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— SEPTEMBER 2023 —

A Journey Through Cairn's History & Vibrant Industries



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Envision Cairns, and you're transported to a world of pristine beaches, lush tropical rainforests, and the iconic Great Barrier Reef. Nestled in Tropical North Queensland, this city is a captivating blend of natural wonders and bucket-list landmarks. Yet, beyond its breathtaking scenery lies a destination with serious advantages for association planners, chief among them being the impressive Cairns Convention Centre, which just underwent a transformative refurbishment and expansion, enhancing its flexibility and solidifying its position as an unrivaled choice for hosting a wide array of events.

Cairns boasts a rich history dating back to its official founding in 1876. Originally established as a frontier town to support the gold rush, it took its name from Sir William Cairns, the State Governor at the time. Despite its humble beginnings, Cairns' destiny changed when chosen as the starting point for a railway line servicing the Atherton Tablelands, becoming a vital transport route for tin and timber to southern ports. As the gold rush faded, the city embraced new opportunities for growth, with thriving sugar cane plantations, flourishing fishing, and pearling industries. Post-World War II, Cairns emerged as a sought-after holiday destination, with the allure of the Great Barrier Reef driving a tourism boom that captured the attention of visitors from around the world.

In fact, Cairns has, today, established itself as a vital hub for the region. Its bustling seaport and well-connected international airport ensure seamless access to both domestic and global destinations. The city's convenient layout allows for easy exploration on

foot, while its impressive array of meeting venues, including the renowned and recently expanded Cairns Convention Centre (more on this on pages 5 to 7 of this supplement), adds to the allure of this contemporary waterfront destination. Worth mentioning is that Cairns is the only business events destination in Australia where you can be at your hotel within 10 minutes of leaving the airport!

Cairns' accommodation options are abundant, with over 8000 rooms available, including internationally renowned hotel brands conveniently located near the convention centre. The city also boasts unique offsite venues, such as the Esplanade Lagoon, parklands, waterfront breweries, and an aquarium, while a 40-minute boat ride leads to captivating island destinations. For a distinct Far North Queensland experience, event organizers can consider hosting events on working sugar cane farms, providing a relaxed and fun complement to the city's offerings.

DIVERSE EXPERTISE

Yet, the true value for associations lies in the city's diverse expertise across various sectors. These key industries not only contribute to Cairns' financial and academic growth but also provide invaluable knowledge to the global community, owing to the city's unique tropical location.

Janet Hamilton, Cairns Convention Centre General Manager, doesn't say otherwise: *"We are very fortunate to be surrounded by the Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics Rainforest, but we also have much more to offer business events in regard to our local expertise in a range of areas."*

"For example, Cairns is home to the Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine which is responsible for a range of research projects, from new tests to detect Malaria, through to exploring how venom could help develop new life-saving drugs."

"Agribusiness is another sector that would benefit from hosting events in the region. Delegates can benefit hugely from our local agribusiness industry and how it is utilizing research and innovation to maximize growth opportunities. From the world's first banana-based flour and the \$173 million avocado industry, to the ground-breaking research carried out by the Centre for Sustainable Tropical Fisheries and Aquaculture, there's so much for delegates to experience."

KEY SECTORS

The good news is that associations can readily tap into this plethora of expertise.

Aviation is, this way, emerging as a prominent sector, with Cairns strategically positioned in the Asia Pacific and hosting major service centres for national and international aviation companies. Cairns Airport is the base for the Royal Flying Doctor Service of

Australia (RFDS), one of the largest and most comprehensive aeromedical organisations in the world, which offers medical help for those living in remote and rural locations rapidly.

In the realm of academics, Cairns Aviation Skills Centre and CQUniversity Aviation Campus, both situated at the airport, provide comprehensive aircraft maintenance engineering courses. Moreover, ambitious initiatives such as the State Government-sponsored development of a business case for an advanced composite fibre manufacturing and repair facility showcase the region's promising future in the aviation sector. Similarly, Cairns is recognized for its exceptional educational institutions, including world-renowned James Cook University and CQ University Cairns, offering first-class tertiary education across various fields, from health and life sciences to creative arts.

