

MEDIA RELEASE

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38 BILLION REASONS WHY THE VISITOR ECONOMY NEEDS TO BE FRONT AND CENTRE OF THE ECONOMIC AGENDA

The Tourism & Transport Forum Australia (TTF) has welcomed the release of the latest international visitor survey that shows double digit growth in visitor numbers and expenditure in the 2015-16 financial year and is calling on the 45th Federal Parliament to put the success of the visitor economy front and centre of the economic agenda.

According to these latest figures, released by Tourism Research Australia today, international visitor numbers increased to 7.2 million (up 10 per cent), visitor nights increased to 248 million (up 5 per cent) and expenditure reached a record \$38.1 billion (up 14 per cent).

China continues its impressive growth with 1.1 million visitors to Australia (up 23 per cent), staying 41.6 million nights (up 13 per cent) and spending a total of \$8.9 billion (27 per cent).

That was followed by strong numbers out of the United States with 619,000 visitors (up 14 per cent), staying 14.1 million nights (up 11 per cent) and spending a record \$3.6 billion (up 20 per cent).

“Australia’s visitor economy continues to be the good news story, but we cannot maintain this strong performance without a concerted effort, by both government and the private sector, to develop an economic strategy that will allow the sector to reach its full potential,” said Margy Osmond, TTF CEO.

“The challenge for the 45th Federal Parliament is not to drop the ball on backing the visitor economy. The international visitor market is becoming increasingly cutthroat as more nations wake up to the economic benefits of a strong tourism sector.

“Quite frankly, I don’t believe we should be happy with \$38.1 billion in international expenditure. We can do a lot better than that considering Australia is attracting less than 1 per cent of the potential Chinese visitor market.

“Australia simply cannot afford to sit back and expect that ‘The Rock, The Reef and The House’ is enough on its own to maintain the strong double digit growth we have been experiencing in visitor numbers and international expenditure.”

Ms Osmond said before the July Election, TTF released an economic plan for the Government to slash the fees and charges which add to the cost of travelling to Australia; support industry securing its workforce for the future; build the visitor infrastructure and public transport that improves the experience of visiting our cities and regions; and recognise the importance of improving the visitor experience at our international gateways.

“An immediate step that the Federal Government can take to support the visitor economy is to scrap the ill-considered backpacker tax.

“We know from a survey of backpackers by Monash University and YHA that the Government is risking a 60 per cent exodus of working holiday makers if the 32.5 per cent tax becomes law. That will smash regional and rural economies that depend on the spending of visiting backpackers and significantly undermine the ability for tourism operators to secure workers.”