

14 April 2008

Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital & External Territories
Department of House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Secretary

RE: Inquiry into the role of the National Capital Authority

TTF Australia welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the *Inquiry into the role of the National Capital Authority (NCA)*.

The NCA plays a crucial role in ensuring effective planning and promotion of the Nation's Capital. TTF Australia commends the Federal Government's commitment to the continual improvement of the planning and development of the Territory through the review of the National Capital Authority.

TTF Australia Limited (Tourism and Transport Forum) is a national Member-funded organisation representing the top 200 owners, operators and investors in Australia's tourism, transport, investment, infrastructure, and education sectors.

TTF Australia's membership comprises the most significant players in the tourism and transport industries including all major domestic and international airlines, major airports, major hotels, attractions and major event venues, investment banks, other tourism and hospitality operators, transport operators and service providers to these sectors.

Referring to Point E from the terms of reference for the Inquiry into the role of the National Capital Authority, TTF sees the following as being areas of concern for our membership:

- The NCA's involvement in the promotion of Commonwealth-specific icons within the Territory and the implications this has for promoting tourism as a whole;
- The NCA's coordinating role in Major Events on Commonwealth Land and the affect this has on the promotion of the Territory as a whole; and
- The lack of a supporting tourism strategy for the NCA to promote the Griffin Legacy and the sites the plan identifies as being of interest to the area.

TTF has addressed the issues under the following subject areas:

- The importance of the promotion of cultural tourism;
- The effect of budget cuts on the NCA;
- The need for an NCA Tourism Plan;
- The Griffin Legacy;
- The promotion and development of major events; and
- The National Capital Educational Tourism Project.

The importance of the promotion of Cultural Icons

Australia's national icons that are administered by the National Capital Authority are of significant importance to the Australian Capital as well as the Nation as a whole. These icons not only benefit the Territory through increased interest and visitation, but also provide monuments to mark our history and cultural heritage.

In the year ending December 2006, the ACT welcomed 611,000 cultural and heritage visitors who stayed a total of 2 million nights. Compared to domestic overnight visitors nationally, visitors to the ACT are more likely to be cultural and heritage visitors, with 71% of cultural and heritage visitors visiting museums or art galleries and 46% visiting history, heritage building sites/monuments¹.

It is important that the promotion and maintenance of nationally significant icons remains a major priority of the NCA in order to maximise potential visitation to the Territory and to ensure that these icons are preserved for future generations.

There is currently no coordinated promotion of national icons on a collective level for attractions controlled or operated on NCA land. There are also no complimentary linkages to other tourism sites that exist in or around these sites and no formal linkages to the promotion works of Australian Capital Tourism.

The effect of budget cuts on the NCA

TTF Australia understands that the promotional unit within the National Capital Authority has received significant cuts in staffing and monetary funding. This has direct implications for the promotion and maintenance of the Territory's attractions under NCA control and the ability of the Territory to generate interest in its tourism attractions.

The NCA has the sole responsibility to ensure that these federally-based icons are maintained and promoted appropriately. This task falls well outside the realm of the Territory's tourism organisation Australia Capital Tourism.

If the NCA does not provide the funding or promotion to maintain the presence of these icons, the tourism industry will suffer as a whole. Australian Capital Tourism are not product marketers but market the Territory as a whole. The shortfall in funding for the NCA can not be substituted or compensated by the promotional efforts of Australian Capital Tourism.

Australian Capital Tourism has received significant cuts to its funding over the 2005-2008 period. Australian Capital Tourism has seen a decrease of 18% in its budget from its \$19.7 million budget in 2005-2006 to \$16.2 million in 2007-2008. This is the lowest

funded State/Territory Tourism Organisation in Australia. They are therefore unequipped to compensate for further cuts to the budget of the National Capital Authority.

TTF understands that as a result of budget cuts to the NCA there has already been a reduction in the successful volunteer program at locations such as Blundell's Cottage and the Carillon. These volunteers showed visitors around these attractions and were a valuable part of the tourism offering.

TTF also understands that these cuts are causing increased costs for users of Commonwealth land controlled by the NCA.

Recommendation

The NCA must have adequate staffing and funding levels to meet its role as the main marketer and promoter of the Territory's cultural icons and facilities.

Need for an NCA Tourism Plan

TTF Australia further recommends that consideration be given to integrating and promoting all NCA-operated attractions through a single tourism plan. At present there is no coordinated promotion of national icons on a collective level for NCA controlled or operated attractions. The lack of integration between NCA controlled tourism sites and complimentary sites in surrounding areas results in a more diluted product offering being communicated to the market. By not integrating and consolidating the cultural icons that are on offer in the Territory, promotion and recognition of these icons will never reach its true potential.

If the NCA is to achieve it's goal of planning and coordinating the development of the Territory in accordance with its significance, all planning, infrastructure and event development conducted by the NCA needs to have a greater strategic and long-term sustainable vision in order to drive visitation. A tourism plan that integrates all icons including the importance of these icons to the Nation, and to one another, needs to be developed.

