

## QUESTIONS ON NOTICE FROM

### **Joint Standing Committee on Northern Australia inquiry into opportunities and methods for, and impediments and challenges to stimulating the tourism industry in Northern Australia**

## **CHRISTMAS AND COCOS NATIONAL PARKS**

**Ms Barnes: “I can provide you some information about what we are doing there – Christmas and Cocos – to stimulate tourism, as well. We will send you some more information about that.”**

#### *Christmas Island National Park Expression of Interest (Eoi) process and status:*

- Christmas Island National Park makes up 63 per cent of the island's 135 square kilometre land mass. Historically the tourism industry has been small on the island.
- To boost tourism numbers and income yield, the local community including current commercial tour operators, the Christmas Island Tourism Association, Shire of Christmas Island, Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development and the Administrator of the Indian Ocean Territories are keen to see eco-accommodation on park and development of sensitive nature-based tourism products.
- In order to provide an opportunity for all interested parties to submit proposals for commercial tourism ventures, Parks Australia conducted an Expression of Interest (Eoi) process in 2016. This applied to land within the National Park only.
- Applications for the Eoi opened Monday 1 February 2016, and closed Friday 22 April 2016.
- 6 Applications were assessed in May 2016 and proponents were advised as to the suitability of their proposal, or not, on the 20th of May 2016.
- The EOI evaluation criteria aimed to encourage proposals supporting quality visitor experiences that will help attract visitors to the island and investment in new visitor infrastructure, while minimising environmental impacts.
- One proposal is being progressed: an eco-chalet and wildlife photography business that comfortably met the criteria outlined in the EOI application documents and will help showcase the natural beauty of the park.
- A further two parties have since shown interest in ecotourism related activities as a result of the public EOI process. These proposals are still in the very early stages and no applications have yet been received via the normal activity authorisation process.
- Investment in existing tourism infrastructure across the island, for example roads, trails, boardwalks etc. at key visitor sites, would significantly enhance the visitor experience. Improved interpretation about the natural environment, culture and lifestyle and the mining history of the island as well as improved visitor orientation facilities would further enhance the experience and highlight the unique attributes of this special part of Australia.

#### *Increased air capacity to Christmas Island out of SE Asia and potential to increase visitation from Asia*

Reliable and secure flights are a critical foundation upon which the development of increased visitation to Christmas Island would be based.

Air capacity to CI has recently increased with an additional once a week flight to Christmas Island every Saturday from Jakarta. The aircraft has 96 seats, 12 business class, 84 economy. The flight is chartered by Christmas Island Air and ExtraDivers and is operated by Garuda Indonesia.

Due to the unique natural and cultural attractions of Christmas Island, an environmentally, culturally, socially and economically sustainable tourism industry will be best achieved by targeting high-yield tourism markets, rather than mass volume tourism markets, because of several factors. Firstly, as a destination, Christmas Island will never be able to compete with high-volume, low-cost tourism destinations in Asia, due to higher access/flight and on-island costs and constraints of island size. Secondly, high-volume tourism (even though considered unlikely due to cost factors) could diminish the unique attractiveness and environmental values of Christmas Island as an ecotourism destination and, therefore, its marketing edge and value.

Christmas Island can provide visitor products that are sustainable, secure and safe. Unique nature based experiences, in a location close to the emerging markets of Asia.

Christmas Island appeals to the dive market, mainly attracting visitors from Singapore and Malaysia in Asia and Europe/UK. Christmas Island markets to the Chinese market through Tourism Australia. Today most residents on Christmas Island are Chinese Malay and the island does attract Chinese visitors, with charter flights being put on at various times.

Christmas Island National Park has recently been approached by off island investors interested in a range of nature based tourism products.

#### *Cocos – Pulu Keeling National Park and tourism potential*

Cocos (Keeling) Islands is home to Australia's number 1 beach. The small strip of white sand on Direction Island was recently named the top beach in Australia's Best 101 Beaches for 2017. Dolly Beach on Christmas Island came in at number 7.

Access to Cocos is limited, and visitor infrastructure minimal. Only two of the 27 islands are inhabited.

