

McKINLAY SHIRE TOURISM PLAN

FIVE YEAR ACTION PLAN 2018-2022

November 2017

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the plan is to guide tourism development and destination management for the next five years, to help ensure the long-term viability and sustainability of this vital sector for the McKinlay Shire economy.

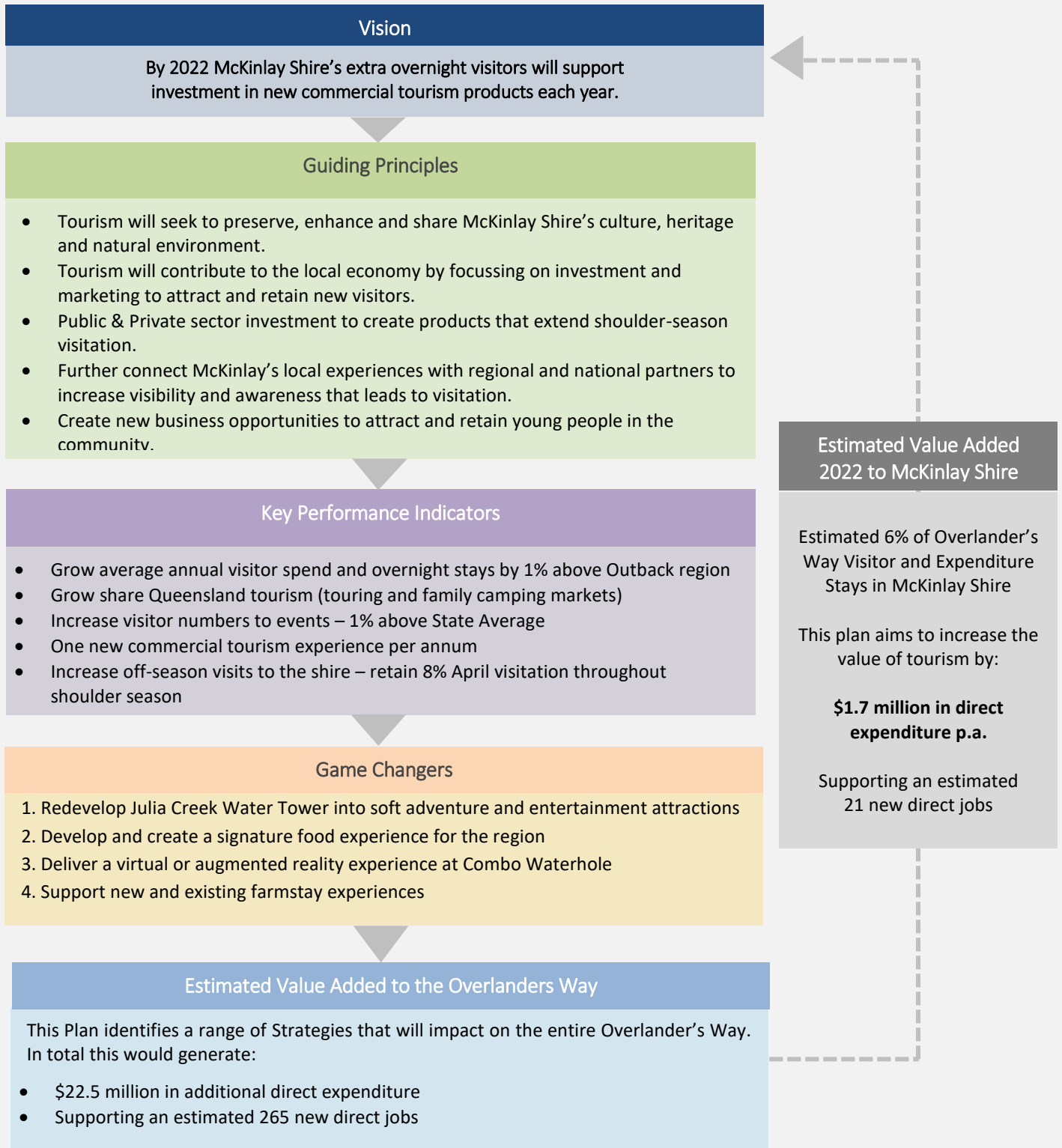


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Disclaimer

The information and recommendations provided in this document are made on the basis of information available at the time of preparation and the assumptions outlined throughout the document. While all care has been taken to check and validate material presented in this report, independent research should be undertaken before any action or decision is taken on the basis of material contained in this report. This report does not seek to provide any assurance of project viability and EarthCheck accepts no liability for decisions made or the information provided in this report.

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1. SETTING THE SCENE



About The McKinlay Shire

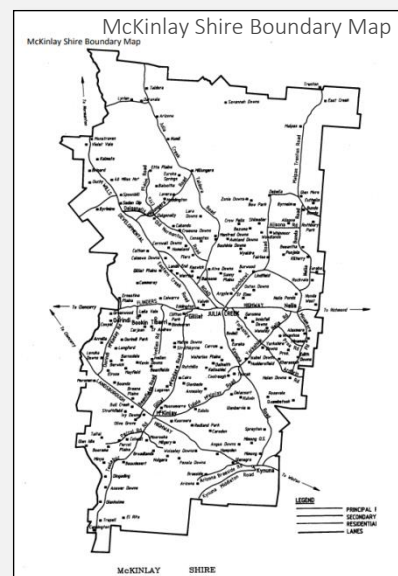
McKinlay Shire is ideally located across the two main drive routes in Outback Queensland, the east-west Overlanders Way (Townsville to Tennant Creek) and the north-south Matilda Way (Cunnamulla to Karumba). Once the floor of the inland sea the region is an emerging palaeotourism destination, rich in heritage the Shire is home to Combo Waterhole where Waltzing Matilda was penned as well as the famous Walkabout Creek and Blue Heeler Hotels and has become synonymous with the Dirt'n'Dust Festival. The unique landscape, a mix of Gulf Plains and Mitchell Grass Downs bioregions it is also home to the endangered Dunnart.

The major service centre, Julia Creek, is approximately 7.5 hours from Townsville and 2.5 hours from Mount Isa, seeing an average of 170,000 visitors passing by each year between Townsville and Mount Isa. McKinlay Shire covers an area of 41,000 square kilometres which has traditionally been known as a sheep and cattle grazing Shire. The economic activity in McKinlay Shire has changed over the last two decades with the identification of mining deposits (McKinlay 2010; South32 n.d).

The Shire is home to just over 1000 residents who welcome up to 12,650 visitors per year through their main attraction, the Julia Creek Visitor Information Centre¹.

In the Tourism Development Plan for McKinlay Shire², the potential for tourism to make contributions to the livelihoods of residents is evident. This potential is currently being explored in the form of various infrastructure projects being progressed, including:

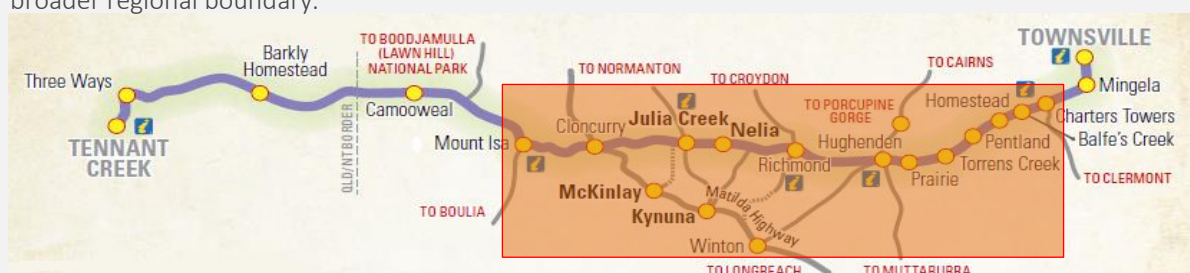
- McKinlay Shire active recreation infrastructure projects (Water Park in Julia Creek, tennis courts in McKinlay and Julia Creek, playgrounds in Julia Creek and Kynuna).
- Artesian Spa baths at the Caravan Park
- Kev Bannah Oval Amenities
- Burke Street Shade Structures Tent City
- Julia Creek RV Site Shovel-Ready Masterplan
- Purchase of the Dirt'n'Dust Festival Site
- Julia Creek Events Venue Precinct redevelopment



Investments in tourism related infrastructure such as these not only provides the impetus for increased attraction for visitors, but also provides new opportunities for local residents in the use of and management of these facilities. With new businesses opening in the town, confidence in future growth and investment is high.

