



# Tourism Jobs Summit Outcomes

On 30 August 2022, Minister for Tourism and Trade, Senator the Honourable Don Farrell led the Tourism Jobs Summit. The Summit brought together 70 representatives from tourism industry associations, unions, business, academia, Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments.

The objective was to bring together sectors and industries to collaborate on innovative ways to address workforce challenges. The day generated actions, which will inform the Jobs and Skills Summit and the development of the Government's Employment White Paper. These actions will also inform visitor economy workforce and skills strategy, an action of THRIVE 2030.

## Understanding the challenges

Prior to COVID-19, the visitor economy (comprising tourism and international education) was Australia's largest services export. It was also the fourth largest export overall after coal, iron ore and gas. The visitor economy has long standing workforce capability challenges, due to the seasonal and/or casual nature of many roles, as well as perceptions about difficult employment conditions and concerns about the lack of long-term career opportunities.

Participants heard from Heather Cotching, Austrade Chief Economist about workforce shortages, employment conditions, structural barriers, and migration patterns. She highlighted the opportunity to fill existing workforce shortages through increased workforce participation from under-represented cohorts.

Former Tourism Minister, the Hon Martin Ferguson AM, Chair of the Reimagining the Visitor Economy process, highlighted the importance of migration to address short term workforce shortages, but also the need for industry to take steps to boost its reputation so it is able to attract necessary staff. He emphasised the need to position the visitor economy as a "career" for young Australians and women, as well as the opportunity to employ more people with a disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

A panel comprising Sharon Ninyyette, Crowne Perth, Andrew Comastri, Etico Hotels and Maureen Pillon, Young Tourism Network spoke about the importance of addressing barriers to participation from underrepresented cohorts. They discussed the need to empower employees and provide them with purpose and the necessary training to supporting their visitor economy career and demonstrated proven results and insights.

John Hart OAM, summarised priorities from Australian Chamber of Tourism and Industry (ACCI)'s recent workforce roundtable, which focused on building skills, migration, and industrial relations.

From a regional tourism SME perspective, Evan Hall, Chair, Australian Tourism Industry Council shared the findings of a recent survey of small businesses on their workforce needs. He identified the importance of using a mix of solutions to address workforce issues to address based on the different business types and sizes.

In terms of visitor economy jobs of the future, Margy Osmond, CEO, Tourism and Transport Forum said changing consumer preferences, including for sustainable tourism, and new innovation and technology would drive the need for new roles in the visitor economy. She emphasised the importance of moving to sustainable aviation fuel. We need to build the capability for this workforce now and use it to our trade advantage.

## Collaborating to address workforce challenges

The Tourism Jobs Summit participants suggested actions to address workforce challenges under the following themes:

- Addressing workforce supply: structural challenges
- Addressing workforce supply: building a domestic workforce
- Addressing workforce supply: the role of the international workforce
- Skills: improving workforce capability
- Elevating the visitor economy into a career of choice.

Participants examined whether ideas had a high, medium, or low impact on building workforce capability and were low, medium, or high cost. Participants voted on a prioritised list of actions.

## Tourism Jobs Summit agreed key actions

### Addressing supply: structural challenges

Participants agreed on the following priority actions:

1. Better use migration, and reforming the migration program, including in relation to Working Holiday Makers
2. Promote the visitor economy as a career of choice
3. Better activate temporary and seasonal workers in Australia

### Addressing supply: domestic workforce

Participants agreed on the following priority actions:

1. Remove disincentives from welfare and tax systems to encourage cohorts, such as people with a disability and people on an Age Pension, to the workforce
2. Enhance funding for pathways to visitor economy careers
3. Address housing shortages in regional areas, with incentives for landowners to provide housing solutions.

## Addressing supply: international workforce

Participants agreed on the following priority actions:

1. Remove industry sector limitations whilst retaining regional dispersion requirements for Working Holiday Makers (WHM)
2. Allow international students to increase the number of hours they can work (up to 30) and allow them to arrive early on a student visa
3. Expand age limit for WHM, and the importance of a second and third WHM stay

## Skills: improving workforce capability

Participants agreed on the following priority actions:

1. Incentivise employers to improve on the job training, including through micro credential training
2. Achieve national consistency of training programs and qualifications; including urgent actions by State and Territories to align regulations and acknowledge each other's qualifications.
3. Achieve better integration between training providers and industry to ensure training meets business needs

## Career of choice: Elevating the visitor economy

Participants agreed on the following priority action:

1. Provide clear messaging on pathways for tourism as a career of choice, and take action to change perceptions on tourism as a career of choice including ensuring employers better engage and empower staff

## Next steps

The action plan from the Tourism Jobs Summit will inform the Jobs and Skills Summit, the Employment White Paper process and the development of the visitor economy workforce and skills strategy, an action of THRIVE 2030.





## Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia Austrade appearance at public hearing with the Joint Select Committee on 31 March 2023 Response to Questions Arising

Thank you for the opportunity to brief the Committee on Friday 31 March alongside the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the Department of Industry, Science and Resources. This submission responds to follow-up questions arising from the public hearing, which we understand have been provided to all three agencies.

We note many questions relate to policy development and initiatives specifically aimed at Northern Australia. As noted in our submission, Austrade is responsible for Visitor Economy policy but does not have policy leadership in other areas relevant to its trade and investment promotion and facilitation remit. Austrade contributes to policy development led by other agencies and shares relevant information, insights and business intelligence gained through its work facilitating trade and investment and stimulating the visitor economy. This includes for example the Home Affairs' led migration review and the Treasury's Employment White Paper.

Further, in contrast to the other two agencies, Austrade's programs and services have a national focus and do not specifically target Northern Australia. We have therefore tailored our answers to align with Austrade's role and functions.

### Committee's questions

***Question 1: What initiatives does the Australian Government have in place to support Northern Australia to make the most of emerging economic and business growth opportunities?***

The following Austrade initiatives, services and programs support economic and business growth but are not targeted at Northern Australia.

#### THRIVE 2030

THRIVE 2030, the national visitor economy strategy, provides a blueprint for the visitor economy's sustainable growth and aims for visitor expenditure to return to pre-pandemic levels of A\$166 billion by 2024, and to grow it to A\$230 billion by 2030.

THRIVE 2030 is constructed on three pillars – collaboration, modernisation, and diversification – and contains 64 actions for industry and government. Austrade leads the action that requires the development of an international diversification strategy for the visitor economy. This is consistent with the Australian Government's broader trade diversification agenda which seeks to build economic resilience and support future prosperity.

While THRIVE 2030 has a national remit, the strategy will have significant benefits for Northern Australia given its focus on Indigenous employment and business ownership, regional tourism and ecotourism.

#### Export Market Development Grants

The Export Market Development Grants (EMDG) program was established in 1974 and encourages small to medium enterprises to market and promote their goods and services globally. EMDG has provided grants and assisted more than 51,000 unique small and medium-size Australian businesses (SME), including many from Northern Australia.

Export Services

Austrade services help business export and grow their operations internationally. Export services are delivered through a network of domestic and international trade advisors and often in partnership with State and Territory counterparts.

The TradeStart Network of export advisors is co-funded by Austrade in partnership with state, territory and local governments and chambers of commerce. TradeStart has five representatives located in Northern Australia – Rockhampton, Mackay, Townsville, Cairns, and Darwin (currently vacant). As of 16 March 2023, TradeStart advisors in Northern Australia provided one-on-one export services to more than 90 companies for the financial year to date, including export planning, market selection and business matching.

Investment promotion and facilitation

As the national foreign investment promotion agency, Austrade works closely with the states and territories to identify commercial opportunities, promote, and attract productive Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). FDI provides capital to broaden the economic base, support infrastructure development and create meaningful long-term jobs through economic development. Foreign investors introduce new industries, technologies and skills, with many foreign investors importing core skills and supporting ongoing training that can assist with workforce development.

***Question 2: Please provide detail of 3 major policies designed by your department/agency to have the greatest positive impact on workforce development in Northern Australia.***

The following examples relate to Austrade's tourism policy role:

Tourism Jobs Summit and Workforce Skills Technical Working Group

Austrade, through THRIVE 2030, is working to build a secure and resilient workforce in the visitor economy. On 30 August 2022, Minister for Tourism and Trade, Senator the Hon Don Farrell, hosted the Tourism Jobs Summit in Canberra. The Summit brought together 70 representatives from tourism industry associations, unions, business, academia, and Commonwealth, state, and territory governments. The Summit generated new ideas and actions to address workforce and skills challenges in the visitor economy, including ideas relevant to the Northern Australia workforce. Outcomes from the Tourism Jobs Summit are attached.

