

Alliances, Linkages and Challenges: the Queensland Heritage Trails Network

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The vision of the Queensland Heritage Trails Network is the empowerment of Queensland communities through enhanced cultural tourism opportunities. The mission is to develop a network that will be a sustainable partnership between community, government and business. It will be made up of many quality experiences, stories and trails, linking Queensland's numerous places of historical, natural, indigenous and contemporary value. It will reflect the diversity of the spirit of Queensland and provide quality, stimulating experiences for Queenslanders and visitors alike.

The following core principles have been developed to ensure that the Network provides very tangible benefits to communities and does so in a manner which takes communities with it rather than imposing on a community an outcome which might not be sustainable:

1. Conservation of heritage assets delivering economic benefits to local communities.
2. Best practice solutions to conservation, interpretation, and presentation of heritage, and adherence to environmental sustainable design principles.
3. Development of sustainable best practice heritage tourism products that contribute to the diversity of tourism experiences within Queensland.
4. Long term partnerships between Government, business and local communities.
5. Reflecting the diversity of our heritage, and embracing natural, indigenous and historic values.
6. Supporting the sense of place and the association of place with the local community and the landscape.
7. Integration of heritage into regional identity, historical contexts and thematic linkages.
8. Active community involvement, ownership and understanding.
9. Maintaining balance between the visitor, the place and the local community.

Introduction

Cultural heritage provides an anchor of stability and a sense of identity in times of rapid change. As the fastest growing state in Australia, Queensland is undergoing rapid change. The vast non-coastal areas of the State are suffering dislocation and

depopulation, yet it is from these areas that many of the nation's cultural heritage images have sprung.

Communities don't want simple quick fix solutions; they want sustainable long-term employment, a future for the people. Communities in general are now wanting to present something to the broader population that is uniquely their own. Something that can't be bought, that isn't made in a distant land, as the solution to their ills. Thus, they turn to the continuity of their heritage and culture.

The notion of cultural landscapes, or 'reading the land', has in recent years developed as an innovative way to understand the connections or linkages that people have with the land. Understanding how we have interacted with the land - for spiritual, cultural and practical reasons - in any one place or area, provides the context for our sense of continuity and our sense of community. It also is a primary stimulus for greater understanding of diversity.

Communities want to own, develop and contribute to their prosperity. More and more, they are searching through their history to educate others about the challenges and unique circumstances that have seen them prosper and survive in the face of adversity. Communities are wanting to their share experiences with others.

Queensland Heritage Trails Network (QHTN) aims to help communities value add to the conservation of the heritage of rural Queensland, and to their ability to achieve a balance in presenting their living culture.

Overview

- QHTN is the only major rural and regional capital works initiative funded through the Centenary of Federation initiative. It is one of two major Queensland Government capital works projects to be funded under the Commonwealth Government's Federation Fund.
- The establishment of the Network represents a major cultural heritage and cultural tourism initiative of the Queensland Government, which is working in partnership with the Commonwealth Government and regional communities throughout the State.
- The Network will conserve and promote natural, indigenous and historic heritage, and develop education resources, create jobs, stimulate development and foster tourism.
- All projects will provide a framework through which visitors can experience Queensland's heritage.
- As a rural and regional initiative, generation of employment opportunities for local communities is critical.

Benefits

Creating the Network will have significant benefits for Queensland. It will:

- integrate places and sites into a marketable network for tourism;
- enable the conservation of a number of cultural sites and places through application of essential capital works;
- provide for the maintenance of heritage places, which are currently redundant in terms of their former uses, by introducing new uses which highlight the history of the place for current community needs such as the Ipswich Global Arts Link;

- link other government initiatives, such as the Museums Resource Centre partnerships between Arts Queensland and local government consortia; the Cultural Tourism Strategy and the Self-Drive Strategies of Tourism Queensland; and the programs of the Australian Heritage Commission (Council) and the Environmental Protection Agency to deliver more effective cultural heritage outcomes.

Funding

QHTN is a State-wide project with investment likely to total over \$110 million over four years

- Commonwealth Government (funded) \$48 million
- Queensland Government (funded) \$39 million
- Local Government, communities and private sector \$20 million+.

