

# Northern Territory Visitor Economy Strategy 2032



Discussion paper



Visitor economy to power the Territory's future



# Contents

Message from the Minister .....	3
Introduction by Paul Ah Chee .....	4
The opportunity ahead.....	5
Building the Strategy .....	6
A holistic view of the Territory's visitor economy.....	7
A starting point for our shared vision .....	8
The value of the Northern Territory visitor economy.....	9
The Northern Territory visitor economy.....	11
The Northern Territory's distinctive advantages .....	12
Critical product and experiences.....	13
Seeking your views and contributions .....	14
NT Visitor Economy Strategy 2032 survey.....	14

# Message from the Minister



The Northern Territory's Visitor Economy Strategy 2032 (the Strategy) sets a bold vision to grow a thriving, year-round visitor economy that reflects the Territory's unique character, leverages our world-class natural and cultural assets, and delivers lasting benefits for our communities.

Co-designed with industry, government, and regional partners, the Strategy builds on our recent growth in tourism. It broadens the lens to the whole visitor economy, recognising its role in driving regional development, creating jobs, and strengthening the Territory's economic resilience.

Our distinct advantage lies in the stories we tell, the landscapes we preserve, and the experiences we create. From the vast beauty of our iconic national parks to the vibrancy of our urban centres, and our proximity to Asia's fastest growing markets, the Territory is uniquely positioned to capture new opportunities and attract more visitors, more often.

## The Strategy focuses on three interconnected priorities:

- › Celebrating our character through showcasing the depth of our nature, culture, military history and creativity to deliver real and distinctive events and experiences.
- › Maximising our location via leveraging our role as Australia's northern gateway to Asia to grow international markets, boost connectivity, and strengthen our position in global tourism networks.
- › Driving sustainable growth by balancing increased visitation together with preserving our natural and cultural heritage and military history, ensuring benefits flow to future generations.

This Strategy is about action and collaboration. It sets clear priorities to expand access, reduce seasonality, diversify experiences and enhance the Territory's reputation as a must-visit destination. Achieving its vision will require our government, industry, regional communities and visitors to work together, invest in innovation, and embrace our shared responsibility for a prosperous future.

The Strategy outlines our plan to welcome more visitors and build a stronger economy that benefits all Territorians. I look forward to working with you to make this commitment a reality and to deliver short, medium and long-term opportunities for Territorians.

**The Hon Marie-Claire Boothby**  
MLA, Minister for Tourism and Hospitality

# Introduction by Paul Ah Chee



As Chairperson of the Tourism Northern Territory Board of Commissioners I'm very excited to introduce the Northern Territory Visitor Economy Strategy 2032 discussion paper and invite you to be part of its creation.

The Northern Territory Government is committed to rebuilding the economy and restoring our lifestyle, and the visitor economy is a priority industry in terms of powering the Territory's future.

I am a proud Territorian of Yankunytatjara, Wankangurru and Arrernte descent from Alice Springs who has been involved with the Territory tourism industry for over 25 years. I'm incredibly positive about the future of Aboriginal cultural tourism. Our care and connection to lands, water and country is what many international and interstate visitors seek out, in fact 80 per cent of visitors believe the Northern Territory is a place to connect with Aboriginal culture.

From Uluru-Kata Tjuta to Kakadu, our Territory is book-ended by two world famous heritage listed natural and cultural icons and encompasses Litchfield, Nitmiluk, the Barkly and the fantastic MacDonnell Ranges. It is our parks and regions that sets us apart, strengthening our destination appeal. Together, we are keen to explore areas that have the greatest potential to drive sustainable, year-round visitation, and support growth across our regions for all Territorians.

Your participation in our discussion paper process will help shape the next chapter of the NT's visitor economy and guide how we grow, invest and tell our unique story in the years ahead.

We encourage your participation and views – your passion and inspired ideas will help build opportunity and prosperity for all of us.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large loop and a few trailing strokes.

**Paul Ah Chee**

Chairperson, Tourism Northern Territory Board of Commissioners



# The opportunity ahead

## More visitors, stronger economy and communities, better lifestyle

The Northern Territory's visitor economy is one of our most powerful levers for achieving the Territory's priorities — from **rebuilding the economy** to strengthening communities and **restoring our lifestyle**.

Travel trends are working in our favour. People want space, nature, culture, and experiences that mean something. From our iconic parks and landscapes to events that bring communities together, stories shaped over thousands of years to new experiences being created every day, the Territory offers visitors something they can't find anywhere else.

