

# Northern Territory's Tourism Industry Strategy 2030

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**Annual Report Card**  
2021-22





# 2030 Targets

## Tourism 2030

This is the third progress report on the NT's Tourism Industry Strategy 2030 (Strategy). It provides an update on targets, actions and priorities, as well as Tourism NT's response to COVID-19.

The initial targets were set for the Strategy in 2019. Since the release of the Strategy, COVID-19 hit the sector, resulting in unprecedented impacts on the global travel industry and across the Northern Territory tourism sector. Almost three years later, operating conditions for the tourism industry are beginning to recover and the changed market environment offers new opportunities for the Northern Territory tourism sector.

While the 2030 targets remain valid, the Strategy will be reviewed in early 2023 with consideration given to changes in the operating environment, the impacts of COVID-19 and the ongoing recovery of the tourism sector.

## Target measurements

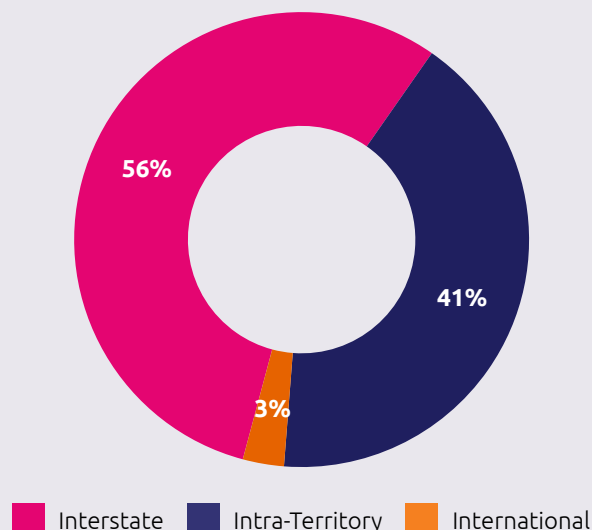
Growth in the tourism industry is measured in a number of ways; for example, by counting visitor nights, visitor numbers and visitor spend. Fundamentally, growth is driven by increases in tourism expenditure. Higher levels of tourism expenditure in the Northern Territory translates to income for businesses and jobs for workers, as well as a wide range of benefits for the broader community – including supporting investment in new infrastructure and enhancing liveability through new experiences and events.

Holiday visitors and spend are highlighted separately due to the agency's ability to influence visitation through its programs and the critical importance of these visitors to the tourism sector.

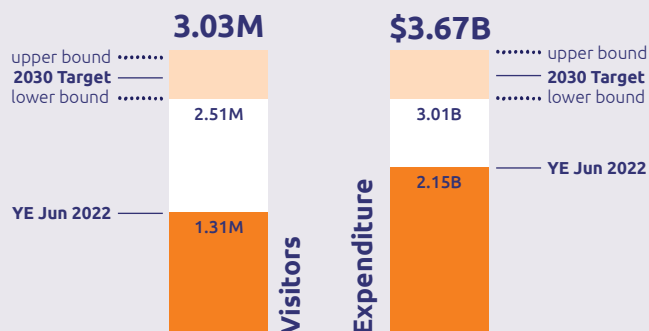


## Holiday visitation split by source

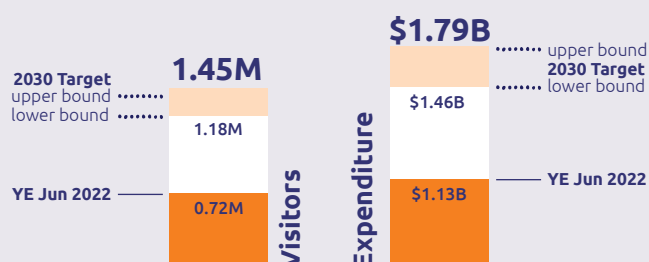
Year ending June 2022



## Total visitor\* targets



## Total holiday targets



Source: International Visitor Survey and National Visitor Survey, Tourism Research Australia, Year Ending June 2022.

\*Total visitor group includes all incoming overnight visitors to the NT.



## Achieving the Strategy target

The Northern Territory Government has a vision to deliver a \$40 billion economy by 2030 with a target of 50% renewables by 2030 and net zero emissions by 2050. Tourism has been identified as a priority industry, critical to growing the economy, attracting private investment, creating jobs and contributing to the Government's sustainability agenda.

