



MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Funding helps Whitsundays tourism industry bounce back

The Whitsundays tourism industry has welcomed \$7m in funding from the State and Federal Governments to help it bounce back from the devastating effects of Tropical Cyclone Debbie.

Four key tourism infrastructure projects in the Whitsunday region will receive funding under the landmark joint Federal and Queensland Government funding package, which was announced on Saturday following consistent lobbying during the past six months by Whitsunday Mayor Andrew Willcox and Tourism Whitsundays' CEO Craig Turner.

Of the \$7m funding, \$4.5m will go to four infrastructure projects located in the Whitsunday Islands, Bowen and Lake Proserpine, an additional \$2 million Tourism Recovery Fund will provide grants for projects that will drive tourism to the Whitsunday Regional Council area, and up to \$500,000 will fund coral propagation research and coral gardening.

Tourism Whitsundays' CEO Craig Turner said it was very important that the projects were tourism infrastructure projects designed to drive visitation and length of stay in the region.

"It was important to ask ourselves, how can we build infrastructure projects that will drive tourists into all parts of the region," he said.

"The whole region was affected by TC Debbie and this funding needs to deliver benefits to all parts of the region – the islands, mainland coast and inland – so we all benefit going forward.

"We are also working hard to try and diversify tourism experiences. We tried to structure the spending of the money so it achieves a range of outcomes and develops opportunities to drive tourism across the whole region."

Mr Turner said as far as the \$2 million Tourism Recovery Fund was concerned, he had pushed back on the initial concept of applicants paying 25 per cent, so projects were fully funded.

"So if your idea gets up, you get 100 per cent of the funds needed – this was non-negotiable as far as I was concerned. The grants are for people with amazing tourism ideas but no capital to fund them."

Whitsunday Mayor Andrew Willcox said the funding made all the advocacy to the State Government worthwhile.

"I am proud of our efforts to quarantine this funding for the Whitsunday Region and these projects will help take tourism in the Whitsundays to another level," Mayor Willcox said.

"We are already an idyllic place for visitation to the Great Barrier Reef and islands, and this funding will help develop mainland tourism."

Tourism in the Whitsundays supports more than 5,000 jobs and injects \$1.6 bn into the local economy every year.

The four significant tourism infrastructure projects that have received Tourism Recovery Funding are:

- \$2 million for the Hill Inlet Lookout upgrade and expansion on Whitsunday Island. This work will complement the recently announced Queensland Government commitment of \$2.78 million for the development of a new 20km walking track connecting Whitehaven Beach to Tongue Point.
- \$500,000 to deliver all-weather walking trails with interpretative panels on Border, Langford and Haslewood islands.
- \$1 million to deliver new tourism infrastructure at Peter Faust Dam (Lake Proserpine) which will help support new tourism experiences in the region.
- \$1 million to enhance the existing facilities on Flagstaff Hill in Bowen to support the delivery of Indigenous tourism activities, festivals, cooking classes and farmers markets.

The \$2 million Tourism Recovery Fund grant program is now open. Funding for projects of \$50,000 or more is available for eligible applicants located in the Whitsunday Local Government Area and can be accessed via Tourism Whitsundays' website where there are application forms - www.tourismwhitsundays.com.au

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