

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND SERVICES COMMITTEE

REPORT NO. 52, 57TH PARLIAMENT

INQUIRY INTO PREHISTORIC, DINOSAUR AND PALEO TOURISM IN OUTBACK QUEENSLAND

QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Introduction

On 18 September 2023, the former Economics and Governance Committee (EGC) resolved to conduct an Inquiry into prehistoric, dinosaur and paleo tourism in Outback Queensland. The terms of reference adopted by the EGC were that the Committee inquire into and report to the Legislative Assembly on:

- recent developments and initiatives to build prehistoric, dinosaur and paleo tourism in Queensland
- the value of prehistoric, dinosaur and paleo tourism to the Outback Queensland economy
- challenges and opportunities for the further development of the industry into the future.

At the transfer of responsibility from the EGC on 13 February 2024, the former Community Support and Services Committee (CSSC) endorsed the same terms of reference for its examination of the Inquiry.

On 30 August 2024, the CSSC tabled its Report No. 52 in relation to the Inquiry making the following recommendations.

Recommendations

The CSSC made two recommendations. The Queensland Government response to the recommendations is provided below:

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends the Legislative Assembly note the report.

Government Response

The Government notes the Committee's recommendation.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends the Queensland Government consider the findings in this report and develop a strategy to enable the future growth and cooperation of Outback Queensland's dinosaur and paleo tourism industry. In particular, we recommended the government focus on:

- the need for greater infrastructure
- attracting an international market
- promoting educational and research opportunities
- mitigating the distance between tourism attractions
- promoting Outback Queensland's tourism attractions as a unified tourist proposition.

Government Response

The Government accepts the recommendation, conditional on further considerations as part of the Government's development and final release of a new 20-Year Tourism Plan for Queensland, which the Government has committed to begin work on under its *The First 100 Days* plan.

The Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI) acknowledges the important work of the Committee in identifying potential improvements to Queensland's world class paleo tourism sector and build on its reputation as the premier paleo tourism state of Australia. The insights, consultations, and findings of the Committee will directly contribute to informing the development of relevant components of the new 20-Year Tourism Plan for Queensland.

The significant efforts, governance and programs currently being delivered by stakeholders across the sector will continue to be delivered and leveraged to support growth of the paleo tourism industry in Queensland. The industry will further benefit from a statewide strategic and coordinated approach that consultation and development of a new 20-year Tourism Plan will facilitate.

Outback Queensland is home to some of the world's rarest dinosaur discoveries and Australia's biggest dinosaur fossils. Dinosaur tourism accounts for more than 11 per cent of tourism's \$470 million contribution to the Outback economy and supports nearly 10 per cent of all Outback Queensland jobs.

Recognising the importance of Outback paleo tourism, DETSI and Tourism and Events Queensland (TEQ) continue to support this sector through several initiatives.

In May 2021, the Queensland Government, via TEQ launched 'The Outback Queensland Dinosaur Roadmap' – a strategy to help boost Outback Queensland's tourism industry by promoting the region as one of the world's leading dinosaur tourism destinations, and delivering a range of actions.

TEQ also administered \$640,000, over three years, to boost dinosaur tourism through the delivery of a range of actions under the Roadmap. An initiative of the Roadmap was to develop a Dinosaur Tourism Collective. The Collective is an industry-led body, designed to be the catalyst for Outback Queensland paleo tourism growth and ensure long term funding sustainability. The Collective consists of an independent chairperson, a program manager and four dinosaur experience operations that were accepted into the Collective via an initial expression of interest process:

- Eromanga Natural History Museum
- Kronosaurus Korner
- Flinders Discovery Centre
- Outback at Isa – Riversleigh Fossil Discovery Centre.

On 1 June 2024, the Collective officially launched its new consumer and trade brand 'Dinosaur Experiences Australia' (DEA), with the group established to support the industry to be unified and to expand market opportunities globally. Collaboration between the members has increased substantially but DEA is in its infancy and there are a number of other outback locations in Queensland that have emerged as 'paleo hubs'. It is the aim of DEA to bring these experiences into the Collective to strengthen Queensland's paleo tourism experience offering and to provide a collective marketing effort.

DEA will continue to be a catalyst for Outback Queensland paleo tourism growth and ensure long term sustainability. TEQ continues to act in an advisory capacity for the Collective and all experience development opportunities for dinosaur tourism experiences, and drives consumer demand for Queensland within global consumer segments and continues to maximise recovery and growth opportunities as key source markets open.

In addition, TEQ is in the final stages of producing a 'Discover Queensland Drive Tourism Marketing Strategy 2032', which will specifically address Queensland's dinosaur trails, identify hero experiences and create clusters for visitation.

The potential of paleo tourism is acknowledged with the recent introduction of a State Fossil Emblem for Queensland, *Muttaburrasaurus langdoni* (Mutt-ah-burra-sore-us lang-don-eye), with actions that are leveraging the new emblem to grow paleo tourism, including the Riversleigh (Australian Mammal Sites) World Heritage Area and Outback Queensland's dinosaur trail. The establishment of the new fossil emblem represents the latest development in a series of initiatives which have helped build a prehistoric, dinosaur and paleo tourism industry that is a key contributor to the Outback Queensland economy and employment.

The Queensland Government supports various projects at five dinosaur tourism projects including Australian Age of Dinosaurs – Shadows of Gondwana; a Riversleigh Fossil Trail experience at the Cairns Aquarium and Reef Research Centre; Central Highlands Regional Council Geo Trail; Creative Country Association Fossil Museum; and the Eromanga Natural History Museum.