

8 July 2020

MEDIA STATEMENT

The plight of Australian tourism requires future action

Today's release of March 2020 quarter domestic and international tourist spending and visitor data only begins to capture the worsening job and operational issues confronting Australian tourism.

ATIC Executive Director Simon Westaway said the future stakes for Australian tourism on the day our largest domestic border between New South Wales and Victoria closed couldn't be higher.

Tourism Research Australia's quarterly snapshot of its National Visitor Survey (domestic) and International Visitor Survey, its first capturing the COVID-19 pandemic, shows domestic and overseas tourist spend dramatically fall by \$6 billion with plunging double-digit numbers of visitor trips and overnight stays as international and internal borders staged closures in the period.

Mr Westaway said the financial, operational and job-destroying hit to Australian tourism from coronavirus to an industry that employed 1 in 12 Australians, required commercial and public policy symptoms and not just sympathy to enable many sustainable businesses to get to the other side.

He said this included urgency for the Federal Government to extend and re-target the JobKeeper program to enable tourism businesses in genuine need to retain their remaining workforce until tourism demand recovers, an approach which also recognised the future sustainability of tourism.

"ATIC has been consistent in calling for a 6-month extension and re-targeting of the JobKeeper program to enable tourism businesses in genuine need to retain their workforce until tourism demand recovers," Mr Westaway said.

"With this release of terrible national tourism data and the pressing situation in Victoria, a decision on JobKeeper needs to be made. Part of our 5-point Job Keeper plan is for it to be at least maintained whilst our international border is restricted, but importantly better target the Program to include regular seasonal employees, be based on a business' turnover and review payment levels.

"International travel shutdowns and business restrictions have limited our industry's ability to also redevelop and reimagine domestic tourism and generate working capital to continue beyond September 2020."

Mr Westaway pointed to the March 2020 NVS and IVS data showing an underlying future sustainability for Australian tourism as both domestic and international tourism sectors grew for the full-year period to end March, in spite of economic injuring bushfires and onset of coronavirus.

He said a package of tourism measures for Australian tourism needed to be factored into the October Federal Budget as well as reinitiating a timeline to complete the Tourism 2030 long-term tourism and visitor economy strategy as a way to better guide all of government and industry.

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