

TTNQ unveils world-leading environmental tourism initiative

Planet Safe Partnership set for a global stage

Tropical North Queensland is set to lead the world in fostering responsible tourism following the launch of a major industry initiative earlier today (Tuesday 28th August).

Tourism Tropical North Queensland Chairman Steven Olle unveiled the *Planet Safe Partnership* initiative in Cairns following an in-depth analysis of environmental tourism programs in Australia and Europe, and extensive consultation with tourism industry leaders.

Mr Olle said the *Planet Safe Partnership* has been created to set a new benchmark in sustainable tourism, and offers a template for the rest of Australia – and the world. “We in the Tropical North are justifiably proud of our unique environmental heritage, and have been working hard to ensure its preservation long before carbon emissions and global warming became popular buzz-phrases.

“Our region is living proof that tourism contributes to the protection of a rare and extraordinary natural environment. We want to share that know-how, in a simple and practical way, with tourism operators, wholesalers, retailers, airlines and transport companies not just in Queensland and Australia, but worldwide.”

Rob Giason, Chief Executive Officer of Tourism Tropical North Queensland, said: “During the past 12 months the issue of climate change has moved to the top of the political agenda, and is beginning to change the way many of our visitors look at travelling, especially long-haul from Europe and North America.

“As a destination based entirely on nature we know better than most our reliance on sustainable tourism practices. That’s why our industry has been working with partners in research institutions and with government and industry organisations to look at how we can best continue to preserve our environment.”

Mr Giason said the *Planet Safe Partnership* will reassure visitors that they are also contributing through practical short and long-term measures aimed at safeguarding Tropical North Queensland’s World Heritage areas.

“As guardians of the Reef and Rainforest, we promise to ensure that these same wonders remain for our visitors’ children and great grand-children.”

Mr Giason said TTNQ recognized its role in providing an example to both the local industry and other tourism promotion organizations. As an example, TTNQ recently

completed an audit of its operational energy use, which has prompted a series of simple measures designed to reduce energy consumption by more than 30 per cent.

“The cost of mitigating the excess carbon generation was assessed at around \$5,000 per year. Consequently, TTNQ will be offsetting this carbon through the Australian Rainforest Foundation’s Hero2 program aimed at buying old growth rainforest, the establishment of wildlife corridors and a donation to running the Cassowary Hospital at Mission Beach.”

Mr Giason said the initiative included not only the tourism industry, but local communities –and importantly – ordinary people. “Tropical North Queensland can take satisfaction that the *Planet Safe Partnership* will make a real contribution to mitigating the factors that contribute to climate change.

“At the same time, it will demonstrate to the world that our region is a world leader in protecting and ensuring the sustainability of our outstanding natural environments.”

Mr. Giason said the premise behind PSP is simple:

- We have some of the best natural environments on the planet with three world heritage areas in our region with the potential for at least two more.
- Through the Queensland and Australian Governments we have in place world leading management process for these sensitive areas
- Through our preeminent research in situations such as the Marine and Tropical Research Facility, James Cook University, the Australian Institute of Marine Science and the CSIRO, we have at the centre of finding solutions to ensure the survival of tropical ecosystems throughout the planet
- We have a mature nature-based tourism industry developed by people who not only treasure our environment but also delight in sharing its values with our visitors

“The message to our consumers is – we are all working together to ensure the special values of this place are here for future generations, when you visit you can see what we are doing and even join us in our endeavours, ” Mr Giason concluded.

The preview of the Planet Safe Initiative also included the presentation of a certificate of membership (Planet Safe Member #1) to the Cairns City Council.

How Does PSP Work?

To be a PSP all participants must:

- Conduct an energy Audit (Carbon Footprint) – ie review energy use in the business operation through an Australian Government accredited audit system.

- Demonstrate environmentally sustainable work-practices through certification with a relevant and credible accreditation organisation.
- Show practical commitment to the conservation of the ecosystems of Tropical North Queensland.

From more information on the Planet Safe Partnership Program visit the website at www.tropicalaustralia.com.au/planetsafe