Recommendation

The NCA needs to develop a long-term strategic tourism plan for all NCA controlled icons that identifies their significance to the Nation and one another.

The Griffin Legacy

Effective planning for future infrastructure development is critical for the growth of the Australian Capital. TTF Australia commends the development of the Griffin Legacy to guide development within the territory and integrate areas of national significance with public infrastructure, parliamentary areas and private investment.

TTF understands that the first stage of the Griffin Legacy has been cut back, which raises concerns about the ability of the NCA to undertake critical infrastructure development and planning work.

In order for the benefits of the Griffin Legacy to materialise into increased visitation, a supporting Griffin Legacy Tourism Plan is required in order to provide direction for the future development of sites of interest, once the Griffin Legacy has been completed. The sites of the National Museum of Australia, City Hall, the War Memorial, Parliament House and the Cultural Institution hub must be linked in a meaningful way that will promote the importance of these attractions to the Territory and to Australia's history. By offering a more consolidated and consistent product offering through transport and infrastructure links and cooperative marketing, the Territory will have the best opportunity to capitalise on the effective planning of the Griffin Legacy.

Recommendation

A supporting tourism strategy should be developed for the NCA to promote the Griffin Legacy and the sites the plan identifies as being of interest to the area. This will require tourism marketing funding by the NCA.

The promotion and development of major events

TTF Australia commends the 23% increase in events that have occurred on National Land over the 2006-07 period. The Cirque du Soleil, the Story of our National Capital, Australia Day Live 2007, Tropfest and Summer in the Capital are critical in enhancing the profile and vibrancy of the community that exists within the Territory.

Whilst these events generate significant community interest and participation, they do not significantly contribute to increasing visitation to, and visitor expenditure in the Territory. Interstate visitors are crucial to injecting additional expenditure through increased hotel nights, restaurant outings and transportation costs.

The NCA needs to have a greater strategic focus on the purpose of events held within its responsibility in order to attract larger crowds of interstate visitors. There needs to be targeted expected numbers and integrated plans to bring together both sponsors and suppliers within the industry to highlight the core characteristics of the Territory.

Proposed funding cuts to the event budget of the NCA will impact on the ability of the NCA to effectively coordinate major events and partner with sponsors and the Territory's tourism organisation. This is of particular relevance to major events such as Floriade.

Floriade is one of the Territory's premier events that not only attracts a large number of community visitors but interstate visitors as well. In 2007, Floriade contributed \$20.3 million to the ACT economy, with 55.8% of interstate visitors staying overnight whilst visiting the event. Overnight visitors offer significant flow-on benefits to other tourism attractions with 60.5% visiting restaurants and cafes, 26.4% visiting the Australian War Memorial and 12.7% visiting the National Museum of Australiaⁱⁱ.

The ACT therefore needs to maintain Floriade as a premier attraction in order to continue to benefit from tourism expenditure associated with this event. Proposed funding cuts will negatively impact on the ability of other Territory partners to effectively supply and operate at the event.

The National Capital Educational Tourism Project

The National Capital Educational Tourism Project is crucial in encouraging greater interstate visitation to the territory and strengthening the significance of the Nation's Capital to our history amongst the younger generation.

The National Capital Educational Tourism Project aims to increase the number of students that visit the Nation's Capital by giving them the opportunity to engage in Australia's democracy, history and culture. The project has been formed to assist schools in understanding the educational benefit of visiting the Nation's Capital through the provision of information and assistance to teachers planning an excursion to the National Capital. This is done through various publications, seminars, conferences and tours.

Student visitation to the Capital is a significant part of the tourism industry. In 2007, student visitation increased by 8% on 2006, with 155,000 students visiting the territory. By developing a holistic program that integrates the cultural significance of the Capital's icons with the infrastructure to move visitation to and from these destinations is commendable in achieving greater visitation to the state.

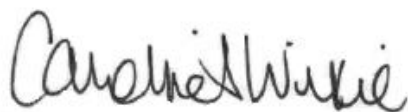
The Planner which forms part of the National Capital Educational Tourism Project is a prime example of an effective collaboration between industry counterparts, the NCA and ACT Government in order to benefit the Territory as a whole. The project incorporates the educational activities of such institutions as the National Museum of Australia, which all contributes to the development of a positive national identity amongst the younger generation.

Recommendation

TTF Australia recommends that funding for the National Capital Education Tourism Project is maintained at existing levels and that the NCA remain actively engaged in this project.

If you have any queries regarding the information above, please contact me on 02 9240 2016 or cwilkie@tff.org.au.

Regards



CAROLINE WILKIE
National Manager – Tourism & Events

ⁱ Cultural and Heritage Tourism, Canberra Australian Capital Tourism, http://www.tams.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0003/66288/Cultura_Heritage_fact_sheet_Dec_06.pdf accessed 31/03/2008

ⁱⁱ Floriade 2007 Event Report, Canberra Australian Capital Tourism, p 3