Overlanders Way Tourism Statistical Region

Due to the small sample size of the main tourism statistical sources (the National and International Visitor Surveys), a larger sample area is required to obtain reliable data. The 'Overlanders Way Statistical Region', shown on the map below, brings together the responses of visitors to the Charters Towers, Flinders, Richmond, McKinlay and Cloncurry Shires. All tourism data provided in this report uses this broader regional boundary.



¹ Julia Creek VIC DATA

² www.mckinlay.qld.gov.au/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=7489dabd-feca-4e68-a31d-fc28e6a54aa2&groupid=17564

Current Tourism Offering

Connecting the Matilda and Overlanders Ways, the McKinlay Shire offers drive tourists timely facilities, good hospitality, and an award winning visitor information centre (VIC). The Shire is a popular stop offering self-drive 'grey nomads' an RV Friendly Town in Julia Creek, with many facilities including a library, newsagents, grocery stores, and other retail outlets, medical facilities, and police station.

The Shire is home to the Julia Creek dunnart (*Sminthopsis douglasi*), a small, endangered marsupial. Currently there is no active breeding colony; however Council is actively working to re-establish the species. Meanwhile the Julia Creek VIC displays fat-tailed dunnarts for its local visitors. The Shire hosts a number of events throughout the year, attracting local, regional, and state participation. These include the Dirt and Dust Festival (April) which offers an impressive schedule of events including a triathlon, horse races, bull ride and concerts. Other large events include: Saxby Round-Up, Sedan Dip, McKinlay Races, Julia Creek Campdraft and Julia Creek Races.

Julia Creek

- Julia Creek VIC
- McIntyre Museum
- Spirit of the Lighthorse Sculpture
- Julia Creek Caravan Park
- Free Cruiser Bikes
- Julia Creek Picnic Area
- Peter Dawes Park
- Julia Creek Water Tower
- Julia Creek Nature Trail
- Julia Creek Historical Walk
- Gannons Hotel
- Julia Creek Hotel
- World War II Bunkers
- Opera House
- Julia Creek RV Friendly Site

Kynuna

- Blue Heeler Hotel
- Kynuna Roadhouse
- Combo Waterhole

McKinlay

- Walkabout Creek Hotel
- McKinlay Roadhouse
- Queensland's Smallest Library and Tourist Centre
- Maronan Station Fossicking

Nelia

- Brolga Statues
- Corella Creek Country Farm Stay

Shire-wide

- Bird watching
- Sedan Dip (Fishing and Sedan Dip Races, Rodeo and Campdraft)
- Fishing (seasonal)
- Punchbowl Waterhole
- Gemstone Fossicking (Garnets)
- Dunnarts and local Wildlife
- Sunsets

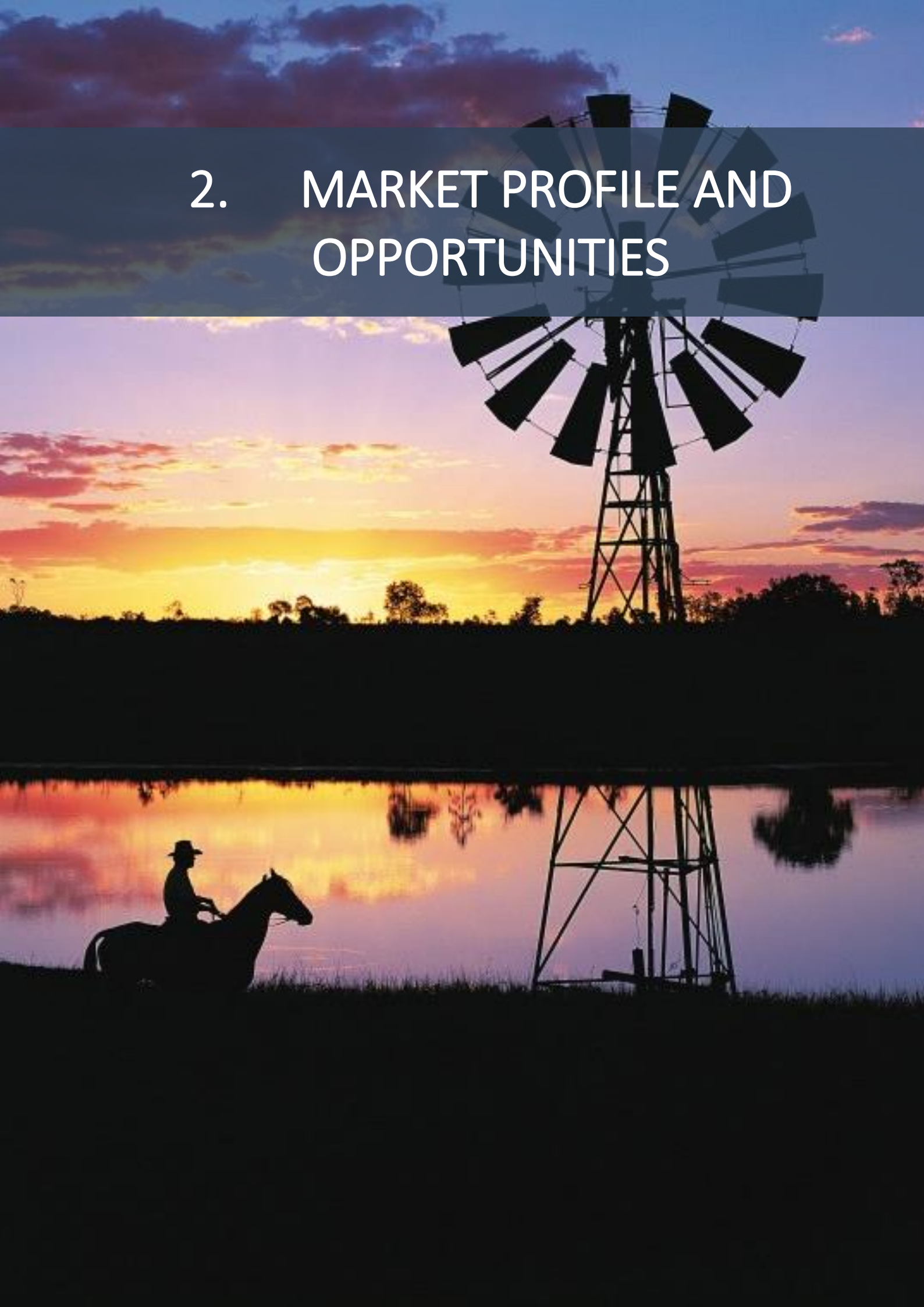
Events

- Australia Day Celebrations
- Julia Creek Dirt n Dust Festival & Artesian Express Races
- Julia Creek Campdraft
- McKinlay Races
- Saxby Round-Up (Rodeo, Campdraft & Gymkhana)
- Julia Creek Turf Club Races x 4
- Sedan Dip Weekend (Races, Rodeo, Campdraft & Gymkhana)
- Julia Creek Pony Club
- Town VS Country Rugby League
- McKinlay Shire Challenge
- Cultural Capers

Current Tourism Development Projects

- Spas at the Caravan Park, the Waterpark and Playgrounds
- Airstrip upgrade
- Investment Attraction & Innovation Hub
- Support OQTA and Overlanders Way
- Mobile ready upgrade 'atthecreek' website
- Town entry beautification / signage
- Review of the role of the Visitor Guide and its distribution
- Selfie spots around the region
- 'Events pole' with dates and locations (Sedan Dip and Dirt'n'Dust, etc.)
- Business Support Programs (Storytelling)

2. MARKET PROFILE AND OPPORTUNITIES



Tourism Strategy

From the key documents the following points should be considered:

- Tourism is a key part of the future economic growth and diversification of the region;
- Greater collaboration and private sector involvement is needed in tourism in the Shire;
- Tourism can play a valuable role in bringing the community together;
- Access infrastructure that supports tourism will also support the community and the broader economy;
- Events play a major role in tourism in the Outback and will continue to be a focus;
- Growing the family market with new experiences is an opportunity;
- Supporting innovation and new ideas is vital to tourism and economic success; and
- A focus on unique experiences must drive the Strategy.

