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Reimagining the Visitor Economy Expert Panel  
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## Reimagining the Visitor Economy Discussion Paper – May 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a response to the Reimagining the Visitor Economy discussion paper which seeks comments on the visitor economy needs as they relate to caravan parks in Queensland.

As the peak body for the caravan parks industry in Queensland, the visitor economy and encouraging Australians to travel extensively within Australia is key to our industry's continued success.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has brought many challenges for the tourism sector, it has also resulted in more regional dispersal by domestic travellers than ever before with Australian's rediscovering the beauty, natural attractions, and diverse tourism attractions that regional Australia offers. This regional dispersal has also seen more Australians returning to the traditional caravan and camping holiday with many caravan parks in Queensland recording record levels of visitation at present.

Despite this, it is necessary to look to the future to ensure that the tourism sector continues to grow and that the collective tourism sector returns to beyond its previous levels of employment and expenditure.

Regional tourism faces many issues which are not seen by businesses in metropolitan centres, including a lack of trained and motivated staff, poor digital connectivity, rising costs for services, lack of options in relation to insurance and perceptions about road quality along with distance a barrier to travel for many potential guests.

### Recommendations

On behalf of our members, we would like to support the recommendations made by Caravan Industry Association of Australia in their submission to this discussion paper, particularly the following items:

#### **Tourism reinsurance pool to cover all natural disasters and extreme weather events across Australia.**

Access to appropriate and affordable Insurance continues to be a significant issue for caravan parks in Queensland. We have received reports from members that they have been denied coverage as they are located in a region that is considered a bushfire or cyclone risk despite not yet having been impacted by these risks.

A reinsurance pool will increase the number of insurers offering policies to our members creating a more competitive market which will in turn provide more appropriate and affordable access to insurance which is an essential service.



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### **Tourism Australia mandate extended to be in the domestic market until 2030.**

While it is important to attract international markets to Australia there must also be a focus on encouraging Australian's to travel in Australia. Traditionally international markets remain in major cities on their first few trips to Australia, rarely travelling into the regions.

To support regional Australia, it is necessary to encourage visitors to travel further and stay longer. Tourism Australia has this ability should it be mandated to market to domestic travellers, providing much needed economic activity in regional areas.

### **Incentives for businesses to adapt and improve their product offerings to attract a more diverse markets and to increase visitation.**

Most caravan parks in Queensland are micro to small businesses, the owners of these businesses are busy checking guests in, cleaning amenities blocks and ensuring they meet their statutory requirements. By extension this means they rarely have time to work on their business as they are so busy working in it.

Creating incentives for tourism businesses, especially those small tourism businesses, to adapt and improve their product offering will have considerable positive impacts on regional areas, including positive employment outcomes and increased economic activity for these smaller towns and businesses.

### **A review of Commonwealth grant funding programs to provide more avenues for co-investment from government & business in tourism infrastructure.**

A major frustration of our members is that many grant programs are seen to favour large businesses and many of these smaller businesses feel that the Government is picking winners when it selects just a small number of large businesses.

A review of Commonwealth grant funding programs could consider how to better support small tourism businesses invest in their infrastructure and provide additional avenues to encourage investment in tourism product right across the country.

### **Investment in regional roads in need of upgrading or sealing in order to grow the drive market.**

Roads and distance continue to be a major barrier to visitation for many tourism businesses in Regional Queensland. This coupled with the fact that hire cars and campervan/motorhomes are not to be driven on unsealed roads can result in lost bookings for amazing tourism businesses that are located off the beaten track.

### **Removal of age limit for Working Holiday Maker (Visa-class 417 & 462) and the need for a bilateral agreement to be in place for adoption of the program.**

In 2019 several of our member parks reported that there had been a shift in their traditional backpacker market with their "backpacker" guests reporting that back home they held professional roles including dentists, doctors and architects.

Removing the age limit for working holiday maker visas would encourage these educated and motivated travellers to fill roles in Regional Australia, supporting businesses currently struggling to fill roles within their businesses – in turn limiting their ability to trade.

### **Expand the roles required for a second-year visa to include hospitality roles in regional areas.**

Work force issues continue to be one of the top three challenges our members face along with access to insurance and the cost of services.

While expanding the roles for the second year visa to include hospitality across Australia is not a quick fix to this problem it will, in time, provide more workforce options for regional businesses, especially with many of these travellers having previously held hospitality roles in metropolitan areas.

### **Investment in improving digital connectivity and reducing black spots around regional Australia**

The introduction of cloud based property management systems has had positive impacts on caravan parks located in major metropolitan and regional centres, particularly in relation to productivity.

Many regional and remote caravan parks have indicated a desire to move to these cloud based systems however due to their lack of digital connectivity have not had the confidence to do so. Other's report that they have made the move to this cloud based software only to discover that the unreliable internet and services in their region makes it unreliable – impacting not only their productivity but also the guest experience in their park.

Further as more travellers come to expect quality internet and phone coverage as they travel, the large number of black spots is impacting the visitor experience in regional Queensland.

### **Creation of enabling tech infrastructure to support regional and remote travel**

Accurate and easy to access information on road quality is also necessary to support these locations which encourage increased expenditure and length of travel due to their regional and remote locations.

On a recent trip into North West Queensland, I personally discovered the difficulty finding accurate information on the road surfaces and quality as I travelled in a hired vehicle which limited my travel – accurate and easy to find information may have seen me travel further afield to some bucket list locations.

### **For more information**

Should you wish to discuss any of these recommendations, or our important sector within the tourism industry in Queensland, please do not hesitate to contact me on the details provided on page 1.

Kind regards



Michelle Weston

Chief Executive Officer

### **About Caravan Parks Association of Queensland**

Caravan Parks Association of Queensland Ltd (CPAQ) is the peak industry body representing caravan parks in Queensland. Established in 1966, the association is the voice for the caravan parks industry in Queensland, providing support, networking, professional development, and promotional opportunities for our members.

There are currently over 440 full and associate members of CPAQ, made up of caravan parks (catering for tourists and residents) and campgrounds, large and small, from all corners of the State, industry suppliers, tourism businesses, plus regional and local tourism organisations.

We seek to work with both state and local governments to balance the needs of the consumer with those of the Government and industry. Further we actively strive to ensure not only that minimum standards within parks are met, but that over time these industry standards are in fact driven higher.

### Caravanning Queensland

We trade under the brand Caravanning Queensland which joins the two related but separate peak industry bodies in Queensland:

**Caravan Parks Association of Queensland (CPAQ)** the voice of the caravan park owners and operators and the associated supply chain in Queensland.

**Caravan Trade & Industries Association of Queensland (CTIAQ)** the voice of the trade sector in the caravan and camping industry in Queensland with a membership made up predominantly of retailers, manufacturers, hirers, repairers, and suppliers in the caravan and camping industries.

