



MEDIA RELEASE

Issued Thursday 7 February 2008

Indigenous tourism conference

North Queensland's fledgling indigenous tourism industry is tipped to benefit from next year's Australian Indigenous Tourism Conference. Conference organisers [are](#) in town this week visiting venues, accommodation and function sites as the planning gets underway.

Indigenous tourism experiences are highly sought after in the international marketplace – and the local indigenous community is making headway into the development of a viable collection of tourism products. The conference, to be held in March 2009 will give a boost to these businesses by bringing tourism experts to North Queensland from around the country.

Cultural Centre Townsville General Manager Scott Anderson attended last year's conference in Broome and tipped this conference will have a great impact on the local industry.

“This is a great opportunity for us over here on the east coast – this is the first time this conference has been held outside of Western Australia or the Northern Territory. It's a great opportunity to bring all the experts in the industry to the region and it will have real benefits for the local industry,” he said.

“People who are thinking about indigenous tourism or wanting to develop their ideas will be able to come along to this conference and tap into the expertise.

“Currently we know there are various communities and groups looking to develop indigenous tourism products in Charters Towers, Ayr and Palm Island. We're currently working with local tour operators to incorporate indigenous elements into their tours.

“There are plenty of indigenous experiences already available in the region – but this is an opportunity to enhance what we've already got – and to expand our range of products.”

WAITOC Conference Organiser Angelique Fransen said Townsville showed great enthusiasm in hosting the conference next year.

“The conference provides an opportunity for Townsville operators to network and build stronger relationships with other indigenous operators and gives ownership

to the local people to showcase their culture to the nation's leading indigenous operators.

Townsville Convention Bureau Manager Julie Caspani said the Indigenous Tourism Conference was an example of what the Bureau can achieve with the support of local host organisations, which was promoted in their recent Think Townsville campaign. The campaign encourages local businesses to bring their national industry conference home.

“This is a conference that will have significant direct benefits to the local tourism industry and inject approximately \$588,000 directly into the economy. Townsville really is a viable conference destination and can compete with any other regional area in terms of quality of services.”

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