Policy linkages

The Network has been developed in the context of State and Commonwealth policy initiatives over the past three years. It capitalises on the existing State Government priorities and links with some recent Commonwealth initiatives and reports. At the State level the priorities for Queensland include:

- more jobs for Queenslanders;
- building Queensland's regions;
- skilling Queensland - the smart State;
- safer and more supportive communities;
- better quality of life;
- valuing the environment; and
- strong Government leadership.

Policy linkages

At the Commonwealth level, the Network compliments recent initiatives and reports including:

- Rural Australia Summit in late 1999;
- Time running out: Shaping Regional Australia's Future;
- Heritage Tourism – bringing people to the bush;
- Draft Heritage Tourism Guidelines – Best practice for people involved in tourism and heritage places; and
- Year of the Outback – 2002

The Network

QHTN consists of three main elements that are linked conceptually and through strategic products:

1. 32 exemplary major projects including heritage conservation projects and new high technology interpretative projects

These projects are underway and are the basis or platform of the Network. Their interpretation and presentation deals with their own stories of place, as well as thematic, geographical and historical linkages within their region. It is also anticipated that as these projects develop, so will a range of linkages (sites, places and stories) and products.

2. Integrated heritage collections, places and sites, and stories, within a marketing, information, thematic and cultural tourism framework

Integration aims to minimise duplication of interpretation at tourist destinations in Queensland. Given that a destination is a place with a story, QHTN is based on the premise that to achieve a number of sustainable heritage and cultural tourism destinations in Queensland there has to be stimulating variation to attract locals and visitors alike. A primary manner in which this variation is achieved is through QHTN and its partners actively ensuring that tools are available to stimulate innovative thinking in regard to harnessing, selecting and using (linking to places) a range of Queensland stories. The stories can be ‘big picture’ themes that highlight human achievement in Queensland, or they can be a series of local stories aimed at featuring people’s lives.

The notion of ‘concentric circles of interpretation’ will form a pattern of presentation. The circles will commence in the centre with the story of the place in which the interpretation is located, followed by a circle of places within a shire, a locality or the immediate region (within a day’s travel) then followed by broader linkages which might result in quite long routes being interpreted. Linkages might be through the landscape and historical or indigenous stories. The natural environment also has a role in that ‘use of the land’ is the primary theme in regard to patterns of man’s activity.

A range of products is envisaged from QHTN and from network partners. Material researched for nodes of interpretation can be used in a number of mediums including videos, CDs and publications.

QHTN will enter into partnership agreements with local government authorities to ‘build the network’ and promote linkages. In many ways, the concepts of QHTN are already being utilised by many local government authorities and QHTN sees its key role as value adding to cultural tourism in Queensland.

A publication possibly badged as a ‘discovery guide’ will be produced in partnership with the Queensland Museum. It will be timeless high quality publication, regionally-based and featuring strategic routes. There will be innovative descriptions of the cultural landscape as used by both indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, showing how the land drew people on to explore and settle, and to trade and interact ceremoniously. There will be brief stories of ‘people on the move’, aiming to result in broad appreciation of the ‘spirit of Queensland’.

Themes

‘...planners use the word ‘theme’ to describe a unifying concept that guides a series of interpretive contacts. Adopting a thematic approach permits disparate landscape elements, facts and stories to be linked, so that a number of interpretive contacts appear not to be isolated pieces of information but an integrated whole.’ (Environment North)

3. An evolutionary and sustainable cultural tourism network for Queensland

The two elements above are part of the strategic framework for QHTN as a sustainable product. However, there are a number of identified activities that will be pursued to foster the growth and well being of a high-quality cultural tourism network for Queensland. Economic sustainability for regional Queensland will be assisted by training and job packages, as well as coordinated marketing. Resource Guides providing a range of clients with a historical and Indigenous framework and guidelines for museum collections, as well as interpretation guidelines will be widely distributed.

A Grants Stage 2 program (*Cultural Tourism Incentive Program 2000-2002*) will provide incentive funding aimed at establishing further projects/destinations to build the network and encourage community-based activity. It is proposed that the program will target local government authorities and will involve community organisations as well as linkage projects.

A signage and thematic strategy, Drive Tourism, represents a program of signage and information to enhance the promotion of cultural tourism in Queensland. This program is undertaken through a partnership between QHTN, Tourism Queensland and Department of Main Roads.

