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POLICY & ADVOCACY UPDATE

Issue #1, 26 July 2023

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- AA Goes to Canberra
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New Association, exciting future

Welcome to Issue #1 of the Advocacy update from Accommodation Australia. The accommodation sector faces both challenges and opportunities as we climb out of the last few years of COVID-impacted travel. I am pleased to have joined AA as the National Policy & Research Advisor and look forward to sharing this journey with you.

Bed Tax Mooted for Victoria

The Victorian Government's announcement that they are considering a bed tax on hotels and short-term accommodation has been met with justifiable angst and incredulity. Working closely with AA Vic General Manager Dougal Hollis, AA CEO Michael Johnson issued a [release](#) and followed up with media expressing our concerns about the negative impact of any tax on the accommodation sector, particularly as there is still a long way to go to fully recover from the COVID period. Let us hope the Victorian Government sees the folly of imposing such a tax.

\$7.5 million to encourage jobseekers to choose tourism

Minister for Trade and Tourism this week announced \$7.5 million to be shared between State and Territory governments and tourism and industry bodies to attract workers to the visitor economy. The Choose Tourism Program is aimed at addressing staff shortages in the tourism sector. More information on the grant program can be found [here](#).

AA Goes to Canberra

Our Accommodation Australia [Board](#) meets in the Australian Parliament House next week, making an important statement that our new combined force in tourism advocacy has arrived on the national scene. The Board will meet with Immigration Minister, Andrew Giles and is hosting Trade and Tourism Minister Don Farrell for dinner after the meeting. The CEO and I are meeting with a range of other key stakeholders during our time in the capital, including senior officials from Home Affairs, Austrade and Jobs & Skills Australia, as well as senior advisors to the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and the Minister for Skills and Training.

EMDG under review

The government has recently announced a consultation process for a "strategic refocus" of the Export Market Development Grant (EMDG) scheme with the following commitments underpinning the review:

- Ensuring that the scheme delivers on its objective of increasing the number of new exporters and remains a sustainable program into the future; and,
- Strategically refocusing the program to better support Australian exporters to develop new markets in line with the government's trade diversification priorities.

Austrade has released a consultation paper (see [here](#) for more information and to download the paper), and comments are due by 11 August 2023. There are also workshops for exporters on-line which you need to register for if interested. Full details can be found at the same web address.

Accommodation Australia aims to make a submission and I would welcome any feedback on the value of the scheme to members and any changes which would benefit our sector. Please send any comments to me (see contacts below) by early August so they can be incorporated in the submission.

Latest overseas arrival data

The latest overseas arrivals data released by the ABS for the month of May 2023 show that recovery in international tourism is occurring but is still well short of pre-COVID levels. Short term visitor arrivals for May 2023 were 512,330, which were more than double the 231,480 who arrived in May 2022 but 23% less than for May 2019. Nationally, New Zealand was the largest source country for arrivals in May 2023, followed by the USA and India. This varied according to the state or territory primarily visited, with Singapore making the top 3 for Victoria, and Japan for Queensland. Interestingly, outbound Australian travellers have rebounded much quicker, with 830,750 short term resident departures, down only 11% compared with May 2019.

Best wishes and I look forward to meeting all of you soon. Drop me an email at policy@accommodationaustralia.org or give me a call on 0418 277 919 if you have any national policy issue that you think AA should be following up.

Kind Regards

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