The Strategy sets out targets for visitor arrivals and spend; the total overnight visitor arrivals to the Northern Territory are projected to reach between 2.51 million and 3.03 million by 2030, accounting for between \$3.01 billion and \$3.67 billion in expenditure. In terms of holiday visitors, targets are for between 1.18 million and 1.45 million holiday visitors by 2030, and \$1.46 billion to \$1.79 billion in holiday visitor expenditure.

Targets are set to reflect an annual growth rate of 4.1 per cent. While the actual growth rate for 2021-22 was 6 per cent, reflecting the beginning of the recovery from COVID-19, overnight visitors remain 33 percent lower than in 2018-19 (before the pandemic).

## Looking to the future

There is considerable work ahead to support tourism's rebound, with the upcoming 12 months focused on taking the Territory's domestic and global appeal to the next level through industry development activities and strengthening demand. The sustainability of our industry is a focus area and Tourism NT is working on a range of initiatives to make it easier for our industry and consumers to make sustainable choices. We will continue to support industry towards the Strategy objectives through the implementation of targeted grant programs to improve the visitor experience and drive the implementation of Tourism NT's suite of strategies and plans.

The sector is making a good recovery from the worst of the COVID-19 impacts. Tourism Research Australia forecasts that Northern Territory domestic overnight visitors will reach pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2023. Inflation across Australia, which rose 6.1 per cent annually over the 2021-22 year, appears to be having an impact on visitor expenditure with average spend per trip increasing significantly. The impact of inflation and cost of living pressures on visitation will continue to be monitored.

In the year ending June 2022 visitor expenditure reached \$2.15 billion derived from 1.31 million visitors, and by 2030 it is anticipated that visitor numbers will surpass 3 million delivering visitor expenditure of over \$3 billion to the NT economy.







# COVID-19 rebound and recovery

## Quick to market response

In response to ongoing COVID-19 outbreaks in southern Australia that were affecting leisure visitation to the NT in the second half of 2021, a number of tactical marketing campaigns were implemented to drive immediate visitation to the Northern Territory. Campaigns included the delivery of a national 'Seek Different' brand campaign and sector specific drive and events campaigns to further appeal to the domestic travel market and generate significant immediate demand for the Territory. Three national campaigns were brought forward from their initial start dates and ran from August to October 2021.

## Working Holiday Maker campaigns

Taking advantage of the reopening of Australian borders to international working holiday makers in early 2022, together with the relaxation of domestic travel restrictions, Tourism NT worked with Tourism Top End and Tourism Central Australia to deliver a dedicated campaign to attract short-term hospitality workers to the Northern Territory.

The Work Hard, Play Hard campaign targeted the youth market in Australia, partnering with The Job Shack NT, Territory businesses looking for workers were able to advertise vacant positions at no cost on [www.jobshacknt.com.au](http://www.jobshacknt.com.au).

As an added incentive, working holiday makers that secured employment in the tourism or hospitality sector via The Job Shack NT, may have been eligible for a \$500 NT Work Perks incentive, to be spent on a tourism experience in the Northern Territory. As at 30 June 2022, 157 workers had been placed in jobs across the Territory via The Job Shack NT portal.

The 'Holiday for a Living' campaign was launched in the United Kingdom in March 2022, to entice youth and potential backpackers. The campaign saw two phases; to firstly reintroduce the destination to youth travellers, then target travellers considering a backpacking holiday with compelling partner deals.

The campaign 'Dein Job:SpaB haben!' ('Your Job: A Great Time!') launched in Germany in March 2022

targeting youth and backpackers in Germany looking to visit Australia focusing on working holiday maker opportunities that the Northern Territory had on offer.

## THRIVE 2030

The national strategy for tourism and the wider visitor economy - THRIVE 2030: The Re-imagined Visitor Economy (THRIVE 2030) was launched on 25 March 2022. Tourism NT worked collaboratively with the Australian Government in the development of THRIVE 2030 to raise issues and leverage opportunities for the Northern Territory tourism industry, with a focus on areas that align to the NT Strategy.

THRIVE 2030 also offered opportunities for Tourism NT to work directly with Austrade to provide feedback and advocate for Northern Territory tourism workforce solutions at the Australian Government level during the year.

Via this advocacy key changes have included revisions to the Working Holiday Maker visa program, changes to international student working hours, and more opportunities for businesses to recruit workers via seasonal workforce attraction programs.