Marketing Strategies

Two strategies, which are not government policy, but are important in the discussion of tourism in the McKinlay Shire are the Overlander's Way Marketing and Development Plan 2017-2020 (under development) and the Queensland Drive Tourism Strategy (2013-2015). These documents are outlined below.

Overlander's Way Marketing and Development Plan 2017-2020

The Overlander's Way Marketing and Development Plan is currently under review. Its current aims are to support the communities located along the Flinders Highway, also known as the Overlander's Way. Specifically, the plan aims to:

1. Increase **Awareness** – Build awareness of the Overlanders Way, the communities and opportunities with existing target markets
2. Enhance Tourism **Appeal** – Use modern technology to attract new visitors and stimulate a desire to travel the Overlander's Way



3. Establish **niche market** travel – Encourage new special purpose travel markets to travel the Overlander's Way, visiting appropriate attractions

A core aspect of the Marketing approach to promote stops along the way is the use of the Overlanders Way website. The site contains a wealth of knowledge for potential and current touring visitors, particularly those who fit into the 'Drive Tourism' market, as outlined in the Queensland Drive Tourism Strategy presented next.



Queensland Drive Tourism Strategy³

The Queensland government developed the Queensland Drive Strategy to support the regional cities and towns which rely on the drive tourism market. Consideration of infrastructure including rest stops, accommodation and information centres complement the obvious review of existing road transport systems. The acknowledgement from the State government level for the significance of drive tourism to regional centres is a great support mechanism for McKinlay Shire and surrounds.

³ <https://publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/queensland-drive-tourism-strategy/resource/16d57308-6772-481a-b96b-283a9401b96b>

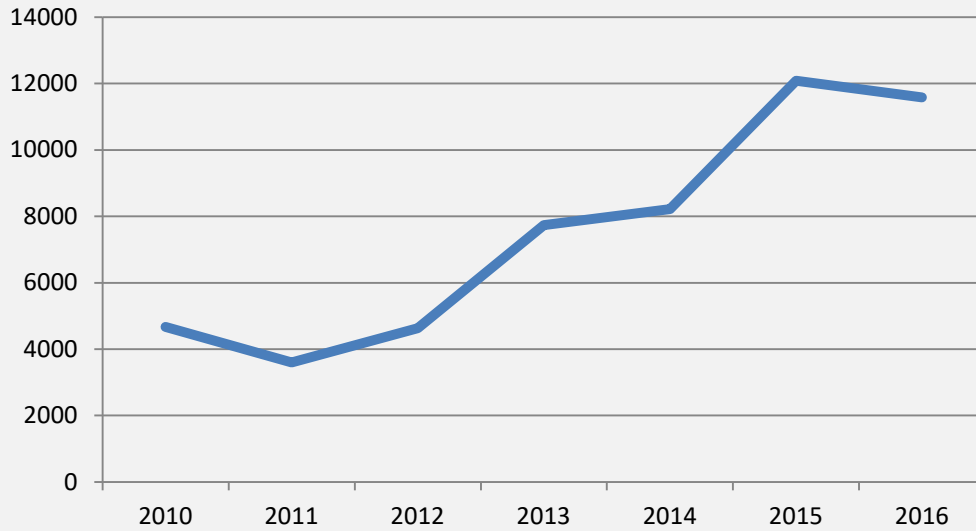
Visitor Information Centre Statistics

The following data is drawn from visitor surveys undertaken between the year 2010 and 2016 at the Julia Creek Visitor Information Centre situated in the town of Julia Creek.

Visitation

In the Year ending June 2016, the McKinlay Shire Visitor Centre received over 12,651 visitors in total, representing 3% of the total visitation to Overlander's Way⁴. The Visitor Centre has experienced an average growth rate of 38% per annum over the last 6 years.

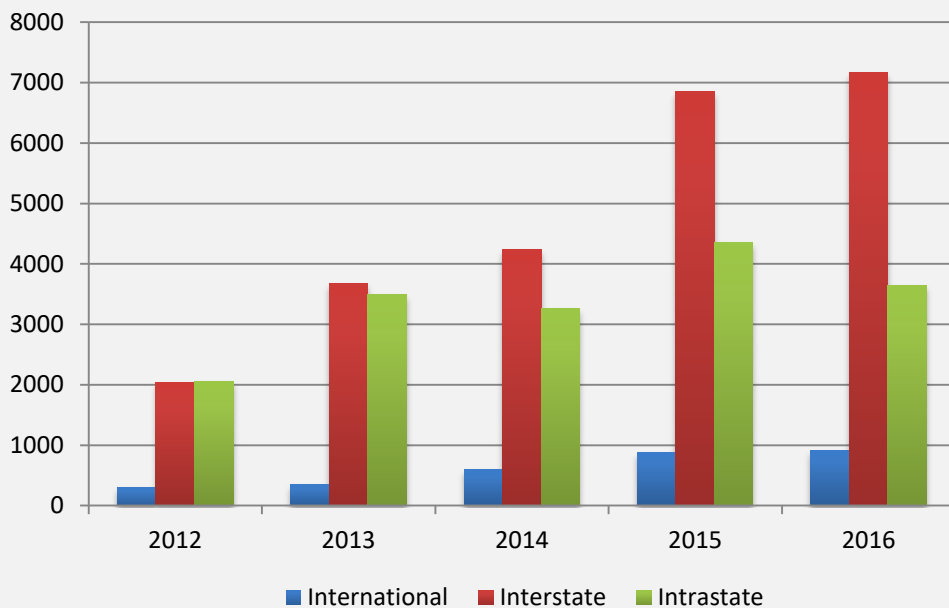
Figure 1 Yearly Visitor Numbers



Visitor Origin

The VIC data suggests Interstate visits represent two thirds of total visitation to the region (61%) with visitors from within the state corresponding to half of this (31%). Interstate visitor numbers have experienced a staggering 63% average annual growth over the last four years (2012-2016).

