TOURISM MINISTERS' COUNCIL
56th MEETING

COMMUNIQUE

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 indentify 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.

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National Long-Term
Tourism Strategy

2010 Priority Actions

Status Report

Australia
UNLIMITED

Australian Government

Working Group		Priority Action	Status
Labour and Skills	1.	Initial findings and presentation of data around regional needs for tourism labour and skills	Research commenced: Access Economics Pty Ltd engaged to identify labour and skills 'hot spots' nationally. Project delayed due to procurement process taking longer than expected. The project is on track for completion by June 2011.
	2.	Responsible service of alcohol (RSA) – recommendations for TMC Ministers to write to relevant Ministers seeking uniform approach for RSA across jurisdictions	Completed. All Ministers have written to counterparts. Responses received from all jurisdictions. The Working Group will liaise with responsible agencies in jurisdictions to seek uniformity through 2011.
	3.	Impediments in the transferability/recognition of training qualifications across jurisdictions – identification of impediments, with recommended actions to address	Completed. Primary impediments identified: including certification requirements for food handling, security and gaming. Industry to take carriage of food handling. TMC exploring scope for uniform approach for the Responsible Service of Gambling qualification. Working Group will continue to explore working with Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment to remove training impediments.
	4.	Ensure the skilled occupation migration list (SOL) includes chefs	Completed. The Working Group has lodged a submission with Skills Australia to have chefs included on the Skilled Occupation List (SOL). The Working Group is awaiting the final decision on the submission from the Hon Chris Bowen MP, Minister for Immigration and Citizenship. The decision is expected by end June 2011.
Investment and Regulatory Reform	5.	Review of regulatory barriers to tourism investment and identification of key priorities	Completed. Audit completed and priority regulatory areas identified, including planning, environmental building code and transport regulation.
	6.	Report demonstrating whether tourism investment faces particular disincentives arising from the Australian Regulatory framework	Research commenced: LEK Consulting has been engaged and is on track to report its findings on tourism investment disincentives by June 2011. Draft report has been completed with 22 recommendations.
	7.	Initial review of depreciation schedules as they apply to the tourism industry	Completed. Advice from ATO and Treasury confirms changes to current schedules would require a project to collect appropriate information for ATO consideration. Broader issues would require a policy commitment. Working Group will consider whether this is an option for consideration in the context of the findings of Priority Action 6.
	8.	Initial review of GST impacts on commercial accommodation versus serviced apartments	Completed. Advice from ATO and Treasury on GST provisions confirms that scope for amendments is unlikely. Working Group to further consider the merits of greater differentiation between residential and commercial accommodation uses. This will be informed by the findings of Priority Action 6.
	9.	Analysis of the accessibility of business support programs to the tourism industry	Completed. Action now finalised; programs identified under priority action 10. Watching brief — individual jurisdictions may request consideration of specific programs.
	10.	Chair of the TMC to write to relevant Ministers seeking examination of eligibility criteria of certain Commonwealth programs	Completed. The review found gaps in Australian Government Enterprise Connect (EC) program and the Green Building Fund eligibility criterion. Letters sent to Minister Carr regarding EC & Green Building Fund programs on 30 June 2010. Hotel investment is now an eligible activity under the Green Building fund following the 2010 Federal Election. Queensland Tourism firms were given access to EC through the EC Queensland Tourism Service for 12 months as part of the Queensland Tourism Industry Support Package. TMC has tasked Minister Sherry with ensuring that the EC is rolled-out to the tourism industry on a nationwide basis.