## Cruise industry restart

Tourism NT worked collaboratively across Government to plan and support the restart of the cruise industry. Small domestic expedition vessels recommenced sailing in Territory waters during the 2021 Kimberley cruising season.

From 17 April 2022 the Australian Government reopened the border to international cruise ships. Combined with a readjustment to the NT CHO Directions lifting the cap on passengers and crew to 350 persons, the first international expedition ship to return to Australia since the pandemic, *La Laperouse*, arrived into Darwin to recommence its Kimberley cruising season from 28 April.



# Tourism Comeback Plan

## Rebound and recovery – Territory Tourism Voucher Scheme

The Territory Tourism Vouchers were back for the 2021-22 year, with Round 4 of the Territory Tourism Voucher scheme offering travel vouchers valued at up to \$200 to fully vaccinated Territorians, redeemable on a dollar for dollar basis, which could be used on tourism experiences across the Territory. The round opened on 4 October and was available up to the end of January 2022.

The vouchers provided an incentive to support the tourism industry and experience the Northern Territory's great lifestyle, by encouraging Territorians to purchase bookable tourism products. To encourage bookings in all regions and spread the economic benefit, Territorians who travelled further afield were once again able to apply for an additional \$200 bonus claim.

Round 4 of the Territory Tourism Voucher initiative saw the redemption of 22,939 vouchers generating nearly \$9 million in gross sales to Territory operators, from a total of \$3.5 million invested.

## \$5 million interstate incentive scheme – NT Summer Sale

The NT Summer Sale returned from 1 October 2021 to 31 March 2022. The campaign offered fully vaccinated consumers \$200 off for every \$1,000 spent on a Northern Territory booking made through the campaign partners (up to a maximum of \$1,000 discount). Industry were encouraged to get involved and agents were encouraged to sell as many Northern Territory holidays as possible with an incentive offered.

Overall the NT Summer Sale delivered over \$4.9 million in Northern Territory booking value. Reduced eligibility for the scheme and reduced number of travel partners willing to be involved, given the additional complexity of the incentive, were contributing factors that resulted in a reduction of sales compared to the year prior.

## \$1 million to promote the Red Centre

The \$1 million allocation to promote the Red Centre as part of the Northern Territory Government's Tourism Comeback Plan supported the region through the promotion of compelling packages and reasons to include more of the Red Centre as part of the Territory itinerary. Activities included a dedicated national media focus on road trips visiting the Red Centre and events, media partnerships, dedicated cooperative sales partnerships with AAT Kings and NT Now promoting Red Centre travel packages and a major social media influencer activation promoting the Red Centre.

## Roadhouse to Recovery Round 2

The Northern Territory Government announced a \$5 million investment in the second round of Roadhouse to Recovery, providing remote and regional Territory roadhouses, wayside inns and caravan parks up to \$150,000 to improve their visitor experience. The Roadhouse to Recovery grant program was developed to improve the on-ground drive visitor experience in the Northern Territory and encourage visitors to stay in remote regions longer. A total of 39 remote roadhouses, wayside inns and caravan parks across the Territory collectively received \$4.9 million to upgrade their facilities.

## International Restart Support Fund

Tourism NT recognised the importance of tourism businesses getting back into the international market once international borders reopened. The Northern Territory Government provided a marketing support fund opportunity for Territory tourism businesses to undertake international promotional and marketing activities between March and 30 June 2022.

Support was provided in 3:1 grant funding to 16 businesses across the Northern Territory to implement an export plan, launch international online campaigns or undertake in-market visits to support the reopening or retargeting of international markets.