Establishment of a Foundation is being investigated with an aim of providing long-term benefits for Queensland's cultural heritage and for the development of cultural tourism.

The 32 projects: examples and issues

Eleven of the 32 major projects were already existing and received additional funding from the QHTN program. They are identified on the attached leaflet. Several are either completed or nearing completion.

The first one to be completed was the Global Arts Link (GAL) at Ipswich. This is a social capital project, based on an all-inclusive people focussed strategy that took three years to develop. The building itself, the old town hall (constructed in 1861), and its myriad of uses over the decades was the catalyst for the collection of stories that has resulted in a place that encourages new voices, new partnerships and new ways for the community to interact and share its identity. GAL has resulted in a place that blurs the boundaries between heritage, social history, popular culture and the visual arts.

GAL is, thus, a project that is extraordinarily successful in regard to community empowerment. It has also resulted in best practice interpretation.

However, some of the other established projects have provided considerable professional challenges in regard to the tensions that might occur between community empowerment and best practice. Jondaryan Woolshed is an example. This Darling Downs Woolshed is a place with significant heritage values. The *in situ* woolshed has, over several decades, been surrounded with a range of unrelated buildings that have had a considerable impact on the cultural landscape. The Association that operates the complex has a number of volunteers who have dedicated much of their time to

developing this complex of buildings. Despite strong volunteer assistance, the Jondaryan Woolshed complex is far from a sustainable proposition.

The Association had a strong negative reaction to the Conservation Plan that recommended that additional buildings be removed, some of them back into the nearby town. It has taken six months to negotiate a compromise solution that essentially opens up vistas to and from the woolshed through relocating imported buildings away from the shed.

Whilst there could be considerable heritage debate within today's audience about solutions for Jondaryan, the *Burra Charter* does not necessarily assist in how to bring along a group of people who have proceeded with (and struggled with) a 'heritage project' for many years. Government input of \$2M within the context of no pre-planning on the part of the group does not necessarily help; indeed professional advice that some of the funds should be used to undo what has been done before caused genuine distress with some volunteers.

Similar issues of community empowerment versus best practice have emerged with some of the remaining 21 'new' projects. Glengallan is an interesting example. This grand 1860s home that was never completed to plans, tells the classic story of pastoral boom and bust. It was abandoned in the 1940s and remains a most evocative 'ruin'. The Conservation Plan recommended that part of building be interpreted as a ruin. This caused great concern for many of the people who were suddenly offered what to them is a very large sum of money to 'restore' Glengallan. Their dream had come true, only to be told by a professional that the building should not be restored to its former glory. Interestingly they rejected the true story of Glengallan in favour of a grander story.

The Hou Wang Chinese Temple in Atherton provides other challenges, particularly in relation to achieving a balance between conserving heritage values and developing a tourism destination. The overall site has archaeological significance, and a proposal to build an interpretation centre on the site is still a point of some debate. There are competing community imperatives. The Friends of Hou Wang is an independent group that feels it has put the primary effort into the place; the National Trust of Queensland owns the place and the Atherton Shire Council feels it has a role in the linkage of the site to other cultural tourism venues in the town and shire.

The Indigenous projects also require cultural sensitivities to be taken into account in regard to ensuring community empowerment. Some of the Indigenous projects may not fit well into the 2002 timeframe of QHTN, and further consideration of this aspect is being undertaken at the current time.

The primary solution is time and education. QHTN has placed all available resources into concept development, including undertaking a number of community workshops. In many cases there have been wonderful results from the workshops, including a considerably enhanced awareness of the big picture themes or stories that relate to a particular place.

In summary, there are excellent opportunities developing in a most positive manner because of QHTN. However, the melding of community empowerment and best practice remains as one of the most challenging issues facing the project team.

The linkages: hinterlands and heritage trails

The Network linkages may be demonstrated through history. For example, Cardwell has a most important historical link to the Gulf country. In the 1870s the Queensland and South Australian colonial governments competed for the telegraph line from Java. Although Darwin won the day, the Queensland Government, in anticipation, had already built a telegraph line from Normanton east through Croydon and other goldfield areas. The line, consisting of Oppenheimer poles, is still consistently visible along the road between Normanton and Croydon.

