



Image courtesy Mountain Bike Australia

Outdoor activities deliver significant economic benefits to Queensland: thousands of Queenslanders are directly and indirectly employed due to our State's great outdoors.

- Statewide Outdoor Recreation Framework
 - QORF calls for commitments to revive the Statewide Outdoor Recreation Framework
- Recreational trail development and promotion
 - QORF calls for the development and promotion of significant recreational trails
- Research
 - QORF calls for commitments to research the wide-ranging benefits of outdoor activities



Photographer: Lachlan Gardiner (Visioning the Outdoors Film & Photo Comp)

A Vision for Outdoor Recreation Policy

Outdoor recreation spaces and activities provide quality of life and positive engagement within our communities. Outdoor recreation spaces and experiences connect people to place, self and others.

Queenslanders value experiences in the outdoors and we act to protect the legacy of participation in outdoor recreation, outdoor sports, outdoor/environmental education, health and lifestyle improvement, adventure therapy, and nature-based tourism for our current and future populations.

Outdoor experiences contribute to healthier, more productive communities.

Why does the State government need consistent outdoor recreation policy?

Sport and Recreation Services (within the Department of National Parks, Sport and Racing) holds primary responsibility for outdoor recreation policy, however outdoor activities extend across government department responsibilities. The following Queensland government departments have responsibilities that intersect with the outdoor sector:

- Premier and Cabinet
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
- Agriculture and Fisheries
- Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services
- Education and Training
- Energy and Water Supply
- Environment and Heritage Protection
- Health
- Housing and Public Works
- Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning
- Justice and Attorney-General
- National Parks, Sport and Racing
- Natural Resources and Mines
- Police, Fire and Emergency Services
- State Development
- Transport and Main Roads
- Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games

A comprehensive, integrated and collaborative policy approach to the outdoor sector is required to maximise the health, environmental, social and economic benefits for the state.

Policy affecting the outdoors must:

- Encourage and promote participation through provision of green and aquatic infrastructure,
- Promote recognition of outdoor recreation benefits through research, social awareness and education campaigns,
- Engage community buy in for outdoor recreation through positive media reports relating to outdoor recreation, outdoor sports, outdoor and environmental education, health and lifestyle improvement, adventure therapy, and nature-based tourism,
- Provide events and opportunities for individuals (including children), groups, families, clubs, to participate in, and value the diverse outdoor activities and environments that Queensland offers, and
- Review existing and historic practices and policies that reduce opportunities for legitimate outdoor recreation activities (including the “hard to locate” activities).

Outdoor recreation planning and management must be based on improved information. Rapid changes in population demographics and density, with changes in technology and economics, affect how people live, work and play.

Outdoor activity is often overlooked when discussions take place regarding physical activity. Outdoor activity is essential, and outdoor experiences must be accessible and approachable for the entire population.

There is a need to:

- provide desirable opportunities for people to live healthily;
- encourage people to understand and honour their environments;
- draw visitation and migration to regional areas;
- meet the needs and wants of the population for outdoor recreation resources now and into the future; and
- understand where and how outdoor recreation is compatible with other resource uses such as management for wildlife and biodiversity, watersheds, timber harvesting, historic preservation and indigenous cultural needs.

Outdoor activities engage people in interactions with the natural and ‘outside’ environments. Outdoor recreation policies must recognise this interaction and strive to create access for participation while minimising damage to the environment and educating participants of their role as stewards for the environment. Sustainable participation is the goal.

Guiding Principles

Community Benefit

Outdoor activities provide positive benefits to our communities by contributing to wellbeing, quality of life and connected communities. Benefits include personal, physical, mental and emotional health; environmental awareness; regional economic benefits; and the opportunity to provide satisfying experiences for tourists and visitors.

Interconnection

Communities are stronger from being connected through greenways and waterways that act as corridors for outdoor recreation. These corridors connect the Queensland landscape by linking urban to peri urban, rural to wilderness. Outdoor experiences enhance connections to cultural heritage - indigenous cultural heritage and non-indigenous cultural heritage.

Stewardship

Outdoor participants are stewards of the environment in which they engage. There is a need to improve the environmental quality of our open spaces, and provide outdoor pursuits in relevant settings. We recognise that not all outdoor activities should occur in all places, at all points in time. However, there needs to be available spaces for legitimate outdoor activities close to home.

Validity

Outdoor recreation activities are recognised and valued as valid, legitimate and beneficial forms of physical activity. The *AusPlay - Participation data for the sport sector* report released by the Australian Sports Commission in December 2016 indicates that over 80% of adults regularly participate in activities that are entirely outdoors-based (eg bushwalking) or have components of outdoors (eg mountain biking within the cycling category). Unfortunately, the AusPlay report only provides statistics for children's participation in organised activities, neglecting unstructured activities like outdoor play. Outdoor recreation spaces need appropriate access, infrastructure and planning.

