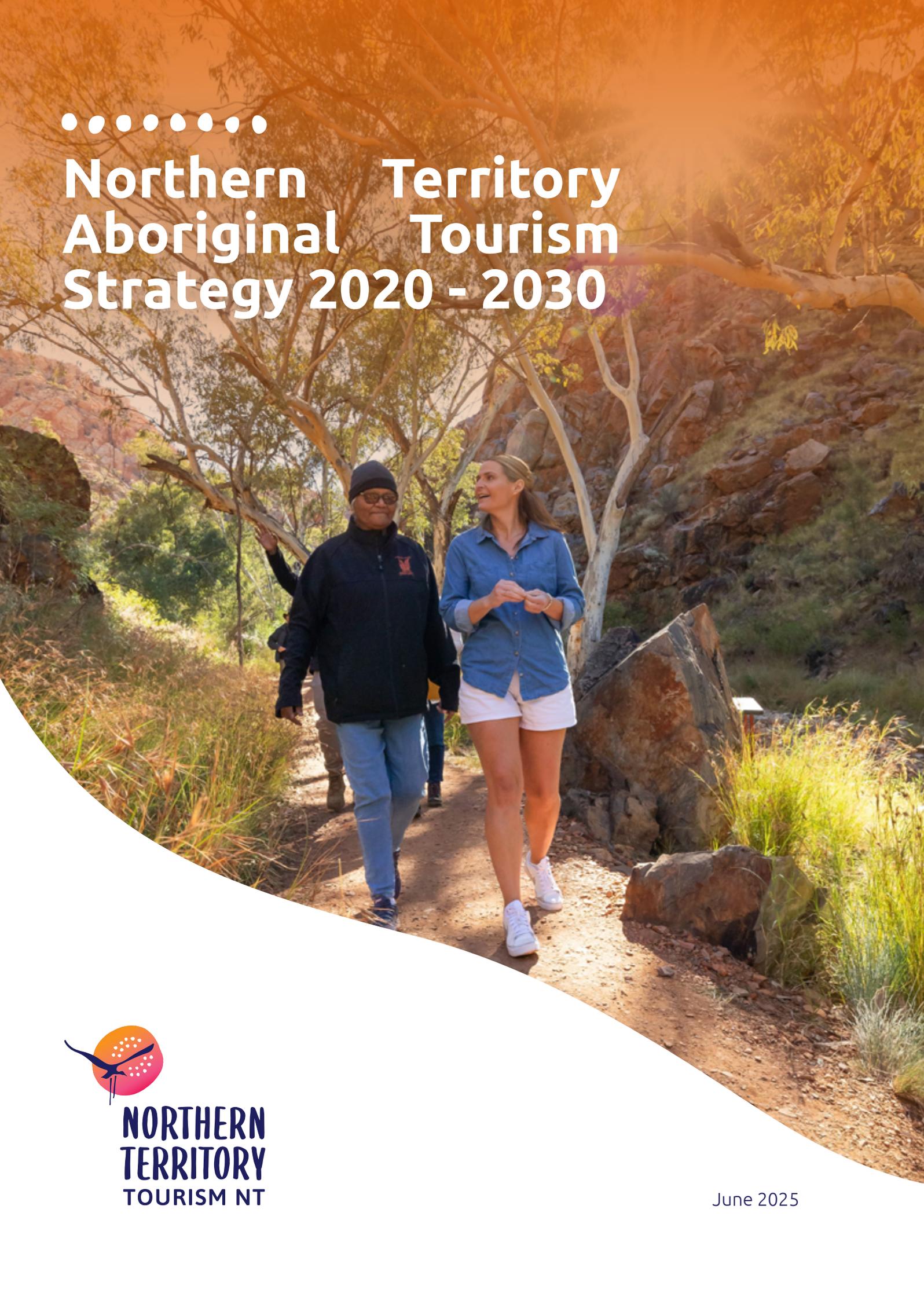




Northern Territory Aboriginal Tourism Strategy 2020 - 2030



**NORTHERN
TERRITORY**
TOURISM NT

June 2025



Acknowledgement of Country

The Northern Territory Government respectfully acknowledges and honour the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory and recognise the continuation of culture, connection to lands, water and country.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.



