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ARTN looks beyond the Election

The Australian Regional Tourism Network is calling on political parties to get serious about tourism and commit to some new ways to bring industry and government together.

The Chair of the Australian Regional Tourism, David Sheldon, was scathing about existing funding programs, saying “they are ad hoc, disconnected and superficial – they do little to increase the competitiveness of regions, let alone drive private sector investment”. “What we have witnessed through this election campaign is minimal new strategy or investment in regional tourism – it’s time to stop talking the talk and start walking the walk ” Sheldon claimed.

Australia’s ‘Visitor Economy’ is worth over \$107 billion, generates over 580,800 direct jobs and close on a million indirect jobs. Tourism helps define the social fabric of a region through creating experiences that locals use and are proud of.

Sheldon said “The biggest constraint we have in the visitor economy is our inefficient way of dealing with tourism across the levels of government and across our industry”. To bring Australia’s tourism industry and three tiers of government together, the Australian Regional Tourism Network has called for a 2030 Visitor Economy Plan. The Plan would streamline the way tourism is managed, should be prepared and influenced by relevant parts of the Commonwealth and State governments, the Australian Local Government Association and representatives of Australia’s tourism industry, and presented to the Council of Australian Governments for endorsement.

The Australian Regional Tourism Network has also called on political parties to commit to the following during the next term of Government:

- A Ministerial sub-committee that reports on investment, skills and training, regional dispersal (transportation; air, roads, rail, ports etc), enabling infrastructure and connectivity hardwired and satellite NBN.
- The rollout and implementation of a regional investment program to enable regional Australia to compete in the 2030 environment.
- Development of a skills and training policy to grow regional and remote employment opportunities - including current working visa programs and the much troubled backpacker tax.
- Development of a National Agri-tourism platform to generate employment in regions.

“Let’s not hear this can’t be done, this is an opportunity for our next Federal government to demonstrate a bipartisan approach and embrace their own statements that our industry ‘the Visitor Economy’ will be one of the nation’s five super go to industries by 2030’ Sheldon concluded.

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Note: Australian Regional Tourism Network is a ‘not for profit’ national membership body representing tourism in regional Australia.