Life Sciences research thrives as well, aided by the presence of the Great Barrier Reef and the Daintree Rainforest. Ground-breaking discoveries in this field contribute to advancing modern medicine, with researchers studying venomous species and exploring medicinal plants used by Indigenous communities.

As Queensland pursues a 50% renewable energy target by 2030, Cairns embraces its abundant renewable resources, with over 100 businesses operating in the renewable energy sector. The Northern Queensland Energy Zone aims to unlock 500 megawatts of clean energy, starting with the Kaban Green Power Hub wind farm. Additionally, Cairns actively supports remote communities' transition to renewable energy, ensuring a continuous supply of power in remote areas. In that area, a major project has been the Portagrid units - modular, transportable containers which ensure energy generation and storage and a continuous supply of power that can be shipped anywhere around the world.



Cairns, the Fast Facts

- Population: 151,000
- Gateway to the Great Barrier Reef
(30 boats leave Cairns every day for it)
- 10-minute ride from airport to city centre
- 45,000 sqm of event space available at Cairns Convention Centre
- 8000 accommodation rooms available in the city
- Key industries: Agribusiness, Aviation, Education, Life Sciences, Marine Services, Renewable Energy, Tropical Health, Tourism
- More than 600 (very diverse!) tours depart daily from the city

With a strong focus on tropical health, Cairns collaborates with researchers worldwide to protect health and prevent diseases in tropical communities. As Hamilton noted, the Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine leads critical research that creates a brighter future for those living in tropical regions.

Then there is of course tourism, which remains the cornerstone of Cairns' economy, attracting visitors seeking diverse experiences, from scuba diving and hiking to gourmet food tours and relaxation in paradise. The tourism industry fosters public and private infrastructure development in Far North Queensland, with

passionate individuals dedicated to showcasing the region's natural beauty and cultural assets.

However, Cairns' academic community has delved into various research areas, exploring topics such as dementia-friendly tourism and the impact of humor on tourists' experiences, fostering greater consideration for their surroundings. Sustainable tourism has also been a focal point, with students encouraged to embrace modern management methods and witness the continuous growth of agri-tourism in the region.

Last but not least is agribusiness, a significant contributor to the Cairns regional economy, generating \$1 billion annually. The region's tropical climate and fertile soil offer a competitive advantage, supporting specialized primary production and well-established supply chains. The leading exports encompass raw sugar, live cattle, and horticultural products, particularly tropical fruits, fish, and shellfish. In recent years, the agribusiness supply chain has expanded to include products like coffee, chocolate, wine, nuts, and dried fruits. Occupying 10,000 square kilometers or 47% of the region, agricultural land in Cairns provides ideal conditions for diverse crops to thrive.

Despite pandemic-related challenges, the food and agriculture sector in Cairns has demonstrated resilience and accelerated growth. As FNQ Growers President, Joe Moro says: *"The future's very bright for growth of the agriculture industry in the Far North. Some of this will be on the back of the new irrigation projects, whilst some will be based on the diversity and the ability of our farmers in the Far North to look at crop diversification."*



Cairns Convention Centre: Where the Rainforest Meets the Reef

When the wonders of nature get entangled with advanced conference infrastructure, that's where the Cairns Convention Centre steals the show. With passion as a driver and experience as a guide, the team of the centre brings industry leaders, academics, hospitality providers, tour operators and service providers together to create a truly inclusive experience for association delegates. Its recent expansion has added space and status to the already renowned purpose-built events venue.



THE CENTRE SO FAR

Opened in 1996, Cairns Convention Centre has transformed the region into a pristine conference destination. Its distinct value comes not only from the ample space it provides for conference organizers, but also from its location. Set on the shores of the world-heritage listed Great Barrier Reef and the world's oldest rain-forest, the Daintree, the venue creates a sense of ease and belonging for its visitors. The predominant water, mountain and forest elements fill the indoor spaces of the venue with light, power and ideas, creating a great platform for innovative thinking and solutions during an event.