Visitors with an Aboriginal guide during a Nitmiluk Scenic Flights helicopter tour, Katherine and Surrounds



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Front cover: Standley Chasm,
Tjoritja / West MacDonnell National Park
Alice Springs and Surrounds

Back cover: Pudakul Aboriginal Cultural Tours,
Darwin and Surrounds



Foreword

Strengthening and showcasing the Northern Territory's distinctive Aboriginal cultural tourism experiences is identified as a key priority of the NT's Tourism Industry Strategy 2030 developed in partnership with industry and government. Both the NT's Tourism Industry Strategy 2030 and the NT Aboriginal Tourism Strategy 2020-2030 were published in 2019.

In early 2020, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in unprecedented impacts on the tourism sector, with many Aboriginal tourism sector stakeholders further impacted with the establishment of biosecurity zones and movement restrictions. Notwithstanding the difficulties encountered during this period, immense work was undertaken to support and recover the tourism sector and to encourage the growth of resilient and sustainable Aboriginal tourism businesses within it. In September 2023, an update to the NT's Tourism Industry Strategy 2030 was published, reaffirming the focus on Aboriginal cultural tourism as a strategic priority for the 2030 vision. This document serves as the 3 year update to the NT Aboriginal Tourism Strategy 2020-2030 (Strategy update).

This Strategy update refocuses the Aboriginal tourism sector's aspirations for respectful and sustainable development, one that recognises Aboriginal people as owning the Aboriginal cultural tourism narrative. The NT will continue its focus on strengthening and promoting the Aboriginal tourism sector, positioning the NT as the destination to connect with one of the world's oldest living cultures.

Aboriginal tourism represents approximately 18 percent of total NT tourism consumption, equivalent to \$383 million in 2021-22. There is rising interest among travellers to experience and respectfully engage with Aboriginal people and cultures. As at June 2023, over \$2 million in total investment has been invested into Aboriginal tourism businesses under Tourism NT grant programs since 2020.

Implementation of this Strategy update will result in a sustainable and prosperous NT Aboriginal tourism sector that enables Aboriginal people to create or take up meaningful employment and business opportunities while maintaining and sharing Aboriginal cultures.



Guiding principles

The implementation of the strategy will be guided by the *Larrakia Declaration on the Development of Indigenous Tourism*.²

Respect

Respect for customary law and lore, land and water, traditional knowledge, traditional cultural expressions and cultural heritage that will underpin all tourism decisions.

Protection

Indigenous culture and the land and waters on which it is based, will be protected and promoted through well managed tourism practices and appropriate interpretation.

Participation

Indigenous peoples will determine the extent and nature and organisational arrangements for their participation in tourism and governments and multilateral agencies will support the empowerment of Indigenous people.

Consultation

Governments have a duty to consult and accommodate Indigenous peoples before undertaking decisions on public policy and programs designed to foster the development of Indigenous tourism.

Tradition

The tourism industry will respect Indigenous intellectual property rights, cultures and traditional practices, the need for sustainable and equitable business partnerships and the proper care of the environment and communities that support them.

Partnerships

That equitable partnerships between the tourism industry and Indigenous peoples will include the sharing of cultural awareness and skills development which supports well-being of communities and enables enhancement of individual livelihoods.

The Larrakia Declaration was established in 2012, when the first Pacific Asia Indigenous Tourism Conference was held in Darwin, on the traditional lands of the Larrakia people. The Larrakia Declaration follows the principles of United Nations Tourism's core policy document, the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism. While serving as a guide for sustainable and responsible development of tourism, the Code makes a reference to the role of tourism stakeholders in protecting and respecting the cultures of Indigenous people, their rights and their ancestral traditions.³

ABOVE FROM LEFT:
Standley Chasm, Alice Springs and Surrounds
Pudakul Aboriginal Cultural Tours, Darwin and Surrounds
Guided cultural tour, Kakadu and Surrounds
Djilpin Arts cultural tour Katherine and Surrounds



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Aboriginal tourism in the Northern Territory

Any visit to the NT will afford people with an experience and connection to one of the world's oldest living cultures. Aboriginal peoples make up 30 % of the population, own 48% of the land mass and 80% of the coastline⁴.