The Network can also be demonstrated through geographical linkages. What was the ecology or geology that drew people to various places? This can result in an indigenous story about use of the landscape from trails and landmarks to trade routes. For non-indigenous stories there can be linkages showing good grazing country in a broad region and related settlement patterns.

QHTN is collating material on long-distance Indigenous ceremonial and trading routes for consultation with relevant people, with an objective of featuring this important part of the history of Aboriginal people. The route or series of routes north-south from the Gregory River area, and including the Moondarra quarry, the pituri area around Boulia, through to the Flinders Ranges and Port Augusta is a most significant trail, and it is hoped there will be agreement to interpret this complex story, with or without reference to specific sites and places.

The land and its use is the main theme of the QHTN. Indeed, if the broadest definition and/or understanding of the notion of ‘use of the land’ is kept in mind, then all human activity fits into this theme. Having such an overarching theme can be used to facilitate interpretive interaction between Indigenous and historic stories. It can also provide real linkages that exist over State borders; the geographical and historical Channel Country links between Queensland and South Australia are an obvious example.

Case Study

The Channel Country

- The way the water runs...
- The divide between the Murray Darling watershed and the Lake Eyre system
- The rivers, the water (climate) and the land as a region
- Where and how Indigenous people lived – trade routes are a feature of this land
- How and why white settlers came – few and far between
- How people have ‘read the land’ – Indigenous stories, poetry (*Clancy of the Overflow*)

The Queensland Drive Tourism proposal identifies 10 proposed State themed routes, which have been developed by Tourism Queensland in association with the Department of Main Roads, viz, Pacific Coast Way, Matilda Way, Overlanders Way, Great Inland Way, Savannah Way, Country Way, Leichhardt Way, Outback Way, Warrego Way and Capricorn Way.

It has been decided that first priority be given to the Matilda Way, particularly from the point of view of signage and integrated interpretation. However, it is also recognised that in order for QHTN to be seen as inclusive and to encourage the critical mass needed for sustainability for the entire QHTN, other trails or by ways may be developed during the current project, concluding at 31 December 2002.

QHTN also proposes to directly deal with the big picture themes and stories in regard to promoting the notion of linkages and how the land and people's activity on that land have interacted. The local stories are to be encouraged through the *Cultural Tourism Incentive Program*.

Case Study **The Gulf Savannah Way**

A preliminary investigation, including meeting with community organisations and local government authorities, was undertaken in mid-September 2000. Although work has been done through the Gulf Local Authorities Development Association, there remains a lack of detailed interpretation, including integration of the ‘big picture’ stories. All interested parties revealed that they would welcome assistance with the big picture aspects of a trail, and would also be happy to deal with the local people stories. There will now be coordination with the Northern Territory on a whole northern Savannah route.

The following themes and activities were identified in discussions with interested parties:

- The geology of the region is a major theme and can be utilised from the outskirts of Townsville, along the Burdekin River, the Great Basalt Wall, gem fields of the Greenvale area, to the Undara lava tubes etc.
- Geology is also the basis of the mining industry that is a major part of the history of the region.
- The ‘coming and going’ approach to settlement is particularly relevant to this region; there are numerous local people stories on how people came into the area, and what happened to them. There are also a number of long treks with the early pastoralist essentially being ‘explorers’.
- Likewise, there are numerous interesting relic township sites that link to the above theme.
- The dry savannah landscape, apart from numerous river crossings, does involve the traveller in long distances where the country appears to be similar. Again, stories of how long it took indigenous and non-indigenous people to travel through this land in earlier times links to the main themes.
- ‘Getting the supplies and taking out the goods’ is another interesting sub-theme and would bring in the railways, port of Normanton as well as other related developments including the historic telegraph line.

Historical framework: Resource Guides

A series of Resource Guides will reflect the thematic frameworks of the Network, and will ensure that the stories of Queensland’s history are told in an integrated manner throughout the Network projects and in additional projects. They will enable researchers, including historians, artists and interested members of the public, to develop stories that present the ‘sense of place’ within an integrated and cohesive picture of Queensland’s heritage. The framework comprises three integrated elements:

- an Indigenous historical framework and protocol;
- the historical context; and
- a thematic framework for movable collections.

Information Technology platform

An information technology platform will be developed to support the Network with a range of digital products and services. Community participation in this activity will be actively sought.

