

18 March 2020

**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**Getting behind our tourism industry seriously matters**

Comments attributed to Simon Westaway, Executive Director, Australian Tourism Industry Council.

The economic abyss facing our tourism industry as a result of COVID-19 is now so patently clear.

To repeat the words of Qantas Group CEO Alan Joyce in the past 24-hours: *"...it is fair to call this the biggest shock that global aviation has ever experienced!"*

From ATIC's perspective simply insert 'Australian tourism' into the same sentence – for it reflects the same outcome.

As the direct employer of 1 million Australians, through 300,000 local businesses, the vast majority small or micro enterprises and many situated in our regions; collectively our tourism industry continues to deliver an outstanding visitor offering that underpins our \$150 billion visitor economy.

Tourism in Australia has very much grown up to become a fundamental 21<sup>st</sup> century economic pillar for our country. And we have increasingly partnered with communities, other industries and importantly with Government around our strategic direction, delivering against our long-term national sustainable growth plan that's strongly stimulated domestic and overseas markets.

The public health, safety and well-being of our fellow Australians must always remain our number one national priority and none more so than at this time. Our industry has stood solidly as one behind the all-of-government decisions that are designed to ensure this remains the case in facing the headwinds of COVID-19.

Yet since the onset of coronavirus entering Australia, the commensurate rapid decline in consumer confidence and commenced imposition of international travel bans from 1 February, initially on our most valuable and largest international visitor market, China, the major impact upon our sector has built and built.

Last weekend's dramatic expansion on travel restrictions has taken the situation to a further level. This now includes anybody arriving into Australia needing to undertake 14-days self-isolation; the review of non-essential gatherings of more than 500 people which has halted in its tracks existing and future major business and sporting events, plus many B2B, community and wider recreational activities; and the 30-day ban on arriving foreign cruise ships.

All are necessary public health policy to work to contain and in time defeat COVID-19, but they are further nails into our industry, driving tens of thousands of our tourism enterprises as well as major airline, transport, accommodation and experience businesses to the financial brink. Collectively our industry can take little more.

ATIC welcomes the understanding that a major Federal Government rescue package is being considered that will be directly targeted to help better protect tourism enterprises, including our Australian airlines and to save jobs across the visitor economy – from tourism, hospitality and aviation sectors.

These are unprecedented times. The horror movie that's unfolded for Australian tourism is one we recognise government is watching and we anticipate and welcome it now looking to act to even better support. This is in the best and right interest for all Australians.

**Further Details:**

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