

‘Big Ideas for the Outdoors’

Context, Priorities & Needs for the Queensland Outdoor Recreation Sector



Disclaimer:

This paper is written by the Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation (QORF) and does not necessarily represent the views of all who attended the Forum; nor does it presume to name all elements of the context for the delivery of all outdoor activities and experiences. The information includes general statements informed by research and makes some assumptions of connections that may be incomplete and/or not represent individual or group circumstances in specific instances.

Background

On May 2-3 2013, representatives of, and stakeholders in, the Queensland Outdoor Recreation Sector, gathered for a two day forum to discuss the current context, future opportunities and possible pathways for sector development in the coming decade. The Forum included representatives from State Recreation Organisations; outdoor education, outdoor recreation, adventure therapy, and adventure tourism providers; not for profit youth, recreation organisations; aligned peak industry bodies; open space and recreation planning consultants; university and training providers; clubs; individuals; land and water managers; as well as State and Local Government officers. This paper utilises a combination of information drawn from that Forum; supplemented by sector conversation and wider research to highlight key issues and opportunities for the Qld outdoor sector in the next ten years; and to encourage conversation and purpose that can serve to strengthen the actions, delivery, and value of the sector for, and throughout, the State.

Introduction

Queenslanders increasingly love outdoor recreation. Research has shown that individual, non-organised physical activity is on the rise (Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport, 2010); and that the majority of that activity is taking place on our parks, beaches and walking tracks (ABS, 2010). With busy lifestyles and time constrained opportunities, people are finding it easier to fit physical activity into the nooks and crevasses of their day, taking the chance to engage in unscheduled and flexible activity that can be done with little preparation, rather than be tied to the commitment of more organised activities (Australian Government, 2013). In addition there is a growing preference for 'adventure, lifestyle, extreme and alternative' activities such as rockclimbing, kite surfing, surfing and mountain biking. These activities are becoming more mainstream (Wheaton, 2010) and more people are opting for adventure based and eco-tourism experiences in their holiday options (Tourism Research Australia, 2011).

Despite these social trends, there are conflicting considerations that impact the opportunities for outdoor recreation into the future. For example, as participation increases, so too does demand for spaces to go. In addition the potential for user conflict also rises. For outdoor activities to be part of our experiences we need to provide for, and manage the spaces where people outdoor recreate so these are close, sufficient, appropriate, diverse and sustainable. Equally, though some participation is increasing, our culture is more fast-paced and impatient than ever before, and we seek immediate gratification. Equally there remain social messages of risk aversion that influence our outdoor participation decision making; the engagement of children in outdoor pursuits; and people's desires and capacity to get active outdoors.

To explore some of these ideas and to unpack the wider context in which outdoor recreation/ adventure activities are experienced, five key contextual concepts are discussed in this paper. These include considerations of social changes as well as sector based challenges that play a role in enabling and maintaining sustainable growth, namely:

- Healthy Outdoors – how being active outdoors, is good for our wellbeing
- Adventurous Travel – the growth of adventure and nature based tourism
- Every Child – an exploration of outdoor activities to build capable and resilient children

- Which Space? – user conflict, sustainable management, access
- Capable People – good providers, good leaders, great service, growing sector

Following this contextual information, some issues, actions and possible solutions identified by the sector are presented which may help direct planning that can reap the benefits of outdoor recreation and take advantage of the social and structural opportunities that are evident.

Healthy Outdoors

Today, people have a heightened interest in their quality of life and outdoor activities, access to nature based experiences and a growing desire to engage with the natural world. The rise of awareness of issues surrounding obesity, heart disease and lifestyle onset diabetes have led to substantial campaigns promoting the need for sufficient physical activity in our daily lives. Outdoor recreation activities offer a range of choices for people to meet this goal, but outdoor pursuits are not just a tool to meet the physical recommendations for movement; they provide multi-faceted benefits in health and wellbeing.

A range of studies demonstrate the **health, wellbeing and community benefits** that can arise from well designed and organised, or independent and casual, outdoor recreation engagements. These cover a breadth of physical and mental health benefits; as well as a suite of social, personal and environmental benefits that can result as seen in Table 1.

