

MEDIA RELEASE

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Sustainability a focus for Cairns & Great Barrier Reef

The introduction of electric buses, community efforts to revegetate rainforest and seagrass beds, and a tourism industry-led push towards Net Zero are among the initiatives cementing 'Cairns & Great Barrier Reef's' reputation as a leader in sustainability.

Business Events Cairns & Great Barrier Reef General Manager Tara Bennett said the region's reputation had resonated with incentive groups wanting to choose a destination that would help their company meet sustainability targets.

"The Cairns and Great Barrier Reef region is the most eco-certified destination in Australia with 72 active eco-certified companies and 27 businesses undertaking the process with Ecotourism Australia," she said.

"Our proactive approach was recognised as one of two regions in Queensland selected to undertake the Queensland Tourism Climate Action Plan providing carbon benchmark data and recommended pathways towards achieving Net Zero before 2050.

"We are consulting with accommodation, tour operators, hospitality venues and Indigenous groups to develop sector-specific strategies to further support the tourism industry's progress towards Net Zero.

"Incentive groups wanting to give back to the destination can assist through our partnership with Reforest which replants degrading land adjoining the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area which is home to the Lumholtz tree kangaroo.

"We have launched a [Tropical North Queensland Regional Dashboard](#) with Reforest so delegates can follow the progress on rehabilitation projects.

"The Reforest partnership plays a key role in business events wanting to offset their footprint, for example the National Australia Bank purchased more than 1300 trees for the Nightwings Lower Daintree Restoration and held a tree planting during their program as part of their commitment to restoring almost 2500 square metres of rainforest.

"This project is in Port Douglas and Daintree, where the world's oldest rainforest meets the Great Barrier Reef, and the first destination in Australia to achieve Ecotourism Australia's Eco Destination Certification.

"Despite 80% of Port Douglas and Daintree's land being protected under World Heritage listing, 80% of its economic activity is from tourism.

"There are numerous reef projects underway including coral nurseries and the eradication of coral-eating predators.

"The Cairns-Port Douglas Reef Hub is working with Traditional Owners and community volunteers to replenish more than 400 hectares of seagrass habitat in Cairns and Mourilyan Harbour.

“Environmental initiatives led to Cairns Airport being crowned Airport of the Year twice in 2023, winning the Major Airport of the Year category at the Australian Airports Association (AAA) National Airport Industry Awards and being named Airport of the Year at the Australian Aviation Awards.

“Cairns Airport also took out the Airport Excellence Award for Sustainability for their Australia-first Sustainability Linked Loan agreement, which features a unique target committing to regenerating threatened species.”

Operator initiatives:

[Tropic Wings](#) has invested \$12 million to add 12 cutting-edge Battery Electric Vehicles for trips to iconic destinations such as the Daintree Rainforest, Mossman Gorge, and Kuranda, providing a unique and environmentally conscious travel experience.

[Cairns Aquarium](#) is home to the world-first coral bio bank in collaboration with Great Barrier Reef Legacy with plans to collect and house all 800 hard coral species from around the world. This project is complemented by the Cairns Turtle Rehabilitation Centre facility also housed at the Cairns Aquarium where behind the scenes tours can be conducted for groups to deepen their connection to conservation initiatives.

[Sailaway Port Douglas](#) has introduced the Great Barrier Reef's first electric glass-bottom boat at carbon-neutral Low Isles, just one hour from Port Douglas. Sailaway is a Climate Action Leader and offsets carbon by contributing to reforestation in the local World Heritage rainforest.

[Mt Mulligan Lodge](#), nestled in North Queensland's outback, has attained Ecotourism Australia - Eco Certified Advanced Tourism accreditation for minimising its ecological footprint, protecting local ecosystems, and engaging in responsible tourism practices.

[Quicksilver Cruises](#) is undertaking a \$2 million engine refit on its Wavepiercer catamarans to allow hydrotreated vegetable oil and other synthetic fuels to be used instead of diesel.

[Nautilus Aviation](#) is on schedule to introduce zero-emission electric vertical take-off and landing aircraft in 2026 for scenic flights over the Great Barrier Reef.

Visit the region's Sustainability Hub: <https://tourism.tropicalnorthqueensland.org.au/sustainability-hub/>

For more information visit businesssevents Cairns.org.au

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Images:

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