

TOURISM MINISTERS' MEETING COMMUNIQUÉ 14 August 2015

The Hon Andrew Robb MP, Federal Minister for Trade and Investment, and the Hon John Eren, Victorian Minister for Tourism and Major Events, Minister for Sport and Minister for Veterans, welcomed Australia's Tourism Ministers to Melbourne today for the 67th Tourism Ministers' Meeting.

Minister Robb highlighted some recent successes to support the tourism industry including:

- \$18 million for an expanded series of Australia Week trade and promotional events in China, India, the United States and ASEAN, promoting Australia as a world class tourism destination and a valued trade and investment partner.
- \$30 million to increase promotion of foreign direct investment in priority areas such as tourism infrastructure, including increased resources for Austrade's global investment teams.
- Reduction in the company tax rate to 28.5 per cent for businesses with a turnover less than \$2 million.
- \$40 million for a four-year extension to the Regional Aviation Access Programme.
- Extending the Entrepreneurs Programme for the first time to northern Australian tourism businesses to help build the competitiveness of the North's tourism industry.
- \$66 million for tourism businesses under the \$1 billion Stronger Regions Fund for projects to help build tourism related infrastructure.

Today's conversation also provided ministers with an opportunity to hear from Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women, who updated ministers on recent visa reforms which will benefit the tourism sector. These include the introduction of the 10 year visitor visa for Chinese tourists, the continued roll-out of electronic lodgement for tourist visas in key markets, facilitation of special events and the continued roll-out of Smartgate technology to improve passenger facilitation.

Ministers discussed the importance of realising a strong tourism investment pipeline and agreed to work with relevant planning ministers in their jurisdictions to develop better practice planning approval processes.

Austrade's Senior Tourism Investment Specialist, Ms Karen Wales, provided ministers with an update on current trends in the hotel investment and development market whilst highlighting challenges that may impede the progress of projects in the pipeline and tourism investment over the long term. Ministers noted the upcoming Northern Australia Investment Summit presents an opportunity to showcase a package of potential tourism investment projects across jurisdictions.

Ministers noted that labour and skills shortages are restricting the tourism industry's ability to meet growing international demand for Australia's quality products, services and experiences. There are currently 38,000 unfilled vacancies in the sector. In the absence

of intervention, the industry will need 123,000 workers (including 60,000 skilled workers) by 2020.

To address this problem, ministers agreed that all jurisdictions and the Australian Government need to work with industry representatives to develop practical plans to support improving skills in the tourism and hospitality industry. Ministers also agreed to raise skills issues with jurisdictional vocational education ministers for discussion through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) process.

Tourism Australia updated ministers on the rollout of the Restaurant Australia campaign that has seen events and promotions across 15 key markets in partnership with state, territory and industry partners. Based on the most recent data available, there has been a 10 per cent increase in international visitor spend on food and wine, providing an increase of \$430 million since the start of the Restaurant Australia campaign, bringing the level of spend in this area to \$4.6 billion.

Ministers discussed the importance of Indigenous tourism and referred the future of the Indigenous Tourism Champions Programme to the Australian Standing Committee on Tourism (ASCOT) for consideration.

Ministerial Attendance:

The Hon Andrew Robb AO MP (Commonwealth - Chair)

Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash (Commonwealth)

The Hon John Eren MP (Victoria)

The Hon Will Hodgman MP (Tasmania)

The Hon Kate Jones MP (Queensland)

The Hon Leon Bignell MP (South Australia)

The Hon Alyssa Hayden MLC (Western Australia)

Apologies:

Mr Andrew Barr MLA (Australian Capital Territory)

The Hon Stuart Ayres MP (New South Wales)

The Hon Dr Kim Hames MLC (Western Australia)

The Hon Adam Giles MLA (Northern Territory)

Rt Hon John Key, Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism (New Zealand)

The Hon Paula Bennett, Associate Minister of Tourism (New Zealand)

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