



# Sustaining enjoyment of protected areas, forests and wildlife

Goal 9 **Promoting sustainable recreation  
on land and sea**

Goal 10 **Supporting authentic and sustainable  
tourism experiences**



## Goal 9

# Promoting sustainable recreation on land and sea

Encourage people to enjoy and experience a diverse range of contemporary and sustainable recreation opportunities on protected areas and forests.

## Why is this important?

Experiences with nature play a vital role in human health, wellbeing and development. A growing body of research shows that more contact with nature improves physical and psychological health, and green areas such as protected areas and forests encourage active outdoor activities<sup>17</sup>. Recreation in a natural setting offers a powerful antidote to the effects of obesity, depression and sedentary lifestyles.

Protected areas and forests provide the most significant resource in Queensland for people seeking a wide range of recreation experiences. Some visitors seek an easy, safe and comfortable experience with nature, some want to be immersed in wild, undeveloped places and others want to experience nature through active and challenging pursuits including bushwalking, sailing, mountain-biking and kayaking.

Outdoor recreation contributes to the health and wellbeing of the community, and also provides a direct economic benefit to regional communities. For example, Queensland's marine parks and island national parks attract many visitors to the state. These protected areas protect the resilience of marine life, while also providing continued opportunities for activities such as diving, boating and fishing.

National, state and regional surveys consistently show that more people participate in outdoor recreation than

in organised sports. However, participation in outdoor recreation has changed in some regions as a result of extended retail trading hours, new technologies that have changed recreation choices and fuel costs.

QPWS is committed to enhancing the health and wellbeing of communities by providing opportunities to enjoy outdoor recreation and the natural environment. QPWS provides and maintains significant outdoor recreation infrastructure in all parts of the state, including camp grounds, walking tracks, picnic areas and many other facilities. It also provides interpretive services to help people connect with nature (see Goal 7).

In Queensland, population growth is an important issue for maintaining and enhancing accessible and diverse opportunities for outdoor recreation. This is particularly the case in growing regions such as South East

**'Even in our increasingly urbanised lives, most people still have a strong need to 'touch green', to immerse themselves in a natural space... These natural spaces often become our favourite places, having special meaning in our lives. They are crucial to our sense of wellbeing.'**

John Landy. Parks Forum, 2008, The Value of Parks. IUCN WCPA and the People and Parks Foundation.

17 Gies E, 2006, The Health Benefits of Parks. The Trust for Public Land, California.



Courtesy of Tourism Queensland

Queensland where the human population is expected to increase almost 60 per cent from 2006 to 2031. Other challenges facing QPWS in promoting and managing sustainable recreation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century include:

- the need to balance visitor needs with conservation, so that recreation is sustainable and preserves the values that people come to enjoy.
- changing patterns of recreational use and cultural expectations, such as people travelling with much larger camp set-ups, more people camping for shorter periods, and people seeking new and challenging forms of recreation.
- the varying demands and needs for recreational opportunities in different regions and across different socio-economic groups.
- the responsibility to promote visitor safety while not interfering unnecessarily with people's right to take some risks in environments which are not always predictable.

Planners for outdoor recreation need to take a whole-of-landscape approach and consider the full spectrum of areas that are available and most suitable for different activities. This will help ensure that recreation on protected areas and forests complements opportunities available in other 'off-park' areas such as those managed by local governments and private enterprise. It will also ensure that the lifestyle, health and wellbeing benefits of outdoor recreation are maximised for everyone.

In some regions protected areas and forests may be the only settings where people can gain ready access to natural environments or to pursue their favourite recreational past time. For example, snorkelling on a pristine reef or climbing a cliff face are not activities that can be done anywhere. Striking a balance of providing recreation opportunities on and off-park and between public and private environments will ensure a diversity of opportunities in appropriate settings—the right activity in the right place.

The level of access and facilities, and the range of recreational activities that are made available in protected areas and forests will therefore vary based on whole-of-landscape planning.