Figure 2 Visitor Origins 2012-2016

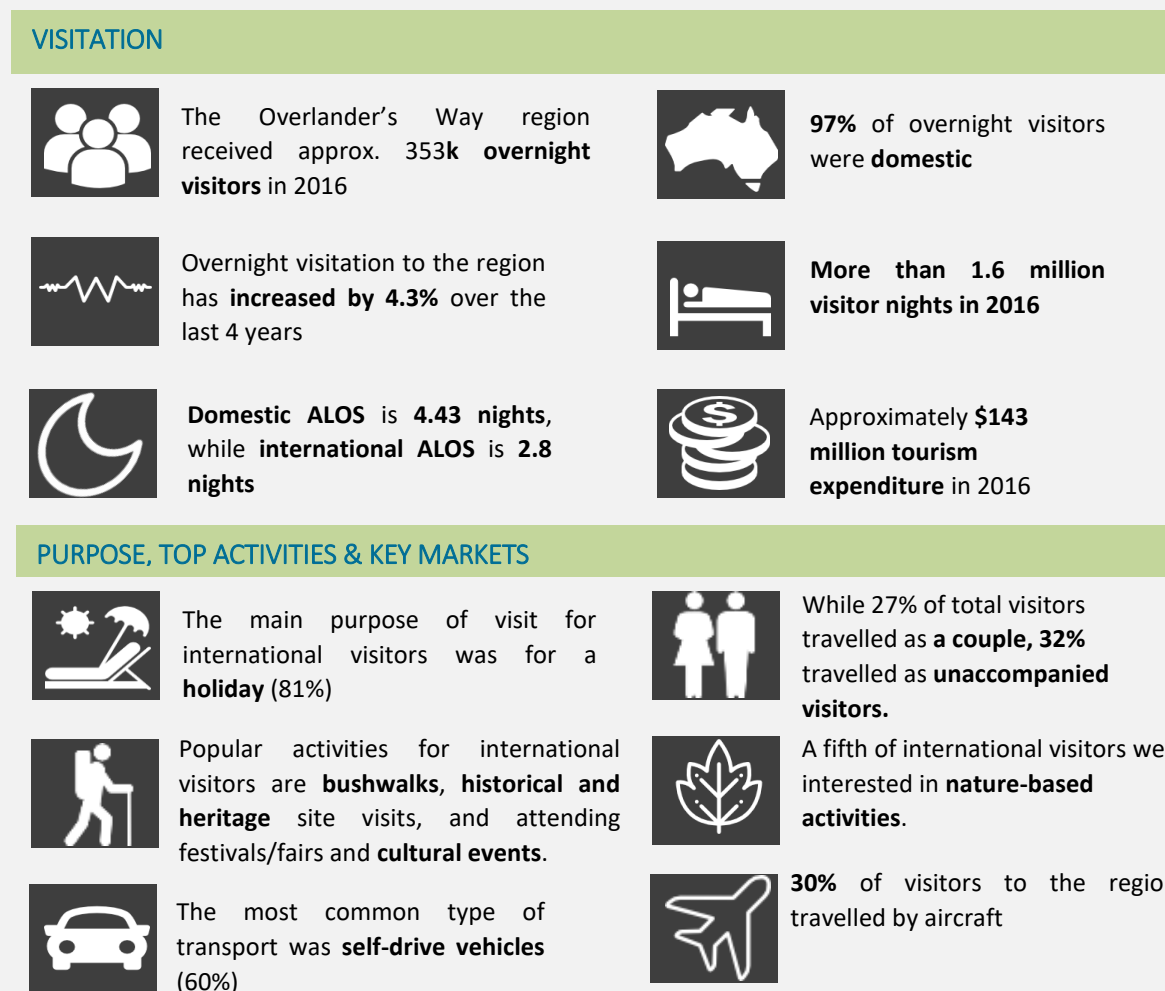


⁴ Julia Creek VIC, TRA (YE 2016)

Visitor Summary

Due to the small sample size of the McKinlay Shire region, it is assumed that the distribution, patterns and trends would follow those of the Overlander's Way as a whole⁵. The following summarises key visitor trends and profiles for Overlander's Way consisting of the Mt. Isa region, McKinlay Shire, Richmond Shire, Flinders Shire, Charters Towers and Dalrymple areas, for the year ending December 2016.

Figure 3: Overlander's Way Visitation Summary



Visitation

In the Year ending June 2016, the Overlander's Way region received over 372,000 visitors in total, of which the majority (95%) were domestic overnight visitors representing an average growth rate per annum of 7%. In the 2016/17 financial year, intrastate visitors from Queensland to the outback accounted for 22.9% of all domestic visitors, while there has been an increase in visitation from both New South Wales and Victoria, with the states contributing 31.1% and 24.7% respectively⁶. The Overlander's Way region received less than 1% of QLD's total visitation in 2015/16 however visitation to the area has grown more than twice as much as Queensland over the last 6 years (See figure 3).

⁵ For the purpose of this part of the Discussion Paper, the sample size of that data for McKinlay Shire in the National and International Visitor Survey is too small. So a 'region' has been created linking the communities west of Charters Towers to east of Cloncurry (which includes McKinlay Shire) to create a region we are calling the Overlander's Way for the purpose of this report.

⁶ TEQ Outback Regional Snapshot YE 2017

Target Markets

The approach set out in the following section of this report is based on the premise of growing the economic contribution from a selection of target markets above the 'business as normal' Tourism Forecasting Committee forecast by achieving a shift in the McKinlay Shire's capture of its target markets (referred to as 'shift share'). Other target market expenditure and visitation is based on growth continuing at TFC rates.

If McKinlay Shire achieved the goal share shifts in the Drive Tourism, Cultural and Sporting Events, Culture and Heritage, and Family Camping Markets by 2022, the region could attract an **additional \$1.7 million of visitor expenditure above TFC growth rates.**

In order to continue to strategically grow the value of tourism to the McKinlay region, target markets, Touring and Family, have been identified. These markets have been recognised through extensive review of market research and industry consultation, selected on the basis of attributes such as; market size, time and length of travel, yield, and fit with McKinlay visitor experience.

Family Market

The family market consists of visitors **with children** travelling for the purpose of a **holiday or visiting friends and relatives**. They are **self-drive** visitors travelling in **cars, caravans,**



RV's or mobile homes with overnight stays in **caravan parks, camp sites or roadside.**

In the year ending March 2017 the Overlander's Way region received **around 20,868** family visitor nights, with 22% of the Outback market share.

The family market represents 3% of the region's total visitor's numbers. Last year it brought over **1.9 million** in expenditure to the region.

Touring Market



The touring market consists of visitors **without children** travelling for the purpose of a **holiday or visiting friends and relatives**. They are **self-drive** visitors who may

travel to **multiple locations** in **cars, caravans, RV's or mobile homes** with overnight stays in **caravan parks, camp sites or roadside.**

In the year ending March 2017 the Overlanders Way region received around **121,000** touring visitors' nights. The market represents 11% of the region's total visitor numbers. Last year the touring market brought over **\$10 million** in expenditure to the region.

Images courtesy of familyvacation.com; dailymail.com

4. VISIONS, GOALS AND KPIS



Tourism in the McKinlay Shire has the potential to become a new employer for the region. Five iconic projects will be the driver of success, along with a focus on boosting the awareness of the Overlander’s Way and the growth of events.



Tourism Trends

The Queensland Government has established an ambitious target to grow visitor expenditure to \$30 billion by 2020. With Queensland's drive tourism opportunities, combined with its cultural and natural assets as a strong competitive advantage, capitalising on these aspects will play an important role in achieving the 2020 ambition. Through the delivery of quality tourism experiences, McKinlay Shire is extremely well positioned to increase its share of domestic visitor arrivals and expenditure and potentially increase the international visitor market share.

Key growth areas in Australia for drive and family tourism

Accommodation – Camping and Caravans

- 11.7 million Caravan and camping overnight trips Australia-wide.
- 88% of grey nomads (55+ drive tourists) travel to rural Australia
- A growing family market.



Heritage and Cultural tourism

- 2016 total visitor expenditure in heritage activities was \$14.3 million.
- This figure is forecast to grow 63% in the next 5 years.
- 21% of visitors to the Outback engaged in heritage activities.



Festival and events – Sports and culture

- Events play an important role in drive and family tourism and supporting local economies.
- The Dirt and Dust Festival is one of the most 'googled' terms related to the region.



Adventure Tourism Activities

- According to Adventure Travel Trade Association's 2016 Adventure Travel Snapshot, 40% of adventure travel tour operator clients are aged between the ages of 50-70.



Rural Tourism

- Rural tourism encompasses all forms of tourism that showcases the rural life, art, culture and heritage of rural locations.



Goals and Performance Measures

The following Goals and Key Performance Indicators have been developed to successfully monitor McKinlay Shire's tourism direction in the next 5 years in order to meet the established 2022 targets.

Goal 1: Drive value before volume

Overnight Stays

Growing at an estimated 3% per annum, the Overlander's Way is predicted to reach over \$443,000 overnight visitors by 2022.

These estimates are based on the latest growth rate for domestic tourism by Tourism Research Australia's Tourism Forecasting Committee, drawing on a range of factors that include the health of the source market economy, access and competitive forces. These however are only estimates, and should be treated as conservative forecast estimates or as 'natural growth'.

KPI #1- Overlander's Way to grow average domestic overnight trips by 2%. If the region were to shift annual growth to **4%** per annum, Overlander's Way could generate an additional **\$8.1 million** in Overnight visitor expenditure by **2022**.

Spend

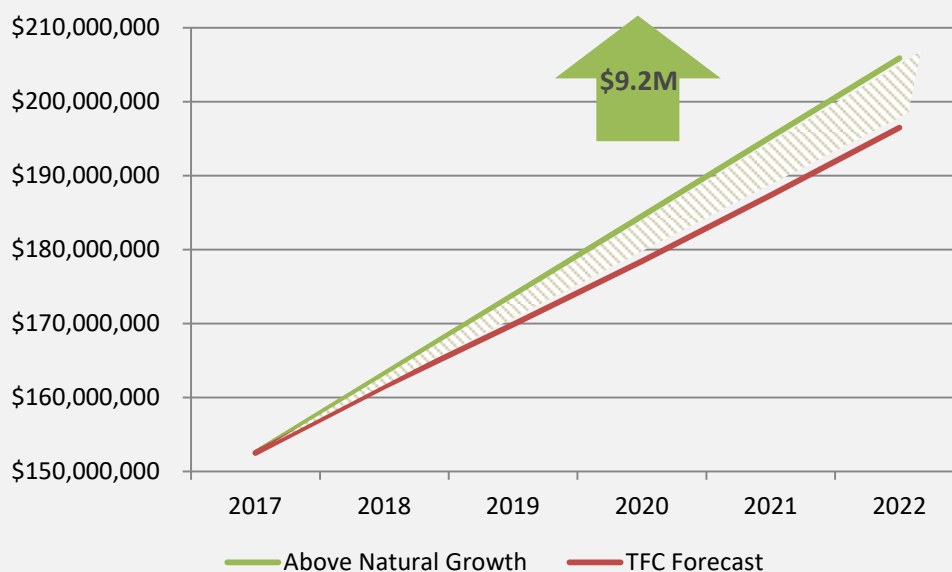
Increasing the value of tourism is not only based on increasing the number of visitors and nights to the region, but also increasing the value of tourism through higher spend from visitors. The goals for visitor spend per night for overnight visitors follow Tourism Forecasting Committee's (TFC) forecasted growth rates⁷.

