

QUESTION ON NOTICE

QoN Number – Implications of COVID-19 – Thursday, 20 August 2020

Topic: \$1 billion fund

Senator Question submitted by Mr. Watt

Senator WATT: Does that mean, then, that DFAT or Tourism Australia—agencies within this portfolio—have made recommendations to government about how this \$1 billion should be used?

Ms Raper: Yes, we were actively involved in those discussions.

Senator WATT: And Tourism Australia has been as well?

Ms Harrison: Yes, there was, right from the outset. And Ms Raper is correct: our staff physically and virtually remain part of us. They worked to Infrastructure as well but were actively working. In the very first days and weeks of all of this and for some time after that, I liaised regularly with Ms Harrison and also with the then CEO of Austrade.

Senator WATT: Ms Harrison, have you and Tourism Australia had some input into how these funds are being spent?

Ms Harrison: We have regular dialogue with DFAT and Austrade on the issues facing the sector, so yes we do.

Senator WATT: Is that specifically about the use of the fund?

Ms Harrison: In the early days we did talk about some opportunities for the fund but, as Ms Adamson said, it did move quickly to another area.

Senator WATT: So when would the last time have been that Tourism Australia had any input or discussions with government about how this \$1 billion fund could be used to help tourism?

Answer

Tourism Australia (TA) engages in various forums to provide whole-of-government input into tourism policy and funding decisions. With respect to the \$1 billion relief and recovery fund, TA has been engaged in discussions as part of broader cross-government meetings.

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Topic: Bushfire recovery funds

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Senator WATT: Okay, you can come back to us on notice. I suppose what I'm specifically interested in is how much of that money that was originally allocated—in total \$45 million—for tourism marketing to attract people to undertake tourism in the bushfire regions was ultimately used to assist bushfire regions, as opposed to more general post-COVID tourism marketing.

Ms Harrison: It's not post-COVID as well. I just want to make it really clear that, when we were allocated that money, it was for the areas of Australian tourism that were affected directly and indirectly by the fires, and we continued to roll that program out.

Answer

As at 31 July 2020, Tourism Australia has spent \$12.41m of the \$61 million it was allocated under the bushfire recovery funds.

Feedback from the tourism industry has indicated that campaign activity early in the year has contributed to the increase in domestic tourism that had been seen in bushfire affected areas in March. However, since travel restrictions came into effect, TA has reduced its spending on all campaign activity to ensure effective and prudent use of funds.

All of the \$61 million funding allocation to tourism marketing as a part of the Government's \$76 million Rebuilding Australian Tourism package remains allocated to this purpose, to be used when circumstances allow.