

PROGRAM – 2026 ART CONVENTION

DAY ONE	TUESDAY 20 OCTOBER 2026	
	5.30pm – 8.00pm	Welcome Reception Shelter Brewery

DAY TWO	WEDNESDAY 21 OCTOBER 2026 Saltwater Busselton	
	8.00am	Registrations Open
	8.30am	Welcome Address from Master of Ceremonies Regional Leadership – The True Test of your Metal <i>Felicia Mariani</i> Regional tourism leadership has evolved dramatically, moving from what was once viewed as a ‘cottage industry’ to a sophisticated and highly professional sector driving economic growth, employment, infrastructure and investment across Australia. With greater government and private investment has come increased accountability, requiring regional leaders to navigate complexity, build strong connections with industry and community, and think strategically about the future. This opening address will explore what contemporary regional leadership looks like, why the expectations have never been higher, and the importance of looking beyond local boundaries to challenge the status quo, think big and consider regional tourism through a national and global lens.
	9.00am	Welcome Address by ART <i>Joel Chadwick, Chair, ART</i>
	9.15am	The Future of Tourism <i>Robin Mack, Managing Director, Tourism Australia</i>
	9.30am	Austrade Office of the Visitor Economy Address <i>Austrade</i>
	10.00am – 10.30am	MORNING TEA
	10.30am	AI Just Stole Your Google Search Traffic. What Are You Going to Do About It? <i>Hannah Statham, Media Mortar</i> AI hasn’t just disrupted search, it has completely rewritten the rules. The only problem is most of us in RTO, LTO, and LGA land are still playing by the old ones.

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		As AI-powered tools and answer engines replace traditional search journeys, brands are losing visibility in places they once dominated. Traffic is no longer guaranteed by ranking first on Google. The way people discover, evaluate, and choose has fundamentally shifted. The new reality is this - AI doesn't rank your page. It selects your answer. And if you don't adjust to this new reality, your destination risks being completely invisible to potential visitors. In 2026, the destination that provides the best answer to a query wins, often before the user ever visits a website. This keynote unpacks what that change really means for you. We'll explore how consumer behaviour is evolving from keyword searches to conversational prompts, and why being "findable" now depends on how well your content can be interpreted by AI systems. It's no longer about clicks. It's about being chosen. Join Hannah Statham and learn how to stand out to the bots through human-centred and written content.		
	11.00am	The ART Social Impact Project <i>Lauren Douglass, CEO, ART</i>		
	11.10am	Panel 1 – Tourism for Good Tourism can do more than attract visitors and drive economic growth, it can strengthen communities, protect culture and the environment, and improve the places people call home. This session will explore how tourism is being used as a force for good and how we can better understand and communicate its social impact. <i>Facilitator: Professor Sarah Gardiner, Director, Griffith Institute for Tourism, Griffith Business School, Griffith University</i> <i>Cameron Tynan, Executive Manager – Property Development & Planning, Reflections Holidays</i> <i>Lauren Caverley, Senior Communications and Sustainability Manager, Tourism Australia</i>		
	12.00pm	Panel 2 – Regional Dispersal How can regions increase regional dispersal.		
	12.50pm	LUNCH		
	Concurrent Sessions 1			
	1.50pm	Agritourism - Bringing your community on board	Accessible Tourism as a Regional Capability: moving from Project to Process	Visitor Information Centres Further details to follow