Working Group	Priority Action	Status
	11. Analysis of best practice investment facilitation	Research commenced: The Allen Consulting Group has been engaged to analyse best practice investment facilitation and assist in the development of tourism investment framework guide. The work is on track and will be completed in June 2011. Draft report has been completed.
	12. Development of tourism definitions for planning schemes to assist development approvals	Completed. National Tourism Planning Guide completed by Tourism Transport Forum. A letter of introduction by the Hon Martin Ferguson AM MP, Minister for Tourism, on behalf of the Tourism Ministers' Council, has been included in the guide. Minister Ferguson wrote on 22 December 2010 to the Hon Simon Crean MP, in his capacity as Chair of the Local Government and Planning Ministers' Council, commending the guide for consideration by Ministers.
Destination Management Planning	13. Undertake a pilot to improve heritage engagement in a National Landscape (Great Ocean Road)	Completed. Pilot complete: Great Ocean Road National Landscape Heritage Project workshop report completed. The report was circulated to all State Tourism Organisations and Parks Agencies to encourage an improved focus on cultural heritage in all destination planning processes.
	14. Examine the capacity of the planned Sustainable Tourism CRC (STCRS) portal area on Destination Management to be used as the key dissemination mechanism for best practice models and information for destination managers	Completed. The Chair of the Working Group joined the STCRC Reference panel to ensure the Sustainable Tourism Online portal was 'practitioner friendly' and provided best practice models and information for users. The portal was launched on 4 August 2010.
	15. Make key recommendations to improve funding bodies support of strategic outcomes resulting from destination management planning processes, particularly the ATDP review	Completed. Funding principles developed and put forward to RET for consideration when developing grants programs.
	16. Identify gaps in research and dissemination preventing key stakeholders from undertaking effective Destination Management Planning	Due to new and additional information on current research available, the Working Group will re-scope this research for delivery in 2011.
Tourism Access	17. Announcement of the new structure of the Tourism Access Working Group (TAWG) and its forward work program	Completed. New structure announced at TMC on 30 April 2010. The strategic objectives of the TAWG are to: • Ensure the economic contribution of tourism is considered in transport infrastructure planning and development; • Address impediments to increased aviation access; and • Address emerging issues related to passenger processing and facilitation.
	18. First meeting of the Tourism Access Working Group to be held in May/June 2010	Completed. Meeting held at Parliament House on 8 June 2010.
	19. A number of items in the proposed forward work plan could result in announcements when projects are finalised. These projects may include a framework of tourism-focussed air services negotiation priorities and scoping actions for industry-driven strategies to attract air services to a region	Completed. Five projects will help to deliver TAWG's strategic objectives. The Cruise date project will aim to assist in ensuring that the sector's economic contribution is considered in future transport infrastructure planning and development. The Regional Airports project aims to increase foreign countries awareness and understanding of the Regional Airports Package while the Mapping Aviation Priorities project will assist in identifying markets that require additional aviation access allocations. The Tourist Refund Scheme project and the Trans-Tasman project will address emerging issues that directly relate to passenger processing and facilitation.

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Industry Resilience	20.	Distribute a user-friendly web brochure to industry of a Climate Change 'Current Policy Snapshot' that can be easily updated as policy setting progress and change	Completed. The 'Climate Change Current Policy Snapshot' brochure was expected to be completed and online by the end of 2010. The fact sheet cannot be finalised until the Multi-Party Climate Change Committee (MPCCC) completes its initial work.
	21.	Identification of programs to assist small businesses in adapting to climate change	Completed. The Working Group compiled a comprehensive list of programs that best deliver on industry needs and may assist businesses in meeting the challenges of adapting to climate change, enhancing resilience and addressing crisis management. The list of programs was collated into fact sheets which were launched at the Tourism Ministers' Council meeting on 15 April 2011.
	22.	Release of a study of the economic impacts of climate change on the tourism industry, including illustrating the implications current climate change projections have for the industry	Final report received by the Working Group and will be submitted to TMC for endorsement. The modelling covers climate change impacts on the top 20 tourism regions in Australia by holiday expenditure, as holiday tourism is considered most vulnerable to climate change impacts compared to other sectors such as business and events tourism.
	23.	National Tourism Incident Response Plan (NTIRP) Review Report planned for delivery in late April or early May	Completed. The Working Group has completed the review of the NTIRP. Relevant government agencies will now implement the recommendations as appropriate.
Tourism Quality Council of Australia (TQCA)	24.	Finalisation of the membership of the Tourism Quality Council of Australia (TQCA)	Completed. TQCA established.
	25.	Launch of the Tourism Quality (TQUAL) brand to industry	Completed. National Tourism Accreditation Framework (NTAF) and TQUAL brand finalised and launched to industry at ATE in April 2011.
	26.	Assessment Guidelines put to the TQCA for adoption	Completed. Final Guidelines were adopted at the meeting of the TQCA on 24th August 2010.
	27.	Implement Stakeholder Engagement and Communication Strategy	Completed. From June 2010 onwards, the Chair and members of the TQCA conducted extensive meetings in a range of states with various stakeholders. The TQCA intends to continue to be proactive in consulting with interested stakeholders.
	28.	Implement Marketing Strategy	Completed. Tourism Australia (TA) has implemented a marketing strategy for the NTAF, including development of branding and the TQUAL mark. At the Tourism Ministers Council (TMC) meeting of 22 October 2010, Ministers agreed to endorse the marketing approach proposed by the TQCA.
Indigenous Tourism	29.	Audit of funding programs to identify duplications and gaps with recommendations of how to address, e.g. development of guide for training employers on how to employ Indigenous people within the tourism industry	Completed. The Working Group found that there is a good selection of programs available assist the development of Indigenous tourism employment and businesses, but there is a need to better communicate information about these programs to the industry. A fact sheet on Programs and Resources to aid Indigenous Tourism Development was launched at the Tourism Ministers' Council meeting on 15 April 2011. Information on the suite of programs has been provided to industry by the Australian Government and State and Territory governments. The audit findings are being used to inform the development of a national tool kit to facilitate Indigenous employment in tourism and assist Indigenous tourism businesses.
	30.	Identification of programs gaps and recommendation of new programs	Completed. As above.