With tourism, events and parks together under one portfolio, we can tell a bigger, more connected story – and make sure our investment in experiences, infrastructure and marketing works harder. We can make sure the things we do to grow visitation also make life better for Territorians.

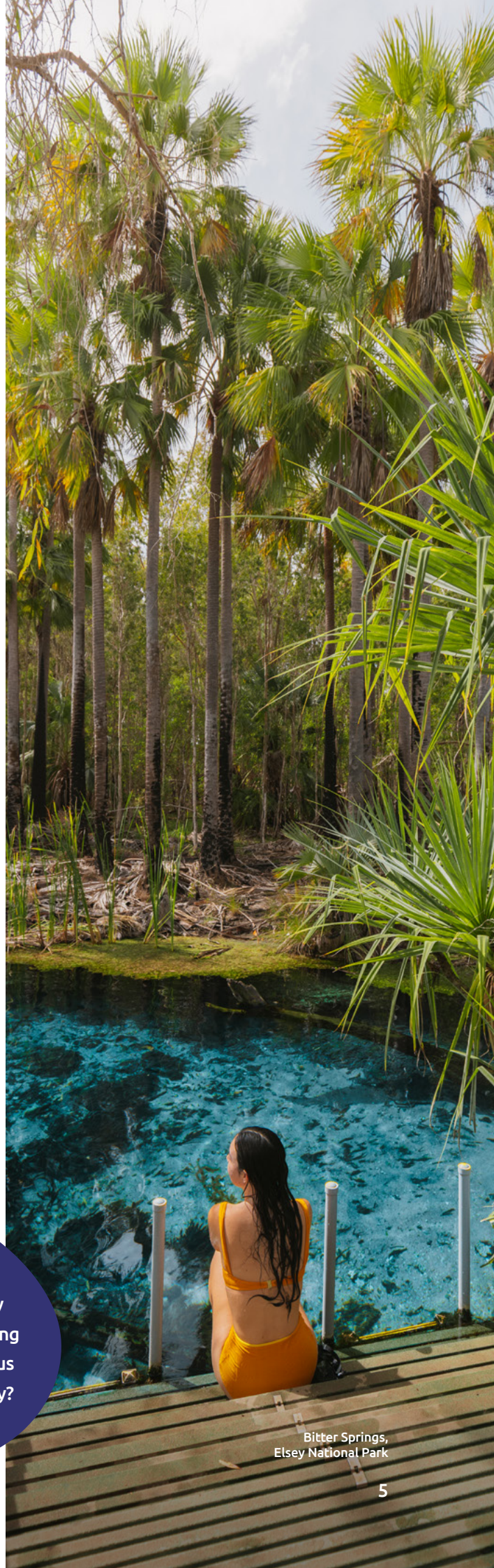
A strong visitor economy does more than bring travellers here. It supports jobs, keeps communities vibrant, helps fund the places and facilities we all use and makes the Territory an even better place to live.

It's a catalyst for regional growth, cultural keeping, and attracting new residents.

Now is the moment to build a shared plan – one that focuses our energy on what matters most, plays to our strengths, and helps the NT grow in a way that benefits all Territorians.



What's one thing that could make this Strategy really stand out, something that genuinely moves us forward as an industry?



Bitter Springs,  
Elsey National Park



## Building the Strategy

Designed together.  
Delivered together.

This Strategy will be shaped by the people who know the Territory best — and who are investing in its future. This includes the operators creating unforgettable visitor experiences, the communities who host them, and the organisations working to grow the Territory's reach. It also includes those beyond the NT who have a stake in its success – national partners, investors and advocates who see the value of a strong Territory visitor economy.

We're building a practical, long-term plan that reflects the Territory's identity, plays to our strengths, and sets a clear direction we can deliver on, together. Your ideas, experience and input are essential.

Discussions with local and national stakeholders have informed our approach to developing the Strategy and the preparation of this discussion paper.

We want to make it easy for you to have your say. We will be **hosting local workshops** across the Territory and Tourism Top End and Tourism Central Australia will also each hold a **townhall session**.

You can also provide your input through our **online survey**, through a **written submission** or by sending us a **short video** – your voice will help build a strategy we can all stand behind.

The discussion paper features **five key questions** to channel your inputs.

What's something that's working well right now, either in your organisation or across the NT, that we should build on?



## Visitor Economy Strategy 2032 timeline



# A holistic view of the Territory's visitor economy

From Top End festivals to Red Centre escapes, business trips to family reunions, every visit contributes to a stronger NT and the vibrancy of the Territory lifestyle.

