



# THRIVE 2030 Implementation Advisory Group

## Group members

### Xavier Simonet (Chair) Chief Executive Officer, Austrade



Xavier Simonet commenced as the Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Trade and Investment Commission (Austrade) in April 2021. He was previously Group CEO and Managing Director of Kathmandu Holdings, which comprises the Kathmandu, Rip Curl and Oboz brands, and has previously held the roles of CEO of Radley London and International Director of Seafolly Group. He also worked for 11 years for LVMH (Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy) in Europe, Asia and Australia. Born and raised in France, Xavier and his family have chosen to make Australia their home, where he has worked for iconic Aussie brands like Seafolly and Rip Curl. He brings a passion for Australia alongside an international perspective that will help to identify the right opportunities and messages to boost Australian businesses around the world. Xavier has a Master's degree in law, economics and public administration from the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris, a Master's in International Management from HEC Paris and the Vienna School of Economics and Business Administration, a Master's Diploma in Business Administration from the HEC School of Management in Paris and has completed the Harvard Business School Executive Management qualification in Strategic Marketing Management.

### Karen Bolinger, Founder, Bolinger Consulting



Karen Bolinger is a dynamic and experienced strategist and executive leader in the visitor economy. Karen runs a consulting business and has worked with various organisations within the visitor economy to develop business event strategies, conduct complete business transformations and establish a presence in the Asia Pacific. Karen is currently the Strategic Advisor to Best Cities – a collective of 11 global destinations collaborating to attract and grow business events for their destinations leading to social transformation. She was previously the CEO of the Melbourne Convention Bureau (MCB), helping deliver over \$2.7 billion in economic contribution to the Victorian economy. Karen's contribution to the sector was recognised when she was awarded the 2018 Joint Meetings Industry Council Unity Award, selected by 10 peak bodies, which recognises individuals who have made significant contributions to the advancement of the Business Events industry globally.

## Sarina Bratton AM, Chairman Asia Pacific and Special Advisor to Executive, PONANT



Widely regarded as a visionary businesswoman and entrepreneur, Sarina was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 2014 for her "significant service to tourism, particularly the cruise ship industry, and in business," - the only Australian ever recognised in this way for their contribution to the international cruise industry. As a former VP APAC for Cunard Line, founder of CLIA Australasia (formerly ICCA Australasia) and founder and MD of Orion Expedition Cruises (2003-2013), Sarina has wide-ranging experience in the APAC region. Since late 2013 when French luxury expedition operator PONANT flagged its intention to internationalise their business and product, Sarina was appointed as Special Advisor and Chairman Asia Pacific to oversee the strategy and spearhead the aggressive development in APAC. Sarina has been recognised with various awards - Veuve Clicquot Business Woman of the Year, E&Y Entrepreneur of the Year (NSW), Australian Travel Innovators Award, Centenary Medal in 2003 for her business leadership contributions and in 2000 was entered into the Business Woman's Hall of Fame. Sarina is also a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

## Matthew Cameron-Smith, CEO, Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia



Matthew Cameron-Smith commenced as CEO of Voyages in August 2020. Matthew has an extensive and highly successful background in national and international tourism, joining Voyages from The Travel Corporation, where he spent almost 10 years leading the Trafalgar Guided Holidays brand as well as his most recent position as Global CEO of AAT Kings. His prior experience has included roles with Tourism Australia - promoting the country in the UK and Europe markets, global roles with Rydges Hotels & Resorts, South Bank Parklands and Dreamworld. Matthew is a director of Ultimate Winery Experiences of Australia, the Anangu Community Foundation and was recently appointed to the Torrens University of Australia Hospitality Industry Advisory Board comprising both Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School and William Blue College of Hospitality Management. He was previously a director of the Council of Australian Tour Operators. Matthew holds an Associate Diploma in Human Resource Development and a Master's degree in Business Administration and Management.

## Tony Coppins, Managing Director, Kangaroo Island Ocean Safari and member of the National Indigenous Tourism Advisory Group



Tony Coppins has been involved in the tourism industry for over 30 years. Tony and his wife, Sandy, own and operate Kangaroo Island Ocean Safari, a marine tourism business offering swim with dolphins, seals and coastal tours, as well as Kangaroo Island Safari, a bus transport service. Kangaroo Island Ocean Safari has recently been inducted into the Tourism Hall of Fame in South Australia. Tony also manages the Kangaroo Island Visitor Information Centre, providing an essential information service to visitors to the island. He is the managing director of Visitor Information Zone (VIZ) which is a proximity digital market platform that sends user-controlled content to smart devices through WiFi. Tony also currently sits on the National Indigenous Tourism Advisory Group and is the Chair of Kangaroo Island Tourism.

**Rodney Harrex, Chief Executive, South Australian Tourism Commission**  
*State and Territory Government Representative*



Rodney is committed to driving South Australia's visitor economy to the ambitious \$12.8 billion by 2030. He successfully led the SATC to achieving a record high \$8.1 billion visitor economy in early 2020 – achieved 12 months earlier than projected. Rodney is focused on continuing to grow the visitor economy by implementing innovative marketing programs that engage consumers and running events to drive visitation, enhancing South Australia's positioning as a diverse and attractive place to visit. Under his direction, South Australia has established unprecedented growth - and set even bolder targets for the next decade through the SA Visitor Economy Sector Plan 2030 – despite the recent challenges of COVID-19 and bushfires. During this period, the SATC has won the right to host many world-class events, conferences and exhibitions, and is considered a leader in this field. Prior to his role at the SATC, Rodney was General Manager, UK and Northern Europe for Tourism Australia.