The NT has undertaken significant work to ensure its Aboriginal tourism sector is developed respectfully and sustainably, while balancing visitor and industry expectations. Fundamental to this work has been an increased focus on accessibility for Aboriginal Territorians for opportunities within the tourism industry, and respectful product and experience development, one that recognises Aboriginal people owning the Aboriginal cultural tourism narrative, that in sharing cultures with visitors' Aboriginal people should directly benefit; socially, culturally, and economically. The NT has also focused its marketing efforts on the Aboriginal tourism sector, in recognition that Aboriginal tourism is a defining feature and improves the NT's profile to attract visitors and has significant appeal with the global tourism market.

The Aboriginal tourism sector consumption has grown an estimated 76 % to \$383 million in 2021-22 from \$218 million in 2016-17, representing significant sector growth and contribution to the overall NT economy. The sector represents approximately 18 % of total NT tourism consumption at \$2.1 billion in 2021-225. The statistics also highlight the NT's opportunity and standing as the destination to connect with Aboriginal cultures, with high holiday perception and participation rates compared to the national average.

Aboriginal cultures are central to life, communities, and landscapes in the Northern Territory.

- » Nowhere lets you experience Aboriginal cultures like the Northern Territory.
- » Culture comes with the Territory.
- » Connect with Aboriginal cultures in the Northern Territory.
- » The world's oldest living culture is closer than you think. You don't need to go overseas to experience it.
- » Culture is everywhere you look in the Northern Territory

1,440 •
estimated total
tourism jobs
supported⁹

\$383 million

estimated annual contribution of Aboriginal focused visitors to the Northern Territory economy⁵



Significantly higher participation in the NT than national average, presents considerable opportunities for the Northern Territory and further enhances its standing as the destination to connect with Aboriginal cultures⁶.

119

Aboriginal
tourism
businesses⁷



80%

of visitors believe the Northern Territory is a place to connect with Aboriginal culture⁸

77

Aboriginal tourism listings are self identified on the Australia Tourism Data Warehouse that meet the following criteria: Indigenous Culture under the following categories Authentic Aboriginal Arts and Crafts; Indigenous experience and/or cultural immersion; Indigenous owned and operated¹⁰



Strategic policy environment

To create a sustainable and prosperous sector, the Strategy requires the support of trusted and respected partners and networks. These partners provide the enabling environment Aboriginal Territorians and Aboriginal businesses require to develop tourism skills, businesses, product, and experiences. Partnerships include Land Councils, other government bodies and departments, at both national and territory level, incorporated entities and not for profit organisations. These partners provide advisory and support services to emerging and existing Aboriginal businesses and organisations. There is a broad range of support services available including funding, business mentoring, business and skills development, training, and trade distribution. Through partnering with these advisory and support services, the Strategy seeks to coordinate services and ensure accessibility and effective delivery for Aboriginal audiences.

The Strategy is a strategically important document that contributes and has linkages with other key government policies, as demonstrated below.



Ongoing Reporting and Reviews

The Department will maintain responsibility for reporting and review mechanisms.





Orange: Northern Territory Government
 Blue: Australian Government



Cultural Aboriginal Dance, East Point Reserve, Darwin and Surrounds

Strategy Overview

Vision

We inspire visitors to connect with one of the world's oldest cultures through immersive tourism experiences which sustain the Aboriginal tourism sector for future generations.

Mission

In participating in the tourism sector, the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory are respectfully supported in order to benefit economically, socially and culturally.



Strategic priorities



Cultures

Respectfully sharing Aboriginal cultures will enrich the visitors' understanding and provide distinctive experiences and product that promotes Aboriginal cultures for future generations.



Communities

Promoting and facilitating mutually beneficial, respected and trusted relationships and networks will continue to strengthen the Aboriginal tourism sector.



Lives

Supporting skills development through initiatives that are responsive to individuals' needs and goals will create better business and job outcomes.



Landscapes

Ensuring the Aboriginal tourism sector is represented in the development of destinations that will improve the Northern Territory's profile to attract visitors.



Interactions

Building effective engagement, monitoring and measuring the connection with visitors and industry will support the continued development of the Aboriginal tourism sector.



Cultures

Respectfully sharing Aboriginal cultures will enrich the visitors' understanding and provide distinctive experiences and product that promotes Aboriginal cultures for future generations.



Strengthen Aboriginal representation and advocacy

Goal

Aboriginal people are recognised as owning the Aboriginal cultural tourism narrative and are respectfully supported in developing tourism experiences and product.