Health Benefit	Specific Benefits of Outdoor Recreation
Physical Health	Stress reduction; improved cardio functioning; reduction of obesity; increased muscular strength
Mental Health	Stress reduction; improved stress management; enhanced mood; reduced depression; improved sense of wellness
Personal Development	Enhanced sense of self; self-confidence, self-esteem etc; improved sense of independence & autonomy; greater awareness; awareness of new life priorities; learning; develop problem solving skills
Social Development	Better social networks; greater social support; greater sense of community; capacity for interdependence and cooperation; development of trust in others
Community Benefits	Economic benefit; greater altruism; more participative society; greater productivity
Environmental Benefit	Enhanced sense of responsibility for the environment; awareness of environment as part of self not just a playground

Table 1: Outdoor Recreation Benefits. Collated from Godbey, 2009; Dickson, Gray & Mann, 2008

In addition **just being outdoors** and engaging with nature can produce strong benefits. By spending time in nature, our minds are more at ease, our creativity is boosted and we are refreshed from being removed from the busyness of modern life (Lynch, 2012). Further, our restorative functioning is enhanced, and if we are outdoors, recreating in nature, the benefits can be amplified (See Table 2).

Health Benefit	Specific Benefit of Contact with Nature
Physical	Stress reduction including lowering heart rate & blood pressure; Reduction in muscle tension; Increased levels of physical activities – reduction in heart disease risk factors & increase immune functioning.
Mental	Improved self-awareness, esteem, concept, positively affected mood; reduction in negative feelings (anger, fear, frustration); better recovery from stress; alleviate symptoms of anxiety, depression; improved psychological health; restore concentration & attention
Spiritual	Feelings of peace, oneness, connection; reduced psychosis; reflection on personal values
Social	Sense of community, place, social ties; expanded social networks; enhanced social inclusion & cohesion; improved quality of life & neighbourhood satisfaction

Table 2: Benefits of Being in Nature. Adapted from Maller et al. 2005

The wider health returns of these activities are clear, but to act as a mitigating contributor to some of the very real health issues Australians face (see box below), they must become more deeply engrained as lifestyle choices.

- 70% of males and 56% of Australian females over the age of 18 are overweight or obese;
- obesity levels for six-year-olds have doubled in the past decade and for 15-year-olds, they have trebled (ABS, 2011-2012);
- one in eight boys and one in 10 girls aged between 11 and 17 have a diagnosed mental health problem;
- it is estimated that more than nearly half of all Australians (45.5%) aged 16-85 will experience a common mental health related condition in their lifetime (ABS, 2008);
- just a 1% drop in outdoor recreation participation could lead to a \$10 million annual increase in health costs (SEQ Catchments, 2010); and
- the top two causes of death in Australia are coronary heart disease and stroke.

Health & Outdoor Recreation	
Opportunities <i>Wellbeing/ QOL</i> <i>Marketing for social good</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor recreation activities can provide people with wellbeing and quality of life outcomes through the combination of open space, physical activity, break from routines, and social engagements. • There is the potential for outdoor recreation to be embedded in messages regarding healthy, active living & lifestyle, & to do so in non-competitive ways i.e. healthy activity is more than sport, gym, fitness groups etc.

<p>Challenges</p> <p><i>Lack of identity & public presence</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an apparent lack of acknowledgement of the benefits & value of outdoor recreation which delimits investment in infrastructure & outdoor promotional programs/ policy. • Outdoor recreation participation must become embedded in people's lifestyles and language, not seen as a fad. • A strong identity with the health agenda could dominate over other important motivations for participation in outdoor recreation.
<p>Actions</p> <p><i>Build message</i></p> <p><i>Articulate message</i></p> <p><i>Align with others</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly articulate the outdoor sector's wellbeing, quality of life and generic health benefits in marketing and promotion. This needs to be a drawcard for participation as fun, adventurous and enlivening; not as a cautionary message of ill health from not being involved. • Enhance outdoor sector ability to communicate health/ wellbeing benefits to government, community agencies, media & wider community. • Build working alliances with allied & alternate health providers – green prescriptions, heart foundation etc.

Adventurous Travel

Adventure tourism is one of the fastest growing market segments worldwide. And Queensland is evidently a desirable destination, with 28% of Australia's adventure travel taking place in this state equating to 5.3m trips in 2012. Nearly half of these experiences take place in South East Queensland (SEQ) (2.5m trips), with SEQ growing its domestic and international market share by 4% over the last five years (EC3 Global, 2013).

