

On June 18 Douglas Shire Council voted to commence an exciting conservation and tourism initiative: making Douglas the first carbon neutral destination in Australia, fulfilling a commitment made by most councillors before the last election.

By partnering with the TPDD and Qantas, Council has structured the initiative to also deliver a major marketing opportunity for the industry whose primary asset, the reef, is under threat from climate change and poor water quality

Both Qantas and the tourism industry say the demand for ethical tourism has become a “must do” rather than a “nice to do” and under the proposed business plan, will jointly promote businesses that offer carbon neutral services in accommodation, transport, tours, restaurants and other services that visitors use. By this means visitors can have a carbon neutral holiday, the first such offer for a reef destination in the world

On Tuesday 18th June 2019 Councillors decided to fund a package that will make the Council carbon neutral, initially offsetting their current GHG footprint of around 6,000 tonnes CO₂e/yr for a total cost of about half a per cent of the Council budget

Offsets, in the form of coastal ecosystem restoration projects that store carbon and improve water quality, will be in Great Barrier Reef catchments. Carbon credits will combine with water quality credits that off set Nitrogen, pesticides and sediment from agriculture and urban activities. The combination of carbon and water quality credits are designed to make this destination able to legitimately claim it is “Reef Safe” so visitors have no detrimental impact on the reef from their holiday footprint in Douglas Shire.

The Council commitment is the trigger for others to offer carbon neutral services and for the official launch of the scheme later in the year – indeed several business are already carbon neutral or on track to be so.

The package is a partnership led by Tourism Port Douglas Daintree (TPDD) and Council and includes Qantas and GreenCollar, Australia’s largest supplier of Australian Carbon Credit Units.

Consultation and planning between Council, TPDD, Qantas, GreenCollar and a cross section of tourism operators has been underway for 18 months, the business model has been developed and a pathway agreed.

The four partners believe this model will be adopted by other reef and nature based destinations and that Douglas will benefit from a first mover advantage.

Healthy Reef Model