Working Group	#	Priority Action	Status
	31.	Recommendation of potential National Conference to support Indigenous tourism development	Completed. The Working Group is encouraging the tourism industry to continue to focus on integrating Indigenous tourism into events such as national tourism forums and conferences and provide support to the Australian Indigenous Tourism Conference to be held in Perth on 20-23 September 2011, convened by the Western Australian Tourism Operators Association.
	32.	Ongoing examination of a national Indigenous tourism representative body	Completed. Tourism Ministers have agreed to the Working Group's recommendation that a stand alone Indigenous tourism representative body is neither sustainable nor feasible at this stage. The Working Group will review this recommendation on an annual basis.
	33.	Building capacity of Indigenous tourism businesses	Progress will depend on gaining support from relevant government agencies (DEEWR, and other State and Commonwealth) to trial a new pilot program. This project is now due for completion by the end of 2011 due to establishment of partnerships for the pilots.
	34.	Recommendations on enhancing Indigenous employment in the tourism industry	To be carried forward in 2011. Pilot Indigenous traineeship in Tropical North Queensland, funded by Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and other state and Commonwealth agencies is underway.
Digital Distribution	35.	A National Online Distribution Action Plan to enhance online product and distribution	Completed. To assist tourism businesses enhance their online capabilities, the Digital Distribution Working Group engaged the consulting firm Keystone Corporate Positioning to develop a Digital Distribution Action Plan as part of the National Online Strategy for Tourism (NOST). The Action Plan outlines the steps required in getting online and/or progressing to the next level of online capability through tools such the tourism e-kit. The Action Plan has been put forward to the Tourism Ministers' Council and is expected to be finalised shortly.
	36.	A governance framework and collaboration model for a National Online Strategy for Tourism	Completed. The NOST will be a blueprint to enable the Federal and State Tourism Organisations to work collaboratively to ensure Australia excels in the promotion and distribution of its tourism destinations, experiences, product and inventory online. The governance framework and collaboration model has been progressed as part of the NOST project above and is also due for completion shortly.
	37.	A program of resources to improve industry's capability to become more proficient in digital marketing and distribution	Completed. The Working Group has completed a desk-top audit of State and Territory programs, findings were used to inform a review of the current Tourism e-kit content to identify opportunities for its improvement. Recommendations for an enhanced and repackaged e-kit are currently being developed, including a pilot program with an Australian TAFE institution to increase uptake by having the e-kit content incorporated into the formal curriculum.
Research Advisory Board	38.	Research and Development Advisory Board to oversight industry research including through the State of the Industry report and Tourism Directions Conference.	Completed. The Research Advisory Board has established a working sub-group to oversee the planning of the Tourism Directions Conference. It also oversighted the development of the State of the Industry report which was launched at the Tourism Directions Conference on 15 November 2010. The Research Advisory Board is focussed on addressing key research priorities and gaps, as identified in its research audit (and earlier research) as part of the National Tourism Research Agenda, to be launched in 2011.
	39.	Completion of Stage 1 of research audit (includes development Phases 1 – 3). Public launch of a 'one stop' database of tourism research to include title search functionality and links to providers for detailed research information.	Completed. Initial report on the relationship of existing research against the key themes of the Strategy completed. TRA has developed a searchable database which will shortly be available as a searchable tool on the Tourism area of the RET website www.ret.gov.au. It is also planned to make database content available via the Sustainable Tourism O line Portal. TRA has been invited to participate in the Sustainable Tourism Online Research and Intelligence Group to provide feedback on management and maintenance of the portal.

Working Group	Priority Action	Status
	40. The State of Industry report will be a key deliverable of the Tourism Directions Conference. The State of Industry Report will set new benchmarks for measuring tourism industry performance and include international comparisons, tourism productivity, value chain analysis and the identification of long-term challenges and trends impacting on the Australian Tourism Industry.	Completed. The first annual State of Industry report was launched at the Tourism Directions Conference on 15 November 2010.
	41. Tourism Directions conference - A one-day 'launch' conference will take place in November 2010. The launch will take a strategic forward looking approach to re-position the tourism industry, highlighting the economic significance of tourism as a key contributor and driver of growth for the Australian economy. The launch will provide a forum for the Strategy working groups to communicate results.	Completed. The inaugural Tourism Directions Conference was delivered successfully on 15 November 2010 at Parliament House in Canberra.