Until 2023, the venue had a total of 45,000 sqm of event space with multiple options for events. Its large (and recently refurbished) Auditorium can be divided into four individual spaces seating 500 people each, or 2,300 combined. Next to it, the 17m-ceiling Arena (also recently refurbished) is able to host trade exhibitions and gala dinners for plenary sessions, concerts and sporting events. 20 meeting rooms, foyers and terraces all around the space add to the venue's capabilities for flexibility and tailor-made event organization.

Cairns Convention Centre in Numbers

- Total capacity: 2,500 pax
- Total surface: 45,000 sqm + 10,500 sqm of new space
- Auditorium: 2,300 pax
- Arena: 5,000 pax
- 23 meeting rooms: up to 118 pax each
- Plenary room: 410 delegates
- Mezzanine Exhibition: 30 exhibition booths
- Trinity Room: 500 people in banquet style
- 239-bay undercover car park
- 7 kilometres of Cairns International Airport
- Walking distance from the city's hotels

THE 2023 EXPANSION

Owned by the Queensland Government (and managed by ASM Global), Cairns Convention Centre managed to secure a \$176 million expansion and refurbishment budget a few years back. In the summer of 2023, the expansion was completed adding 10,500 sqm of new floor space to the venue. The goal was to maximize the centre's capabilities, modernize the facilities and bring new business to the tropical city all while increasing employment opportunities in hospitality, logistics, security, and maintenance.

The surrounding nature was yet again the prevailing factor behind the expansion. Richard Coulson of Cox Architecture and Project Director of the expansion, explains: *"The inspiration for the Cairns Convention Centre started with thinking about the place that we were at. Far north Queensland is quite spectacular, and we have the great fortune of being on this inlet looking over this fantastic mountain range. It was orchestrating the building so it could all play to that. All the major rooms of the expansion are looking out to that view."*



The innovative feeling starts already from the entrance of the building. Formed in Port-Cochere style, this outdoor space gives a warm welcome to visitors and can function as an outdoor event area. Located on the Mezzanine Level, the Plenary room has the ability to hold 410 delegates and can be split into two equal spaces. Next to the Plenary, the Mezzanine Exhibition can accommodate 30 exhibition booths, whereas three new meeting rooms complete the picture of this level. The new meeting rooms (bringing the total number up to 23 now) can also be configured in different combinations or be combined to hold 370 delegates. The jewel in the expansion is the new third level with the 500-delegate Trinity Room and outdoor Trinity Terrace that have been created to complete the needs of any event outside the conference rooms.

TECH READY

As hybrid meeting space needs become more complex, Cairns Convention Centre has a raft of audio-visual equipment to keep pace with the most demanding of presentation needs. *“Hybrid meetings and online collaborations are here to stay, and we are*

fortunate to deliver the most complex needs in a simplified format, all backed by an outstanding technical team”, says Janet Hamilton, General Manager at Cairns Convention Centre.

PTZ cameras have been fitted across all the meeting spaces, offering pan, tilt and zoom control features and there are now digital lecterns with built-in preview monitors for easy reference to presentation notes. *“These lecterns provide presenters a level of comfort with an upfront display and touch panel controls so they can control AV features within the room when, and if, required”*, she says. Centre-wide there are high resolution laser projectors in every room as well as a large format 15-metre screen with three projector blend.

SUSTAINABLE IN EVERY WAY

Based on practices commenced in 1996 when the building opened, the Cairns Convention Centre holds Earth Check benchmark status. With respect to its surroundings, it follows the most demanding environmental controls, from the design of our venue and the use of the latest energy efficient technologies to the adoption of sustainable operating practices.

The existing sustainability initiatives have been reinforced with the expansion. The materials used for the construction (timber, stone, floor coverings) are locally sourced and produced, contributing not only to the reduction of CO₂ but also to local employment opportunities.

An important design element was the screen. *“It was designed from a passive strategy first for sustainability. The external screen facade is an important part of a passive sustainability approach. All the screens have been calculated to resolve the sun angles as it's rising through the day and at different times of the year. The orientation of the blades is all resolved via computer modelling, and they change from the south to the north as it has different solar exposure. This includes the frequency of the blades, they are calculated and arranged for maximum performance”*, says Coulson.