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DAY TWO (Continued)		<i>Allison Clark – Global Agritourism Network</i> What were we thinking?! Case studies from communities around the world on the intended and unintended consequences of agritourism. <i>Erin Molloy, Festival Director, AHOY Management</i> Festivals loved by the Locals. How AHOY Management put the community first at Taste Great Southern / Pair’d and Cabin Fever <i>Kate Shilling – Tourism Australia</i> Early insights on social and economic impact of agritourism from Australia’s first National Farm Tourism Survey.	<i>Ryan Smith, Founder and CEO, The Access Agency</i> Accessible tourism is often delivered through short-term projects, yet visitors do not see LGA boundaries and rarely distinguish between public and private spaces. They experience the destination as a whole. This presentation explores how local governments, regional tourism organisations and businesses can work together to embed accessibility into everyday destination management. By treating accessibility as an ongoing process rather than a series of projects, regions can provide more comprehensive visitor information, strengthen destination capability, recognise economic benefit and create more seamless travel experiences for everyone.	
	2.40pm	CONCURRENT SESSION CHANGE OVER		
	Concurrent Sessions 2			
	2.50pm	Agritourism – Farmstay Focus <i>Tim Brady – Head of Heyscape</i> <i>Rachael Steadman – Wooramel Station</i> <i>Third speaker TBC</i>	RTOs Brain Trust – The Room is the Panel <i>Led by Marcus Falconer and Joel Chadwick</i> An honest, interactive conversation where RTO leaders share what's working and what needs attention. RTO	Experience by design: creating tourism people love and AI recommends <i>Liz Ward, CEO, Tourism Tribe</i> What makes a tourism experience genuinely memorable, commercially strong and easy for AI

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		Different ways agritourism operators collaborate to offer unique accommodation and on-farm experiences.	leaders across the country are solving the same problems, mostly in isolation. This session flips that. A short panel kicks off the conversation, then the mic comes to you. Share a challenge or opportunity or a win you're proud of. Hear how others have made an impact and tackled issues, and swap what's actually working. Built for a room full of people who want to discuss, listen and learn about important topics amongst their peers.	to recommend? Liz Ward from Tourism Tribe explores how operators can move beyond selling products to deliberately designing experiences around the right customers, their values and what they truly want from travel. Drawing on Tourism Tribe's work with destinations across Australia, this session explores the intersection of customer insight, AI and contemporary experience development, and how these elements can be practically applied by tourism businesses and DMOs to improve experience quality, strengthen businesses and create more compelling reasons to visit.
	3.40pm	AFTERNOON TEA		
	3.50pm	ART Ambassador and Ask ART Session ART is privileged to have members with immense skills and experience in the visitor economy that are willing to amplify people's knowledge by volunteering their time during the year to provide content on the ART hub. The convention is a great time to meet these 'specialists' in the flesh and pick their brain on the areas of their expertise. The Ambassador round tables allow attendees to hear from two specialists of their choice about the current status of that topic and ask questions that relate to your specific needs. <i>Facilitator: Lori Modde, Lorick Management</i> <i>What are the hot trends right now? - Carolyn Childs, MyTravelResearch.com</i> <i>How do councils/government organisations provide great inclusive experiences when most of the visitor contact is done in the private sector? - Ryan Smith, The Access Agency</i> <i>What does AI mean for the future of my organisation and what do I need to do first to adapt? – Liz Ward</i> <i>What more can I be doing to make my destination / businesses / event show up in Ai search? – Hannah Statham</i>		

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		<i>Are your sustainable and eco-tourism businesses ready for the EU's changing Green Claims Directive and its impacts - Alysia Brandenburg</i> <i>How do we know whether our destination is genuinely resilient—and what should we be watching before pressure becomes crisis? - Kylie Ruwhiu-Karawana (representing Janet Mackay), TRC Tourism</i>
	5.00pm	Day 2 Wrap up Independent Dinner Arrangements
	5.15pm	ART AGM Saltwater Busselton

DAY THREE	THURSDAY 22 OCTOBER 2026 Saltwater Busselton	
	8.30am	Panel 3 – Crisis management and leadership through economic uncertainty <i>Facilitator: Felicia Mariani</i> Danial Rochford, CEO, Tourism Central Australia Holly Wyatt, Regional Tourism Manager, Fleurieu Peninsula Tourism More speakers announced soon
	9.20am	Research, Insights and Data <i>Garrett Tyler-Parker, Austrade</i> In a world with more data than ever, this session will focus on the ‘so what’ and ‘now what’ – translating complex information into practical insights that help organisations make better decisions and take action.
	10.10am	MORNING TEA
	10.40am	Leadership in Regional Tourism Communities: <i>How Collaboration Creates Thriving Destinations</i> <i>Sveva Falletto, Executive Director Nature-based Tourism, Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA), Western Australia</i> This presentation explores how stakeholders including local, regional and state governments, commercial tourism operators, Traditional Owners and community organisations can work together to create thriving tourism destinations that deliver lasting economic, environmental, cultural and social benefits for regions.