Holidaymakers have long been at the heart of the Northern Territory's tourism story and they remain a cornerstone of our visitor economy.

But the picture is bigger. It also includes people visiting friends and family, on business trips, attending conferences and major events and festivals, those travelling to work, including defence personnel, and international students.

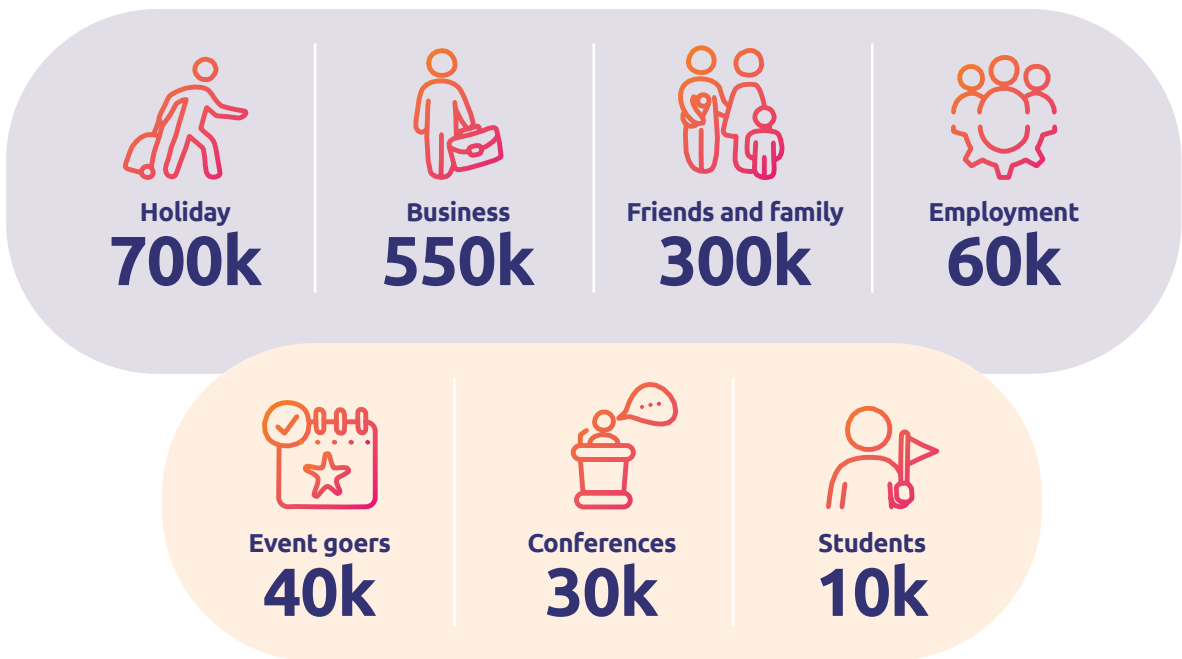
Together, they make up a visitor economy that touches every part of the Territory, supporting



jobs, sustaining local businesses, strengthening communities, and bringing new energy and opportunities.

Taking a whole-of-visitor-economy view recognises its full value and ensures we plan and invest collaboratively for a future where all parts of the system can grow, diversify and thrive.

## Northern Territory total trips 2024





# A starting point for our shared vision

Co-designed long-term Visitor Economy Strategy, endorsed and owned by partners and stakeholders — to drive year-round visitation, leveraging the Territory's unique character and iconic parks and landscapes for sustainable development and growth.



What changes are you seeing in the types of visitors coming, or the types of experiences they are looking for?



# The value of the Northern Territory visitor economy

## Powering jobs, businesses and the Territory's economy

The visitor economy is a critical part of the Northern Territory's economy, even more so in regional areas. It generates billions in annual spend, supports thousands of jobs, brings in investment, sustains small businesses and plays a key role in helping bring major projects to life.

**Tourism contributes \$2.5 billion in gross value** added to the Territory's economy and as a key service export earner delivers **\$600 million**.

### **The visitor economy also contributes to the liveability and lifestyle of the Territory.**

The facilities, services and experiences built for visitors are often the same ones used and loved by locals. A strong visitor economy means stronger communities, more vibrant towns, and greater opportunities for Territorians to live, work and stay in the NT.