Following TFC's visitor spend growth rates, in 2022 overnight visitors to the Overlander's Way would spend an average of \$100 per night (up from \$89.8 in 2017).

KPI #2- Overlander's Way to grow spend per night by 1% above forecast growth. If the region were to shift annual growth to **7%** per annum Overlander's Way could generate an additional **\$9.2 million** in tourism spend by 2022.

⁷ TFC forecasts are estimated national growth rates

Figure 4 TFC forecast growth vs 7% Goal



Food Tourism

Food tourism is one of the strongest travel trends globally and there is a national objective of developing a positioning for Australian food and wine to strengthen the tourism offering and tap into the global food and wine trend. Food and Wine are a key factor in holiday decision-making and the most important emotive trigger closely followed by world-class beauty⁸.

GAME CHANGER PROJECT #1: A Signature Food Experience

McKinlay Shire’s rural ties with the Outback provide a great opportunity to develop food and drink as an experience area.

It is recommended that the Shire identify and work with celebrity chefs and/or food experts to develop and create a signature dish for the region that will leverage a well-known culinary strength such as red claw, beef or local recipes.

As an example, in 2014, Gympie Regional Council engaged Matt Golinski, a highly regarded Australian chef, as the region’s official Food and Culinary Tourism Ambassador. Council and local producers, growers and food businesses worked with Matt to help showcase the region’s quality produce.



Image courtesy of fudtravel; train and cert

PROJECT ACTION PLAN

1.1	Identify and bring in food experts or chefs into the region.	Year 1
1.2	Grow significant food dishes that position the region as a culinary hotspot	Year 1
1.3	Target existing food providers to encourage renovation of product, expansion of business acumen and become leaders in changing the McKinlay shire perception.	Year 1
1.4	Integrate local food and the stories of local dishes into every touch point for the visitor experience.	Year 2
1.5	Actively pursue marketing of the McKinlay food scene through social media channels such as Instagram, twitter and Facebook.	Year 2
1.6	Support the establishment of a Heritage Pub marketing and support program	Year 3

⁸ Tourism Australia, September 2013, Restaurant Australia: why it’s time to share our food and wine with the world

Goal 2: Grow share of Queensland’s touring and family markets

The Drive Market

The ‘drive tourism’ market consists of visitors who use a vehicle to travel for leisure. Driving is often the only or main way to get to many Queensland destinations. Business in rural and regional communities often partially rely on income from drive visitors who stop, as they often buy local tourism products and services, as well as supplies.

The State government recognises drive tourism as an important contributor to regional economies, offering opportunities not only for tourism focused businesses, but for supporting businesses who receive visitor spend as they pass through outback communities.

Holidays makes up the largest market when it comes to overall visitation to the Outback (35%) which has traditionally been based on a drive market with long stays in region. In 2016, 21% of total visitors to Outback Queensland (26,065) engaged in heritage activities, and 16% engaged in nature and outdoor activities (14,617).



According to Tourism Research Australia’s National and International Visitor Surveys, there were 10.3 million domestic overnight driver tourism visitors to Queensland representing 57 per cent of all domestic visitors to Queensland.

The Family Market

Conventionally two adults and their children, whom live together in the same household, travel together and look for short stays (1-3 nights) which are quick, cheap and easy. These three aspects have proven to be a vital selling point for many family holidays with the increasing importance placed on having an enriching and connecting experience as a whole family, before returning back to the demands of work and life⁹. The traditional once a year two week holiday is no longer the norm with many families choosing to do multiple small holidays throughout the year instead. Trends also show that families are willing to spend more money on a holiday which will provide life long memories and experiences¹⁰.

Domestic travel is said to fulfil a vital element in family lives offering a chance for families to relax and reconnect. A 2015 Destination NSW report suggests that domestic family trips are often in the form of weekend breaks or short breaks of 2 to 4 day with a key driver in ease, comfort and convenience.



According to the Tourism Research Australia National Visitor Survey, in the year ending March 2017, there were 4.41 million domestic overnight trips undertaken by the domestic family market to Queensland.

Suggested Actions

- | | | |
|------------|---|--------|
| 2.1 | Encourage the development of family-friendly drive market accommodation at existing establishments | Year 1 |
| 2.2 | Prioritise tourism road funding to seal Julia Creek, Walkabout, and Kynuna Triangle | Year 1 |
| 2.3 | Establish a modern brand template for new brochures, billboards and signage to promote iconic experiences | Year 2 |

⁹ Journal of Tourism Futures – Trends in Family Tourism

¹⁰ Parenting.com – Family Travel Trends

Family Market	Touring Market
Overlanders Way currently has a 2% share of the Queensland family market.	Overlanders Way currently retains a 12% share of the Queensland touring market.
KPI #3 - Increase share of family market to 3% attracting an additional \$1.4m in expenditure.	KPI #4 - Increase share of touring market to 15% attracting an additional \$3.6m in expenditure

GAME CHANGER PROJECT #2: Combo Water Hole AV/VR

Virtual and Augmented Reality (VR-AR) technology is revolutionising the way the tourism industry delivers tourism experiences.

It is recommended that a technology partner be approached to scope and deliver a virtual or augmented reality experience at Combo Waterhole in conjunction with the Waltzing Matilda Centre in Winton.

Winton's Waltzing Matilda Centre used VR during its construction phase to give the community an opportunity to experience the design before it was built. The opportunity exists to extend this concept to using VR/AR to take the stories into the landscape.



Images courtesy of startup daily; the upcoming

PROJECT ACTION PLAN

3.1	Research and identify quotation for delivery of augmented reality experience	Year 1
3.3	Establish a partnership with Winton Shire and the Waltzing Matilda Centre	Year 1
3.2	Pursue and deliver a grant application for Combo Water Hole VR funding	Year 2
3.4	Deliver Combo Water Hole VR	Year 2
3.5	Establish a Council partnership operation	Year 3
3.6	Begin experience hand-over	Year 5

Goal 3: Increase visitor numbers to events

Events Tourism

Events play a key role in fostering regional tourism and economic development. They are an ideal way to build brand awareness and a key driver for regional visitation. Nationally, event participation has been growing at an average of 5.9% p.a. since 2010 and Queensland is also experiencing growth in event participation with an average growth of 4.9% p.a. over the past five years. The most popular event categories are food and wine, music related, garden and botanical, sport and art exhibitions.

Research by Tourism Research Australia suggests that events in natural settings are gaining popularity¹¹. The findings suggest that event participation is strongly influenced by word of mouth recommendations, with events in natural settings such as local food and drink events being more likely to be recommended than others. Events are a key trip driver - three-quarters of event attendees surveyed would not have gone to the destination on this occasion if not for the event, highlighting the enormous potential events have for regional tourism.

Local food and drink events were the most popular events having broad mainstream appeal and potential to drive overnight trips. Sporting competition events have a strong niche appeal and are key trip drivers having the ability to drive trips further from home. Events appeal to visitors for a variety of reasons with key drivers including opportunities for once in a lifetime experiences, natural settings and opportunities to participate.

Through its inclusion of a triathlon in the annual Dirt and Dust Festival, as well as the various campdrafts, McKinlay Shire recognises the value of the connection of sport and nature. The potential to build on this trend is evident with the Shire's current planning for tourism investment and plans for increasing visitors on an annual basis.

KPI #4- Capture an extra 10,000 event visitors to the region to generate an additional \$6.7 million in overnight visitor expenditure.

