areas.

Medium Term

Soft mobility

Offer bike, eBike and electronic mountain bike hire for guests or utilise the [Bike Kiosk](#) service.

Medium Term

Infrastructure & resource efficiency

Provide information about the challenges faced on the island (generators, no tank water) and how visitors can [reduce holiday emissions](#) including encouraging visitors to:

- Be water-wise by taking shorter showers, using the half flush button on the toilet, turning taps off while brushing teeth and making sure taps aren't left dripping
- Turn off lights/fans/air-conditioning when leaving their room
- Pack light and carbon offset flights
- Reduce food waste by only ordering what's needed

As an operator you can do the following to reduce emissions:

- Conserve energy by taking advantage of natural lighting and ventilation
 - Don't leave the air conditioning and lights on for guests on arrival
 - Implement energy-saving LED lightbulbs
 - Use energy efficient equipment/facilities check ENERGYSTAR-rated appliances
 - Add 3-minute timers in the showers to either switch off after 3 minutes or notify guests they have reached 3 minutes
-

Soft mobility

Short Term

Implement strategies to reduce your emissions across all business operations (see above examples)

Medium Term

Use a Carbon Calculator to track and calculate your emissions, making it easier to set emissions reduction goals in the future (e.g., Carbon Neutral, Neutral Together or Low Carbon Living)

Long Term

Consider offsetting the remaining emissions by investing in a CO2 reduction project (e.g., Greenfleet or Greening Australia) or look at local give back projects.

4. Waste minimisation & Management Strategies

Short Term

Reduce	<p>Avoid single-use plastics and polystyrene</p> <p>Encourage use of reusable cups and bottles (provide BYO incentive) or consider eco-friendly/compostable products and correct disposal</p> <p>Buy food and materials in bulk where available to minimise packaging and food miles</p> <p>Adopt a 'No print' and e-marketing policy in the office (e.g., electronic invoices and digital brochures where possible)</p> <p>Ensure all printed materials are printed on environmentally friendly paper (e.g., FSC certified paper) and actively encourage your guests to pass on print publications where possible.</p>
Reuse / Repurpose	<p>Provide reusable bags or water bottles for guests (e.g., provide or sell ecofriendly aluminium or bamboo water bottles with your branding on as a souvenir)</p> <p>Provide water stations for all customers and staff to refill their bottles and actively point out those publicly available on the island</p> <p>Encourage customers to pass on items for reuse at the end of their stay/tour</p> <p>Consider second-hand where possible (e.g., electronic equipment/furniture)</p> <p>Donate/ partner with food rescue organisations or CI Charities.</p>
Minimal wildlife disturbance	<p>Ensure operations do not involve alterations to any wildlife habitat</p> <p>Educate guests about the dangers of feeding wildlife (e.g., educational signage or posters)</p> <p>Encourage guests to take nothing but pictures – no wildlife feeding or touching</p> <p>Implement minimal disturbance measures (e.g., stay on tracks and walkways, avoid breeding sites, limit lighting where possible)</p> <p>Marine operators should be aware of and adhere to reef respect/protection, whale, dolphin, shark/megafauna interaction restrictions, reef mooring do/don't for vessels (locals and visitors alike)</p>

Short Term

Minimal wildlife disturbance cont.

Educate visitors about minimal impact behaviour, conservation, and biodiversity challenges in the area.

Adopt security and emergency procedures; ensure all staff are trained; adhere to guidelines for animal health, safety and wellbeing (e.g., ABTA guidelines).

Have guides trained in local species identification, get involved with recording data to assist relevant researchers and provide opportunities for staff and guests to participate in [citizen science](#) projects where appropriate such as programs running with Parks.

5. Community and Culture

Short Term

Local community support

Employ local staff and guides wherever possible

Buy from local businesses and support the local economy

Promote fellow local businesses and operators and look for collaboration opportunities (e.g., package tours with local producers or cross promote).

Engage in community events and conservation programs (e.g., beach cleanups, volunteering, seabird rehabilitation/bird feeding, The Pink House – reptile breeding extinction management).

Consider discounts to experience your products for locals, community, and school groups.

Medium Term

Cultural sensitivity & respect

Share stories of the island's history (e.g. <https://christmaslandstories.org.au/>)

Inform visitors about the culturally diverse community's respectful practices, cultural festivals, holidays, and traditions

Use reputable sources for cultural information

Support local artisans as suppliers and partners (street art tours, food diversity).

Cultural training

Complete a [cultural awareness training](#) course

Include cultural information and policies in staff induction procedures.

NEXT STEPS

If you have started ticking things off the above checklist. Well done! It's now time to take the next step.



The Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard, launched in 2022 by Ecotourism Australia with founding partner Tourism Australia, encourages tourism businesses to pursue sustainability. It's not a certification but a benchmark for improvement. Any tourism business, including cafes, restaurants, accommodations, and tour providers, can participate. Completing the checklist takes approximately a day and doesn't require perfection, progress matters. The scorecard showcases businesses strengths and provides insights into areas where improvement can be made, offering transparency and guidance to enhance sustainable practices.