## Quick economic facts

Total Spend<sup>1</sup>

**\$1.5bn**

Spend Per Capita<sup>1,2</sup>

**\$5,683\***

Percentage of  
business and total  
businesses<sup>4</sup>

**21%**

as share of total  
employing businesses

Tourism Filled Jobs<sup>3</sup>

**17,000**

**1,434**  
employing tourism  
businesses

Tourism Exports<sup>3</sup>

**\$600m\*\***

**2,525**

total tourism  
businesses

Gross Value Added<sup>3</sup>

**\$2.5bn**

(7.9% of Territory GVA)

1. Tourism Research Australia, Domestic Tourism Statistics and International Visitor Survey, Year Ending March 2025.

2. ABS, National, State and Territory Population, Year Ending December 2024.

3. Tourism Research Australia, Tourism Satellite Account, Year Ending June 2024.

4. Tourism Research Australia, Tourism Businesses, Year Ending June 2024.

\* Includes overnight Intra-Territory, Interstate and International spending

\*\* Based on purchaser's price for international visitors.





# The Northern Territory visitor economy

## By the numbers, the visitor economy at a glance

The Northern Territory visitor economy continues to build momentum, with the most recent data showing visitors spent **\$1.5 billion** in the Territory, with **1.1 million trips** and **8.2 million nights** by interstate and international visitors and trips by Territorians<sup>1</sup>.

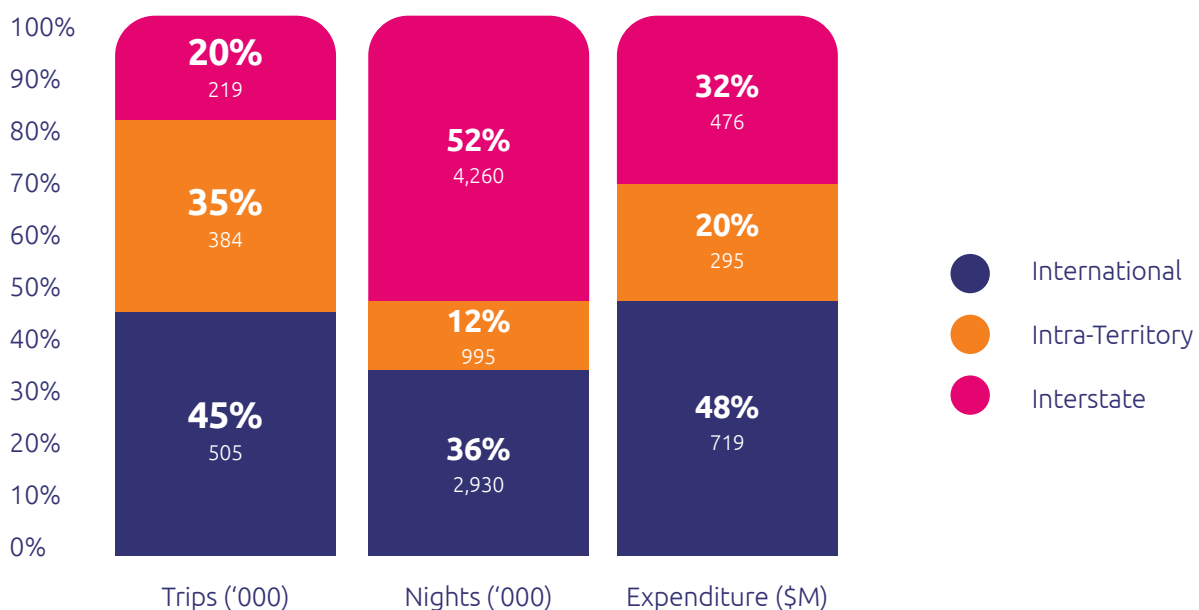
International visitation is a key source of high yield visitors.

Interstate trips rose 9% year-on-year, with nights up 6%. International visitation grew 10%, with an uplift in all five of the NT's top source markets. Travel by Territorians was also strong, with trips up 16%.

Seasonal peaks continue and initiatives to attract visitors year-round, through events, business travel and improved access, are contributing to stronger shoulder season performance.

Understanding the size, shape and trends of our visitor economy is essential to setting the right priorities, targeting investment and ensuring benefits flow across the Territory.

## Northern Territory – Overnight Trips



<sup>1</sup> Year ending March 2025, Tourism Research Australia Domestic Tourism Statistics and International Visitor Survey





How do we elevate  
what's unique to the  
Territory?

# The Northern Territory's distinctive advantages

The Northern Territory offers experiences, landscapes, and lifestyle found nowhere else. Many of these strengths are globally recognisable and deeply appealing, and with the right focus, they can play an even greater role in setting the Territory apart. At the heart of it all are the people and stories that shape these experiences, adding authenticity, warmth and a character that can only be found here.