Suggested Actions

- | | | |
|------------|--|---------------|
| 4.1 | Prepare a Shire Events Plan to guide the Events Program and include KPIs for the management of the program and funds to support an Events Program and marketing to drive off-peak visitation, nights and spend | Year 1 |
| 4.2 | Support existing events to extend their reach into emerging markets through industry capacity building and establishment of a cluster group for events. | Year 2 |
| 4.3 | Support the development of small-scale events that promote the region for light aircraft visits | Year 2 |
| 4.5 | Support spin-off events from existing major events (e.g. art and crafts, music and culture) | Year 3 |

¹¹ Tourism Research Australia, 2014. Events: Drivers of Regional Tourism

Rural Tourism

Contemporary rural tourism activities are frequently positioned around providing unique opportunities to 'connect' with the personality of the destination through country pubs, boutique accommodation and retail facilities, or farms. Other popular rural tourism opportunities include farmers markets, food and wine events or meet the maker events.

GAME CHANGER PROJECT #3: Support New and Existing Farmstay Experiences

It is recommended that a Farmstay Rural Experience be developed where visitors can experience the 'real' outback.

Australia's Farmstay experiences range from rustic stays through to luxury outback stations, lodges and restored farmhouses. McKinlay Shire's heritage and setting make it an ideal location for visitors of all age groups to experience the real outback and embrace country life.

Farmstay experiences can include taking part in a horseback cattle run, eating by the camp fire, sleeping under the stars or even sitting on a porch looking out into the landscape.

In a review of Council's Planning Scheme it can provide greater flexibility and certainty for rural property owners by allowing both cabin style accommodation and low-cost camping options on rural land.



Image courtesy of ytravelblog; byronbay farmstay

Project Action Plan

- | | | |
|------------|--|---------------|
| 5.1 | Target existing accommodation providers to encourage renovation of services with a focus on rural themes. | Year 1 |
| 5.2 | Break down barriers for private investors to peak their interest (e.g. conferences with successful operators insurance professionals, etc.). | Year 2 |
| 5.3 | Encourage investment in high-end, branded accommodation to drive growth. | Year 3 |
| 5.4 | Develop a dedicated marketing campaign focussed on the region's farmstay and rural experiences. | Year 4 |

Goal 4: Support the Development of Commercial Tourism

Council-led Commercial Projects to Expression of Interest

Recognising the risk and return ratios of new tourism businesses in the McKinlay Shire it is vital that Council continues to play a role as the 'start-up' business leader. That is, new ideas (such as the Water Tower Adventure experience) will require capital investment and may experience a few years of operating losses before they become profitable projects. With Council taking the lead role in business establishment and operation in the first few years, then calling for commercial expressions of interest, Council increases the likelihood of success. This model of Build Own Operate and Transfer (BOOT) is common in higher risk, low return businesses that have a greater employment and economic impact than just their bottom-line (e.g. Julia Creek Water Tower).

KPI #5-Create one new commercial tourism experience per annum.

Curriculum Generated Tourism

The benefits of field-trip experiences for students is well-documented (for example see Greene et al. 2014; Informal Science 2016; Rahman and Spafford 2009; Shakil et al. 2011¹²). Connecting classroom experiences with real-life provide shared social interactions, both with fellow students and with communities distinct from their own. Linking to existing curriculum can bring students a deeper connection to content, including science, history, geography or social science to name a few.

Connecting outback communities to school and tertiary experiences is an ongoing trend which is supported by the Queensland government's initiative 'Outback Queensland Education Experience Program'. This initiative supports students and educators in defraying the cost of school camps in outback Queensland. Connecting the many benefits of curriculum based field-learning with financial support for the participants provides an excellent opportunity for outback locations such as the McKinlay Shire.

Suggested Actions

6.1	Investigate the cost and feasibility of tours during Council-led events to stations and lookouts where visitors can experience the flora, fauna, dramatic geology (including Great Artesian Basin) and lesser known spots like the Aboriginal art locations and caves (on private property).	Year 3
6.2	Formulate and promote new educational experiences such as Garnet fossicking.	Year 3
6.3	Develop locations that support the outback push towards paleotourism to leverage the growing interest through partnerships with local collectors with fossil collections and stories.	Year 4

¹² [Greene et al. 2014](#); [Informal Science 2016](#); [Rahman and Spafford 2009](#); [Shakil et al. 2012](#)

GAME CHANGER PROJECT #4: Water Tower Experience

The Julia Creek water tower is an icon of the town. Visible for miles, transformation of the heritage listed sites will create a famous attraction in Outback Queensland.

The transformation of a 29.7 metre icon will be in two parts:

1) By Day – Adventure Beacon & Lookout

The project will involve the construction of a suitable access staircase to the top of the tower. Visitors will be able to access the water tower as a part of a guided tour allowing the opportunity for an interpretative experience with a local guide as well as ensuring visitor supervision and safety throughout the climb.

The water tower spiral staircase is a feasible albeit complex design. As such planning, engineering and construction costs have been estimated to start at \$850,000.

Creating a safe and accessible lookout opens Julia Creek to the soft adventure based tourism markets.

Abseiling: Setting up an abseiling activity from the top of the tower to ground level would be a relatively simple installation. Visitors would abseil down the 27 meter wall under the control of trained staff creating an exhilarating and fun experience for people of all ages.

Rock climbing: Installing climbing holds on the exterior wall could transform the entire water tower into a climbing wall. Developing beginner to advanced climbing routes would target rock climbers of all ages and experience levels.

2) By Night – Creative Showcase

An added value of a high-rising structure such as Julia Creek’s water tower is its exterior visual potential. By projecting images onto the face of its structure, the water tower can act as a canvas for a number of entertainment opportunities and creative evening events. One option is to showcase visitors and locals images on a rotating basis.



Image courtesy of Rap Jumping



Image courtesy of Darren Jew photography

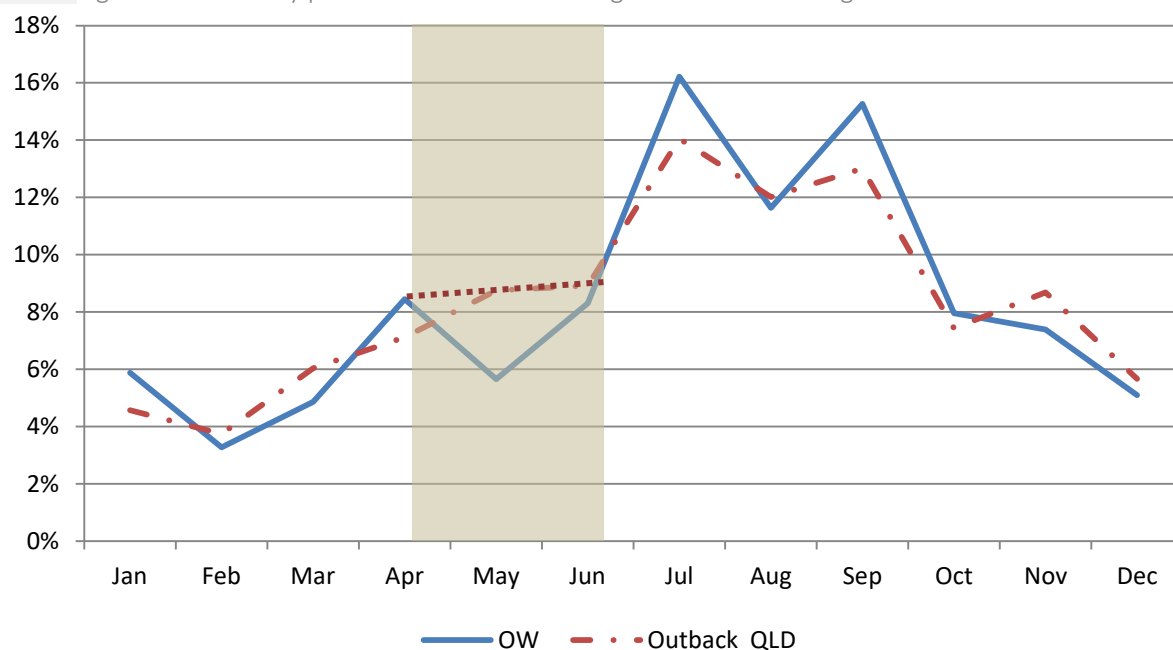
PROJECT ACTION PLAN

7.1	Invite an Adventure Tourism Operator to carry out pre-feasibility and operating plan to secure funding for Water Tower Experience	Year 1
7.2	Secure funding and purchase projector and upload technology for night image displays	Year 2
7.3	Identify suitable operators to manage multiple experiences on the water tower (abseil, rappel) as well as a completely unique element that links the thrill with the skill.	Year 2
7.4	Employ the services of an adventure experience provider to operate business model for the water tower climb through an EOI process.	Year 2
7.5	Outsource local guide training incorporating interpretation, first aid and emergency training.	Year 3
7.6	Redevelop the water tower structure in partnership with the private sector partner / operator.	Year 3
7.7	Enter into a long-term partnership for operation of the experience.	Year 4-5

Goal 5: Off-season

According to the Tourism Research Australia, the Overlanders Way generally follows the Outback QLD seasonality, with a dip in visitation from December to February. Notably, the peak visitation period for the region is between June and September, where numbers remain above 12%. This highlights the significance of the region’s cool and mild winter weather conditions for tourist travel.

