

MEDIA RELEASE:

Backpacker & Adventure Tourism Industry & YHA Conference 4 May 2016, Cairns

Leaders in the youth tourism field will converge in Cairns on 4 May 2016 for the inaugural **Backpacker & Adventure Tourism Industry Forum** taking place at Pacific Hotel (43 Esplanade).

The forum is hosted by YHA, and will bring over 160 delegates from the backpacking industry together to consider trends and issues in the sector.

Key speakers include:

Senator Richard Colbeck, Federal Minister Tourism & International Education (via live video link-up)

Julian Ledger, CEO - YHA Australia, on hot topics in the industry

Dr Jeff Jarvis (Monash University), on the latest research into working holiday makers

Richard Beere, Fastrak Asian Solutions, on adapting for, and capturing more, Asian visitors

Gus Balbontin, Former Director of Lonely Planet, tech whizz and guru on digital disruption

Alex de Waal, CEO of Tourism Tropical North Queensland.

The forum runs from 8.30am to 12.45pm, followed by lunch with the Mayor of Cairns, Cr Bob Manning, OAM.

Following the open forum, over 100 youth hostel managers from around Australia will congregate for the annual YHA Ltd Managers' Conference.

Julian Ledger, CEO of YHA Australia, said:

"Tropical North Queensland has long been a favourite destination for youth travellers and in the last 12 months we have seen a resurgence. The new Northern Australia policy announced last year provides special incentives for working holiday makers to stay and we expect that will start having a positive effect as these become better known".

The backpacker sector continues to be of significance to the tourism industry. Overall, 596,000 backpackers visited Australia in 2015, staying for an average of 84 nights and spending \$6,000 each while in Australia. At any one time, there are nearly 180,000 working holiday makers in Australia (*source: Tourism Australia, International Visitor Survey statistics, December 2015*).

YHA is part of the world's largest budget accommodation network, Hostelling International, with 4,000 hostels in 90 countries.