Austrade established a Workforce and Skills Technical Working Group in 2022, to support the development of a visitor economy workforce and skills action plan, informed by the Tourism Jobs Summit.

Austrade, through THRIVE 2030, is working to build a secure and resilient workforce in the visitor economy. On 5 August 2022, Minister for Tourism and Trade, Senator the Hon Don Farrell, hosted a Tourism Industry Roundtable in Canberra, as an opportunity to hear directly from Industry on workforce challenges and opportunities. On 29 August 2022, the Minister for Tourism and Trade hosted a further Roundtable on Investment Jobs and Skills.

On 30 August 2022, the Minister for Tourism and Trade, hosted the Tourism Jobs Summit in Canberra. The Summit brought together 70 representatives from tourism industry associations, unions, business, academia, and Commonwealth, state, and territory governments. The Summit generated new ideas and actions to address workforce and skills challenges in the visitor economy, including ideas relevant to the Northern Australia workforce. Outcomes from the Tourism Jobs Summit are attached. All outcomes from Roundtables and the Tourism Jobs Summit were provided as input to the Government's Jobs and Skills Summit.

Austrade established a Workforce and Skills Technical Working Group in 2022, to support the development of a visitor economy workforce and skills action plan, informed by the Tourism Jobs Summit.

#### Tourism Local Navigators Pilot

This pilot grant program is due to launch in mid-2023 and will be delivered in partnership with the Department of Social Services. It aims to reduce the barriers for small and medium tourism business to employing a person with a disability. The grant guidelines identify Cairns as a possible site for the pilot.

#### The Hub Portal

Austrade is developing the Hub, an online portal for the hospitality, tourism, and travel sectors. It will be hosted by the Accommodation Association of Australia and connect businesses, workers, and students to information about job opportunities in the visitor economy. This will have a positive impact in Northern Australia as it will enable greater access to relevant tourism-related job information into regional areas.

### ***Question 3: In your portfolio areas, what were the biggest problems historically affecting workforce development in Northern Australia, and how do these compare to today?***

Austrade's submission to the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee, pages 4-7, outlines the challenges in attracting and retaining a skilled workforce, as provided by clients and stakeholders. Austrade does not collect data relating to regional workforce issues that would support any historic comparison.

### ***Questions 4 and 5: How do you measure the effectiveness of the policies your department/agency has implemented and will implement for Northern Australia, and whether they are fit-for-purpose? How do your policies recognise differences between different parts of Northern Australia – for example, regional hubs versus remote communities?***

Austrade visitor economy policy initiatives do not specifically target Northern Australia. Austrade consults state and territory governments to ensure, for example, the visitor economy Interim Action Plan, meets the needs of their jurisdictions.

### ***Question 6: What programs has the Australian Government introduced and supported to encourage more Australians and migrants to live in the north?***

Austrade is involved in the following programs that encourage migrants to live and work in Northern Australia.

#### Working Holiday Maker Program

Austrade works closely with Department of Home Affairs on the Working Holiday Maker program. This program encourages backpackers to work in Northern Australia and remote areas in certain industries to qualify for a second or third extension to the Work and Holiday visa. This program is providing an additional flexible and seasonal workforce in Northern Australia. Austrade, the Department of Home Affairs and Tourism Australia, in a cross-government partnership, delivered an email mailout to all offshore Working Holiday Maker (WHM) visa holders to encourage them not to delay in traveling to Australia to begin their Working Holiday. The email was sent in March 2023 with a link to the Home Affairs website for further information on specified work and a link to Tourism Australia website where WHM's can find more information on working holiday jobs, as a way to incentivise further take up of travel to Australia by this important group.

#### China-Northern Australia Education Engagement Strategy and digital campaign (NA Strategy)

Increasing the number of students studying in Northern Australia will increase the pipeline of potential workers and migrants for that region. The one-off NA Strategy helped Northern Australian education providers engage the Chinese market and promoted selected Northern



Australian cities (Darwin, Alice Springs, Townsville, Cairns, and Rockhampton) as study destinations for Chinese students. Austrade delivered the Strategy between July 2019-July 2021 in collaboration with StudyQLD and StudyNT.