On top of this, in the developed world, people are demonstrating a desire to purchase *experiences* over products, and to have the services they are provided with be more personalised and unique, even if they are delivered *en masse* (CSIRO, 2012). Theoretically, people have more disposable income and on-demand services are increasing as access to digital information becomes more embedded. Within this context 'experiences' are desirable and it is these, not products, that make us happier and help **meet our needs for social connectedness** and feelings of being alive (San Francisco State University, 2009). When combined with a desire to also engage in some form of socially responsible tourism behaviours, the opportunities for adventure based and eco-tourism are substantial.

The trend for adventure based experiences can be seen in:

- a 3% growth in walking tourism in Queensland the last 5 years;
- Cycle holidays having increased by 25% in the domestic market and by 17% in the international market;
- Water-based adventure (such as kayaking, sailing, surfing and windsurfing) has increased by 14% Australia wide since 2008; and
- Domestic day trips for Four Wheel Driving increasing by 55% in Queensland, and 70% in SEQ in the last 5 years (EC3 Global).

Adventurous Travel & Outdoor Recreation	
<p>Opportunities</p> <p><i>Government priority</i></p> <p><i>Broaden Outdoor Recreation market</i></p> <p><i>Events</i></p> <p><i>Package our services differently</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased government interest in adventure based and eco-tourism is driving investment in, and access to, outdoor recreation spaces. • There is scope to broaden the market for traditional outdoor recreation/ education providers to include tourists, visitors & international students. • The sector needs to share (& market) deep, high quality experiences that have high interpretation output, with commercial clients. • Outdoor recreation participation & social value can expand through the provision of high quality, well organised Outdoor Events. • There is scope to work with land & water managers to promote the economic, health and community returns of well-located and serviced natural areas & regional trail networks (for the tour group and the free & independent traveller). • There is expressed demand for ease of participation & new ‘products’ could be welcomed. For example ‘adventure weekends’ at proximal locations, with provision of transport, equipment, accommodation options. i.e. Accommodation: national park/ Council camp site, Activity: local MTB club transport bikes of people/ families &/ or in association with Canoe Club who provide craft.
<p>Challenges</p> <p><i>More than tourism</i></p> <p><i>Well trained staff</i></p> <p><i>User Conflict</i></p> <p><i>Tailored experiences</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism data does not adequately capture all participants. Outdoor recreation needs to continue to seek research that reflects actual outdoor recreation participation outside of "tourism" contexts. • Recreation has always been ‘free’. For the outdoor sector to engage people’s desire for high end adventurous experiences the sector needs better training and business development. • Managing conflict between user groups while retaining the experience. • The tourism model does not necessarily reflect outdoor recreation participation and aspirations. Each activity has a specific culture with very complex interactions. • All users want a unique experience, not necessarily one shared with 5000 other people. This means that the multi-use format is not the panacea. There is still a need to tailor spaces & experiences for different user groups.
<p>Actions</p> <p><i>Develop Clear Messages</i></p> <p><i>Promote environmental care</i></p> <p><i>Engage with tourism</i></p> <p><i>Record our numbers</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate with government about how the development of quality outdoor recreation leaders, programs & infrastructure has, & can, support Qld’s ability to deliver quality tourism experiences. • Immerse participants in a positive ethic regarding caring for the environment, ‘sustainable’ use. The outdoors is not just a playground. • Develop a web based passport for children to demonstrate their outdoor experiences. These could be local, state or regional initiatives. • Engage with tourism providers and regional tourism offices to raise the profile of existing opportunities for participation in outdoor pursuits, places and experiences. • Outdoor recreation providers/ clubs/ operators to capture and report on number of participants, number of ‘bed/ camp’ nights, spend on local produce/ merchandise, fuel costs etc.

Every Child

Children who spend time outdoors are healthier, happier and more resilient. In addition, they may learn better in school, have better socialisation skills, have more chances to develop their strength, balance and coordination, and have fewer attention disorders (e.g. Bilton, 2010; Fjortoft, 2004; Godbey, 2009; Louv, 2005; Martin, 2011). Being outdoors and active helps children develop personally and socially, and assists with physical and mental health (Martin, 2011). In addition, children who interact with nature have a decreased risk of being overweight, are involved in more physical activity and are even likely to have better vision (Rose et. al., 2008; Wheeler, Cooper, Page & Jago, 2010).