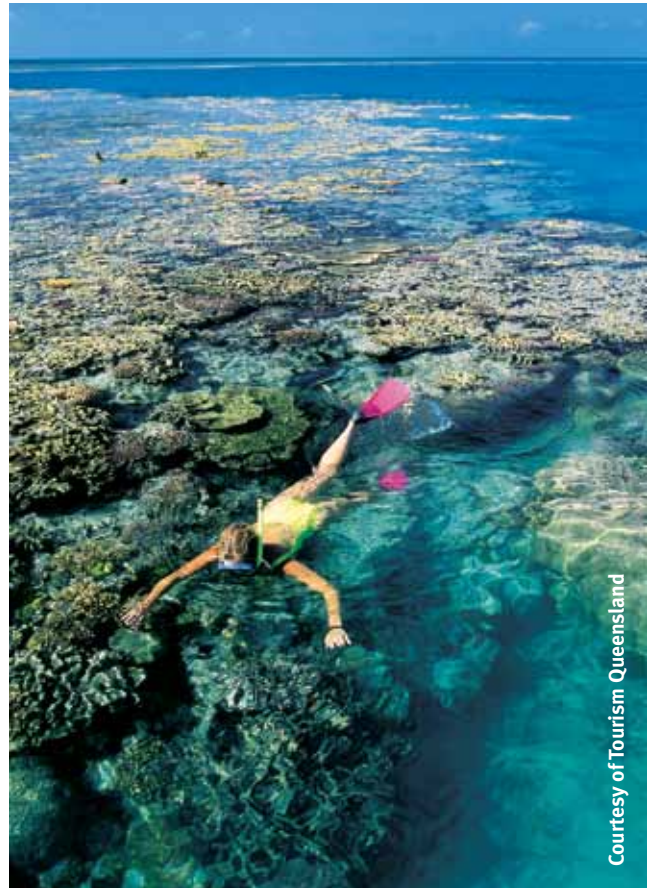
Across both the marine and terrestrial environments, it will be important that QPWS continues to work with other agencies, land managers, outdoor recreation providers and the community to specify where particular activities can occur.

Contemporary management and science is also helping to determine sustainable thresholds for visitor use in order to preserve the unique natural and cultural values of a place. Supported by detailed management planning, zoning and monitoring, a range of recreation experiences are likely to co-exist in harmony with the natural and cultural environment.

# What is our approach?

A diverse range of sustainable opportunities will be provided for Queenslanders and other people to experience and enjoy wildlife, protected areas and forests. QPWS will:

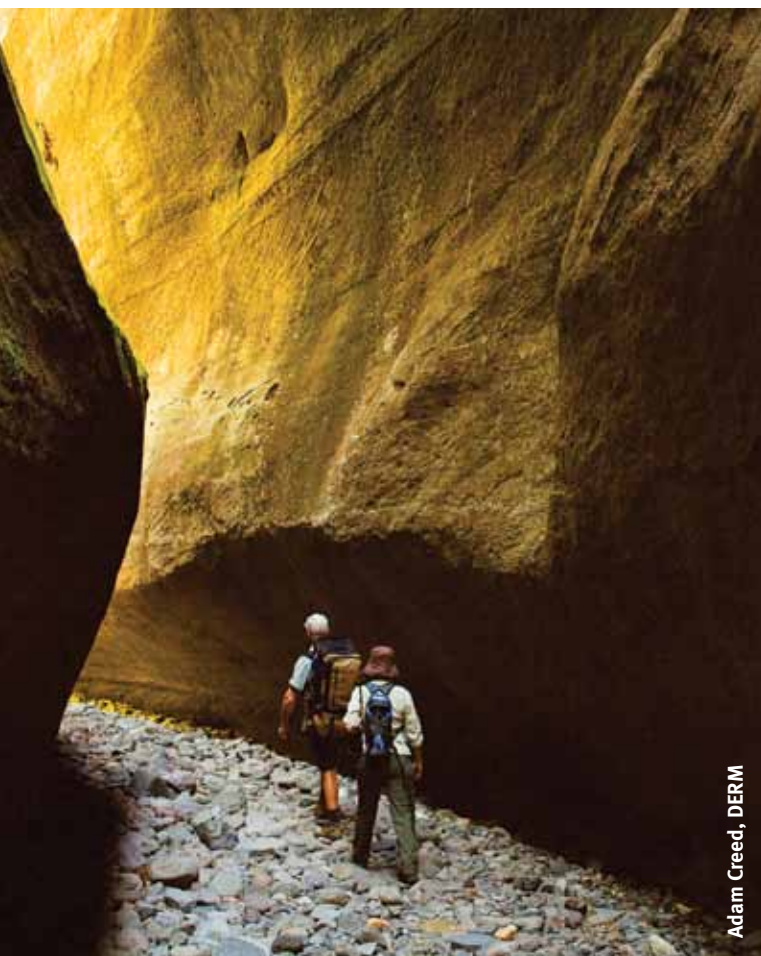
- play a positive role in enhancing the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders and visitors by providing a diverse range of safe and sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities attuned to community needs.
- consider and consult with traditional owners to ensure that visitor opportunities align with and support indigenous aspirations for country.
- partner with recreational industry groups, local government and other State departments to inform practice, identify opportunities and meet community aspirations based on a whole-of-landscape approach.
- strategically plan and manage protected areas and forests across the state and within each region to maintain and provide a wide range of settings for outdoor recreational experiences, from remote and undeveloped to the more developed.