**Phillipa Harrison (Ex-officio member) Managing Director, Tourism Australia**



Phillipa Harrison joined Tourism Australia in February 2017 to head up the organisation's international operations for Asia, the Americas, Europe and New Zealand as well as Global Distribution and Partnerships. In this role Phillipa oversaw Tourism Australia's network of international offices spanning 12 countries as well as managing airline relationships and distribution channels, working in partnership with the industry to grow the inbound market for Australian tourism. In September 2019, Phillipa was promoted to Managing Director. Prior to joining Tourism Australia, Phillipa spent six years working for Hamilton Island Enterprises and before that held a variety of senior sales, marketing and product roles at Viator Systems (Sydney), Base Group (Sydney), STA Travel (London), Contiki Holidays (London), and Trailfinders (London).

**Tim Horan AM, Managing Director, River & Mercantile Asset Management**



Tim is an experienced non-executive director with involvement on a range of government and non-for-profit boards. Tim was a Tourism and Events Queensland Board member from 2009 to 2012 where he played a significant role in developing and implementing an events strategy for Events Queensland. His career has also seen him head the Sports and Entertainment business in Private and Premium Banking for Westpac Banking Corporation until 2018 . Tim is also an ambassador for the Modified Rugby Program (MRP) that provides modified games of rugby for boys and girls with learning and perceptual difficulties. He was made a Member of the Order of Australia in 2009 and inducted into the Sport Australia Hall of Fame in 2010.

## Rob Pennicott, Managing Director, Pennicott Wilderness Journeys



Robert is the owner of the multi award winning Pennicott Wilderness Journeys, which he founded in 1999. Today the business operates six signature experiences in Tasmania and one in Victoria, including: Bruny Island Cruises, Tasman Island Cruises, Iron Pot Cruises, Tasmanian Seafood Seduction, Bruny Island Traveller, Wineglass Bay Cruises and Wilsons Promontory Cruises. Pennicott Wilderness Journeys has a fleet of 17 state-of-the-art vessels and 14 buses, employs more than 100 staff and hosts over 110,000 visitors annually. Rob passionately promotes the importance of sustainable and regenerative tourism. A part of each ticket sold goes to the Pennicott Foundation, to fund important philanthropic activities. Previous projects include eradicating feral cats from Tasman Island and rats from Big Green Island. Pennicott Wilderness Journeys is 100% carbon offset and an Advanced Ecotourism Certified operator. Pennicott Wilderness Journeys has won 12 Australian Tourism Awards, one Victorian Tourism Award and 29 Tasmanian Tourism Awards including being inducted into the Australian Tourism Awards Hall of Fame for Ecotourism and Sustainable tourism. Robert has also been recognised as an Australian Tourism Legend.

## Laura Ruffles, Executive Director and Global COO, Corporate Travel Management



Laura has significant local, regional, and global travel industry experience. Laura's responsibilities include optimising sales performance, service delivery, client satisfaction, employee retention and profitability to achieve the company's business goals globally. Her strengths include managing leadership performance, strategy and business planning, sales and client management, process engineering and optimisation. In December 2015, Laura was appointed to the CTM Board as an Executive Director. Laura is also an active member of IATA's Global Travel Executive Committee (GTEC), is a Director of Australian Federation of Travel Agents (AFTA) is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and holds an MBA from the Australian Institute of Business. Laura is passionate about the travel industry and particularly advocates for women in business and leadership roles fostering a culture of equal career opportunities. Originally from the UK, Laura has called Australia home for 16 years where she resides in Sydney with her husband and 4 children.

**Carolyn Turnbull, Managing Director, Tourism Western Australia**  
*State and Territory Government Representative*



Carolyn is the current Managing Director of Tourism WA, responsible for the day-to-day operations of the agency including the promotion of WA as an incredible tourism destination, working with industry and government to improve access, accommodation and tourism experiences and delivering a world-class events calendar. Carolyn brings 20 years of international leadership experience in the tourism and hospitality industry to the role of Managing Director, having held senior executive roles with global hospitality brands including Aman Resorts. She joined Tourism WA in 2020 as the Executive Director - Industry, Aviation and Markets and continues to provide executive direction for the agency in the area of aviation.

**Simon Westaway, Strategy Director, Royce Communications**



Simon brings 25-years of senior executive experience inside some of Australia's most prominent companies including the Qantas Group, BHP, Tourism Australia, Orica and Medibank Private. He has headed two national industry bodies as CEO or Director – the Australian Livestock Exporters' Council and the country's largest small business tourism organisation, the Australian Tourism Industry Council. He was a former executive manager at a regional airline (Impulse Airlines) and long-standing executive Head of Corporate Relations and EXCO member for the major Qantas Group airline, Jetstar. At Tourism Australia, he oversaw and released TA's successful China Strategy and an innovative India2020 visitation strategy before both markets achieved substantive growth. He was responsible at TA for the successful implementation of Australia's first long-term sectorial strategy, Tourism 2020.