More expansively there are strong educational reasons why children should learn through **outdoor education**. Research in Australia and overseas has shown that kids who learn through activities delivered outside the classroom are more likely to:

- be more engaged and enthusiastic in their learning;
 - have deeper learning that is retained longer;
 - have improved attendance and intrinsic motivation;
 - take greater pride and ownership of their accomplishments;
 - have reduced behavioural problems; and
 - have enhanced capacity to build their confidence and leadership skills.
- (e.g. Ballantyne, Packer & Everett, 2005; English Outdoor Council, 2012; Leiberman & Hoody, 1998)

These are fantastic outcomes however there are multiple forces and social mores that act against increasing outdoor opportunities for kids. These include an apparently litigious society and risk-averse social messages and policy making that identifies outdoor activities as high risk. On top of this there are concerns about the possibility of sustaining injury, and time and supervision constraints that impact on what families and schools choose to do that could build, or enable, children's outdoor play, experiences and pursuits.

Though the well regarded **biophilia hypothesis** purports that we have an inherent affinity with nature, and that our capacities to think, feel, communicate, create, and find meaning in life all depend upon our relationship to nature (Kellert, 2012), children's disconnection with this environment can be seen in the following worrying facts:

- Modern Children spend 90% of their days indoors;
- Children spend just 4 -7 minutes outside each day in unstructured outdoor play such as climbing trees, building forts, catching bugs. Yet they spend more than 7 hours each day in front of a 'screen' (National Wildlife Federation, 2011);
- Children have less chance to roam. In 1971, 80% of seven- and eight-year-olds walked to school, today fewer than 10% do; and
- Australian children are spending only one-tenth of their time in play, with 1 in 20 children never leaving the inside of their homes to play (Allen & Hammond, 2005).

Children's Outdoor Experiences & Outdoor Recreation	
Opportunities <i>Lifelong participation</i> <i>Engage</i> <i>Quality programming</i> <i>Policy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need to build and enable lifelong participation. A school camp experience is one moment in time, what is required are recreation pathways that build ongoing engagement. • Opportunities exist to work with schools, community & commercial settings that are open to childhood development considerations to develop deeply engaging experiences. • Some national research is investigating the quality and duration of outdoor programming to achieve best results. Opportunities exist to structure programs of sufficient known duration, challenge & frequency to deliver quality outcomes. • Current state government policy is focused on youth development & intervention to promote adventure based programming & therapy. Other program outcomes may gain credibility in this current climate.
Challenges <i>Recreation is not managed</i> <i>Lack of value</i> <i>Screen time</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much 'free' recreation & play is not making anyone any money. It is about participating, exploring, engaging, learning, experiencing, challenging, and at times, competing. Only things that are measured are managed. Only things that are managed are invested in. • There is an increasing range of competing expectations in schools (e.g. Naplan, ACARA) that reduce the delivery of outdoor recreation, education or the promotion of learning outside the classroom. • A focus on 'inside' and screen time delimits children's understanding and valuing of the outdoors as well as their capacity to develop self-esteem, physical & mental health, & character development.
Actions <i>Value research</i> <i>National Curriculum</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and promote a resource hub that collates research demonstrating the positive value of participation, learning & engagement in outdoor activities for children. • Promote learning outside the classroom in the National Curriculum through easily delivered teacher resources and/or student activity. • Develop resources, identify activities &/or apps that inspire children to get outdoors.

Which Space?

To a notable extent, the scope, frequency, duration and types of activities undertaken in our parks, waterways, national parks and state forests is largely unknown. The last Qld Outdoor Recreation Demand Study that explored participation and frequency was focused only on South East Queensland and was completed in 2007. Since that time:

- Queensland has welcomed, on average, 1000 new people to come and live each week, who may or may not have a social or historical interest in the outdoors as a contributor to liveability;
- we have experienced a global financial crisis leading to a reduction in spending, job losses, and a shift in household debt and saving;
- there has been more higher density living options developed, which increases pressures on urban, local parks; and

- Queensland went from experiencing years of great drought to experiencing years of severe flooding and cyclones, both of which impact on people's opportunities & desires to be outdoors and active.

Based on the existing general participation data that is available, it is known that picnicking, bushwalking and water activities attract high participation, and that cycling in off road, or 'natural' areas is increasing in appeal (Qld Government, 2007; Australian Sports Commission, 2001-2010). A recent Newspoll visitor survey for the Qld Parks and Wildlife Service showed that the most popular activities in the parks estate are outdoor recreation, namely:

- bushwalking (40%),
- swimming/ snorkelling/ SCUBA (23%),
- fishing (17%), and
- scenic drive/ sightseeing (16%) (Newspoll, 2012).

