

Please quote: CTS 16775/22
Contact officer: Mr Ed Hopper
Contact phone: 3333 5321



Department of
Tourism, Innovation and Sport

12 October 2022

[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email to the Honourable Tanya Plibersek MP, Australian Minister for the Environment and Water. As the Action Plan for Tourism Recovery *Towards 2032: Reshaping Queensland's Visitor Economy to Welcome the World* (the Action Plan) sits within the portfolio responsibilities of the Honourable Stirling Hinchcliffe MP, Minister for Tourism, Innovation and Sport and Minister Assisting the Premier on Olympics and Paralympics Sport and Engagement, your letter has been referred to my office for consideration and direct response.

The independent Tourism Industry Reference Panel released the Action Plan in June 2022 after 12 months of industry engagement and research. The concept of a visitor levy is one of the 75 recommendations made by the Panel.

Specifically, the Panel recommended legislative change to provide local governments with the ability to implement a visitor levy guided by key principles including visitor pays; revenue raised to be used for tourism purposes; and locally determined charges. The visitor levy concept was proposed to the Panel by some stakeholders as a possible option to provide more sustainable funding to promote and develop tourism across the state.

The Queensland Government is considering the Panel's recommendations to develop a full government response, alongside the next long-term tourism industry strategy for Queensland, set for release in late 2022. While there is no clear or firm consensus across industry on a visitor levy, the Queensland Government is open to further conversation and examination of industry proposals around the concept, and such a discussion and analysis would be evidence-based and informed by consumer expectations.

The Action Plan also highlights the growth potential in nature-based tourism experiences, identifying sustainability as a key catalyst for change along with key opportunities to 'accelerate ecotourism'.

The Queensland Government supports ecologically and environmentally sustainable ecotourism within protected areas in Queensland, acknowledging that ecotourism projects must be delivered responsibly and in partnership with Traditional Owners and environmental regulatory authorities.

The Queensland Department of Environment and Science (DES) is the agency responsible for the management of Queensland's protected area estate and must ensure all ecotourism development on protected area, including the Cooloola Project you noted in your correspondence, is undertaken in a manner which is consistent with the requirements of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* and ensures the protection of key protected area values.

The Cooloola Project is being jointly delivered by the Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport (DTIS) and DES under a policy framework to guide ecotourism development in national parks, comprising the Ecotourism Facilities on National Park Implementation Framework and Best Practice Ecotourism Development Guidelines. More information on the department's requirements for ecotourism development on national parks, including copies of these documents, can be found at parks.des.qld.gov.au/management/ecotourism/about-ecotourism-on-parks.

Projects such as the Cooloola Great Walk Ecotourism Project focus on:

- Protecting culture: working with local Traditional Owners to ensure trails and new ecotourism opportunities are designed to provide an Indigenous cultural experience
- Preserving and presenting natural assets: assessing any proposals against State, National and World Heritage environmental frameworks and creating new revenue streams for the Queensland Government to maintain national parks
- Future-proofing regional communities: creating sustainable employment and business opportunities for Traditional Owners and regional communities.

I encourage you to consider the more detailed information on the Cooloola Project, including frequently asked questions, ecological studies undertaken to date, history of the site selection process undertaken by the department, and proposed impact avoidance and mitigation measures, on the DTIS website at www.dtis.qld.gov.au/tourism/qld-ecotourism-trails/cooloola-great-walk.

I trust the above information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Hopper
Acting Director-General