Actions

Develop and implement an Aboriginal Cultural Tourism Framework that is a culturally focussed toolkit to support and build Aboriginal Territorian's confidence in participating in the tourism sector; and provide guidance to support services and partners in the right way of working with Aboriginal people, while meeting the expectations and demands of visitors.



Develop quality experiences, products and services

Goal	Increased supply of unique Aboriginal cultural tourism experiences and tourism product across the Northern Territory.
Actions	<p>Provide support to Aboriginal Territorians and Aboriginal businesses and organisations through strategic initiatives and programs, including grant funding opportunities, to develop Aboriginal tourism experiences and tourism product.</p> <p>Develop and deliver an Aboriginal cultural wellness and bushfood tourism opportunities project to support new tourism experiences and product development.</p> <p>Using an evidence-based approach, support the development of Aboriginal cultural tourism experiences and tourism product along key Northern Territory self-drive routes.</p> <p>Support the development of Aboriginal cultural tourism experiences and tourism product for the in cruise sector.</p> <p>Support the development of Aboriginal cultural events that encourage visitation to the Northern Territory.</p>



Communities

Promoting and facilitating mutually beneficial, respected and trusted relationships and networks will continue to strengthen the Aboriginal tourism sector.



Support leadership, governance and knowledge

Goal

Strong leadership, governance and knowledge sharing in the Aboriginal tourism sector are key to sustainable Aboriginal businesses and organisations.

Actions

Continue the delivery of Aboriginal tourism forums with a focus on fostering leadership and sharing knowledge in the sector.

Continue to work with land councils, promoting the profile and supporting the Aboriginal tourism sector.

Provide support and promote opportunities for Aboriginal tourism businesses to access leadership, governance and network initiatives, programs and events.



Support equitable and sustainable collaborations and partnerships to nurture knowledge and understanding

Goal

Tourism industry stakeholders are delivering equitable and sustainable Aboriginal tourism sector collaborations and partnerships.

Actions

Develop and deliver an Aboriginal cultural tourism communication toolkit for use by marketing and media agencies working within the sector.

Identify and support collaborations and partnerships that contribute to developing the Aboriginal tourism sector.

Continue to support and develop tools and resources to educate and promote the sector.



Lives

Supporting skills development through initiatives that are responsive to individuals' needs and goals will create better business and job outcomes.

Connect Aboriginal Territorians and Aboriginal tourism businesses and organisations to advisory and support services

Goal Delivery of effective advisory and support services for Aboriginal Territorians, businesses and organisations.

Actions Monitor the advisory and support services available to the Aboriginal tourism sector, to guide effective service delivery.

Continue to develop tourism sector material to ensure accessible formats are available and are relevant to Aboriginal audiences to increase confidence in participating in the Northern Territory's tourism sector.

Connect Aboriginal Territorians and Aboriginal tourism businesses and its employees to tourism skills development programs and initiatives

Goal Effective tourism skills development programs and initiatives are available for Aboriginal Territorians and Aboriginal tourism businesses.

Actions Support Aboriginal Territorians and Aboriginal tourism businesses to access programs, initiatives, and training to enhance tourism skills.

Contribute to and support tourism skills development programs and initiatives.

Develop and implement the Northern Territory Aboriginal Tourism Accelerator program in partnership with Indigenous Business Australia.



Kakadu Billabong Safari Camp,
Kakadu and Surrounds



Landscapes

Ensuring the Aboriginal tourism sector is represented in the development of destinations that will improve the Northern Territory's profile to attract visitors.





Aboriginal tourism is represented in the development of destinations including in its visitor services and infrastructure

Goal

Visitor services and infrastructure development supports the needs of the Aboriginal tourism sector.

Actions

Support infrastructure and funding applications that develops the Aboriginal tourism sector.

Support the development of catalytic projects aligned to the Aboriginal tourism sector, including the development of the National Aboriginal Art Gallery in Alice Springs and the Larrakia Cultural Centre in Darwin.

Develop and deliver a program to support the development of Aboriginal cultural tourism experiences and product in the Northern Territory parks and reserves led by Aboriginal Territorians, businesses and organisations.

Support Local Decision Making groups on progressing identified priority tourism experiences and tourism product development.