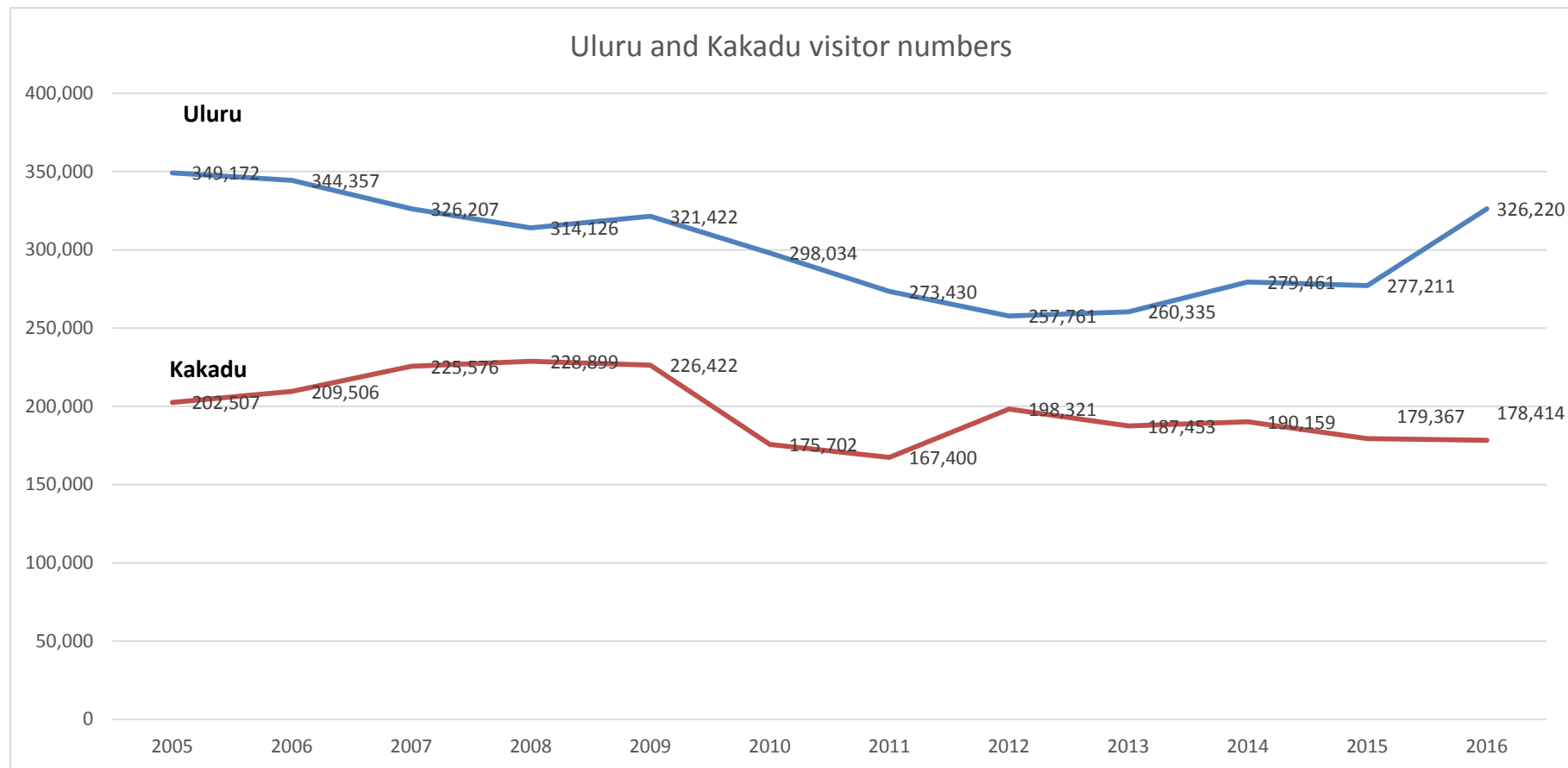
The formation of a strong partnership between the Christmas Island Tourism Association (CITA) and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands Tourism Association (CKITA) has aided the development of an integrated 'brand' of Australia's Indian Ocean Islands, encouraging potential visitors to visit both unique Island destinations. The partnership also allows the potential leveraging the limited funds available to both organisations. Parks Australia supports the work of these associations, and will work with them on cooperative marketing.

### **VISITOR NUMBERS OVER THE LAST 15 YEARS FOR ULURU KATA TJUTA & KAKADU NATIONAL PARKS**

**Mr SNOWDON: You can take this on notice if you like—can you give us the visitor numbers over the last 15 years?**

See Attachment A.

## ULURU AND KAKADU NATIONAL PARKS VISITATION 2005-2016



	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Uluru</b>	349,172	344,357	326,207	314,126	321,422	298,034	273,430	257,761	260,335	279,461	277,211	326,220
<b>Kakadu</b>	202,507	209,506	225,576	228,899	226,422	175,702	167,400	198,321	187,453	190,159	179,367	178,414