These findings generally match other studies which indicate that 17% of the Queensland population spends time recreationally fishing, prawning or crabbing (State of Queensland, 2012); and that 18% of Queenslanders ride a bicycle, with 69% of these doing so for recreational reasons (Australian Bicycle Council, 2011).

Though land is a recognised finite resource, issues of sufficient space are not limited to terrestrial environments. Over the years the media has highlighted the conflict arising on Gold Coast beaches as multiple surf craft and individuals compete for access to the same waves and beaches (e.g. Courier Mail, Feb 6, 2012). Surfers, boogie boarders, surf skis, and SUP's are vying to the same space. This competition is amplified by swimmers, jet skis and kayakers for example, all striving to enjoy their piece of our coastlines.

On land, trail bikes, mountain bikes, walkers and horse riders have a history of needing similar trail based landscapes, but they do not always easily share. This is due in part, to different speeds of participation, but each also seeks different qualities in their trails to make their activity most enjoyable. On top of this, other users want access to nature, but not trails (e.g. orienteers, rogainers); and outdoor recreation activities are at best a secondary use of our open spaces, with limited dedicated and protected locations for use.

As populations grow, and services and space becomes more in demand, one very real challenge is how to accommodate participants, providers and visitors; AND maintain the environmental quality of the spaces in demand.

Currently these issues are not being collectively identified, coordinated or managed and **access and accessibility** issues are rising. For example,

- people wish to engage with outdoor spaces, but their activity needs are not being met, or are not available 'out their front door';
- there is a scarcity of sufficient outdoor spaces to meet current and future demands, and reduced planning requirements to build quality green networks;

- little effort has been put into capturing the interest and engagement of the breadth of our society to broaden participation (e.g. access for people with a disability; engaging people from diverse cultural backgrounds); and
- solutions seem to be focused on moving the *people* to the *spaces*, with little consideration for the transport networks that enable this to easily occur – and without burning excessive fossil fuels.

Spatial Concerns & Outdoor Recreation	
Opportunities <i>Policy change</i> <i>Private land</i> <i>Trail care</i> <i>Local benefits</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a policy focus on increasing access. This can provide opportunities for outdoor recreation in our National Parks, State Forests and Marine Parks & hopefully on local government lands. • There remains a need to negotiate opportunities with private land holders to increase spaces for outdoor recreation purposes. • With ‘Friends of Parks’ and Trail Care opportunities more accessible, the outdoor sector have the opportunity to work with land and water managers to care for natural spaces. • There is increased willingness from local government authorities to recognise the social, economic and environmental returns of well-designed, and located, outdoor facilities in their regions.
Challenges <i>User conflict</i> <i>Transport</i> <i>Secondary land/ water use</i> <i>Lack of coordinated whole of landscape planning</i> <i>Lack of data to inform planning</i> <i>Multi use planning solutions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in commercial operations to meet the experiential demands of consumers could provide challenges for outdoor recreation. This may be in the form of user conflict as competing groups vie for the same spaces; or from an increase in people’s expectations of the outdoor experience as investment in facilities and activities increases. • Transport to and from outdoor recreation spaces cannot exclusively be met by private vehicle. This will put great impact on trailhead/ launch and staging areas to meet parking requirements, and excludes some people from meaningful participation. • Outdoor recreation remains a secondary use of land and water, thereby falling through the cracks in planning schemes, rather than being recognised as a core, contributing feature of a healthy, viable and connected communities. This means a) there is limited land zoned for outdoor recreation as a primary purpose, b) there is no coordinated planning and management across the breadth of tenures where outdoor recreation can or could occur, c) there is no long term planning, including urban design, transport corridors, or whole of landscape responses for outdoor recreation across the nation or the state, and d) there is no informed authority consulting with all interested groups managing conflicts, over-use issues, or identifying resources for in demand or hard to locate outdoor recreation. • There is a lack of clearly articulated & specific information for the economic & social benefits of integrating outdoor recreation into future planning. • There is a trend toward multi use planning, yet quality single use space is still critical & will become more so with higher user pressure.
Actions <i>Advocate</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to engage with the range of government departments & land/ water authorities to encourage a coordinated approach to planning and resourcing spaces for outdoor recreation (e.g. Health, DSDIP, NPRSR, LGA’s, DEH, Bulk Water Authorities, DTMR).