## Aboriginal culture at the heart of the Northern Territory

The NT is home to the world's oldest continuous cultures, with Aboriginal people custodians of Country and culture for tens of thousands of years. Visiting the NT means connecting with stories, art, language and traditions that cannot be found anywhere else, guided and shared by those who live them every day.



## Iconic parks as world-class assets

From Kakadu and Litchfield to Nitmiluk, Uluru-Kata Tjuta and Watarrka, the NT's national parks are among the most recognised and celebrated landscapes in the world. They are central to our tourism identity, driving visitation and offering nature-based experiences that are real, immersive and unforgettable.



## Asia on our doorstep

The NT is closer to Asia than any other Australian capital, and our communities are enriched by the diversity of those that live here. Our location puts us within easy reach of some of the world's fastest-growing visitor markets, making the Territory a natural gateway for travel, study, and business. It's a two-way connection: for generations, people from Asia have made the NT their home, adding depth and diversity to our communities and shaping the Territory's multicultural character.



## The Real Territory

Vast, raw and timeless, this is the Real Territory: deeply connected through multicultural diversity. From red desert landscapes to tropical wetlands, it offers the space, freedom and the outback character that travellers seek, with experiences that leave a lasting impression. From the hum of a bustling night market to the stillness of a remote waterhole, it's the contrast, the character and the people that make the Territory unforgettable.



# Critical product and experiences

## Building blocks for a thriving, year-round visitor economy

### Only in the Territory experiences

The Northern Territory delivers experiences that are immersive and real. The Territory offers a story of Australia's military history from the very people who have shaped the nation. Adventures in vast, untamed landscapes, Aboriginal art and storytelling, unique wildlife encounters, opportunities for camping, fishing and hunting, and lively urban and multicultural experiences all shape how visitors see and feel the Territory. Food is part of that story too, from ocean fishing and freshly caught barramundi to bush foods that share ancient knowledge, bustling tropical markets to modern Territory dining, our flavours are as distinctive as our landscapes.

### Compelling events and festivals

Events bring the Territory to life and create reasons to visit now. From the Darwin Festival and Parrtjima to major sporting fixtures, Million Dollar Fish to Pitch Black, our events inspire travel, build anticipation and can help extend visitation beyond the traditional peak season. More than 200,000 visitors to the Northern Territory say they engaged in events Australia wide\*—presenting a major prospect to influence this event-ready audience with a well-curated year-round event calendar. The opportunity ahead is to grow the portfolio's reach, spread visitation throughout the Territory and attract new audiences.