Aboriginal cultural tourism is a priority in region-based promotion

Goal

Improved visitor awareness of and engagement with the Aboriginal tourism sector in the Northern Territory's regions.

Actions

Strengthen connection and prioritisation of Aboriginal cultural tourism experiences and tourism product development in Destination Management Plans.

Aboriginal cultural tourism experiences and tourism product are a priority across regional promotional activities.



Interactions

Building effective engagement, monitoring and measuring the connection with visitors and industry will support the continued development of the Aboriginal tourism sector.



Support connection to industry marketing initiatives and trade distribution

Goal	Increased focus on the Aboriginal tourism sector in marketing initiatives.
Actions	Increase and enhance Australian Tourism Data Warehouse listings to raise the profile of Northern Territory Aboriginal tourism experiences and product.
	Support increased Northern Territory representation in Tourism Australia's Discover Aboriginal Experiences program.
	Promote and support opportunities for Aboriginal tourism businesses to attend relevant national and international tourism industry events and forums, such as NT Muster, the Australian Tourism Exchange and Australia Tourism Export Council events.
	Support Aboriginal tourism businesses to connect to trade distribution channels.
	Tourism NT, in partnership with industry, to continue to market the Northern Territory as a place that offers unmatched immersive Aboriginal cultural experiences.
	Continue to support content capture (video, music and photography) of Aboriginal tourism sector experiences and tourism product for use in marketing and promotion.

Cultural Dance at Barunga Festival, Katherine and surrounds



Monitor and research sector development and visitor experiences

Goal	Data collection and reporting provides insights and contributes to improved Aboriginal tourism sector development and visitor experiences.
Actions	Utilise information and insights from tourism sector data collection and reporting to inform the Aboriginal tourism sector and visitor experience development.
	Undertake strategy review and update by 2027.



Definitions

- **Aboriginal business** –
 - Northern Territory based wholly owned and controlled by Aboriginal people, or
 - Northern Territory based with more than 50% (majority) owned and controlled by Aboriginal people.
- **Aboriginal cultures** – respectfully acknowledging that the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory are the First Nations people of the Northern Territory, who are one of the most linguistically diverse peoples in the world; with distinctive customary law and lore, land and water, traditional knowledge, traditional cultural expression and cultural heritage.
- **Aboriginal cultural tourism** – Northern Territory Aboriginal cultural experiences and product that are delivered with integrity and the appropriate cultural authority with respect to Aboriginal intellectual property rights, cultural and traditional practices; and are consistently delivered in a creditable and respectful manner.
- **Aboriginal tourism business**¹¹ –
 - based in the Northern Territory and wholly owned and controlled by Aboriginal people, or
 - based in the Northern Territory with more than 50% (majority) owned and controlled by Aboriginal people.
 - its primary business is providing the visitor economy with related goods and services including accommodation, transport, visitor tours and experiences, events, retail, food and beverage, cultural and art centres.
- **Aboriginal tourism sector** –
 - an Aboriginal tourism business.
 - all tourism businesses and their partners who incorporate an Aboriginal cultural tourism experience or product.
- **Cultural tourism** – a type of tourism activity in which the visitor’s essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/product in a tourism destination¹².
- **Experiences** – the complete travel experience includes all tourism elements that a visitor consumes, from the time they leave home, during their visit to the destination and up until they return. This includes transport, accommodation, meals, tours and attractions, as well as other activities. These may be a combination of products purchased independently by the consumer or bundled into a package for sale, as well as free experiences¹³.
- **Product** – tourism product is a combination of tangible and intangible elements, such as natural, cultural and man-made resources, attractions, facilities, services and activities around a specific centre of interest which represents the core of the destination marketing mix and creates an overall visitor experience including emotional aspects for potential customers. A tourism product is priced and sold through distribution channels and it has a life-cycle¹⁴.
- **Tourism business** – its primary business is providing the visitor economy with related goods and services including accommodation, transport, visitor tours and experiences, events, retail, food and beverage, cultural and art centres.
- **Visitors** – can be either domestic visitors (Australians or residents who travel away from their home for more than a certain time and distance, including those who are travelling internally as part of an outbound international trip) or international visitors (non-residents who visit Australia for less than a year). For the purposes of this Strategy, international visitors also include international students, regardless of their length of stay, reflecting their statistical likelihood to behave more like visitors rather than residents¹⁵.

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