Capable People

People respond to good service. They like people who engage with them, and can provide them with experiences and opportunities they want to come back for. This does not mean that commercial gains are the predominant outcome, rather that clubs, associations, outdoor recreation centres, schools, retailers, not for profit community service providers, and program providers need to appreciate how to **best service** their clients. While free outdoor recreation remains a participatory desire at the heart of outdoor recreation, what will allow the sector to have greater voice and capacity to deliver will be great outdoor leaders delivering enticing activities through well designed programs that are engagingly marketed.

People who understand and can take others into the outdoors are valuable commodities. They are the face of the outdoors – the person who keeps the experience safe, who teaches participants to ‘do it yourself’, who enable the experience, who open up a new hobby, career, awareness or lifestyle. They are people who make the outdoors accessible and meaningful.

Currently in Queensland, the opportunities for great training are not always clear, affordable, timely or sufficient. In the last decade we have:

- lost any tertiary training specific to the outdoor sector (outdoor recreation, outdoor education or adventure based therapy);
- seen public sector training reduced from 3 to 1 TAFE, providing Vocational Education Training in outdoor recreation;
- lost private RTO’s as subsidised training decreases and compliance requirements increase;
- been exposed to a reduction in government funding support for school based trainees in outdoor recreation;
- experienced a disconnect between the training package for outdoor recreation and the sectors expectations; and
- had online delivery of certification being promoted as a desirable and meaningful delivery platform for outdoor recreation skills based training.

Though outdoor recreation activities are a tool in the delivery of outdoor and experiential education; community recreation programs; adventure and eco-tourism; and intervention programs for youth at risk, there is little coordinated training across these sectors. In addition, there are high fees for training delivery, low pays for workers, and a reducing pool of opportunity for qualified staff to emerge from a strong framework of education and training for the sector.

What the outdoors needs is a well-developed, effective sector that supports the ‘business’ of the outdoors and that meets shared standards and safety management processes.

Leadership Capability & Outdoor Recreation	
Opportunities <i>Share</i> <i>Highlight economic benefits</i> <i>Promote training</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek synergies to can share training costs and certification outcomes with tourism, adventure therapy and outdoor recreation. • The wider economic and social significance of outdoor recreation could provide leverage to convince training and funding agencies of the importance of funded training for the outdoor sector. • Engaging young people with quality outdoor experiential programs, as well as well connected & delivered Cert II's in Outdoor Recreation, may lead to a greater demand for outdoor recreation, education & tourism guide training.
Challenges <i>Decline in skill</i> <i>Loss of confidence</i> <i>Funding</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Without capable leaders on all spectrums of delivery the experience declines & risk management concerns increase. • There is an expressed loss of confidence in fee for service training providers and the training outcomes from the VET system. This delimits interest, credibility & desire for rewarding people with these qualifications & restricts demand & interest. • A loss of subsidised/ priority funding will amplify the sectors discontent with VET.
Actions <i>Communicate</i> <i>Define</i> <i>Pathways</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate the need for quality trained guides, instructors & sector leaders. • Define & explain the intentions & outcomes of different training pathways for the outdoor sector to raise awareness & knowledge of employers & to set reasonable expectations for graduates. • Identify & articulate actual and possible, training & career pathways in the outdoor sector.

What is needed?

The outdoor sector has recognised that it lacks cohesion, a strong voice in the community, and that it includes elements of competing interests. It also recognises it is a valuable and important contributor to wellbeing, lifestyle, development and learning, but it lacks a clear message that is consistently and appealingly 'marketed' externally. The days of quietly delivering services and opportunities only to people who choose to tap into the outdoors must evolve. As a sector there is a need to recognise that the world has changed and will continue to do so. To be relevant the outdoor sector needs to be seen, and a more coordinated approach must be taken to address the changing needs of participants:

We need help creating an identity. We've got to be marketed like a pizza - with different slices. The image and what we portray is critical so we can be seen and we can be heard. It is time for us to be cool. Hardcore, even. We need to allow people to know that even if they have never surfed, or ridden, or paddled before, they can feel and be part of the experience ... And they want to be.

Big Ideas for the Outdoors Forum Table Group

Key Priorities

Repeatedly, core actions have been identified that could enhance the capacity for people to participate in outdoor pursuits and for the sector to deliver quality services and experiences. Building on the concepts discussed in the first part of this document, and informed by the outdoor sector, some key priority actions are described below.

