

Budget Estimates – Opening statement (Thursday, 15 February 2024)

- Good evening and thank you for giving me the chance to address this committee.
- I want to start by providing a brief update on Tourism Australia’s work, how international tourism is recovering and what we expect to see in 2024.

Tourism Australia

- Tourism Australia continues to work hard in key international markets around the world encouraging travellers to plan and book an Australian holiday.
- Our global campaign, Come and Say G’day, has been showcasing Australia since October 2022 and we are pleased it is having a positive impact with our brand tracking showing it is driving up awareness, consideration and intent for a holiday to Australia.
- Since we last met, we have held key events to help our industry engage with our international markets including our signature incentive showcase for business events, Dreamtime, in Adelaide in November and Australia Marketplace returned to China in December.
- Work is also well underway for the Australian Tourism Exchange in Melbourne in May; our incentive showcase for business events will be in Cairns in September and Australia Marketplace events will be held in key markets around the world throughout the year.
- These events have high engagement and satisfaction from our industry and help them reestablish their contacts and commercial arrangements globally.
- Our Aussie Specialist training program has the highest number of participants it has ever had. There are now more than 40,000 Aussie Specialists and they have already completed more training modules online this financial year than last.
- We continue to work with our partners. We have more than 190 partnerships with airlines and key distribution partners around the world and we are pleased to report they delivered 6 per cent over their passenger targets in FY23.
- International business events are returning to Australia. At the moment visitation for business events is back to about 67 per cent of pre-pandemic levels, while visitor spend is at 94 per cent.
- To help those numbers grow our Bid Fund program, in partnership with states, is securing a strong pipeline of international business events. The Bid Fund has helped to land 9 wins, with an economic value of \$91 million since January this year alone.

Arrivals

- Overall international arrivals to Australia are continuing to trend in the right direction. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics international arrivals in October 2023 were at 79 per cent, compared to October 2019...
- In November 2023 they were at 81 per cent, compared to November 2019 and just today the arrivals for December 2023 were released and they show arrivals remained at about 81 per cent, compared to December 2019.
- The top returning markets in December, in terms of volume, were New Zealand (125,640), UK (97,170), USA (85,200), and China (66,530).
- We are confident this will be the year we return to those 2019 levels so we can stop referring to those at the benchmark and once again focus on sustainably growing the Australian tourism industry.

China

- As you know China was our number one tourism market in 2019. We welcomed 1.4 million Chinese travellers contributing \$12.4 billion in visitor spend.
- China reopened later than our other key markets so it is a bit behind in its recovery but we are pleased to see Chinese travellers returning to our shores in growing numbers.
- According to the latest arrivals China is sitting at about 60 per cent of 2019 levels and is our fourth largest market.
- Our partners on the ground tell us Australia is consistently the number one destination for long haul travel in China, so we are confident arrivals will continue to grow.
- Thank you for your time. I'll now happily take any questions you might have.