Rainwater storage for plant irrigation and water saving measures through low-flow fitting and fixtures are in place, while electrolysed water is used instead of chemicals for food safety sterilisation. Energy Efficiency is achieved through LED lighting with motion sensors, new chillers, energy efficient fans and high-performance glazing with Low E film coating. 1200 sun blades and living green façade have been optimized to reduce direct sunlight onto the façade, reducing heat gain and increasing thermal efficiency.

On the accessibility side, the venue offers Braille signage and hearing loops in every meeting room, as well as lifts, escalators, wheelchair accessible toilets throughout the building, changing places facilities and a wheelchair service.

“We're always trying to find a way of resolving buildings with their context, with the climate and with community. If this project is embraced by the local community, that will be the most important piece for us. It's such a significant investment for the state of Queensland and for the community of Cairns. We feel like it will be another launching point for visitors to come to Cairns and to understand the uniqueness of far north Queensland,” concludes Coulson.



Case Study

International Congress of Vertebrate Morphology (ICVM 23)

With a diverse audience of more than 400 participants from 27 countries, the International Congress of Vertebrate Morphology (ICVM 23) emerged as a pivotal scientific event for vertebrate zoologists and functional morphologists. Held at the Cairns Convention Centre from July 28 to August 1, the congress provided an exceptional platform for the presentation and deliberation of cutting-edge research findings. Dr. Olga Panagiotopoulou, ICVM 23 Scientific Program Committee Chair, says that Cairns was the quintessential destination to host such a gathering.

In an interview with Boardroom, Dr. Panagiotopoulou explained, *“The International Congress of Vertebrate Morphology is a global event aimed at bringing leading academic scientists, researchers, and scholars together to exchange expertise and scientific results on all aspects of vertebrate morphology, evolutionary morphology, and biomechanics.”* Emphasizing inclusivity, the congress is rotated across various geographical locations due to the international reach of the society. The 23rd edition marked its debut in Oceania, drawing both national and international media attention, underscoring the substantial financial and scientific impact such a congress bestows upon Australia as a whole.

CAIRNS: THE IDEAL HOSTS FOR ICVM 23

Delving into the choice of Cairns as the congress’ venue, Dr. Panagiotopoulou elaborated, *“In 2018, I led and won the bid to host the 13th International Congress of Vertebrate Morphology in Australia.”* Following this success, Cairns expressed interest in hosting the event, and the following phases included site visits, stakeholder engagement for obtaining funding from the Queensland Government, contract negotiations, and budget planning.

“All information was presented to the voting members of the ICVM Executive Committee in 2019, during our 12th congress in Prague,” said Panagiotopoulou. *“Delegates voted Cairns due to its more affordable accommodation and its close proximity to the Great Barrier Reef and the Rainforest.”*

UNWAVERING SUPPORT

The Cairns Convention Centre exhibited remarkable dedication during the planning phase, accommodating changes necessitated by the postponement of the congress for a year due to COVID-19-related travel restrictions. Dr. Panagiotopoulou acknowledged the Centre’s proactive collaboration with a US company that aided in the event organization, saying the teams at the venue “went above and beyond” to make sure everything went smoothly.

The Centre’s efforts even extended to facilitating discounted hotel rates and liaising for funding from the Queensland Government to alleviate registration fees, thus nurturing a conducive environment for participants.

On a personal note, Dr. Panagiotopoulou highlighted the exceptional attributes of Cairns. *“The major asset has been the close proximity to the Great Barrier Reef and the Rainforest where delegates had a unique opportunity to watch some of Australia’s unique wildlife,”* she said. The convenience of hotels and hospitality venues within walking distance of the Convention Centre eased networking. The splendid weather in July, along with free child-entertainment sites, enhanced the overall experience for delegates traveling with their families.

In the end, ICVM 23 at the Cairns Convention Centre not only facilitated the exchange of scientific insights but also showcased the charm of the host city, leaving an indelible mark on attendees’ memories.

