



MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

The Town Famous for Dirt n Dust is Attracting Visitors for Something Completely Different

Julia Creek has long been known for its iconic Dirt n Dust Festival, recently celebrating its 30th year. A growing number of visitors are stopping in the North West Queensland town for a very different reason.

From soaking in naturally heated artesian baths beneath a blanket of stars to slowing down and spending more time exploring the region, changing travel trends are creating new opportunities for one of Queensland's smallest communities.

Despite a resident population of around 500 people, Julia Creek now welcomes almost 15,000 visitor nights each year, highlighting the important role tourism plays in supporting local businesses and the local economy.

Janene Fegan, Chair of the Overlanders Way and Mayor of McKinlay Shire, said the community had recognised the importance of creating unique visitor experiences long before wellness tourism became a mainstream travel trend.

"Most people know Julia Creek for Dirt n Dust, and that's still an important part of who we are," Cr Fegan said.

"But we're also seeing growing interest from travellers who are looking for something completely different. They want to slow down, spend time in regional communities and experience things they can't find anywhere else."

One of the town's most recognisable attractions is the Julia Creek Artesian Baths, developed by McKinlay Shire Council in 2016.

Drawing naturally heated mineral-rich water from more than 900 metres underground, the baths offer visitors the opportunity to relax beneath expansive Outback skies while experiencing water rich in naturally occurring sulphur, calcium and magnesium.

Cr Fegan said the baths were developed as part of a broader vision to strengthen tourism and create reasons for visitors to stop, stay and spend time in the community.

"For a small council, tourism is incredibly important," she said.

"We knew we couldn't compete with major cities, so we focused on creating experiences that were uniquely ours."

"Many of the things travellers are actively searching for, whether that's wellness, slow travel or authentic regional experiences, are things we've been offering for years."

Kalan Lococo, Community Services Team Leader who oversees the Caravan Park and Artesian Baths, said visitor expectations had changed significantly in recent years.

"We're seeing more travellers wanting to immerse themselves in a destination rather than simply pass through," Kalan said.

"People often arrive expecting a quick overnight stop and end up staying longer because they discover experiences they weren't expecting."

Cr Fegan said Julia Creek's success demonstrated how regional communities could adapt to changing visitor expectations while remaining true to their identity.

"Tourism trends will continue to evolve, but what people are looking for is often surprisingly simple," she said.

"They want authentic experiences, genuine connections and the opportunity to slow down."

"That's something The Overlanders Way has always done well."



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