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Media Release

Tourism Master Plan the Key to the Jigsaw

The East MacDonnell and Plenty Highway Region is one step closer to having a tourism master plan that will shape investment in the region for the next 10 years with the announcement of TRC Tourism as the project consultants.

The Central Desert Regional Council is leading the project. The Master Plan will map existing and potential visitor experiences across the region to guide future tourism investment and development by both Government and private business.

The region has an abundance of existing visitor attractions including pastoral tourism & resort style accommodation, Indigenous cultural areas of significance, historical pioneering sites, gemstone fossicking, 4WD adventure and a vast range of nature tourism attractions. There is significant potential offered through the continued sealing of the Outback Way and an increase in visitation to the region by the self drive market. The recent development of the Alcoota Mega Fauna fossil display in Alice Springs offers an opportunity to extend the popular Dinosaur Trail from Queensland and include the Alcoota Dig site at Engawala.

The Master Plan will set a course for remote Indigenous communities and other tourism operators to benefit from the large infrastructure projects already in the pipeline.

Central Desert Regional Council President Adrian Dixon said the communities in the region are excited about the highly anticipated master planning project. "Our communities have always wanted to get into tourism. Up until now they've not really known how. This plan will be like a jigsaw, bringing all the pieces together. We can develop visitor experiences about our culture, about our song lines, about the giant creatures that roamed that part of our land. We can plan to work with existing and new tourism operators in the Region." Mr Dixon said.

The master planning project will be undertaken by leading tourism consultants TRC Tourism who recently delivered the master plan for Mountain Biking in the NT. That plan resulted in the NT Government recently committing \$12 million to develop the West MacDonnell Ranges Mountain Bike experience.

Council CEO Diane Hood said the project would benefit from the expertise that TRC brings to the table. "It's obvious that Governments and private investors need the assurance that future development is strategic, well planned and coordinated. A master plan provides that confidence to invest. We are delighted to be using TRC Tourism to capture the information and develop the plan. We are also excited about getting input from the communities of Atitjere, Engawala and Bonya." Ms Hood said.

Ms Hood said that the project is an inclusive process aimed at integrating the entirety of visitor experiences, existing and aspiring, Indigenous and non-Indigenous across a range of niche markets. "We have the support of the NT Government. We have a broad range of people at the table, tourism experts, pastoralists, traditional owners, nature parks and wildlife experts. They will help guide the project. We intend on consulting as widely as we can so that we gather the best possible information.

TRC Tourism will kick off the master planning consultations in mid April with the finalised Master Plan expected to be delivered to Government by 12 October this year.

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