

Destination NT

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Event Program

Friday 7 November 2025

From 8.00am Registration

8:30am

Opening

Master of Ceremonies, Jules Lund

Welcome to Country

Ministerial address

Hon Marie-Clare Boothby, Minister for Tourism and Hospitality

Welcome

Chris Chaffe, Chair, Tourism Top End

Keynote

The Territory Within: How to Live by Design, Not by Default

Jules Lund, Tribe Group

Working in tourism takes guts, grit and constant hustle, often at the expense of your own wellbeing through storytelling and real-world inspiration, travel reporter and entrepreneur Jules Lund invites you to reconnect with what matters, think creatively, and uncover new opportunities through collaboration. You've survived peak season— now's the time to reset and reimagine what's possible.

Morning tea

Tourism Australia update

Rob Dougan, Tourism Australia

The potential of the China visitor market

Panel chaired by Rob Dougan, Tourism Australia

- Paul Beames, Get Lost Travel (Autopia Tours)
- Brian Hennessy, Sunlover Cruises Cairns

As the Territory prepares for China Southern's new direct route from Guangzhou to Darwin hear from Tourism Australia and industry as they unpack the latest trends, insights and opportunities shaping Chinese travel.

Visitor Economy Strategy 2032 - Growing a thriving year-round visitor economy

Panel chaired by Suzana Bishop, Department Tourism and Hospitality

- Samantha Bennett, Tourism Top End
- Danial Rochford, Tourism Central Australia
- Cathy Simmonds, Hospitality NT

Lunch

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Breakout sessions

Breakout 1

Powering visitation through major events

- Nicky Potgieter, Department of Tourism and Hospitality
- Ben Mead, Holidays of Australia

Discover how the MXGP has driven visitation and showcased the Territory on the world stage and how you can boost bookings, attract new audiences and create lasting visitor demand.

OR

Turning visitor expectations into experiences that sell

Panel chaired by Jules Lund, Tribe Group

- Raylene Brown, Kungas Can Cook
- Chris Day, Parks and Wildlife Commission
- Dominic Mehling, Tourism Australia

Today's travellers seek meaning, not just memories. This session explores how authentic storytelling, local connections, and smart timing can transform experiences, deepen engagement, inspire repeat visitation and higher spend.

Breakout 2

Business events is everyone's business

- Professor Claire Smith, World Archaeological Congress
- Molly Upstill, Tourism Top End

Discover how local operators capitalised on the World Archaeological Congress in Darwin. This session shares delegate insights, including key statistics and demographics and explores how tourism businesses can engage with business events, build partnerships, and convert delegate visitation into long-term revenue opportunities.

OR

Changing Places, changing experiences – Accessible tourism in action

Panel chaired by Nigel Weston, Parks and Wildlife Commission

- Ellie Owen, Department of Tourism and Hospitality
- Office of Disability

Explore how accessible infrastructure from Changing Places facilities to park upgrades and inclusive event initiatives is enhancing the visitor experience. Learn how you can tap into new opportunities in accessible tourism.

Afternoon tea

Breakout 3

From production to product – Set jetting into the visitor economy

- Jennie Hughes, Screen Territory
- Staci Mellman, Department of Tourism and Hospitality
- Monika Tonkin, Department of Tourism and Hospitality

Leverage the NT's screen industry - from on-location production to global release. Hear practical tips to engage with productions, showcase your business, and harness film and TV exposure to attract visitors, promote your offerings, and create lasting marketing impact.

OR

Crafting memorable experiences – Authenticity and connection through storytelling

Panel chaired by Megan Waters

- Hannah Graham-Ward, Ella by Minoli
- Johnny Murison, Jarramali Rock Art Tours
- Martijn Weezepeel, Battery Hill Mining Centre

Explore how personalised interactions, storytelling, and thoughtfully designed activities leave lasting impressions. This session highlights how memorable tourism experiences shape destination image, influence future visitor behaviour, and ensure your offerings are remembered long after the trip ends.

Keynote

Demystifying AI – What's true, what's not and what really matters

Lucio Ribeiro, TBWA

AI feels everywhere, but real, actionable solutions are rare. In this talk, Lucio Ribeiro demystifies AI, bringing clarity and discipline to a complex field. Gain practical insights to confidently use AI, save time, improve decisions, and unlock growth - without the buzzwords.

4:30 - 5:30pm Conference networking drinks