- **Outdoor recreation needs to be Convenient and Compelling.**

For outdoor recreation to be convenient for people to access and desirable to do, two key actions are required:

1. The sector needs to work with media and social channels of **communication** to clearly articulate its value, benefits, welcome and relevance to the wider community. This can allow it to be prized, recognised and supported as a legitimate and desirable land/ water use and pastime. For growth to occur and for opportunities to emerge outdoor experiences need to be normalised activities for the community and a compelling part of everyday living for Queenslanders and visitors.

2. Outdoor recreation opportunities need to be **proximal** to population/s, easy to access and supported by **infrastructure** (green and built). With predicted population growth putting pressure on open spaces and waterways; an increasing awareness of the health benefits of physical activity and how these are amplified in natural spaces; and recognised social pressures that lead to the time fragmented lifestyles of modern society, there is a need to:

- a) ensure people are **aware** of the spaces and activities close to their homes/ workplaces;
- b) enable people to access these locations easily. This may mean additional attention is paid to **transport infrastructure** and modes of transport (e.g. cycle paths to trailheads; public transport nodes near outdoor recreation hubs; reduced costs for bus hire and transportation etc), and support infrastructure and information is available to attract and enable participation (e.g. signage, mapping, promotional information);
- c) remove **barriers to investment** in outdoor recreation centres and businesses, and constraints to private landholders sharing their spaces for public recreation (e.g. insurance issues, public liability, zoning and road upgrade costs);
- d) provide **easy access** to the equipment or services that people may seek in order to actively engage. This may include ensuring there is adequate parking at trailheads or outdoor recreation hubs; provision of select equipment hire at sites (e.g. canoes, bikes, camping gear); and the introduction of shuttle transport options for example; and
- e) be a relevant voice in the planning cycles such that outdoor activities, spaces and programs are **coordinated and well managed** components of the planning and investment for Queensland.

- **Build the Sectors Capacity**

1. *Research.*

To demonstrate value, to inform best practice and to enhance the sectors capacity to deliver there is a need to understand not only who is already participating, in what forms, for how long and where; but also what actions or messages can build participation, ensure latent demand is being addressed, and can inform best practice design of programs, experiences and products that make the most difference in outcome. This means that outdoor participation needs to be actively and specifically measured; outdoor programs and events need to be monitored and reviewed; constraints and barriers need to be determined for different community groups; and the educational, social, economic, environmental, spiritual and personal benefits need to be identified, measured and understood for their contributions to resilient, healthy lifestyles and personal development.

2. *Workforce Development.*

Support is needed to empower those who work in the sector (for fee or for free) to enhance their knowledge, skills and ability to achieve organisational goals and to build the skills and capacity of the sector to work with communities or clients. Currently technical skill training is available through select industry accreditation and certification within the VET system. With regularity, the quality, scope and output of these programs are challenged in terms of their capacity to create well rounded, successful, work-ready outdoor leaders. Regardless of the reality or consistency of the flaws in these training opportunities, it is evident there is not a breadth of training and education pathways specifically for the outdoor sector, and the critique of existing training is indicative of a wider call for:

- a. **deeper learning** and educational opportunities relevant to outdoor sector workers; and
- b. the development, delivery and promotion of organisational and sector **career pathways**.

3. *Organisational and Business Development.*

The businesses and organisations that deliver outdoor activities need to be supported to understand opportunities, build market share, promote services, support staff, and manage budgets so they are planning and acting for growth and development, not for survival and compliance. Predominantly the sector in Queensland is run by volunteers or delivered through small businesses which struggle to find the time, or access the resources, to develop or build the services they provide. In addition, some do not realise the role they can play by working with others, to offer greater opportunities for their communities or clients. Until there is some priority placed on outdoor recreation for public policy, as well as social marketing and accessible funding, this situation will continue, and sector capacity to respond to change will be piecemeal.

What is needed is *targeted* support that addresses the sectors disparate and particular business needs, which include, in order of reported need:

- Marketing
- Business Development/ Planning
- Governance
- Financial Management
- Risk Management

(QORF, 2012).

- **Engage Across the Community**

Outdoor recreation is not for any one group, location, demographic. Rather it can, and should, be the domain of all.

Queensland is a diverse and multicultural society. We are made up of rich and poor, young and (increasingly) old, English and non-English speaking communities, people who live with the natural environment and those disconnected from it. While some outdoor recreation requires equipment, much can be done with few resources, or just a little imagination. A bushwalk requires just a treed landscape; camping, a location and a tarp to create shelter; parkour can be done using any resources or infrastructure; swimming needs a creek, beach or waterhole. In essence, while these should all be cheap and available options to the majority of our citizens – not all people experience access in that way.