Figure 1 Seasonality patters of Domestic Overnight Visitors to the region



The Overlanders Way experiences a notable “off-season peak” in visitation in April, attracting 8% of its average yearly visitors. This could be attributed to events such as the Dirt’n’Dust festival demonstrating the effectiveness of events in drawing in off-peak visitation

On the other hand, the Outback Qld region experiences an “off-season peak” in November, which seems to coincide with school holidays.

McKinlay Shire could benefit from these spikes in visitation by attracting and retaining visitors these visitors along the shoulder seasons. This would complement the peak season demand whilst at the same time easing the off-season’s impact to the local economy.

KPI #5- Grow visitation in April season and retain current 8% visitation through the shoulder months of May and June.

Suggested Actions

- | | | |
|-----|---|--------|
| 8.1 | Invest in seasonal campaign activity to encourage visitation during off-peak travel periods | Year 2 |
| 8.2 | Identify strategic events with potential to be brand builders, seasonality stretchers and visitor attractions | Year 3 |

What this means for McKinlay Shire

The McKinlay, Richmond and Flinders Shires have been recognised to attract an estimated 19% of total visitor nights and 18% expenditure to the Overlander's Way. As one of three shires within this region, McKinlay Shire's percentage share of visitation and expenditure has been estimated at 30%.

Given this estimate, by 2022 McKinlay Shire could attract an additional:



Overnight Visitation - \$552,000 in domestic overnight expenditure
(From 15,500 extra visitors staying overnight)



Visitor Spend - \$552,000 in visitor spending
(By increasing spend from \$83 to \$102 per night)



Touring Market - \$216,000 in expenditure from the touring market
(From 3,300 additional touring visitors)



Family Market - \$84,000 in expenditure from the family market
(From 1000 additional family visitors)



Events - \$401,000 in expenditure from the events market
(From an extra 1,677 event visitors)

Total \$1.7 million p.a



Supporting 21 jobs*

*EarthCheck estimates based on Tourism Satellite Account

4. ENABLERS OF SUCCESS



Investment Attraction

- Strengthen partnerships in tourism and economic development.
- Participation of all partners in development projects - infrastructure, experience packaging and readiness, investment and access.
- Maintain and grow successful drive routes throughout the Outback.
- Work as a collective across the entire Overlander's Way economy to ensure everyone is promoting the region on-message and in a way that will maximise visitation and spend.

Accessibility

- Maintain existing access routes with agreement to increase frequency and decrease cost toward 2022.

Connectivity

- Conduct a major transformation of mobile phone service and WiFi accessibility throughout the region.

Community Support

- Encourage stronger links between tourism and the resources sector to proactively encourage coordination to improve liveability and sense of place.
- Build community appreciation and support for tourism and future investment



Image courtesy of Deborah Keane

5. ACTION PLAN



Game Changers 5 Year Plan

Year	Game Changers
Year 1	Food Tourism Experience
Year 1	Combo Waterhole VR
Year 1	Water Tower Experience
Year 1	Adventure Tour Operator

5 year Action Plan

Year 1

Action

- 1.1 Identify and bring in food experts or chefs into the region to leverage local foods
- 1.2 Grow significant food dishes that position the region as a culinary hotspot
- 1.3 Target existing food providers to encourage renovation of product, expansion of business acumen and become leaders in changing the McKinlay Shire perception.
- 2.1 Encourage the development of family-friendly accommodation at existing establishments
- 2.2 Prioritise tourism road funding to seal the Gidyea Bug by-way between Julia Creek and McKinlay
- 2.3 Establish a modern “McKinlay Shire” brand template for new brochures, billboards and signage
- 3.1 Research and identify quotation for delivery of augmented reality experiences at Combo Water Hole
- 3.2 Establish a partnership with Winton Shire and the Waltzing Matilda Centre’s VR experience
- 4.1 Prepare a Regional Events Plan to guide the Events Program and include KPIs for the management of the program and funds to support an Events Program and marketing to drive off-peak visitation, nights and spend.
- 5.1 Target existing accommodation providers to encourage renovation of services with a focus on “farm” and rural themes.
- 6.1 Invite an Adventure Tourism Operator to carry out pre-feasibility and operating plan to secure funding for Water Tower Experience

Year 2

- 1.4 Integrate local food and the stories of local dishes into every touch point for the visitor experience.
- 1.5 Actively pursue marketing of the McKinlay food scene through social media channels such as Instagram, twitter and Facebook.
- 1.6 Support the establishment of a Heritage Pub marketing and support program
- 2.3 Establish a modern brand template for new brochures, billboards and signage to promote iconic experiences
- 3.3 Pursue and deliver a grant application for Combo Water Hole VR funding
- 3.4 Deliver Combo Water Hole VR
- 4.2 Support existing events to extend their reach into emerging markets through industry capacity building and establishment of a cluster group of events
- 4.3 Support the development of small-scale events that promote the region for light aircraft visits
- 6.1 Develop a dedicated marketing campaign focussed on the region's farmstay and rural experiences
- 7.1 Investigate the cost and feasibility of tours during Council-led events to stations and lookouts where visitors can experience the flora, fauna, dramatic geology (including the Great Artesian Basin) and lesser known spots like the Aboriginal art locations and caves (on private property).
- 7.2 Secure funding and purchase projector and upload technology for night image displays
- 7.3 Identify suitable operators to manage multiple experiences on the water tower (abseil, rappel) as well as a completely unique element that links the thrill with the skill.
- 7.4 Employ the services of an adventure experience provider to operate business model for the water tower climb through an EOI process.
- 8.2 Invest in seasonal campaign activity to encourage visitation during off-peak travel periods

Year 3

- 1.6 Support the establishment of a Heritage Pub marketing and support program
 - 3.4 Deliver Combo Water Hole VR Experience
 - 4.3 Support the development of small-scale events that promote the region for light aircraft visits.
 - 4.4 Support spin-off events from existing events to extend reach into emerging markets (arts and crafts, music and culture)
-

- 6.2 Formulate and promote new educational experiences such as Garnet fossicking
- 7.5 Outsource local guide training incorporating interpretation, first aid and emergency training.
- 7.6 Redevelop the water tower structure in partnership with the private sector partner / operator.
- 8.2 Identify strategic events with potential to be brand builders, seasonality stretchers and visitor attractions

Year 4

- 3.5 Establish a Council partnership operation for the Combo Water Hole VR experience
- 6.3 Develop locations that support the outback push towards paleo-tourism to leverage the growing interest through partnerships with local collectors with fossil collections and stories.
- 7.7 Enter into a long-term partnership for operation of the Water Tower experience.

Year 5

- 3.6 Begin Combo Water Hole VR experience hand-over
- 6.4 Investigate the creation of a trail link to surrounding shire to less know paleo-tourism sites.

5. APPENDIX

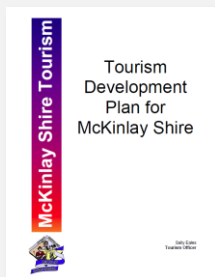


Appendix A: Plans and Strategies for Tourism

The following plans and strategies were identified as having important implications for the McKinlay Shire Tourism Industry as of 2017.

