

Somerset Region. Esk Workshop Summary

WHAT DO WE LOOK LIKE? 2032 ASPIRATIONS

- Tourism sector well-supported by council funding.
- Preservation of country vibe with convenient access to shops and restaurants.
- Diversity in high-quality accommodation options.
- Free informational tours on First Nation heritage and natural parks.
- Enhanced tourism education for operators to improve visitor experiences.
- Community embracement of tourism as a unifying element.
- Availability of diverse dining options throughout the week.
- Enriched rail trail activities to encourage longer stays.
- Increased local attractions to boost repeat visitation beyond 20%.
- Collaboration among operators to create memorable experiences.
- Exploration of single-track biking and other diversified activities.
- Provision of essential services like town water and wastewater management.
- Development of upmarket accommodation in the region's south.
- Expansion of culinary options to establish a foodie destination.
- Greater awareness and utilisation of Brisbane Valley Rail Trail (BVRT) and similar attractions.
- Cultivation of Esk as a prime cycling and eco-tourism hub.
- Regular opening of more shops to enhance the town's vibrancy.
- Promotion of high-quality, diverse visitor experiences.
- Support for tourism operators to foster thriving and sustainable businesses.
- Commitment to maintaining the region's natural beauty and cultural heritage.
- Creation of a seamless and synergistic environment where businesses work together.
- Encouraging the development of transformational experiences for visitors.
- Strategic marketing to highlight Somerset/Esk's unique tourism offerings.
- Preservation of the region's character and charm through thoughtful growth.
- Encouragement of small business development within the tourism sector.
- Integration of cultural heritage and nature-based experiences.
- Introduction of guided tours to showcase Conondale National Park and indigenous insights.
- Promotion of a defined identity for Esk and neighbouring towns within Somerset.

How Do We Make Visitors Feel?

- Relaxed and at peace, especially under the night sky.
- Amazed by the region, with a craving to return.
- Adventurous, having experienced more than expected.
- Empowered by choices in how they explore.
- Positive about their impact on themselves and society.
- Welcome and included, amidst mindful and joyful interactions.
- Engaged with transformational and sustainable experiences.
- Confident and ambitious to discover more.
- Rejuvenated, with a deep sense of wonder and excitement.
- Satisfied, yet eager for future visits.
- Connected to the community and enriched by new learnings.
- Proud of their accomplishments and enriched by the joy of discovery.
- Inspired by the local culture and heritage.
- Intrigued by the unique flora, fauna, and landscapes.

- Energised by outdoor activities and the natural environment.
- Proud to share their experiences and stories with others.
- Appreciative of the local hospitality and warmth.
- Curious about local traditions, crafts, and culinary delights.
- Fulfilled by engaging in activities that align with their values.
- Motivated to participate in conservation and community projects.
- Enriched by educational experiences that deepen their understanding.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Trends

- Instant booking trends.
- Visitors from Byron, Coffs Harbour after Lismore trail, within 2-3 hours' travel.
- Popular "Bikes and Beers" weekends, enhanced by sunflower viewings.
- Predominance of grey nomads over families in visitor centres.
- Decreased rail trail activity during summer.
- Rise in walker numbers.

Who we want

- Chinese and Indian markets.
- Corporate groups for unique team-building experiences.
- Lifestyle resorts catering to over 50s and large groups.
- Socially conscious and slow tourism enthusiasts.
- Human-powered travel and solo female adventurers.
- Nature lovers, adventurers, and professionals.
- Lifestyle resort events.
- Boosting current market for extended stays and spending.
- Targeting international visitors from Asia.
- Catering to event attendees, including high-end musicians and artists.
- Promoting collaboration among operators for a unified visitor experience.
- Ensuring family-friendly options.
- Supporting school excursions with educational and adventure activities.
- Attracting longer stay visitors from South East Queensland.
- Focusing on the 2-4 hour drive market.
- Adventure riders and families seeking outdoor activities.
- Engaging retirees and semi-retired for leisure and discovery.
- Corporate retreats and private school educational trips.
- Ready for trade operators offering recreational and indigenous education experiences.

HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET THERE?

EXPERIENCES

- River activities including canoeing and fishing.
- Indigenous cultural experiences, emphasising storytelling and ethical engagement.
- Accessible market and food trails highlighting local produce.
- Water sports park with cycling and hiking tracks.
- Night sky experiences for astronomy enthusiasts.
- Development of Mount Glenrock trails for bushwalking and nature tours.

- Lake adventures, such as fishing charters, jet skiing, and water-skiing, with a focus on education and accreditation.
- Commitment to carbon neutrality and sustainable practices.
- Cycling trails, including BVRT with supplementary journey and storytelling apps.
- Unique accommodation options like lake houseboats and bed and breakfasts.
- Hiking trails across diverse terrains.
- Mountain biking alongside dedicated bike parking facilities.
- Guided tours offering insights into agri-tourism, farmgate experiences, and national parks.
- Educational experiences related to environmental conservation and heritage.
- Farm stays and festivals to engage visitors in rural life.
- Wine and ride events to combine adventure with local flavours.
- Mount Glen Rock trails for exploring nature and cultural heritage.
- Farm tours and historical building tours to connect visitors with local heritage and agriculture.

Infrastructure: Hard + Soft

Hard Infrastructure

- Town water and sewage systems.
- Road infrastructure, including better roads to farms and car/trailer parking.
- Building approvals for accommodation on farms and streamlined event approvals.
- Links between BVRT and Lake Wivenhoe, and rail trail in Kilcoy.
- Accommodation enhancements and increased options.
- Lake development for accommodation and recreation.
- Agri-tourism infrastructure: farm stays and event hosting.
- Cycling infrastructure: maintenance stands, trails adjacent to BVRT, and gravel riding loops.
- Family holiday parks and public transit for accessibility.
- Hiking tracks throughout the region.