The outdoor sector needs to explore and address the barriers preventing wider participation.

How does it help increase access to, and awareness of, outdoor environments so people can outdoor recreate?

How should it market services or programs to people from diverse backgrounds?

How can the sector package and promote in ways that make outdoor experience viable options for the time pressed individual; the single parent family; the new migrant; or urbanised youth?

What is needed is policy and practice that ensures sustainable transport networks or green corridor access to our outdoor recreation locations. The poor, the young, the old, the disconnected, the new Queenslander, the rural and remote, are all impacted in their access to outdoor space by reliance on private vehicles. This could be alleviated by a focus on sustainable journeys to locations; as well as well managed spaces for people to outdoor recreate.

There is also a need for the sector to shape and market services as socially inclusive. Not only should camping be a cheap, healthy, engaging holiday option for everyone to enjoy; but the connection between health and wellbeing, and the outdoors and recreation, need to be relevant to the wider population. This comes, in part, from having well designed and accessible urban, outdoor spaces. It comes from a diversification of outdoor opportunities and infrastructure in regional areas that are not restricted to those with private vehicles and a capacity to pay for access. It also comes from a welcoming message from providers and participants to encourage others to become involved.

Conclusion

Sitting is the new Smoking – it's bad for us in ways that we haven't entirely grasped and with repercussions that are yet to be seen.

Cycling is the new Golf – as a growth activity, the various versions of cycling is seeing expansion that rivals the popularity of golf in its heyday, but with wider demographic appeal & accessibility.

Experience is the new Currency – people don't just want to consume, they want to have experiences. In our time-constrained, developed society, experiences are a desirable commodity.

Throughout the developed world there are consistent indicators that demonstrate social drivers of change. For example, while there are elements of financial distress in Queensland, there is also greater financial stability (Australian Government, 2011) and a capacity from the population to spend more on their leisure and experiences. At the same time convenience is paramount as time pressures fuel people's desires to access information, experiences and resources promptly, and often in quite a consumptive way – that is, people *buy* the experience they are seeking. It is evident that outdoor recreation is sufficiently diverse that many people can find a desirable or appealing experience, place or activity, but to be viable and visible it also needs to be inviting, proximal, relevant, accessible, and welcoming.

This can only be done by addressing the balance between participation and the impacts of outdoor experiences on natural environments. Increasingly there is discussion of environmental custodianship that recognises the relevance of outdoor participation, in synergy with conservation goals. To achieve this however requires mindful engagement and management so outdoor recreation and related experiences are integrated with conservation outcomes and ecosystems, so landscapes and marine environments can be accessed and managed appropriately.

Not everyone wants to outdoor recreate. Not everyone wants to be in 'nature'. However, the known benefits should be available to the breadth of our community, and the potential to glean these returns should not be exclusive. Too often outdoor recreation is seen as the preserve of the white, middle classes who have time for leisure, paid vacations and 2.1 children. More expansively there is a need to find ways to engage with the breadth of our ethnic and socio-demographic groups, so more people value and reap the reward from being active in the outdoors, connected to their communities, and have the desire, skills and knowledge to be positive stewards for the environment.

Part of this process is also about advocating for the provision of different environments and appropriate locations for outdoor activities. The majority of Queenslanders do live in the South East corner of the State. Proximal and accessible outdoor recreation needs to be through the use of local parks and reserves and incorporated in daily routines. Proximity to local parks, waterways, and other outdoor recreation resources is critical across the state for increasing opportunity for participation, and for providing a range of activities to meet people's immediate and varying recreational needs. Regional solutions then support these everyday opportunities, allowing more complex, 'hard to locate' activities to be provided for.

Finally and personally, as a sector, we need to care less about what we are called, and more about what we do. We need to focus on how we make a difference and who we are telling our stories to. We need to be less defined by our titles as recreators, educators, guides or therapists; and more mindful of how others engage with what we are about. We differ through the activities we do, the outcomes we strive to achieve and/or the product we are 'selling'. But we are alike in that we want more people able to positively experience the outdoors and, for most, to be active more often.

It shouldn't matter whether that is urban or rural, wilderness or local park, land or water; whether it is a long walk, short ride or big climb; or whether it is tourism, education, competition or play. If we are going to appeal, if we are going to make a difference, if we are going to be something that people identify with, and aspire to be a part of, value and support, we have to represent an accessible message of experiences, health, fun, lifestyle and growth.

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