

Sub 65

Ms Lyndel Bates
The Research Director
Economic Development Committee
Parliament House
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Brisbane QLD 4000
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17 May 2010

Dear Ms Bates

Inquiry into developing Queensland's rural and regional communities through 'grey nomad' tourism

The Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the Economic Development Committee's 'Inquiry into developing Queensland's rural and regional communities through grey nomad tourism'.

The information provided in this submission reflects the views of Queensland's highly diverse tourism sector bodies and regional tourism organisations and can be considered as a united industry response to this inquiry.

As an outcome of this review, QTIC looks forward to greater recognition of the contribution of 'grey nomads' to Queensland's economic prosperity through the introduction of policies which facilitate growth in this important tourism market.

The Queensland Tourism Industry Council

The Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) is a private sector, membership-based tourism industry organisation. QTIC represents the interests of the tourism industry, including business operators, Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs) and sector associations.

All of Queensland's RTOs are members of QTIC, as are 17 of the industry's sector associations and in excess of 3,000 regional members, operating in all sectors of the tourism industry.

QTIC is owned and governed by its members through member based councils, boards and committees and truly reflects the views of the industry at all levels throughout Queensland.

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Feedback

As outlined in the issues paper, tourism contributes more than \$8.4 billion to the Queensland economy per year, which accounts for 4.5% of Gross State Product. An additional \$5.6 billion is generated from tourism indirectly. Underpinning the contributions to GSP is a total expenditure amount from overseas and domestic visitors to Queensland of \$19.4 billion annually. These figures demonstrate that tourism contributes more to the State's economy than agriculture, forestry and fishing combined.

The importance of 'grey nomads' to tourism in Queensland cannot be overstated. This high valued group of visitors tend to provide vital tourism capacity in periods that would otherwise be 'off peak' or of low demand. In addition, as 'grey nomads' often visit areas not inherently frequented by other tourist markets, this group of travellers are of significant importance to a number of regional and rural areas in Queensland.

The 'grey nomad' market is also of considerable importance for the caravanning and camping sector of the tourism industry. As stated in the issues paper, 52% of visitors utilising camping and caravan parks in 2006 were 45 years or older.

In addition, as the population of Australia is ageing, both in numbers and in proportion, the contribution of 'grey nomads' to Queensland's economic prosperity is likely to increase.

In addition to this feedback, QTIC wishes to make the following further points:

Appropriate infrastructure requirements to develop and facilitate the continuation of 'grey nomad' tourism

- As the 'grey nomad' market involves large numbers of older tourists travelling independently, QTIC acknowledges that there are key infrastructure requirements which must be addressed to facilitate this group's ease of travel. Such key infrastructure provisions include access to 24 hour medical and pharmacy services, access to basic vehicle repair services, access to dump points and potable water and parking within close proximity to general shopping precincts.
- QTIC continues to support the use of visitor information centre accreditation in Queensland – which assists in facilitating the independence sought by this group of travellers. QTIC looks forward to a continuation of the strong partnership established between these centres and local government.
- As 'grey nomad' tourism has direct links to drive tourism, enhancing roadside infrastructure in Queensland will have a positive flow on effect to this market. Such infrastructure investments could include the provision of more appropriate signage to be erected both on major touring routes and with town environs.
- QTIC also proposes that, unless there are significant shifts in government policies, the future of the caravan park industry – a key infrastructure requirement for 'grey nomad'

tourism in Queensland - is under serious threat. QTIC is aware that the current size of the caravan and tourist park industry is large enough at present to cater for current needs of 'grey tourists'. However, this cannot be said for the future, given the current decline in caravan park accommodation in Queensland.

- Specific issues impacting on the supply of caravan park accommodation in Queensland are discussed below.

Issues relating to the regulation of Queensland's camping and caravan parks

- Although exact numbers are unavailable, it is estimated that in the past ten years, up to fifty caravan parks have disappeared from the market. In feedback from its members, QTIC predicts that the rate of decline in the number of caravan and tourist parks across Queensland is about to rise dramatically – reducing the State's capacity to appropriately service the 'grey nomad' market.
- A major reason for this decline is the imposition of the Department of Environment and Resource Management's sewage licence fee increases. These fee increases have particularly impacted on those parks reliant on their own sewage disposal systems, are well above CPI and have been implemented with little consultation with industry stakeholders.
- To compound matters, the recently proposed changes to the land valuations system in Queensland – including the proposed adoption of 'site value' - have the potential to inflict further operating costs on caravan park businesses.
- QTIC is also concerned that the business capacity of caravan park operators is severely tested due to local government regulations. As individual local governments are responsible for the licensing and regulation of commercial caravan and tourist parks, there are virtually 74 different sets of regulation for the industry throughout Queensland.
- This situation has particular implications for management companies and park chains which operate multiple park operations throughout the State. A major obstacle faced by these operators is the disparity between local government laws and regulations throughout the Queensland.

Methods for marketing and promotion to Queensland's rural and regional communities to 'grey nomad' tourists

- QTIC agrees that governments play an important role in marketing Queensland's attractions to potential visitors – including 'grey nomad' tourists.
- QTIC proposes that further investments into the promotion of regional tourism – through increased funding for the Regional Tourism Organisations of Queensland - will assist in ensuring that regional and rural communities are able to benefit from greater visitation from 'grey nomads'. In addition, as 'grey nomads' are essentially road travelling tourists,

increased promotion of touring routes throughout Queensland will have a flow on effect to increase promotion of Queensland to this valuable tourism market.

- The Queensland fuel subsidy has historically provided an incentive for 'grey nomads' to travel to Queensland. Although the removal of this subsidy has only increased the price of fuel by approximately 8 cents per litre, this was a strong marketing tool incentivising touring within Queensland.
- QTIC notes that the series of caravan and camping shows - held each year in Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Sydney and Brisbane - provide excellent opportunities to promote touring in Queensland. Given the significant numbers attending these exhibitions – with over half of the gate attendance qualifying for inclusion in the 'grey tourist' age bracket – QTIC proposes that there are opportunities for government to further partner with industry associations to ensure the continued success of these exhibitions.

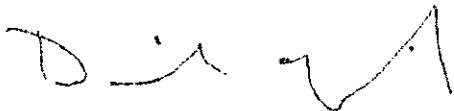
Government encouragement for 'grey nomads' to use their skills by undertaking work in rural and regional Queensland

- QTIC acknowledges that 'grey nomads' possess a wide range of skilled trades that would be of value in rural and regional communities. As a means of putting these valuable skills to further use in regional Queensland, QTIC suggests that government expand its 'harvest trail' initiative and 'map out' a seasonal trail for 'grey nomads' - which encompasses tourism and hospitality occupations in regional areas.
- The development of such an initiative for the tourism and hospitality industry in Queensland would provide 'grey nomads' with a clearer understanding of work opportunities while travelling and also respond to seasonal peaks in the tourism industry – including festivals, events and times of high tourism demand.

QTIC appreciates the opportunity to provide input into the Economic Development Committee's 'Inquiry into developing Queensland's rural and regional communities through grey nomad tourism'. As discussed above, QTIC recognises the potential economic and skills contribution of 'grey nomads' to regional Queensland and, with this in mind, understands the important role of government in ensuring the continued growth of this valuable tourism market.

Please feel free to contact me on (07) 3236 1445 should you require further information.

Kind regards



Daniel Gschwind
Chief Executive