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MEDIA STATEMENT

Latest international tourist data needs to inform national tourism strategy

The release by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) of a further record number of international visitor arrivals, marking the September 2019 business quarter, is strongly welcomed by the Australian Tourism Industry Council (ATIC).

Representing over 8500 Australian tourism businesses, ATIC said the remaining period of the *Tourism 2020* national tourism strategy before the now developing *Tourism 2030* visitor economy plan is unveiled next year, continues to vindicate the importance of government and industry having collectively agreed to the right strategic pillars around a decade ago.

ABS Overseas Visitor Arrivals data for the year to September 2019 achieved 9.3 million in short-term visitor arrivals.

ATIC Executive Director Simon Westaway said it was now timely industry was further engaged around what the strategic pillars of *Tourism 2030* will be that can sustainably drive our \$150 billion industry both in its performance, resilience and being adaptable to changing markets.

“ATIC has backed the right and proper decision confirmed by the Federal Assistant Tourism Minister that *Tourism 2030* will prioritise and measure regional visitor dispersal outputs and impacts as part of the next long-term national tourism plan,” Mr Westaway said.

“Whilst 43 cents in every visitor dollar is now spent in Australia’s regions still over 90 per cent of this regional tourism spend comes from Australians seeing Australia despite record international visitor arrivals to our shores. This is the type of strategic rethink around *Tourism 2030* that’s required, and where believed necessary, and is what industry wants to see more of.

“Australia’s compelling nature based offering is so often best experienced by visitors being immersed in regional and rural Australia. Whilst more overseas visitors are doing so, industry knows this has been captured by a handful of regions on the edge of traditional gateways such as Sydney, Melbourne and the Gold Coast or traditional stand-alone destinations of Cairns and Uluru.

“Collectively we need to crack open the potential for more visitors to experience more of our regions.

“Make no mistake the Australian tourism industry is highly engaged around its future direction. Our visitor economy is a success story that we are positively spruiking and has bipartisan backing that we welcome and do not take for granted. But clear trends emerging out of the latest national visitor data gives guidance on where *Tourism 2030* may need to be more widely taken and industry wishes to remain close to the process.

“Some clear trends are emerging out of the latest visitor data. The Chinese visitor market has, and we anticipate can remain very strong, but it is arguably maturing or we must appropriately plan for any change. The US and excitingly Japan are rising markets, but the UK is facing a national election and has the overhang of the direction of Brexit. Yet our current exchange rate makes Australia appealing.

“South East Asia and NZ are the foundations of our tourism exports however the bulk of our faster growing international tourism markets have not traditionally dispersed widely across the continent.

“That’s the challenge, but also the incredible opportunity for our industry if we can find the right policy mix and strategic approach for more international visitors, just like more Australians, are now experiencing our world-acclaimed regional and outback tourism product,” Mr Westaway said.

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