



QUEENSLAND
TOURISM INDUSTRY
COUNCIL

The Voice of Tourism

**Submission to the
IGAB Independent
Review Panel
on the
Biosecurity review
discussion paper**

Queensland Tourism Industry Council

Po Box 13162
George Street QLD 4003
P (07) 3236 1445
F (07) 3236 4552
E policy@qtic.com.au
www.qtic.com.au

August 2016

Introduction

The Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the IGAB Independent Review Panel on the Australian biosecurity system review and discussion paper '*Is Australia's national biosecurity system and the underpinning Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity fit for the future?*' (the Discussion Paper).

QTIC supports the ambition to 'minimise the impact of pest and disease incursions on the nation's economy, environment and community, while protecting our international reputation for high-quality and safe produce' and to ensure that 'the nation's tourism sector benefit from our pristine and unique natural environments.'

Queensland Tourism Industry Council

QTIC is the state peak body for tourism in Queensland. The voice of tourism, QTIC represents the interests of the tourism industry, including business operators, Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs) and sector associations.

QTIC is a private sector, membership-based tourism industry organisation; all of Queensland's 13 RTOs are members of QTIC as are 20 of the industry sector associations and in excess of 3,000 regional members, operating in all sectors of the tourism industry. QTIC works in partnership with government agencies and industry bodies at a local, state and national level (National Tourism Alliance), to strengthen the voice of tourism in all relevant policy forums.

QTIC remains committed to working with government and industry through the following national and state strategies and working groups:

- Australian Government, Tourism 2020, Tourism Industry Potential;
- Labour and Skills Working Group;
- Queensland Government, DestinationQ Industry Partnership Agreement and 12 Month Action Plan.

Tourism and Biosecurity

Tourism is a key economic driver in many Queensland regions, supporting regional employment and community growth, employing over 219,000 people directly and indirectly¹. This is substantially more than the mining sector (79,000 direct jobs) or even agriculture, forestry and fishing combined (56,900 direct jobs)².

The tourism industry in Queensland contributed \$23 billion to Queensland's Gross State Product (GSP), representing 7.9% of total GSP and generated \$5.8 billion in exports in the year ending June 2014, making it the state's second largest export earner behind coal². In the year ending June 2015, visitor expenditure in Queensland was \$18.3 billion; \$49 million daily spend in the local economy. The return on tourism is high, with every dollar tourism earns adding an additional 87 cents to other parts of the economy³.

¹ Tourism Research Australia, State Tourism Satellite Accounts 2014-15 (released August 2016).

² Tourism Queensland, Tourism Economic Key Facts, September 2015.

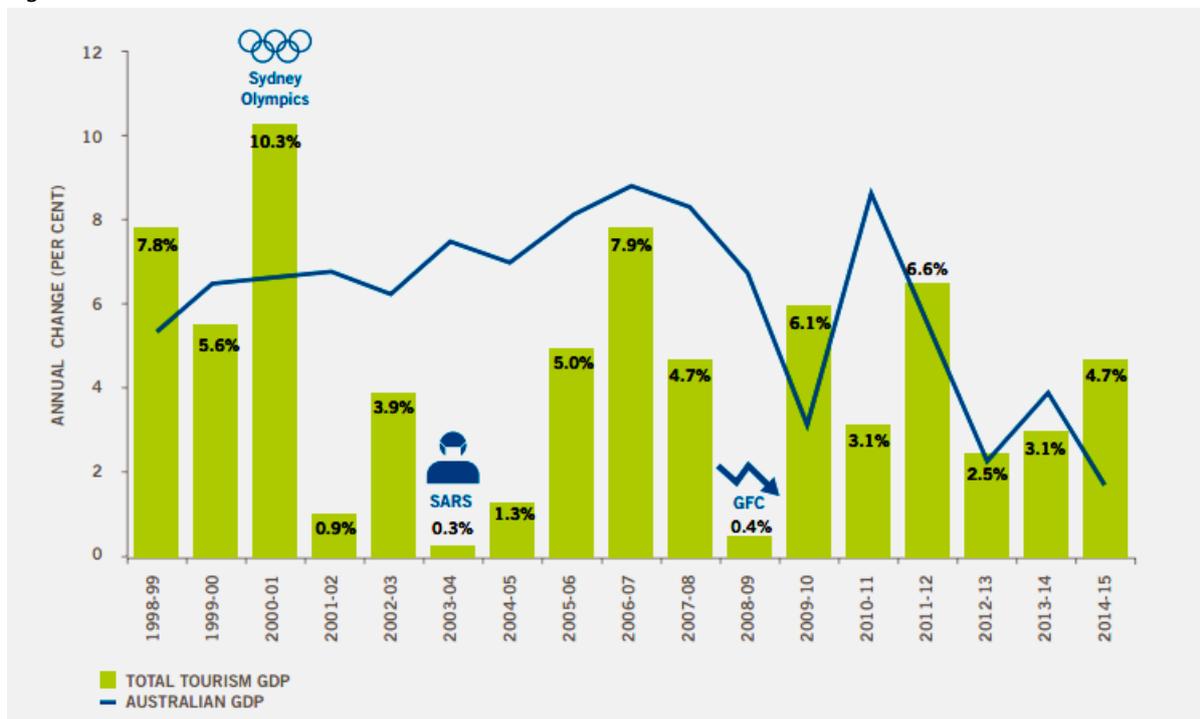
³ Tourism Australia, 2014.

