

11 - 14 NOVEMBER 2026

Destination NT

The Territory *Spirit*



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information on
the program and
speakers bios

Conference Program

Friday 13 November 2026

From 8:00am Registration

8:30am

Opening

Master of Ceremonies, Kathleen Gazzola

Opening address

Paul Ah Chee, Chair, Tourism and Events NT Advisory Board

Regional welcome

Patrick Bedford, Chair, Tourism Central Australia

Keynote - Customer obsessed: How to win hearts and build lifelong loyalty

Naomi Simson OAM

The rules of customer engagement are being rewritten. Agentic AI is now making purchasing decisions on behalf of buyers. New web standards — including WebMCP — mean AI agents can interact with your website and your customer service before your customer ever picks up the phone. If your brand experience isn't built to be trusted by both humans AND the AI systems they delegate to, you are already behind. But here's what I also know after 25 years of building brands: the fundamentals haven't changed. Trust is still built one interaction at a time. Loyalty is still earned through consistency, honesty and making people feel genuinely seen.

Visitor Economy Strategy 2032

From strategy to action: Progress, partnership and the path ahead

Panel chaired by Suzana Bishop, CEO Tourism and Events NT

- Brett Mitchell, Intrepid
- Olivia Harvey, Journey Beyond
- Kerry Hoolihan, Red Centre Adventures

The visitor economy is a powerful driver of economic growth and a key pillar of the Territory's economy, supporting jobs, investment and opportunities across every region. The session will open with an update on the NT Visitor Economy Strategy 2032, highlighting progress, priorities and how the Strategy is shaping decisions, investment and destination development.

Building on this update, a facilitated conversation will explore how industry, government and investors can work together to unlock greater collective impact, including how local tourism operators can connect with larger companies, build partnerships and tap into new opportunities created by major investment and development across the Territory.

Morning tea

Continued on next page →

Morning tea

Ministerial address: Unlocking visitation growth through brand positioning

Honourable Marie-Clare Boothby, Minister for Tourism and Hospitality

Who's coming next? The research, audiences and story behind the NT's new brand

Staci Mellman, Chief Marketing Officer, Tourism and Events NT

The Territory has never lacked for stories – the challenge is making sure the right travellers hear them. This session goes deeper into the strategic thinking behind the NT tourism brand refresh, sharing what our global brand research revealed about what travellers are looking for in their travel experiences and how the world sees the Territory (and where those perceptions fall short).

We'll unpack the growth audiences shaping our next chapter and share how the refreshed positioning will guide the way we talk to travellers, laying the foundations for a new consumer campaign launching in 2027. This is work in progress, and industry's voice matters in getting it right. Built with industry, for industry – come see where the brand is heading and how you can ride with it.

Ready for the world: Growing the NT's international opportunity

Susan Coghill, Chief Marketing Officer, Tourism Australia

Staci Mellman, Chief Marketing Officer, Tourism and Events NT

A fireside chat on how we attract more international visitors to the Territory, and what our tourism industry needs to be ready to capitalise on the opportunity.

Lunch

Breakout sessions

Breakout 1

Going Global: the practical pathway to international trade shows

Monika Tonkin, Senior Director Global Marketing, Tourism and Events NT

Dave Atherton, Regional Manager SA, NT & NTH QLD, ATEC

OR

Dark skies, big horizons

Marnie Ogg, Dark Sky Tourism and the Australasian Dark Sky Alliance

Breakout 2

Parrtjima: Unlocking the visitor economy

Aimee Luxton, Executive Director Events, Tourism and Events NT

OR

A collaborative approach to delivering business events

Rebecca McCaig, Director Business Events, Tourism and Events NT

Afternoon tea

What the Territory's next stage of industrial growth means for the visitor economy

Hayley Richards, CEO Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations

The Northern Territory is entering a period of strong investment and development, bringing new opportunities, increased visitation and long-term economic growth. But how can tourism businesses position themselves to be part of this prosperity story?

Explore the major projects and industries shaping the Territory's future, highlighting the opportunities for tourism operators, destinations and communities to leverage growth, attract new markets and build stronger businesses.

Outrageous optimism: Tourism through the demographic lens

Simon Kuestenmacher, The Demographics Group

Conference networking

*Program subject to change