***Question 7: How does your department/agency consult and co-design programs with Northern Australians? How are you working with remote communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities?***

From a visitor economy perspective, Austrade consults with state and territory governments in the development of tourism policies and programs. For example, THRIVE 2030, the long-term national visitor economy strategy, is guided by a standing Commonwealth-state-territory committee referred to as the Australian Standing Committee on Tourism (ASCOT). ASCOT meets regularly throughout the year to monitor THRIVE 2030 actions.

Austrade does not co-design programs specifically targeting Northern Australia or remote communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. However, the region and communities are captured in the promotion, attraction, and facilitation work conducted by Austrade. This work is often done in collaboration with the Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australian governments.

***Question 8: What industries falling within your portfolios are facing the most challenges attracting and retaining staff?***

Austrade's submission to the JSC identified industries facing the most challenges attracting and retaining staff: Visitor Economy (see pages 8-9) and defence, space, construction, mining, and energy (see pages 4-5).

***Question 9: How do levels of government currently collaborate to address issues in Northern Australia? How can collaboration and coordination between levels of government be improved to address workforce development issues in Northern Australia?***

Austrade works collaboratively with the relevant state and territory governments for Northern Australia to achieve outcomes in the four areas of our agency's responsibility — trade, investment, visitor economy and international education. Some examples are outlined below.

Trade

Austrade maintains an extensive network of domestic and international trade advisors, delivering advice to business. This work is often delivered working in partnership with State and Territory counterparts.

The TradeStart Network (co-funded by Austrade) is predominantly a regionally based network of export advisors that delivers Austrade services in partnership with state, territory and local governments and chambers of commerce.

Investment

Austrade works with state and territory counterparts, both in Australia and overseas, on investment strategy, promotion, attraction, facilitation, and aftercare. Austrade also collaborates with states and territories on investment promotion activities, including sector-specific materials, the Austrade website, missions, and global industry trade shows, and in direct targeting and support for potential foreign investors.

Austrade coordinates this work through bilateral engagement and via a national investment forum, which brings together the heads of investment promotion across all states and territories. The forum provides an avenue for discussion on global issues and investment trends, strategic priorities and joint promotional activities, and policy issues affecting Australia's competitiveness. The forum also provides a framework for coordination of foreign investor servicing and to drive capability uplift for investment promotion staff across Australia.

### Visitor Economy

Austrade collaborates with the state and territory governments that represent Northern Australia on visitor economy policy and programs through the Tourism Ministers Meeting, (TMM), Australian Standing Committee on Tourism (ASCOT), the THRIVE 2030 Implementation Advisory Group and the THRIVE 2030 Workforce and Skills Technical Working Group.

### International education

Austrade works in partnership with the states and territory governments and other Australian Government agencies to deliver information and services to international students. This marketing alliance is called the Study Australia Partnership. This partnership works together to improve coordination of key information for students and agents.

### ***Question 10: How do problems in workforce development in Northern Australia reflect Australia-wide issues and how are they unique to Northern Australia?***

While many regions face challenges in accessing and attracting skilled migrants, these problems are more acute in Northern Australia due to a sprawling geography, remoteness, and a smaller skills base. Although Northern Australia offers cheaper commercial land costs than other regions, investors are less inclined to consider projects in locations outside of the east coast capitals, due to difficulties in accessing skills. Housing shortages also add to the challenge of attracting people to move to the Northern Territory.

Workforce shortages in the visitor economy are exacerbated during peak periods, which can occur at opposite times to high season in southern Australia. Attracting and organising workers with specific skill sets to move from southern to Northern Australia during opposing peak seasons could increase the pool of available workers.

### ***Question 11: Which industries and sectors has the Australian Government identified as having the potential to create lasting employment and long-term, local economic benefits for the north?***

There is a desire and opportunity to broaden Northern Australia's economic base by facilitating growth in sectors beyond its traditional strengths in agriculture, energy, and resources. Austrade has identified opportunities for expansion and growth in defence, critical minerals, space, hydrogen and renewable energy and First Nations tourism. There are also opportunities in the services, infrastructure, logistics, training, innovation, and research and development (R&D) that cluster around these sectors. Austrade's submission to the JSC provides detail on these priority sectors for future economic development in Northern Australia on pages 7-10.