# Current visitor data snapshot

## Total visitor expenditure

**\$ 2.15 billion** ↑ 46%  
Expenditure from a total of 1.31 million domestic and international visitors

**1.31 million** ↑ 6%  
Total visitors

**7.1** ↑ **1.5 nights**  
Average nights

**\$1,642** ↑ 37%  
Average spend per person

## Domestic overnight visitors by type (towards target)



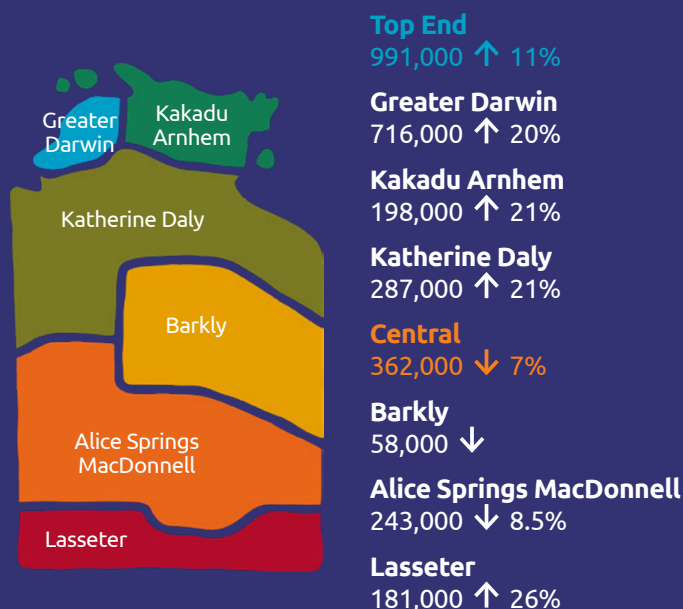
\*\*Other includes employment, education and other visitors for stopover reasons

## Regional recovery

Recovery in visitation has been strong across parts of the Northern Territory however it has not been experienced equally across all regions. The Top End experienced visitation recovery during 2021-22 with all regions experiencing an increase in visitor numbers.

Central Australia experienced a decline in overall visitor numbers, with Barkly and Alice Springs MacDonnell both recording a decline in visitation. Alice Springs has been impacted by the slow return of capacity in aviation and accommodation, with the Mercure Alice Springs Resort hotel not returning to the short-term market until August 2022 and key aviation routes in the Centre operating at lower capacity or yet to return.

## Total visitors by region



## Top Domestic Markets



**Queensland**  
Visitors 157,000 ↑ 3.7%  
Expenditure \$326M



**Victoria**  
Visitors 155,000 ↑ 143%  
Expenditure \$430M



**South Australia**  
Visitors 152,000 ↑ 82%  
Expenditure \$227M



**New South Wales**  
Visitors 117,000 ↓ 9.3%  
Expenditure \$309M



**Western Australia**  
Visitors 107,000 ↑ 127%  
Expenditure \$247M

# Achieving priority objectives

The NT's Tourism Industry Strategy 2030 strategic framework is designed to unite efforts across the public and private sectors, with priorities and actions targeted towards shifting the current performance of the tourism sector in the Northern Territory to one of sustainable growth. The strategic framework incorporates six priority

objectives that, if delivered, will make a material impact on the trajectory of tourism in the Northern Territory, and the below four pillars underpin the framework. The following is a summary (not exhaustive) of all actions taken towards achieving Strategy targets in 2021-22.

