

For Immediate Release

5 July 2021

Tourism Whitsundays funding win to drive industry opportunities with appointment of vital new role

Tourism Whitsundays has welcomed a vital new addition to its team, via an Australian Government funding grant, to drive proactive business opportunities for the region's tourism industry.

Respected brand and product development leader, Nicole Riksman, has commenced in the role of *Industry Development Manager - The Whitsundays*, a position made possible through the Federal Government's Recovery for Regional Tourism Fund, supporting areas reliant on international tourism and adversely impacted by COVID-19.

Funding of \$3 million was secured by Tourism Whitsundays to deliver a range of regional initiatives, including a Whitsundays Product and Industry Development Project, with the appointment of Ms Riksman a critical step in driving this important initiative.

With over 12 years' national travel industry experience, Ms Riksman brings senior leadership skills in brand management, business improvement and customer experience optimisation to the Tourism Whitsundays team.

Tourism Whitsundays Chief Executive Officer, Tash Wheeler said this new role would be central to the company's tourism recovery strategy and will focus on supporting local operators.

"We're thrilled to have Nicole on board to assist us in encouraging and facilitating experience-based opportunities for the region, developing tourism products and identifying investment prospects to benefit the industry.

"We recently completed a comprehensive analysis of the current tourism experiences on offer in The Whitsundays Region, highlighting gaps and areas of potential development, and Nicole's key focus will be to drive outcomes from this work in partnership with our industry.

"The overarching mission of this important role is to retain and create jobs by driving visitation growth, boosting consumer demand and improving product diversity to better leverage the domestic tourism market. Nicole's knowledge and expertise will be invaluable in achieving these goals."

Ms Riksman has held a range of senior roles across Australia including Brand Leader for Student Flights Queensland, Regional Leader for Escape Travel Victoria and Tasmania and General Manager for Flight Centre in Western Australia and Northern Territory.

She also recently completed a Masters of Business Administration (MBA), supporting small start-up to large scale organisations in brand and product development. She has recently been working in the energy sector, identifying value opportunities to cater to the evolving needs of business customers.

Ms Riksman will be based in The Whitsundays for the 12-month contract role and will be accessible to tourism businesses in the region for support in nurturing their products and experiences.

"I'm really looking forward to meeting with operators from across The Whitsundays Region to better understand their diverse challenges and supporting them to navigate through these challenges to areas of opportunity.

MEDIA RELEASE

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"The impacts of the past 18 months on travel and tourism have been significant, particularly in regions such as ours that had such a reliance on international visitation. I'll be working hand-in-hand with industry to ensure we can harness the current domestic travel market but also maintain a longer-term international preparedness."

Ms Wheeler said this balance was critical to ensuring current and future prosperity for the region.

"In addition to nurturing experiences suited to Australian travellers, Nicole will be working closely with our marketing and trade teams to ensure there is a vibrant, inbound tourism offering in place, ready for when international visitors return to Australia and the beautiful Whitsundays region."

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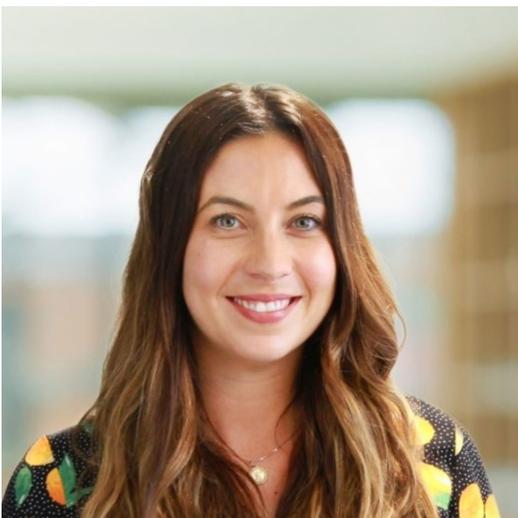
About Tourism Whitsundays: *Tourism Whitsundays (TW) is the organisation responsible for destination marketing and visitor attraction for the Whitsunday region. It is the lead agency recognised by Tourism and Events Queensland and the Whitsunday Regional Council to lead the promotion of the region as a tourism destination. Tourism Whitsundays markets all aspects of the region including the Great Barrier Reef, Whitsunday Islands and Coast, accommodation, boating and sailing, fishing, touring, recreational activities, adventure, dining, shopping, weddings and honeymoons, conferencing and business events.*

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IMAGE: Nicole Riksman, Industry Development Manager - The Whitsundays



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