- consider environmental, economic and social sustainability in determining appropriate recreational use of protected areas and forests.
- provide high standard visitor facilities that cater for a broad range of outdoor recreational needs and are located, designed, constructed and maintained in accordance with appropriate building standards and practices.
- encourage visitors to take personal responsibility for their safety. Ensure visitors are aware of potential hazards, the level of skill they require to negotiate protected area or forest experiences safely and the consequences of unsafe behaviour.
- identify and implement ways to restore safe access to closed sites, through regular review, mitigation strategies, information and awareness.

**Sustainable** is defined in the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* as 'maintaining the life support system of nature' and 'ensuring that the benefits of the use to present generations does not diminish the potential to meet the needs and aspirations of future generations'.

- ▲ Snorkelling on the Great Barrier Reef provides an outstanding recreational opportunity and also supports the local and state economy.
- ▲ Contact with nature improves mental and physical health. Here bushwalkers explore Carnarvon National Park.



# What we will do: priorities for 2020



DERM

## 9.1 Provide contemporary and sustainable recreational opportunities on protected areas and forests.

- a) Develop a QPWS visitor management strategy that considers the current and future directions for recreational opportunities in Queensland protected areas and forests.
- b) Develop site specific or regional recreation strategies for protected areas and forests that describe the direction for infrastructure and facility provision, visitor experience, and the mitigation of impacts on natural and cultural values.
- c) Develop a simple, user-friendly categorisation system that helps the public to easily find a suitable protected area or forest for their recreational activity.
- d) Implement contemporary and innovative regulatory mechanisms that support sustainable recreation pursuits on protected areas and forests.
- e) Use a volunteer base such as the Friends of Parks and recreational interest groups to support recreation asset maintenance and monitoring of impacts.
- f) Identify existing and potential recreation opportunities on new protected areas and during tenure conversion processes. Consider and plan for these in the gazettal process.

## 9.2 Achieve best practice recreation management in Queensland's protected areas and forests.

- a) Work with outdoor recreation groups and users to develop codes of conduct that reduce permit administration and promote industry best practice behaviour and standards.
- b) Develop and implement an integrated system of visitor monitoring to better understand current and future recreational use patterns and visitor impacts and to ensure effective resource allocation.
- c) Develop and implement an integrated system of documenting recreational use in protected areas and forests to facilitate planning, adaptive management and the identification of potential opportunities.
- d) Improve and maintain visitor risk policies in accordance with international standards and contemporary applied research.
- e) Continue to promote visitor safety through facilities, education and other innovative management and risk mitigation strategies.
- f) Apply the landscape classification system from the Site Planning and Design Manual to all visitor sites and ensure that all facilities and infrastructure meet these standards.
- g) Provide information to promote safe, sustainable recreation on protected areas and forests (see Goal 7).