

TOURISM MINISTERS' COUNCIL

56th MEE

Tabled Document No 3

By: RET-Tourism

COMMUN

Time/Date: 12.53, 31 MAY 2011

15 April 2011

Tourism Ministers met in Darwin today for the 56th meeting of the Tourism Ministers' Council (TMC).

Ministers discussed the considerable progress being made towards implementing the National Long-Term Tourism Strategy (the Strategy). Thirty-three of the 41 Priority Actions have been completed with the remainder due for completion by the end of the year. Many of the priority actions completed in 2010 have provided the strong foundations for the Working Groups to undertake their new 2-year forward work programs agreed by Ministers. Key highlights are outlined below.

Given the significant progress made on the implementation of the National Long-Term Tourism Strategy, Ministers agreed to establish a series of industry forums in each state and territory through 2011, to communicate outcomes to stakeholders.

Industry Resilience

Ministers discussed the impact on the tourism industry of recent natural disasters, notably the recent Queensland floods and Cyclone Yasi; the earthquakes in Christchurch and also the 2009 Victorian bushfires and recent floods. Ministers determined some key lessons learnt for prevention, preparedness, response and recovery, in line with the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience. Ministers welcomed the Industry Resilience Working Group's comprehensive list of programs available to assist businesses in meeting the challenges of adapting to climate change, enhancing resilience and addressing crisis management. Ministers launched a series of fact sheets providing this information to the Australian tourism industry. Tourism Ministers agreed to rename the existing National Tourism Incident Response Plan to 'National Tourism Incident Communication Plan' to more accurately reflect its role.

National Tourism Accreditation Framework (NTAF)

Ministers welcomed the launch of the National Tourism Accreditation Framework (NTAF) at the Australian Tourism Exchange on 2 April 2011 and noted the Australian Tourism Accreditation Program and Eco-tourism Australia were the first two programs to be approved to operate under the NTAF. Ministers called on tourism businesses and organisations to support the NTAF. A nationally consistent accreditation brand has long been advocated by the industry and provides the means for businesses to identify themselves as quality operators.

Indigenous Tourism Development

Ministers supported the development of a national Indigenous tourism and hospitality training and employment capability. This followed a presentation from the Indigenous Land Corporation on training opportunities arising from their acquisition of the Ayers Rock Resort and other key properties. Ministers also noted the comprehensive list of programs to assist Indigenous tourism businesses and facilitate Indigenous employment in tourism and launched a fact sheet providing this information to industry. This work will add to a national toolkit to assist the development of Indigenous tourism business skills.

Investment and Regulatory Reform

Ministers launched a National Tourism Planning Guide and encouraged its use within jurisdictions. Ministers noted that use of the Guide could reduce industry investment costs through improved development application processes and better project facilitation.

The Guide is available at:

<http://www.ret.gov.au/tourism/tmc/workinggrps/invest/Pages/default.aspx>

Ministers also discussed the preliminary findings of a major project on regulatory barriers to tourism investment and noted the potential for planning review, streamlined development approval processes and other reforms to increase the supply of tourism product in high natural amenity areas. Such reform will be crucial to the tourism industry meeting its 2020 growth potential which requires the development of an additional 40,000 – 70,000 rooms. The review is due for completion in May 2011 with final recommendations in October 2011.

Labour and Skills

Ministers noted the progress being made on the national recognition of the Responsible Service of Alcohol qualification, with all States progressing enabling recognition of each others certificates. Ministers explored a similar outcome with the Responsible Service of Gambling qualification. Noting that tourism-related industries recently added 148,000 jobs, or almost half the total jobs created in the Australian economy, Ministers endorsed a national labour and skills survey to identify current levels of tourism and hospitality employment across Australian regions. The survey findings will be used to project skills and labour needs by occupation and volume and develop regional labour and skills plans.

Digital Distribution

Ministers welcomed the development of a National Online Strategy for Tourism. Drawing on the inaugural Tourism Operators Online Capabilities Benchmark Survey, Ministers noted that the current level of online presence by tourism businesses was high at 84 per cent but only one third (35%) with online booking and payment facilities.