Outside of the Conference Room

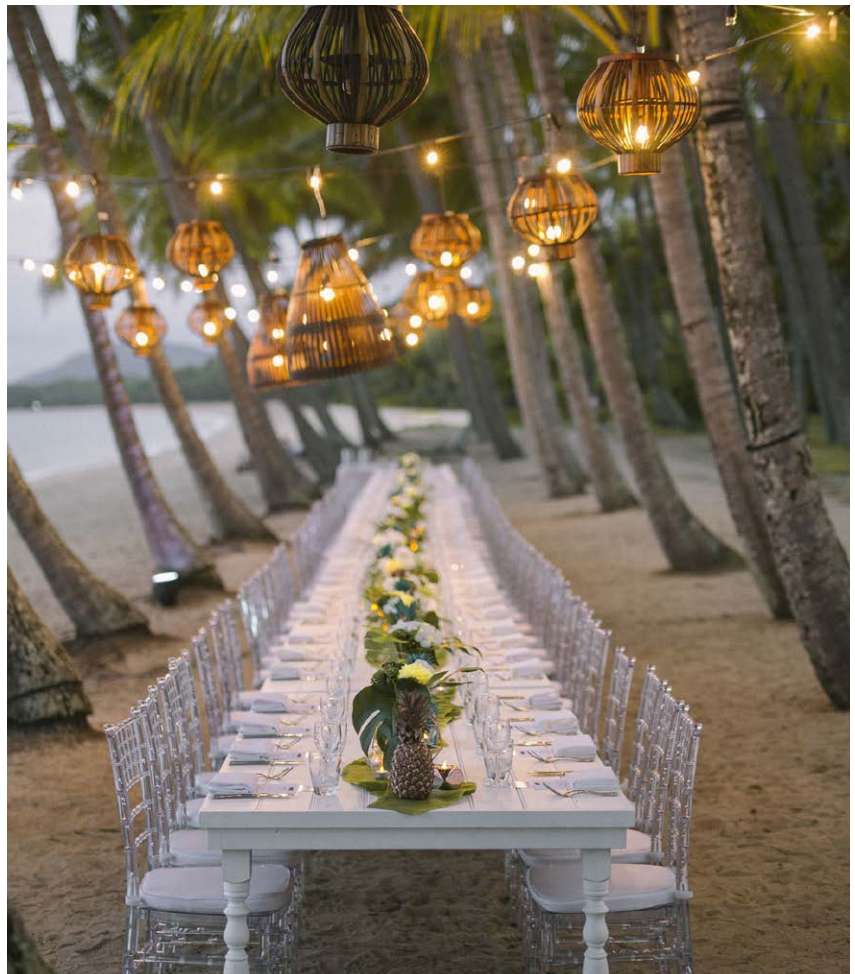
Nestled between two of Tropical North Queensland's most captivating natural wonders, Cairns offers a paradise of adventure awaiting exploration beyond the conference halls. With the Great Barrier Reef and the World Heritage-listed Wet Tropics Rainforest within reach, the city serves as a gateway to a world of breathtaking experiences, perfectly combining culture and nature.

In Cairns, the spirit of adventure thrives, promising an unforgettable journey into the heart of what makes Australia so special. Whether exploring the mesmerizing underwater world of the Great Barrier Reef, a world-renowned UNESCO World Heritage site, or venturing into the depths of the ancient rainforest, Cairns serves as a vibrant hub of exploration and discovery.

UNDERWATER & INLAND

Every day, nearly 30 boats depart from Cairns, whisking visitors to the fascinating marine playground of the Reef - conveniently, the Reef Fleet Terminal is a mere five-minute walk from most city hotels. In less than an hour, snorkelers and divers can immerse themselves in Australia's most spectacular underwater environment: the vibrant marine life and captivating coral formations have created a world that is hard to find anywhere else.

For those seeking inland adventures, the Douglas Track to Glacier Rock beckons with its sun-dappled forest, offering a scenic hike that connects visitors to nature's tranquility. Nearby Crystal Cascades invites swimmers to revel in cascading pools, while the Skyrail Rainforest Cableway provides an exhilarating glide just meters above the lush canopy of the tropical rainforest.



