

ATIC calls on PM to take on Tourism

Leading tourism peak body ATIC has called on the Prime Minister to personally take the reins of the Tourism portfolio under an anticipated Federal Ministerial reshuffle before the year end.

ATIC Executive Director Simon Westaway said Tourism as a current and future economic pillar should stay inside Federal Cabinet with its recovery best served under the PM's direct oversight.

"Federal Tourism Minister, Simon Birmingham, now in the Finance portfolio, has done an excellent job in tourism's worst ever year due to COVID-19 and bushfires," Mr Westaway said.

"With the PM's past tourism experience, we believe nobody is better equipped inside the Federal Government to guide our industry so heavily impacted by the virus and in bushfire recovery.

"Australia's visitor economy has halved in total economic value through 2020 with tens of thousands of tourism jobs and businesses lost due to COVID-19 and last summer's bushfires.

"Latest released national tourism data shows accumulated visitor spending losses now above \$50 billion and still climbing given the remaining domestic and international border closures.

"It remains a challenging period for the tourism industry that had employed 1 in 12 Australians before COVID-19 and facing no meaningful international border re-opening until well into 2021.

"We believe the Prime Minister taking the portfolio is innovative and necessary as tourism's total economic contribution and job creation can be well driven from the very top of government.

"Many Australian Premiers today have portfolio responsibility for Tourism enabling stronger partnerships between government and industry which aid a more sustainable growth outlook.

"The Prime Minister holding the Federal tourism portfolio can also only enhance key deliberations with the States around the recovery of our visitor economy through the National Cabinet process.

"At a minimum Tourism's seat at the Federal Cabinet table must be retained in any future re-shaped Ministry to keep this critical industry front and centre in executive decision making."

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