Ecotourism given a lift at the Brolga Awards

The Brolga Awards gave a nod to top tourist attractions in the Territory, and Sea Darwin Eco Tours took two top trophies. The family-run business scooped up the award for Ecotourism as well as the prestigious Chairman’s Choice Award at the Brolga Awards, which were held on Saturday night.

Owner and operator Jim Smith (pictured) said it had been a journey since they started the business in 2008 but were thrilled at the accolades. “We went in not expecting anything, because there are some very good operators out there,” he said.

“What made us really chuffed was the Chairman’s Award. When we started, the turtles were not on the radar and we have created a new destination in the NT with our tours.”

The tours provide educational and historic tours around Darwin Harbour as well as their key attraction – a sunset tour to Bare Sand Island, with a nesting ground for flatback turtles.

“A lot of people in Australia know more about lions and tigers than they do about what’s in our own backyard,” Mr Smith said.

“We try to connect people with a place, and help to provide them with a thematic interpretation where they will get goosebumps and remember it in a year’s time.”

Overall, there were five individuals and 22 businesses who were awarded for their services to the tourism industry at the ceremony.

China deal a pearler for NT

By CRAIG DUNLOP

The Territory looks set to benefit after Chinese President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Tony Abbott signed the long-awaited China-Australia Free Trade Agreement on Monday.

The main sectors to benefit from the agreement will be cattle, fresh produce, natural resources and pearling. The benefits of freer trade with China could be years away, as some of the NT’s major export products will continue to be the subject of Chinese import tariffs for almost a decade.

Among the winners is the pearling industry, which is currently slugged with a 21 per cent tariff on imports to China.

The tariff will be phased out over the next four years, a move that will bring some relief to the Paspaley family, whose iconic pearling business has been under siege from a deluge of cheap, plentiful imports in recent years.

Paspaley Group executive director James Paspaley welcomes the agreement.

“I am sure that not only Paspaley but also the whole of the Australian pearling industry will benefit from the reduction of these trade barriers,” he said.

“The freeing up of trade relations is an extremely positive move, one which will undoubtedly build industry confidence, encourage market growth and be of great benefit to our customers.”

Chinese President Xi Jinping and Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott have signed a historic trade deal.