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	Drawing on Western Australian case studies, Sveva Falletto will demonstrate how tourism projects can act as catalysts for broader regional transformation. Beyond delivering tourism infrastructure, these projects showcase how a shared vision and collective leadership can strengthen communities, enhance visitor experiences and support long-term destination stewardship. The presentation highlights the evolving role of the WA Parks and Wildlife Service as both a land manager and an enabling partner, bringing stakeholders together to balance conservation outcomes with sustainable visitor access. It will also examine the growing importance of the change towards regenerative tourism principles, ensuring tourism contributes positively to local communities, supports conservation goals and enables meaningful involvement of Traditional Owners.		
Concurrent Sessions 3			
11.10am	Building the right tourism partnerships - cultural way and corporate way <i>Tracey Diddams, TRC Tourism and Rayleen Brown, Kungas Can Cook</i> This session delves into how Aboriginal people and tourism partners can build meaningful, sustainable collaborations by balancing cultural way priorities with corporate requirements. It examines what genuine partnership looks like—where risks and responsibilities are shared, and cultural authority, community benefit and traditional protocols are foundational rather than add-ons. Drawing on real-world Aboriginal tourism examples and lived experience, the session explores	Tourism in the Council Chamber: How Do We Get Tourism Taken Seriously? Tourism delivers far more than visitor numbers, marketing campaigns and events. But within Local Government, its true value isn't always understood or recognised. This candid panel discussion will explore how Tourism Managers can better demonstrate tourism's economic, social and strategic contribution to Councillors, executives and colleagues, while building stronger internal support and influence. From competing priorities and tight budgets to breaking down silos and finding the language that resonates in the Council Chamber, our panellists will	Turning climate leadership into regional tourism value <i>Elissa Keenan, CEO, EcoTourism Australia</i> This presentation shares the first insights from Ecotourism Australia's forthcoming Climate Leadership research, supported through the Boundless Earth EPIC Grant Program. It challenges the idea that climate action is simply about managing risk, showing instead how climate leadership can strengthen destinations, grow regional economies and create competitive advantage. The session introduces a practical framework that brings together emissions reduction, climate adaptation, nature protection,

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		common partnership models across the visitor economy and the roles various partners play in areas such as product development, operations, marketing and compliance. Key contrasts between cultural way (protecting Country, language, Lore, Aboriginal-led roles, and ecosystem stewardship) and corporate way (legal agreements, governance, profitability and network access) are highlighted, demonstrating how respectful engagement can strengthen trust and deliver mutual benefits.	share their experiences and practical insights. If you've ever found yourself having to justify why tourism matters, this is a conversation you won't want to miss.	cultural stewardship, social impact and credible sustainability into a clear tourism value proposition. It also highlights a new Sustainable Tourism Reputation Index, giving destinations a practical way to understand how sustainability influences reputation, visitor choice and global competitiveness.
	12.05pm	LUNCH		
	1.00pm	The Future of DMPs <i>Facilitator: Carolyn Childs</i> How is destination management planning evolving to meet an age of heightened uncertainty? ART will continue its thought leadership in regional and remote destination management planning, sharing knowledge, looking at trends and hearing from some of the changemakers in this space.		
	1.50pm	Leadership Keynote Address <i>Todd Babiak</i>		
	2.40pm	Regional Success Stories – Showcase Hear from successful tourism operators as we showcase Australia's South West.		
	3.30pm	Convention Wrap Up		
	5.30pm – 9pm	ART Convention Dinner Origins Market		

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*Program subject to change