Moreover, with over 600 daily tours departing from the city, Cairns offers easy access to the captivating Wet Tropics rainforest, immersive Indigenous culture, delectable food trails, inviting beaches, and accessible outback adventures. Alternatively, you can immerse yourself in the city's unique charm and cultural richness. Along the waterfront Esplanade, bustling markets offer, for instance, a taste of local cuisine, while various cultural experiences allow you to engage with the region's rich Indigenous heritage.

BEYOND CAIRNS

As Australia's first eco certified destination, Port Douglas can be an option for international delegates. A picturesque coastal town accessible via a one-hour drive north along one of Australia's most spectacular coastal drives - the Great Barrier Reef Drive -, it offers a unique blend of natural beauty and relaxation for travelers seeking a serene escape, from pristine beaches to vibrant markets, and waterfront eateries where you can savor local cuisine.

Port Douglas boasts an array of highlight tours that offer unique and immersive experiences. For a deep dive into the Indigenous heritage of the region, the Indigenous Guided Dreamtime Walk at Mossman Gorge is a must-try. Walkabout Cultural Adventures provides captivating cultural journeys that offer insights into the local traditions and customs. Additionally, Reef Unlimited, the operator of Reef Magic, offers small and personalized tours that take delegates on a journey into the heart of the magnificent Daintree Rainforest.

Nestled approximately 30 minutes north of Cairns, the quaint village of Palm Cove exudes coastal charm and allure. Its heart lies along the esplanade, gracefully adorned with ancient melaleuca trees that have stood for over five centuries. Though small in size, with a population of around 2,000, this beachside destination boasts an array of splendid boutique hotels and resorts. Among them stands The Reef House, a captivating colonial

beach house dating back to 1958, boasting a splendid pool for its guests. Oh and it can also perfectly cater to small to medium-sized groups, hosting 40 to 150 delegates.

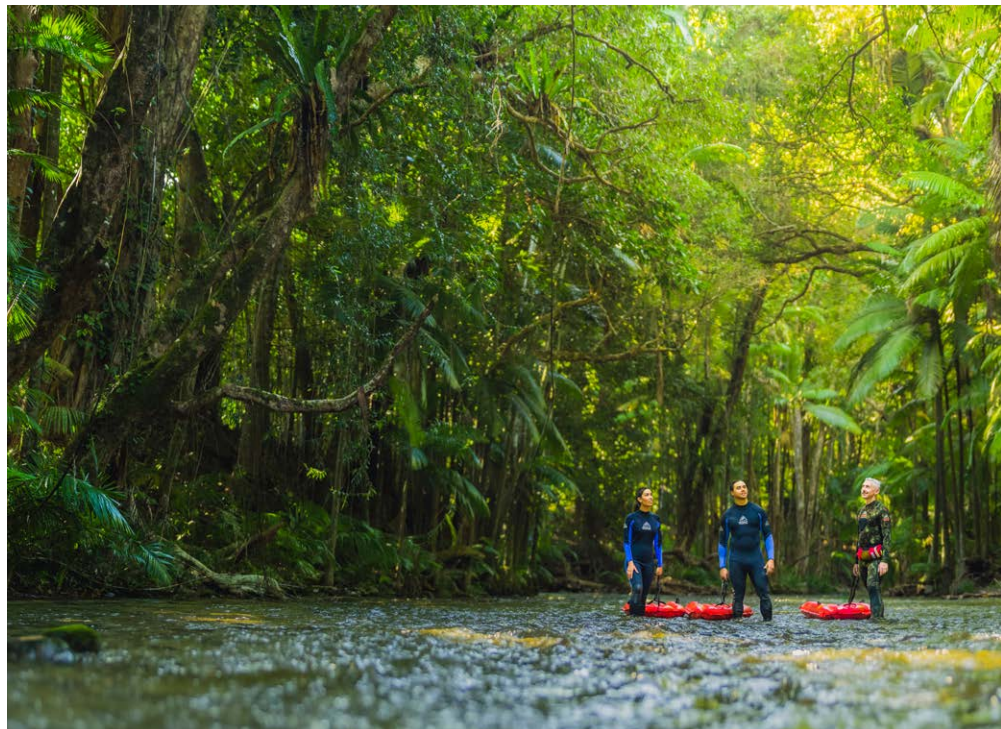
CSR AT ITS BEST

In today's business landscape, CSR has evolved into an essential aspect for organizations aiming to make a positive impact on society and the environment. In Cairns & Great Barrier Reef, this commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility is evident through various initiatives.