 **Marketing**

 **Industry development**

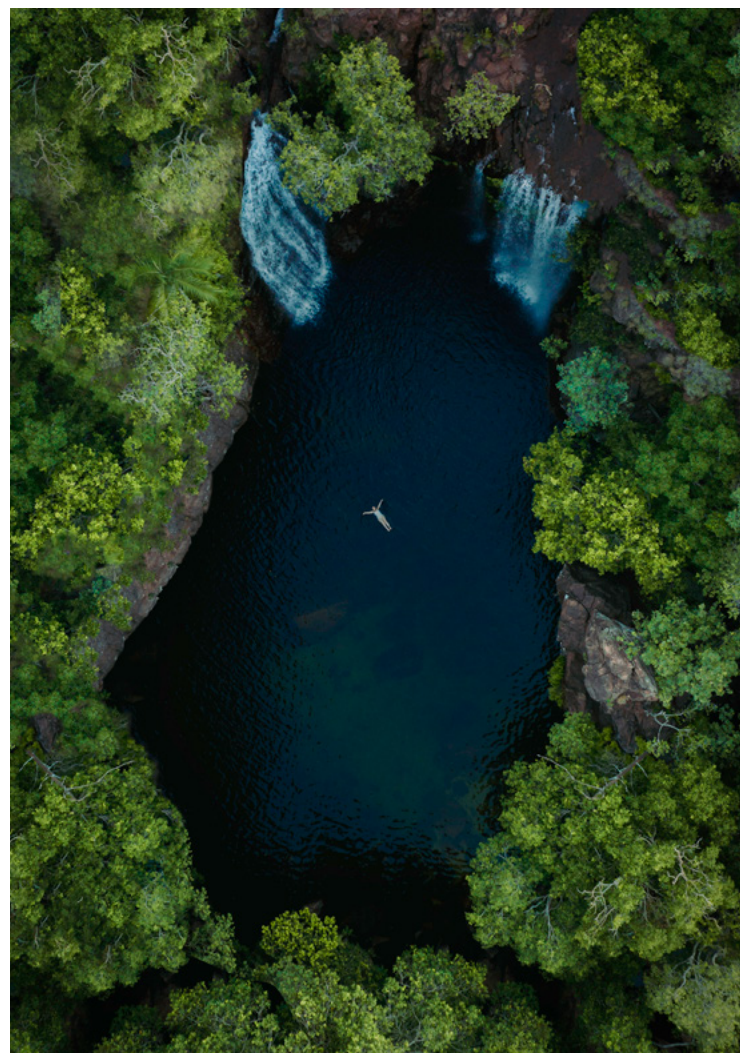
 **Workforce development**

 **Collaboration across industry and government**

## Grow investment in the Northern Territory's remarkable assets, product and regions

- More than \$1.5 million in grant funding was awarded to 54 Territory businesses through round 5 of the Visitor Experience Enhancement Program, with businesses providing a matched cash co-contribution to upgrade and improve their visitor experiences.
- Delivered the final two Destination Management Plans (DMPs) for the Northern Territory, being the Greater Darwin region and East Arnhem Land region DMPs.
- \$4.9 million awarded to 39 remote roadhouses, wayside inns and caravan parks across the Territory through round 2 of the Roadhouse to Recovery grant program which assisted businesses to upgrade facilities to improve the drive visitor experience.
- The Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security (DEPWS) launched the new online booking system for camping and multi-day walks in Northern Territory Parks, enabling visitors to plan visits and have greater certainty when camping or undertaking more popular multi-day walking trails.
- More than \$800,000 in funding awarded as part of the Territory Government's Tourism Town Standards Asset Program to assist regional councils to upgrade streets and visitor centres to improve the visitor experience.
- Supported 216 operators through the Tourism Business Development Program's seven pillar framework. In addition, 14 industry initiatives were delivered that supported 168 operators.
- More than \$168,000 in funding was awarded to Territory tourism operators to develop new evening attractions, supporting Northern Territory operators to develop new and/or seasonal tourism offerings that deliver tourism benefits to the regions.
- DEPWS opened Central Valley in Litchfield National Park to visitors, allowing campers direct access to enjoy spring-fed creeks for swimming and relaxation. The new infrastructure supports greater visitor dispersal within the Park and provides a drawcard for visitors to further explore the Park.

- New outback luxury accommodation, Finnis River Lodge, opened offering experiential accommodation, food and touring options easily accessible from Darwin.
- Following a competitive Expression of Interest process, the Northern Territory Government and Traditional Owners selected Australian Walking Company (AWC) to bring a new hiking experience to Watarrka National Park. AWC will design, develop and operate a multi-day experience in consultation with the NT Government and Traditional Owners.







## **Strengthen and showcase the Northern Territory's distinctive Aboriginal cultural tourism experiences**

- The Aboriginal Tourism Committee welcomed a new Chair, Mr Paul Ah Chee, and four Committee members.
- A dedicated Director Aboriginal Tourism was appointed in November 2021.
- The Aboriginal Tourism Committee engaged in six meetings, consultations and workshops, provided advice on the City of Darwin's tourism vision 'Discover Darwin' and the NT Parks Masterplan, and presented on the Aboriginal Tourism Strategy 2020 - 2030 at the Australian Indigenous Tourism Conference in 2022.
- Aboriginal owned and operated businesses and organisations received a total of \$331,871 from Tourism NT grant funds. This included the Aboriginal Tourism Grant Program round 3, which provided \$201,265 to 12 Aboriginal owned and operated businesses to develop and enhance their tourism interests and products.
- Released the first Northern Territory Aboriginal Tourism Strategy 2020 - 2030 annual report card and an Aboriginal tourism businesses in the Northern Territory factsheet, providing new data and insights on the sector to inform development opportunities.
- Small Business Champions and Workforce Development officers based in Darwin and the NT's regional towns continued to provide workforce development, start-up business information and access to support programs to Aboriginal businesses and Territorians.

