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MEDIA STATEMENT

Latest National / International Visitor Survey results for Australian tourism

Today's release of yet another record set of visitor economy data reinforces that Australia's tourism industry remains as one of our nation's fastest growing and sustainable industries.

The Australian Tourism Industry Council (ATIC), representing over 8000 local tourism enterprises, said the tourist visitor and spending growth figures released by Tourism Research Australia (TRA) and headlined by a strong domestic sector, needed to be celebrated and acknowledge that industry and all-of-government support behind a cohesive national tourism strategy is working.

TRA said Australian domestic tourism – Australian's travelling to and through our country – saw local spending steeply rise by 15% and resident overnight trips up 12% - mirroring high repeated growth from prior quarters. Despite observed international headwinds, overseas visitor spending in Australia still rose an impressive 5% with travel volumes up 3%, in a plateauing of the record run of visitors received from wider Asia and led by China.

ATIC Executive Director Simon Westaway said drivers behind the latest National and International Visitor data called for greater clarity in future planning and forward industry projections and garner a collective industry voice around the direction of the \$140 billion plus Australian tourism sector.

Mr Westaway said one of the few missing links from the current national *Tourism2020* strategy and future transition into a *Tourism2030* long-term strategic plan – an ATIC policy priority - was a failure in achieving wide-spread and genuine international visitor dispersal into more Australian regions.

He said regions within day trip reach out of major Sydney, Melbourne and SE Queensland gateways, such as the Blue Mountains, Great Ocean Road or Byron Bay, have benefited from record international visitor flows and spending, but not greater regional and rural Australia beyond pockets like Uluru.

And another ATIC long-term call for stronger regional aviation gateways, particularly through northern Australia where point-to-point narrow-body jet access capability and marketability directly from Asia or our larger cities can exist, remains a series of opportunities not capitalised upon.

"The great momentum around Australian tourism over many years cannot be at risk of being stymied if we don't heed the clear signs of a changing visitor market", Mr Westaway said.

"International visitor flows from Top 5 visitor markets of China and the UK have softened, possibly to new normal levels, yet other markets like the US and India gain traction. And yet our iconic Kakadu, symbolic of Australia's unprecedented nature and indigenous offering, has seen visitor numbers dramatically slide due to a range of known factors only now being addressed.

"Pleasingly domestic Australian travel has regained serious lustre. Enabled by continued growth in accommodation offerings, including government and private sector investment in infrastructure around a number of Australia's premier tourism icons, the upward trend appears lasting!

"ATIC is optimistic projected increases in domestic air capacity including from Qantas over the next year, a low Australian dollar, stable economy and high government investment in transport and public infrastructure will see more Australians more often pursue their passions through local travel. Future tourism strategies and marketing need to best capture this momentum shift.

"Marketing Australia's unique appeal and offering to the international visitor remains all-critical and its momentum and investment must be retained and built upon including through Tourism Australia. ATIC however believes domestic tourism needs greater recognition in any future policy response."

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