The information technology platform will incorporate:

- digital gateways located at each Network site and other key locations which provide Network information to travellers across Queensland;
- a suite of curriculum materials designed to meet the range of needs of Queensland's students;
- the Network's website - <http://www.heritagetrails.qld.gov.au>.

Cultural Tourism Incentive Program (CTIP) 2000-2002

The \$3M CTIP was set up to be flexible, while encouraging partnerships and packaging of projects through local government authorities. There are three components:

- 'Building the QHTN' for medium-sized projects that will fit into the aims of QHTN and add further places as cultural destinations in Queensland. The primary objective of 'Building the QHTN' is to provide incentive funding to upgrade existing cultural or heritage facilities in order that such facilities can be incorporated into the overall Network. It is envisaged that projects will be medium size and will link to QHTN's strategic and regional routes. A further objective is that the funded projects will enhance the sustainability of QHTN through partnership agreements with local government authorities.
- 'Regional linkages' provides funds for the enhancement of the network component of the overall QHTN, and is based on the surrounding regions of QHTN's major projects. The primary objective of the 'Regional Linkages' component of the incentive program is to encourage innovative approaches to drawing people out from the QHTN major projects to places and experiences in a broader region. Two critical factors are envisaged; achieving regional partnerships between a range of destinations and achieving creative linkages that relate to the landscape, its use by people and the stories of those people.
- 'Community Network Program' for community groups to develop local stories, heritage trails and interpretation. A primary objective of the Community Network Program component of the incentive program is to encourage community participation in the ongoing development of the QHTN. Through LGAs, the Grant Program provides support to projects that research, conserve and interpret Queensland's cultural and natural heritage places and collections. A further objective is to increase enjoyment of, and access to, our shared heritage.

Over 160 expressions of interest have been received for CTIP. These applications remain valid for the two remaining years of QHTN, and additional expressions of interest can be received up until 30 November 2001. There are three rounds of assessment during the time frame of QHTN.

A number of LGAs submitted very good packaged expressions of interest that combine community involvement and develop linkages both within their own hinterlands as well as giving attention to further afield. Other applications still dealt with parochial needs relating to a 'historical village'; still others wanted to construct 'heritage toilets' and others wanted to create icons for their towns (for example, a reconstructed bullock team). We have talked to all applicants, managing to redirect a number of them to deal more with linkages.

Marketing strategies and regional packaging of Queensland destinations

While the Network will be marketed in its entirety, sites will also be encouraged to establish marketing links with other attractions, which explore similar themes or are located in the same region. This strategy will be linked to Tourism Queensland's regional marketing framework.

The Network marketing strategy includes developing an identity for the Network, which will be widely marketed in Australia. This image will also be incorporated in all publications and used as a branding tool on Network attractions.

The Heritage Trails Network will be integrated within the existing marketing and packaging programs of the Tourism Queensland and regional tourist authorities. Tourism Queensland's Drive Strategy will enable tourists to discover the various nodes of the Queensland Heritage Trails Network. The Network will provide a connecting link to statewide tours and assist visitors in developing full and diverse itineraries before they commence their journeys. Importantly, on-site promotions will encourage visitors to expand their journeys as they move through the Network.

As the Network is established between now and the end of 2002, the opening of a number of Network sites and associated events will be integrated with significant community activities and celebrations to commemorate the Centenary of Federation in 2001.

Conclusion

The Queensland Heritage Trails Network is a very significant project, which draws together many of the features of Queensland's heritage. It will showcase Queensland in a manner which has never been attempted in such an integrated way before. It will only work with the support of the communities, industry bodies and various levels of government.

Nevertheless, there is a range of complex imperatives for QHTN. It serves major policy initiatives of both the Queensland and Commonwealth Governments; it must meet the more localised needs of LGAs; it must be aware of sponsorship partnerships, and seek to achieve a balance in regard to the multifarious nature of community.

The Network requires a high level of coordination and cooperation. QHTN is working through Local Government Authorities as well as coordinating bodies such as Regional Tourism Organisations. It is also utilising the regionalised structure of a number of State Government Agencies.

There is something in this network for everyone. Its appeal is widespread and diverse. With continuous support and re-enforcement from Government and the community, it will showcase to Australia and the world, the rich and diverse heritage of this State.