

MEDIA RELEASE

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Australia's first support network for Indigenous tourism employees launched in Cairns during NAIDOC Week

The Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) and corporate partner Echo Entertainment Group will celebrate the creation of Australia's first support network for Indigenous employees in the tourism industry in Cairns on Tuesday 7 July.

The launch of the 'QTIC Indigenous Employee Network - North Queensland Chapter' coincides with NAIDOC Week (5 - 12 July), a nationwide celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and achievements.

The new employee group is part of a \$300,000 partnership between QTIC and Echo Entertainment Group to create and promote Indigenous job and career opportunities via peer mentoring and relationship building across the local community.

The new network, for existing and potential Indigenous employees in Queensland's tourism sector, is designed to support and retain staff in the industry and further strengthen the representation of Indigenous employees.

Due to the strong concentration of tourism employers in Far North Queensland, the new statewide network is starting in Cairns with further chapters to be established across Queensland.

The QTIC Tourism Indigenous Employment Champions Network, supported by Echo Entertainment Group, is a voluntary body with 26 Queensland member companies focused on increasing employment pathways for Indigenous Australians.

As part of its 'creating jobs for Queenslanders' focus, Echo Entertainment is providing funding to QTIC to help it maintain and expand its work to create and promote Indigenous employment opportunities, through initiatives like this new network for employees.

"We are delighted that our funding support is enabling this new Australian-first initiative to be started," said Geoff Hogg, Managing Director Queensland of Echo Entertainment Group.

"We know that this has been something QTIC has wanted to achieve for some time, in order to support existing Indigenous employees and attract and retain new ones to Queensland's growing tourism sector.

"For both existing and potential Indigenous employees, this network will provide peer mentoring and help establish important links within local communities across Queensland.

"This is particularly important to newcomers in the tourism industry, as they will be able to learn from peers and ask questions in an informal setting. It will also enable industry representatives to engage directly with them to help answer questions and identify opportunities."

Mr Hogg said Echo Entertainment Group was committed to improving sustainable employment for Indigenous Australians in the tourism industry, and would use its membership to actively promote the network to others in Queensland's growing tourism sector.

In Queensland, Echo Entertainment Group employs more than 3,500 people and operates the Treasury Casino & Hotel, the Jupiters Hotel & Casino, and the Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre.

ECHO ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

The casino operator has joined a working party which is currently developing the terms of reference for the new group.

QTIC Chief Executive Officer Daniel Gschwind said the network for employer companies is helping increase operators' awareness of how to encourage and maintain increased participation of Indigenous Australians within the mainstream tourism industry.

"It does this by enabling members to share experiences and identify areas of opportunity and collaboration. As well as producing resources and industry case studies, we also bring together stakeholders from around the state for an annual forum on Indigenous tourism challenges and opportunities," Mr Gschwind said.

"We want to thank Echo Entertainment Group for its generous financial support, which builds on the very significant in-kind support from other volunteer companies in the network."

More information about the QTIC Tourism Indigenous Employment Champions Network, supported by Echo Entertainment Group, can be found at www.qtic.com.au.

About QTIC:

[QTIC](http://www.qtic.com.au) is the peak industry body for tourism in Queensland, acting as "The Voice of Tourism". QTIC is a private sector, membership-based organisation representing the interests of the tourism and hospitality industry across Queensland. Queensland's tourism industry generates 241,000 jobs and delivers \$23 billion in Gross State Product for the state.

About Echo Entertainment Group:

The [Echo Entertainment Group](http://www.echoent.com.au), which includes Treasury Casino & Hotel in Brisbane and Jupiters Hotel & Casino on the Gold Coast, is one of Queensland's largest private sector employees with a workforce of more than 3,500. Echo Entertainment is proud to support a range of community groups, charities and sponsorships including Surf Life Saving Queensland (supported since 1994), Cerebral Palsy League of Queensland (supported since 2002) and Ronald McDonald House South East Queensland. More than \$100 million has been contributed to the Jupiters Casino Community Benefit Fund (now the Gambling Community Benefit Fund) since 1987 for grants to community groups across Southern Queensland. In 2015 Jupiters and Treasury announced a three year deal with the Queensland Rugby League to become an official partner of the QRL, and the home of the XXXX Queensland Maroons.

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Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) is the peak industry body for tourism in Queensland representing more than 3,000 members. QTIC is a private sector, membership-based organisation which, since 2001, has worked to influence and shape the state's tourism business environment that directly contributes \$23 billion to the Queensland's economy and employs more than 241,000 Queenslanders.

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