Rainforestation, a leading organization in the CSR space, offers a diverse range of options tailored to international audiences. As a major Tropical North Queensland tourist attraction, their approach combines tourism experiences, education, and CSR initiatives seamlessly.

Seasonal variations bring a diverse array of activities for nature enthusiasts to partake in. From wildlife rest area

maintenance to rainforest habitat regeneration, there's something for everyone to get involved in conservation efforts. Participants can engage in clearing and refurbishing safe park wildlife refuge areas, ensuring a nurturing environment for indigenous species. Hands-on experiences in rainforest habitat regeneration include planting, mulching, weeding, and constructing and installing plant guards to foster the growth of lush greenery. Additionally, participants have also the opportunity to contribute to the preservation of native bird and bat populations by constructing nesting boxes. Another meaningful endeavor involves building maintenance for an art centre catering to indigenous youth, fostering a nurturing space for creativity and cultural expression. Moreover, volunteers can actively support the environment by engaging in beehive building for native bee colonies, promoting biodiversity and sustaining essential pollinators.



Recently, Rainforestation orchestrated a successful event for a large group of 350 delegates. The participants were engaged in a series of meaningful activities, including indigenous reconciliation, the creation of nesting boxes, and a tree planting session. Amidst these activities, delegates enjoyed a fulfilling lunch, and they also had the chance to partake in other captivating tourism experiences, such as exploring the wildlife park and embarking on an exciting Army Duck tour.

Similarly, the ReefConnect Program is a groundbreaking initiative catering to the rising demand for sustainable touring options in the meetings sector. Developed in collaboration with GBR Biology, this immersive and educational experience offers a unique opportunity for events and groups visiting the Great Barrier Reef. With a focus on Reef Conservation, First Nations Sea Country, and Marine Science, ReefConnect allows guests to explore the reef while gaining valuable insights into conservation efforts, Indigenous culture,

and the wonders of marine life. Led by marine and cultural specialists, these tailored programs can be seamlessly integrated into group bookings or private charters in Cairns and Port Douglas.

There is also the 'crocodile' option that awaits at Hartley's Crocodile Adventures, a family-owned and operated business. Here, international delegates have the opportunity to get up close and personal with iconic Australian wildlife, including not just crocodiles, but also wombats and koalas. The passion for crocodile conservation is evident as Hartley's educates guests about these living dinosaurs through boat tours on the lagoon and captivating shows throughout the day. Notably, Hartley's plays a significant role in conservation efforts with its North Queensland Wildlife Trust, founded by the Freeman family in 2004.

And last but certainly not least is the Cairns Turtle Rehabilitation Centre, a voluntary non-profit organization committed to rehabilitating sick and injured turtles.

Situated amid the Great Barrier Reef, which is home to six of the world's seven marine turtle species, the organization addresses the severe threats facing these creatures. Operating from locations like Fitzroy Island and James Cook University, the centre tends to turtles afflicted with diseases and injuries, including the prevalent 'floaters disease'. Over the course of fifteen years, the center's success rate in rehabilitating and releasing turtles back into the ocean has surged to over 85%. Innovations like satellite tracking are providing evidence of successful post-rehabilitation adaptation and even long-distance movements.

In the end, Cairns and its captivating surroundings beckon with a harmonious blend of adventure, cultural immersion, wildlife encounters, and a commitment to sustainability. For associations seeking an authentic Australian experience, this destination presents a myriad of enticing possibilities, making it an all-encompassing choice for unforgettable endeavors.



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in Cairns & Great Barrier Reef.



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