To help tourism businesses take the next steps in developing their online capability, Ministers agreed to release the '*Going Global Action Plan*'. The Action Plan covers the steps required in getting online and/or progressing to the next level of online capability through tools such as the tourism e-kit and will assist tourism businesses adapt to a changing product distribution environment (including the rollout of the National Broadband Network) and optimise the use of online technologies to promote and market their product.

TMC Two-Year Forward Work Program

Ministers endorsed the TMC Two-Year Forward Work Program including the supply side challenges highlighted in the 2020 Tourism Industry Potential. Key deliverables identified under the Work Program include:

- Identification of regional employment 'hot spots' and the development of strategies to address these.
- Recommendations on practical actions to address regulatory barriers to tourism investment.
- Recommendations for capturing the benefits of simplified border arrangements for trans-Tasman travel.
- Launch to consumers and marketing of the National Tourism Accreditation Framework.
- Identification of practical training opportunities for Indigenous youth and tourism businesses.
- Identification of opportunities to increase small business adoption of climate change mitigation programs and uptake of business continuity planning.
- Roll-out of the National Online Strategy for Tourism and the tourism e-kit.

- Implementation of a National Tourism Research Agenda.

The Work Program will evolve over time to include new issues of national significance that require the collective attention of the TMC.

ASCOT-TMC Budget

Ministers have committed \$2.9 million over 2011-12 and 2012-13 to fund the nine Working Groups as they continue to implement the Strategy. As in previous years, the budget will be funded from contributions from the Commonwealth and all States and Territories.

COAG Reform of Ministerial Councils

Following the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) decision on 13 February 2011 to reform the Ministerial Council system, Ministers reaffirmed their position for the TMC to continue its operation outside the COAG arrangements to lead the national tourism policy agenda and continue to implement the Strategy.

National Tourism Research Agenda

Ministers discussed the National Tourism Research Agenda (the Agenda), which will identify and inform both current and future tourism research priorities. The Agenda has been developed to inform policy and help progress towards the 2020 Tourism Industry Potential. It includes tourism-specific and industry-related research participants such as government, industry and academia.

Industry 'Fact Sheets'

Ministers endorsed three fact sheets:

- *Crisis Management Programs and Resources* – provides information about programs and resources to assist the tourism industry to effectively prepare for potential crises in order to be more resilient to external shocks.
- *Industry Resilience Programs and Resources* – outlines programs and resources for the tourism industry to be able to respond and adapt to climate change issues.
- *Programs and Resources to aid Indigenous Tourism Development* – provides information on the programs and resources available to facilitate Indigenous economic development and employment within the tourism industry.

The fact sheets are available at:

<http://www.ret.gov.au/tourism/tmc/publications/Pages/default.aspx>

TMC comprises Commonwealth, State, Territory and New Zealand Ministers responsible for tourism with Norfolk Island and Papua New Guinea as observers.

Members of the Council are:

Hon Martin Ferguson AM MP (Commonwealth - Chair)
 Senator the Hon Nick Sherry (Commonwealth)
 Hon Dr Kim Hames MLA (Western Australia)
 Mr Andrew Barr MLA (Australian Capital Territory)
 Hon Malarndirri McCarthy MLA (Northern Territory)
 Hon Louise Asher MP (Victoria)
 Hon Jan Jarratt MP (Queensland)
 Hon John Rau MP (South Australia)
 Hon George Souris MP (New South Wales)
 Hon Michelle O'Byrne MP (Tasmania)
 Rt Hon John Key MP / Hon Jonathan Coleman MP (New Zealand)

Observers:

Hon Andre Nobbs MLA (Norfolk Island)

Hon Charles Abel MP (Papua New Guinea)

TMC is supported by the Australian Standing Committee on Tourism (ASCOT). ASCOT comprises the Secretary of the Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism, the CEOs of State and Territory Tourism Organisations, Tourism New Zealand and Tourism Australia, with Norfolk Island and Papua New Guinea as observers.

Secretariat contacts:

Australian Government Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism

ascot-tmc@ret.gov.au

Ph: (02) 6243 7113

Media contacts:

Bindi Gove, Minister Ferguson's Office

Ph: 0406 644 913