Local

Tourism Development Plan for McKinlay Shire¹³



The Tourism Development Plan was developed by Tourism Officer Sally Eales in 2008. The document provides a detailed depiction of the tourism economy in the Shire and the region. The key objectives of the Tourism plan are:

- Outline strategic direction of tourism in McKinlay Shire and propose a range of actions suitable for implementation by McKinlay Shire Council, the community and industry in McKinlay Shire;
- Facilitate greater local and regional tourism and enhance access to quality tourism experiences; and
- Through community and stakeholder consultation, develop a plan that is easily implemented and a model for tourism development for small rural communities.

The plan recognises the contribution of tourism to the Shire. It identifies strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as well as suggested projects for the future. A transport audit is included as an appendix providing the reader with the context of access to the Shire. The document concludes encouraging local stakeholders to work together to deliver a sustainable tourism products, and to develop stronger relationships with regional and state tourism organisations.

McKinlay Shire Community Plan 2010-2020¹⁴



The community plan was built in conjunction with the development of a Shire-wide Infrastructure Plan to guide the Shire over the next 10 years in infrastructure and service development.

Vision: "A region that has safe, healthy and prosperous communities with a vibrant civic culture, a strong sense of identity and place, social equality and access to services"

The key objectives of the Community plan are:

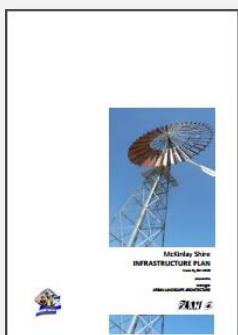
- Community Connections – a well-connected community that is accessible, inclusive and legible for both residents and tourists;
- Economic Diversity – a prosperous local economy supported by an increased population, new and sustainable industries and tourism; and
- Good governance and partnerships – Good governance across all aspects of management, open lines of communication to foster partnerships and good relationships between all stakeholders.

The plan demonstrates strong community recognition of the Shire's regional attributes, the country lifestyle, and unique environmental and historical assets, as valuable opportunities to bring the McKinlay Shire tourism forward.

¹³ www.mckinlay.qld.gov.au/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=7489dabd-feca-4e68-a31d-fc28e6a54aa2&groupId=17564

¹⁴ http://www.mckinlay.qld.gov.au/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=97a4c7dd-5374-4316-babb-eb047541f2bd&groupId=17564

McKinlay Shire Infrastructure Plan, 2010¹⁵



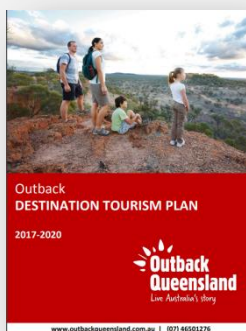
The aim of the Infrastructure Plan is to provide physical infrastructure recommendations derived from the Community Planning process under a number of headings such as:

- Community Connections – accessibility and interconnectedness;
- Economic Diversity and Resilience – Industry diversification; and
- Housing and Built Environment – tackle population decline and attract migration.

The infrastructure plan encourages the development of economically sustainable and environmentally appropriate tourism infrastructure.

Regional

Outback Destination Tourism Plan 2017-2020

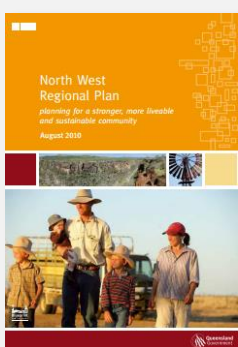


This Destination Tourism Plan builds upon the 2014 DTP, which was prepared to provide the definitive direction for tourism and events in the Outback region towards 2020, highlighting the resources required to achieve the 2020 target and create a sustainable and competitive tourism and events destination.

- Focus on acquisition and attraction of new major events;
- Extend shoulder periods and create new 'off-peak' experiences for regions;
- Create opportunities for the private sector to better manage their 'experience'; and
- Maintain and increase access throughout the region – road/rail/air.

The Destination Tourism Plan presents a more accurate picture of tourism economic net worth to the Outback and assists in the facilitation of investment for catalyst projects and development opportunities.

North West Regional Plan, 2010



The North West Regional Plan provides the framework for integrating federal, state and local government planning agendas, linking infrastructure and service provision to manage future population change to 2031. The plan has the following key focus points;

- Addressing key economic, social and environmental issues ;
- Identifying infrastructure and service needs ;
- Maximising benefits and managing impacts of major projects;
- Driving innovation and productivity;
- Mobilising public, private and community sectors; and
- Aligning efforts across agencies and all levels of government.

The regional plan also considers the region's potential needs beyond 2031 to ensure that planning decisions made today do not compromise options to meet longer-term needs.

The plan points towards the region's commitment to ensuring long-term sustainable management and development of the regions' tourism industry.

¹⁵ http://www.mckinlay.qld.gov.au/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=6bf43430-6976-4ea5-830e-470524dac46a&groupId=17564

State

Destination Success – The 20-year plan for Queensland Tourism, 2014¹⁶



Launched in January 2014 after an eighteen-month-long consultation process, the 'Destination Success' plan presents state tourism stakeholders with a vision of what Queensland Tourism will look like for the long-term. The plan uses the CSIRO megatrends as a framework to understand the changes to market predicted over the 20 year phase.

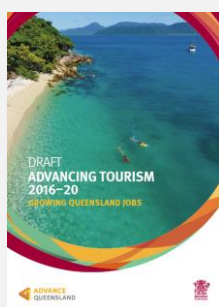
The plan uses a destination approach to supporting industry in achieving success. The plan includes six strategic themes:

1. Build strong partnerships
2. Preserve our nature and culture
3. Delivery quality, great service and innovation
4. Target a balanced portfolio of markets
5. Offer iconic experiences
6. Grow investment and access

For McKinlay Shire, the inclusion of a destination approach to planning in the local Tourism Development Plan aligns with the state's intentions. Under the 'building partnerships' theme, the State government acknowledges the significant contribution which small-medium enterprises (SMEs) make to the tourism industry, which is the backbone of service provision in the McKinlay Shire.

Using events, as well as promoting culture and nature as part of iconic experience development is also in line with the State approach. Investments in transport and innovative technology are also high on the State agenda, which could also support local tourism planning.

Advancing Tourism 2016-2020 – Growing Queensland Jobs, 2016¹⁷



To achieve the goals of the 20-year plan, the Queensland Government introduced the 'Advancing Tourism' five-year plan, with a goal to attract more visitors to the State. The four strategic priorities outlined in the plan are:

1. Grow quality products, events and experiences
2. Invest in infrastructure and access
3. Build a skilled workforce and business capabilities
4. Seize the opportunity in Asia

Significant opportunities for the McKinlay Shire represented in this plan centre on the growth of products, events and experiences and investment in infrastructure and access. The outcomes are predicted to bring more jobs to Queenslanders and more visitors through strategic marketing approaches, as outlined in the refresh of Tourism and Events Queensland's strategy below.

Brand Queensland - Tourism & Events Queensland – Refreshed Creative Branding & Messaging¹⁸



The Refreshed Creative Branding and Messaging strategy outlines Tourism and Events Queensland's new direction. Four of the five themes in the strategy align with the tourism product in McKinlay Shire:

- Natural encounters – wildlife and natural landscapes;
- Adventure discovery – Adventure and learning;
- Queensland Lifestyle – Food, cities and country; and
- Events – Music, culture and creativity.

¹⁶ <https://www.destq.com.au/20-year-plan/vision-strategy>

¹⁷ <https://www.dtesb.qld.gov.au/tourism>

¹⁸ <http://teq.queensland.com/~media/1C6A5F1C9CFC4B49837534DB181B747C.ashx>

The Queensland Plan, 2014-2044 ¹⁹

The Queensland Plan is an aspirational community vision designed to represent the direction in which the Queensland community envision the state to go in the next 30 years. The plan outlines a series of focal points such as:



- Regions – build on people, local enterprise and natural resources;
- Economy – Diversify industry to remain globally competitive;
- Environment – encourage green energy solutions.

The plan represents Queenslanders aspiration for the next 30 years and sets a roadmap for growth and prosperity. Within this plan is prevailing vision of a well preserved and internationally recognised tourism experience focused on Queensland's natural and cultural heritage assets.

¹⁹ <https://www.queenslandplan.qld.gov.au/assets/images/qld-plan.pdf>