Future Needs

A diversity of lands and waters should be acquired/preserved to meet current and future outdoor recreation needs of the communities of Queensland. The outdoors must be valued for the opportunity to recreate, learn, heal, recuperate, challenge, adventure and interact with family and friends. Meeting future needs means responding now to the demands of tomorrow, and ensuring there are spaces and places available for outdoor recreation purposes, whether that be national parks, marine parks, rivers, major dams, local government parks, beaches, Queensland territorial waters or private lands.

Actions

QORF calls on all political parties to:

1. Provide broad ranging opportunities for all people to freely participate in diverse, legitimate outdoor recreation activities;
2. Provide active support through promotion and funding for not for profit clubs and associations in their delivery of positive and inclusive outdoor recreation programs and recruitments - including support for QORF as the peak body for the outdoor sector in Queensland and support for QORF's Nature Play QLD project in its mission to make nature play a normal part of childhood in Queensland;
3. Sufficiently resource QPWS to effectively manage the Protected Area Estate (PAE) and to provide support and encouragement for outdoor recreation/education/therapy in these environments. This includes (for example) recruiting sufficient on ground staff; provision of well designed and developed trails for multiple activity purposes; development of camping sites that can accommodate school and other larger scale groups; addressing the ongoing maintenance requirements of the PAE etc;
4. Support government and non-government land and water managers to provide spaces for outdoor recreation activities that cater for actual and latent demand;
5. Commit resources to the development of a comprehensive understanding of the current and potential economic, social, environmental and personal benefits of diverse **outdoor recreation** activities (and the implications if these experiences are lost from the Queensland lifestyle);
6. Commit resources to improving the understanding of the current and potential social, personal and environmental benefits of effective **outdoor education** in the P-12 school system, including the benefits of building resilience, good risk management behaviours, learning outcomes, interpersonal skills, judgement, communication and self-reliance;

7. Manage outdoor recreation access, programs, promotion and incentives in a holistic and coordinated manner. This includes engaging with the outdoor recreation/education sector and ensuring **whole of government communication** to guide planning, coordination, resourcing and delivery. Outdoor recreation policy and planning needs to receive attention at a high level and involve effective interdepartmental coordination – for example, through resuscitation of the Statewide Outdoor Recreation Framework;
8. Prioritise and work with the VET and higher education system to provide relevant, accessible, excellent sustainable training to develop informed and capable outdoor recreation and outdoor education leaders and programmes;
9. Enable interstate and regional cooperation for **S**tate and **L**ocal outdoor recreation projects to multiply the public recreation benefits;
10. Implement a program of advice and incentives to private land holders to provide outdoor recreation opportunities on their properties. Many private landholders already allow people on their properties for outdoor recreation purposes and the private sector takes pressure off our national parks and public lands. Advice needs to be given on development approval processes, risk management and liability insurance to help private landholders to manage outdoor recreation on their land; and programs developed and implemented to help subsidise liability insurance;
11. Support and enable local government authorities to:
 - a. conduct inventories and evaluate their outdoor recreation resources and opportunities;
 - b. purchase land for outdoor recreation purposes;
 - c. determine local and regional trend data regarding population, recreation, transportation, health etc as it relates to outdoor recreation needs and liveable communities;
 - d. plan for outdoor recreation use and development of resources; and
 - e. rehabilitate and construct new facilities and support services to meet outdoor recreation requirements.

“QORF recognises that being outdoors is good for people. The outdoors is great for well-being and can speed up healing. Nature can calm us down and increase creativity and productivity. Outdoor experiences connect people to their true selves, to others and to the natural environment.” QORF Strategic Plan: 2017-2019.



Photographer: Dom Colvile (Visioning the Outdoors Film & Photo Comp)

Note: This document draws on past policy position statements produced by QORF, and is not likely to present anything new in our understanding of outdoor recreation/education benefits for those within the outdoor sector. We have drawn from policies and research that is well established both in Australia and internationally. There are Irish, New Zealand, Norwegian, USA, UK and Canadian national policies that prioritise outdoor recreation participation as part of the culture and health of their countries. As we have done previously, we specifically reference Siehl, G. (2008), “The Policy Path to the Great Outdoors: A History of the Outdoor Recreation Review Commissions” (USA, Resources for the Future) and the City of Fort Collins Parks and Recreation Policy Plan (2008) in the development of this document.