Based on Ecotourism Australia's existing globally recognised certification criteria, the scorecard measures where a business or tourism operator is on their sustainability journey at a point in time. Businesses track their own operations against 50 criteria across the following four pillars of sustainability:

Sustainable Management
Environmental Impacts
Socio-economic Impacts
Cultural Impacts

If you are a business operating in the IOT region (Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands) you may be eligible for a complimentary scorecard thanks to a partnership between Ecotourism Australia, University of Queensland and Christmas Island Tourism Association as part of the IOT Marine Parks Grant. Places are limited, [click here](#) for more information.

Once you have completed a Strive for Sustainability Scorecard, scored well in key areas, and feel comfortable to apply for [certification](#), we would encourage you to do so. If you are still unsure speak with your scorecard coach for recommended next steps.

If you would like more information regarding the scorecard or the next step of certification. Phone (07) 3256 6777 or email sustainability@ecotourism.org.au and one of our certification specialists will be happy to assist.



Visitors to Christmas Island
Christmas Island Tourism Association

Christmas Island Tourism Association recently completed their Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard. Read the below case study sharing their experience:

Established in 1996, Christmas Island Tourism Association based at the Visitor Information Centre, serves as the island's tourism hub, providing essential information and products for visitors. With a focus on showcasing Christmas Island's natural beauty, diverse wildlife, and cultural heritage, CITA employs strategic marketing, events, and partnerships to enhance the visitor experience and boost the island's economy. Committed to responsible tourism, CITA collaborates with the local community to preserve the environment while steering the future direction of tourism on Christmas Island.

Ecotourism Australia, in collaboration with the University of Queensland and Christmas Island Tourism Association, has secured Parks Australia funding to strengthen sustainability in the Indian Ocean Territories and the local economy through world-class ecotourism. The initiative involves an industry development program, promoting global-standard sustainable practices, with an integrated marine science and nature-based tourism approach.

CASE STUDY

“Preserving the natural wonders of Christmas Island through sustainable ecotourism will not only safeguard precious ecosystems but cultivate thriving local economies and enrich the lives of the local community. Says Sarah Coote, Destination Marketing Manager, Christmas Island Tourism.”

The Christmas Island Tourism Association (CITA) plays a pivotal role in supporting this ongoing program, emphasising its significance by completing the Strive for Sustainability Scorecard. This step allows CITA to assess its position within Christmas Island’s sustainability pathway and reinforces its commitment to driving positive change in the region’s sustainable tourism practices.

Adopting sustainable tourism practices not only helps to meet customer expectations but also ensures your business has a greater positive impact on the local environment and community. The scorecard is an opportunity for businesses to develop continuous improvement to support long term business success.

“Sarah said, Completing the Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard has been a valuable tool for us to see where we are doing well and in what areas we can improve. I’d highly recommend that other businesses on Christmas Island take the opportunity to complete the scorecard.”

As part of the IOT Marine Parks Grant, Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands may be eligible for a free scorecard. If you’d like more information regarding starting your sustainability journey email sustainability@ecotourism.org.au or call 07 3256 6777.



Below we present insights from other businesses on their experiences with completing the scorecard and the benefits they derived from the process.

Phillip Island Nature Parks

Phillip Island Nature Parks let visitors access some of Australia's cutest and most elusive marine animals. But seeing the island's adorable little penguin population or one of Australia's largest Fur Seal populations isn't all about 'awws' and 'ahhs'. Every ticket purchase contributes to protecting these creatures through world-leading research.

Understanding the island's largest threats is vital to their 30-year conservation vision, so scientists can protect the island's vital ecosystems (and you can make those penguins a staple in your summer holiday).

Key takeaway from completing the Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard:

"Don't be disheartened if your first application doesn't make it," they stated. "Trust that it's a journey – but a worthwhile one. Becoming sustainable is financially viable, and it means a lot for consumers, customers, and stakeholders. Connecting with like-minded businesses can also help, as you swap and compare strategies, work together, and celebrate success."

Live Ningaloo

Fascinated by the blooming corals and the array of marine life in the world-renowned Ningaloo Reef, Murray Pattison and Sonia Beckwith founded Live Ningaloo in 2016 to offer guests an intimate swimming experience in the majestic ocean with whale sharks and humpback whales alike.

"Constant development and improvement when it comes to sustainability and regeneration are at the heart of everything we do, and to be able to communicate to our audience in a way that encapsulates our efforts in a format like the scorecard felt necessary," stated Live Ningaloo Operations Manager, Gigi McKercher.

The comprehensive report that comes with the scorecard provides Live Ningaloo with customised feedback, assuring them of their current effort in sustainability and delivering insights into how they can improve.

"Not just for Live Ningaloo, but for all businesses, this program highlights and celebrates the environmental successes that have been achieved, big or small, and presents them in a format in which the eco-conscious tourist can choose thoughtfully whether the experience is right for them. We feel that this program will provide another pathway for us to connect with and enrich our guests" experience with us.

Key Contacts

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Useful Weblinks

[Austrade Sustainable Tourism Toolkit](#)

[Australian Government Simple Guide](#)

[The future of Tourism Demand Report](#)

[Christmas Island National Park](#)

[Christmas Island Tourism Association](#)

[Cocos Keeling Islands Tourism](#)

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