Soft Infrastructure

- Quality assurance schemes for businesses.
- Indigenous tourism education to share stories and celebrate history.
- Training opportunities for tourism operators.
- Improved mobile phone service and coverage.
- Limiting bureaucracy for faster business and tourism development.
- Tourism education programs and marketing support.
- Experience signage and AEDs location maps for safety.
- Encouraging more product development within the tourism sector.
- Funding opportunities for smaller businesses to encourage growth and innovation.
- Enhancing the accessibility and experience of national parks and natural sites.

Enablers

- Streamlined approvals for events and accommodation.
- Quality assurance schemes for businesses.
- Expansion of bike network and cycling trails.
- Enhanced mobile coverage and digital connectivity.
- Tourism education and training initiatives.
- Marketing support and funding for tourism promotion.
- Collaboration with Southern Downs Regional Council for integrated planning.
- Development of bike paths and public transit options.

- Utilisation of technology for tourism experiences (e.g., Google Maps).
- Public and private sector partnerships for infrastructure development.
- Community engagement in tourism development and education.
- Accessibility improvements for natural and cultural attractions.
- Innovative accommodation solutions to increase capacity.
- Promotion of agri-tourism and sustainable tourism practices.

KPIs / How Will We Know It's Working?

- Increased visitation for rail trail and national park tours.
- Growth in local business revenue from tourism.
- Enhanced cooperation among tourism operators and local businesses.
- Higher ratings of visitor satisfaction and engagement.
- Expanded reach and impact of marketing campaigns on social media and other platforms.

Desired Outcomes

- Visitors become advocates for Somerset/Esk's unique country charm and natural beauty.
- Successful integration of cultural and eco-tourism experiences into the region's offerings.
- Boosted local economy through innovative tourism practices and accommodations.
- Strengthened relationships within the community and with tourism bodies for sustainable growth.
- Preservation and celebration of Indigenous culture and history through engaging tourist experiences.
- Development of Somerset/Esk as a destination known for high-quality, sustainable tourism offerings.
- Implementation of policies to support tourism development, including better infrastructure and services.
- Consolidation of Somerset/Esk's identity as a premier destination for outdoor and cultural tourism in SEQ.
- Fostering collaboration between agriculture and tourism to create unique visitor experiences.

INTO THE FUTURE

Vision / Aspiration

Becoming a leading rural retreat within Queensland, known for its seamless blend of heritage, nature, and community-driven tourism. Nestled in the scenic Brisbane Valley, Somerset/Esk aims to attract visitors with its unique combination of rural charm, rich Indigenous history, and outdoor adventures, from cycling on the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail (BVRT) to exploring lush national parks. The community's passion for sustainability, local culture, and the arts will offer a distinct, enriching experience to all who visit, making Somerset/ Esk a must-visit destination for those seeking authenticity and connection.

Regional Guiding Principles

- Honour and share the rich Indigenous culture and history of the region with respect and integrity.
- Champion sustainable and eco-friendly tourism practices to preserve our natural and cultural heritage.
- Empower local businesses and communities to innovate and collaborate, enhancing the visitor experience.
- Promote inclusivity and accessibility in all tourism offerings, ensuring everyone can enjoy Somerset/Esk's beauty.

Strategic Priorities & KPIs

- Enhance visitor engagement with Somerset/Esk's cultural and natural assets, particularly focusing on Indigenous experiences and the BVRT.

- Support the growth and collaboration of local businesses in providing diverse, high-quality tourism products and services.
- Develop and market Somerset/Esk as a hub for eco and adventure tourism, with a strong emphasis on cycling, walking, and nature-based activities.
- Foster partnerships and networks that enable knowledge sharing, innovation, and sustainable growth within the tourism sector.

Now

- Strengthen the collaboration between Somerset/Esk's tourism operators, local council, and the community to align efforts and resources.
- Amplify Somerset/Esk's presence in regional and national tourism platforms, highlighting offerings like starry night experiences, immersive agricultural tours, and cycling adventures.
- Encourage the development of new, quality accommodation options and experiences that cater to a broad range of visitors.
- Prioritise education and training for tourism stakeholders to elevate service standards and sustainability practices.

How?

- Foster collaboration among local businesses, Indigenous communities, and the tourism sector to create cohesive, immersive visitor experiences.
- Enhance branding and marketing strategies to highlight its key attractions, such as the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail, local heritage, and natural beauty.
- Implement a comprehensive training program for tourism operators to elevate service quality and promote sustainable practices.
- Develop targeted initiatives to attract eco-conscious and adventure tourists, promoting Somerset/Esk as a prime location for cycling, hiking, and nature-based activities.
- Strengthen partnerships with regional and state tourism organisations to boost visibility in domestic and international markets.
- Encourage local accommodation providers and businesses to adopt eco-friendly practices and infrastructure, aligning with visitors' growing preference for sustainable travel options.
- Capitalise on cultural heritage by developing and promoting Indigenous-led tours and experiences, enhancing cultural understanding and appreciation.
- Innovate event offerings to extend visitor stays and the tourism calendar, potentially through food festivals, art exhibitions, and outdoor adventure.
- Support the creation and marketing of Somerset/Esk-specific tourism products and packages, leveraging local produce, arts, and crafts to offer unique souvenirs and experiences.
- Explore funding opportunities and partnerships to improve tourism-related infrastructure, including enhancing accessibility and connectivity to key attractions.