## **Through strategic marketing activities, grow the value of the holiday and international student market in the Northern Territory**

- Implemented a number of tactical marketing campaigns to drive immediate visitation to the Northern Territory, including a national 'Seek Different' brand campaign, drive and events campaigns, social media influencer activities and a number of cooperative partnership sales to incentivise immediate visitation.
- Stimulated visitation recovery by developing a national brand campaign, encouraging Australians to reconnect with family and friends in the Northern Territory.
- Hosted the 2022 Symposium for Leading Education Recruitment bringing together international education

agents and industry which included coordinating and hosting a three-day Top End familiarisation tour and a Territory international education and training showcase.

- Delivered campaigns focused on drive, events, tour promotions, working holidays, international students and youth to create further demand.
- Partnered with six major media productions including The Bachelor, The Living Room, The Today Show, Studio 10, Reel Destinations and Mamamia to distribute the Northern Territory's unique offerings in an engaging manner to a mass audience.
- Reinstated international marketing campaigns with major trade and airline partners to increase demand, convert travel and support the re-establishment of international air routes back into the Northern Territory.
- Implemented personalised always-on awareness and conversion marketing activity, resulting in a 122% visitation increase to [northernterritory.com](https://northernterritory.com), an increase of 296% in leads to Territory tourism operators and a 49% increase in digital banner leads to trade partners (airline, online travel agents and holiday packages) from those dreaming of or planning an NT holiday.

## **Leverage and build events to drive visitation**

- Launched two national event marketing campaigns during 2021-22, encouraging domestic travellers to take a trip to the Territory and raise awareness of the Territory's different and immersive events.
- Leveraged NT Major Events Company (NTMEC) events including BASSINTHEGRASS through inviting Australian media publications and six social media influencers to showcase the Top End's experiences, attractions and Darwin's largest music festival to their extensive following; and conducting two competitions to promote the event.
- Competitively attracted business events to the Northern Territory, receiving 67 applications through the NT Business Events Support Fund.
- NTMEC delivered Million Dollar Fish, offering anglers from across the country the opportunity to catch a barramundi worth a million dollars. Season 7 included the biggest pool of prize money in the history of the competition, with a record-breaking number of fish caught across the Top End.
- Secured two significant international association events, the World Aquaculture Society and World Community Development conferences, for Darwin, scheduled in 2023.





## Develop ongoing access to and within the Northern Territory

- Following ongoing advocacy from the Northern Territory Government and Tourism Central Australia, funding for the sealing of Mereenie Loop Road was announced in 2021-22.
- Supported development of a Qantas Embraer 190 (E190) staff base in Darwin which is expected to create up to 200 Territory jobs.
- Developed the Tourism Town Standards guidelines to provide direction for local governments on requirements to improve town presentations and enhance the visitor experience for the drive market.
- Delivered a dedicated Drive Tourism Strategy which identifies key product and marketing opportunities and aligns to opportunities and initiatives in the six regional DMPs.
- Launched the Northern Territory Cruise Tourism Strategy 2022-2025, which reflects emerging trends in the cruise industry prior to COVID-19 and the steps to be taken over the next three years to regrow the industry.

## Governments, all industries and the general public recognise the value of tourism to the Northern Territory

- Hosted the Northern Territory Brolga Awards for Tourism Excellence, attended by more than 250 guests including 42 entrants.
- Delivered October Business Month events on 'Creating Advocacy through Review Responses' which offered an opportunity for the tourism industry to learn more about the importance of consumer satisfaction in relation to business operations.
- Hosted the third Tourism: Towards 2030 conference, in April 2022, in Darwin and Alice Springs. Presenters delivered market insights, national perceptions, industry trends, encouragement and practical advice to the tourism industry.
- The Tourism NT Industry Sentiment Poll for the June quarter 2022 showed that Northern Territory operator sentiment for both their business outlook and regional outlook was positive for the next 12 months.
- Northern Territory tourism operators secured two gold, one silver and one bronze award at the Qantas Australian Tourism Awards held on the Sunshine Coast in March 2022.

- Monitored the consumer satisfaction of the NT tourism industry through ReviewPro, a platform which analyses online reviews and collates data. Annual reports to NT operators deliver online reputation performance and insights. Key data sets are also shared with industry partners.
- Supported the 2022 Top Tourism Town Awards, promoting the awards via social media, industry newsletters, regional tourism organisations, the Local Government Association of the NT and direct correspondence to stakeholders. NT towns were encouraged to submit entries to demonstrate the value of tourism to their town in one of three population based categories.