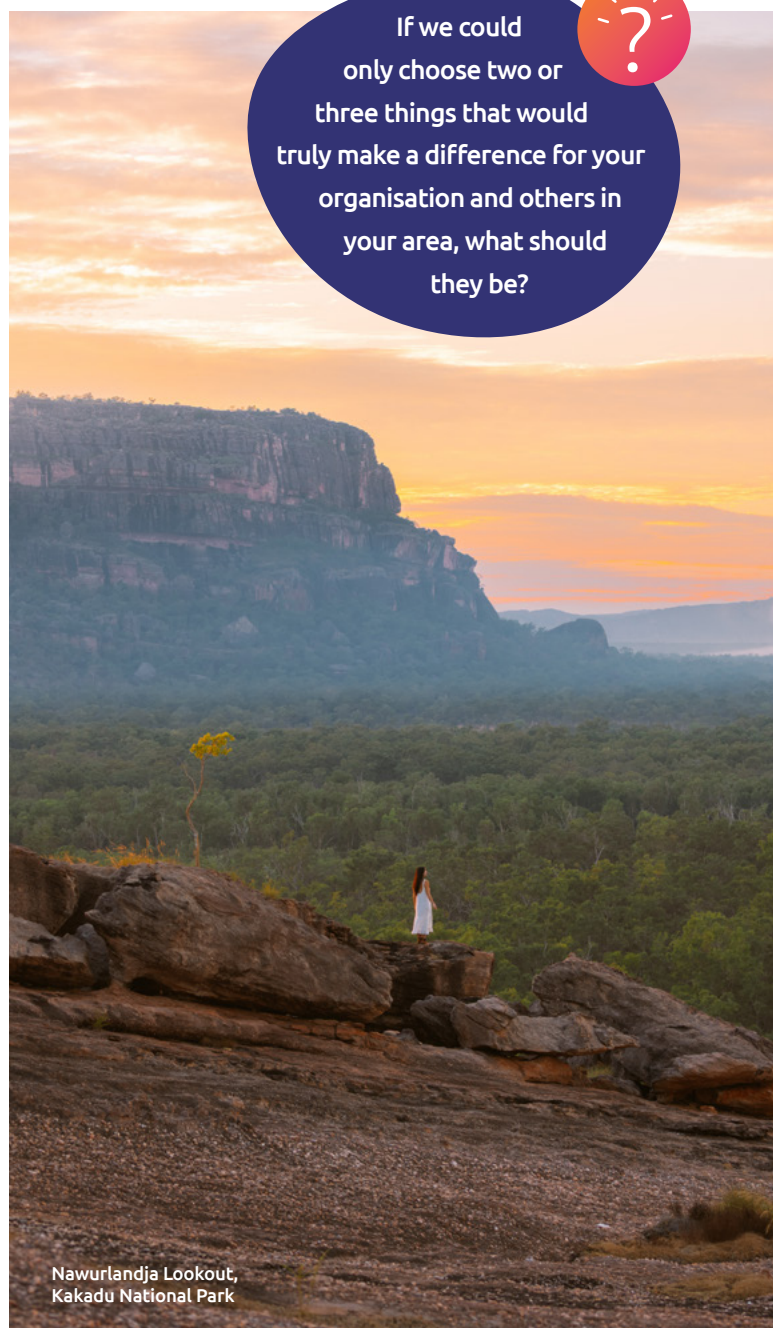
### Stunning national parks

The NT's stunning national parks are cornerstones of our visitor offering, with 1 in 3 NT visitors including a national park in their trip. Uluru-Kata Tjuta and Kakadu are internationally recognised icons, drawing visitors from across the globe to experience their natural and cultural significance. Alongside these, parks including Litchfield, Nitmiluk, and Watarrka offer nature-based experiences that are equally real, immersive, and unforgettable. These places connect visitors to nature and the NT's unique sense of space and are vital to delivering world-class visitor experiences.

### Enabling infrastructure

World-class experiences need strong foundations. For the NT, that means a mix of quality accommodation options across all budgets, aviation capacity to connect us with key markets, and road infrastructure that links communities and attractions. Maintaining and expanding this infrastructure is critical to supporting year-round visitation.

If we could  
only choose two or  
three things that would  
truly make a difference for your  
organisation and others in  
your area, what should  
they be?



Nawurlandja Lookout,  
Kakadu National Park

Source: International and National Visitor Survey, Tourism Research Australia,  
Year Ending December 2024

\*Trip activities include - Attend theatre, concerts or other performing arts; attend  
festivals / fairs or cultural events and attend an organised sporting event.



# Seeking your views and contributions

At the core of developing the Visitor Economy Strategy 2032 is a strong desire to hear from and work with those who share the view that the NT is a remarkable destination. We want the Strategy to reflect both the critical role of the visitor economy in the Territory and our shared ambitions for the future.

By co-developing the Strategy, our aim is to anchor the collective efforts of stakeholders across industry and government to create a shared plan that focuses our energy, builds on our strengths, and delivers benefits for visitors, communities, and the Territory as a whole.

We're inviting industry, partners, and stakeholders in the NT and beyond to share their views on the future of the Territory's visitor economy. Feedback can be provided in response to the consultation questions via the online survey or written or video submissions.

## **Big picture: what matters most**

What's one thing that could make this Strategy really stand out – something that genuinely moves us forward as an industry?

## **What's working?**

What's something that's working well right now – either in your organisation or across the NT – that we should build on?

## **Understanding our visitors**

What changes are you seeing in the types of visitors coming, or the types of experiences they are looking for?

## **What makes the NT distinct?**

How do we elevate what's unique to the Territory?

## **Priority areas and ideas for impact**

If we could only choose two or three things that would truly make a difference for your organisation and others in your area, what should they be?

## **NT Visitor Economy Strategy 2032 survey**



The Strategy will be launched at Destination NT –  
**Unlocking opportunity: How our visitor economy will power the NT's future** on 4 November 2025.

Contact [strategy.tourism@nt.gov.au](mailto:strategy.tourism@nt.gov.au) for more information  
[www.tourismnt.com.au/ves2032](http://www.tourismnt.com.au/ves2032)



Uluru Kata Tjuta  
National Park



**NORTHERN  
TERRITORY**  
TOURISM NT