

Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and Members of the Committee welcome to Christmas Island. The Christmas Island Tourism Association were pleased to show you some of the sites to highlight the amazing nature, rich culture and heritage, the recent achievements, the potential and the challenges.

With a solid global membership base, strong industry partnerships, professional and committed staff and committee combined with recent successes through marketing and product development: Christmas Island Tourism is in a prime position to continue to work with stakeholders, community and operators to grow tourism.

Due to the planned closure of the immigration detention centre and ongoing uncertainty with the mine ACTION IS NEEDED NOW by governments, tourism, private investors and the not-for-profit-sector to develop a sustainable tourism industry based on the unique offering of Australia's Indian Ocean Islands. Planning, resources, commitment, vision and action is needed by all stakeholders. There is increasing willingness for organisations to work together to identify and work towards common goals.

The key actions required to stimulate tourism are:

- **Review Air Services Arrangements** to ensure reliability, frequency and affordability of services between Perth, Christmas Island, the Cocos (Keeling) Islands and a South-East Asian hub.

A northern flight is critical to tourism growth. The airline operators, government, airport and tourism must work together to deliver incentives consistent with those provided by state and territory governments for example marketing and driving demand to retain international services.

- **Maintain and upgrade tourism/community amenity** to provide safe and high quality experiences. Amenities include boardwalks, roads, seating, signage, shelters, jetties, heritage and cultural assets, airport, parks and open space, toilets, waste management etc.

We acknowledge the limited resources, large portfolio and competing priorities of the owners of the assets, however, a strategic, proactive approach is required to ensure these facilities are maintained.

The Australian Government must commit to develop a master plan to create an inviting multi-use space at Flying Fish Cove as indicated in the recent budget papers and taking into account landslide and rockall mitigation strategies.

- **Provide adequate and ongoing funding for tourism associations** to enable marketing, visitor servicing, product development and industry capacity building. Tourism funding in the region has been cut over the last four years while expectations and costs have increased. Annual funding is often unknown until the second quarter of the financial year. This does not provide sufficient capacity nor confidence to build tourism.

Reinstating the budget to CI Tourism would cost \$77,500 per annum, which is a small cost to the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development but would make a significant difference to CI Tourism's ability to support the regional economic and community development.

- **Reduce red tape, barriers and delays to facilitate private investment in tourism and other industries.** The governance arrangements for the Indian Ocean Territories are unique and complex. These complexities combined with the additional costs and challenges of being remote create barriers to investment. Improved communication, engagement and responsiveness between the Australian Government, stakeholders and the community would assist and specifically work is needed to:

- reinstate the local community grant program;
- reduce delays for development including heritage approvals and land release;
- find a solution to the market failure of insurance; and
- facilitate the proposed water entry near the dive operators and accommodation.

- It is positive that work has commenced to **develop and implement a strategic plan/structural adjustment program** to transition the economy to post immigration and post mining.

Economic development organisations, Christmas Island Tourism and other stakeholders must be adequately resourced to facilitate outcomes.

- **Provide adequate and ongoing funding for the Christmas Island National Park visitor servicing and environmental programs.** The unique selling point for Christmas Island and the key reason it attracts domestic and international visitors is nature.

Without a healthy environment and access to natural places and stories, tourism will suffer.

- **Seek World Heritage Listing** to increase visitation; improve planning, management, interpretation, visitor facilities and protection; and promote local and national pride in the site. World Heritage sites are places that are important to, and belong to, everyone.

A commitment is needed to commence the process and support the group of experts across a range of disciplines who have already identified some of the outstanding values which meet listing requirements.

- **Provide the Indian Ocean Territories access to all Australian Government programs and grants available across Northern Australia.** Currently there are exclusions which limit investment, access to grants and support mechanisms. Impacts are sometimes exacerbated by also being excluded from programs and grants available in Western Australia eg the Tourism Development Driver Program.

- **Ensure the fibre optic cable due to land on Christmas Island in 2018 is available to the community and business at fair prices.** To make the best use of this opportunity a program to attract new, and develop existing, businesses must be implemented.

- The issue of a **casino licence must be resolved to enable** the resort to reopen or the site to be used for another tourism venture. This facility is wasted, decaying and blocks public access to Waterfall Bay. If the facility is operating there is the potential to diversify tourism.

Thank you for your time. The Christmas Island Tourism Association will provide another formal submission to the Inquiry incorporating outcomes from this visit. In the meantime we would be happy to answer your questions.