

Domestic tourism needs certainty on open borders

Latest national tourism data around Australia’s free-falling domestic visitor economy due to COVID-19 is proof point that certainty around keeping interstate borders open must remain.

ATIC Executive Director Simon Westaway said 2020’s COVID and bushfire impact saw a \$36 billion hit to tourism with 3/4 of domestic overnight spend losses due to interstate travel collapsing.

Tourism Research Australia’s September 2020 analysis also showed national Visitor Spend (down 56%), Overnight Trips (down 46%) and Visitor Nights (down 43%) against September 2019.

“Open domestic borders and the confidence they will stay open is the catalyst for getting Australians to begin travelling again and this can’t be compromised,” Mr Westaway said.

“Industry needs continued certainty by the States to keep domestic borders open so that tourism’s recovery gains traction ahead of changes to JobKeeper and Federal stimulus in March.

“The latest domestic tourism numbers reinforce just how deep a hole our industry fell into and the collective impact of the COVID pandemic with border closures and the earlier bushfire crisis.

“The journey for Australian tourism’s recovery and its sustainable future, as one of our biggest industries, faces ongoing challenges, including our continued hard international border closure.

“Long-standing issues haven’t gone away in the COVID economy and the attention of government is needed to address market failure of affordable, accessible small business insurance products.

“Real labour and skills shortages remain across parts of industry through the COVID-19 impact on the international backpacker workforce and our stalled Working Holiday Maker Program.

“A new national tourism and visitor economy strategy and plan, beyond the completed *Tourism2020*, also must be expedited into 2021 including a sharp focus on sustainable recovery.”

(Latest TRA data is at <https://www.tra.gov.au/domestic/monthly-snapshot>)

Further Details:

Simon Westaway
M: 0401 994 627

Executive Director
E: swestaway@qualitytourismaustralia.com

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