In a growth prospects report by Deloitte titled “*Positioning for prosperity? Catching the next wave*”, global growth trends and Australia’s areas of advantage were examined. Results showed that our next waves of prosperity are likely to come from five sectors: tourism, gas, agribusiness, international education and wealth management. The report states, “*there is a lot more potential growth in the pipeline [for Australia], with tourism projected to be among the world’s fastest growing industries. Our forecasts have it growing 4% a year from now to 2033 – that is, more than doubling in size over the next two decades*”⁴.

The scalability, preparedness and responsiveness of Australia’s biosecurity system will be essential as the country experiences a fast growth of travel and tourism activity.

Biosecurity threats and incidents can have a devastating impact on the Australian tourism economy. Figure 1, below, sourced from the August 2016 Tourism Research Australia release of the *State Tourism Satellite Accounts 2014-15*, clearly shows the impact that the SARS global outbreak of 2003-04 had on Australia’s direct tourism GDP – a similar impact as the global financial crisis⁵.

Figure 1: Annual Growth in Direct Tourism GDP and Australian GDP⁵



The integrated nature of the visitor economy, across many sectors and sensitive to various global and local economic forces, means that any risk or impact on other sectors, including agriculture, can have a flow-on impact to the success of the tourism industry.

⁴ Deloitte, *Positioning for Prosperity?: Catching the next wave*. 2014.

⁵ Tourism Research Australia, *State Tourism Satellite Accounts 2014-15* (released August 2016), *Annual Growth in Direct Tourism GDP and Australian GDP*, p.16.

Response to Discussion Paper

The Discussion Paper included a list of questions for stakeholder response. This submission by the Queensland Tourism Industry Council provides answers to a selection of the questions, below, as relevant to tourism activity and industry in Queensland.

Agreeing to risks, priorities and objectives

6. Are the components and functions of Australia's national biosecurity system consistently understood by all stakeholders? If not, what could be done to improve this?

The Queensland Tourism Industry Council believe there to be an opportunity to improve the level of understanding about biosecurity procedures and responsibilities by the tourism industry. Similarly, it is essential that the tourism industry be considered as a key stakeholder group on biosecurity, and briefed and included in the functions of the national biosecurity system.

In the year ending March 2016, there were 575.6 million visitor nights in Australia, a daily average of 1.58 million visitors being hosted across the country. In Queensland, the tourism industry hosted 132.5 million visitor nights, a daily average of 363,000 visitors across Queensland⁶, greater than the combined urban centre resident population of Townsville (157,748) and Cairns (133,893)⁷.

As this large population of visitors is being hosted and therefore under the care of the tourism industry, the tourism industry plays an essential role in providing information and security in the management of risk and in the event of a biosecurity threat.

8. What form would this best take (for example, a national statement of intent or national strategy)? What are the key elements that must be included? What specific roles do you see industry and the broader community playing in such an initiative?

There is opportunity to expand the communication about biosecurity to businesses directly impacted by threats and incidents. Providing biosecurity risk management and threat response training to employees in the tourism industry could be one way of improving the engagement with the tourism industry, the industry's understanding, and the outcomes of delivering Australia's biosecurity system.

This could potentially be coordinated through regional networks, with regular updates distributed through industry communication channels.

A national statement of intent, and explanation of the role that different industry sectors can play in the national biosecurity strategy, could support a joint commitment and cooperation with industry. This would also provide a policy platform whereby stakeholders have an expressed shared commitment to issues concerning the environment, regional economies, and security.

⁶ Tourism Research Australia, National and International Visitors Survey (nights), March 2016.

⁷ Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2011 Census data.

Embedding share responsibility

9. Are the roles and responsibilities of stakeholder in Australia's national biosecurity system clearly and consistently understood? How might this be improved?

As noted in the response to the previous question, QTIC agrees that a national statement of intent and explanation of the role that different industry sectors can play in the national biosecurity strategy would be beneficial. However, the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in Australia's national biosecurity system must be not only clearly communicated, but also coordinated and efficient.

For instance, the role of the tourism industry in providing visitors with information on biosecurity would be greatly assisted if, upon issue of a visa to visit Australia, pre-trip visitors were provided with information on Australia's biosecurity system and what they should expect when travelling in Australia. This could be achieved by online communication as part of the post-approval information when a visa is issued. This would be at no or very little cost to the government and would contribute greatly to the communication with visitors.

Furthermore, Australia is known globally as a pristine nature-based destination, where the natural environment and related activities are a main driver of visitor demand. There is a jointly beneficial opportunity for the tourism industry to be a part of delivering the biosecurity message to visitors, as the tourism industry may be able to leverage the message of a strict biosecurity system to benefit the destination brand. Delivering the biosecurity message in a positive manner and integrated with destination marketing could create greater visitor understanding of Australia, cooperation, and overall a positive visitor experience.

In terms of the enforcement of biosecurity rules and regulation at Australia's international gateways, it is critically important to ensure that communication and engagement with international visitors is consistent with a customer-service focused approach. First impressions count for one of Australia's major export industries.

Market access

17. Are there ways governments could better partner with industry and/or the broader community to reduce costs (without increasing risk), such as industry certification schemes?

The Queensland Tourism Industry Council is the coordinating organisation for the Australian Tourism Accreditation Program (ATAP) in Queensland. There is potential to include Biosecurity Risk Management as a module of the program, whereby tourism operators could be provided with information and would be required to indicate a procedure for how their business would respond to a biosecurity threat or incident. This addition to the ATAP would need to be consulted on and approved by all state managers of the program (including all other state tourism industry councils).

The role of research and innovation

19. Which specific areas of Australia's national biosecurity system could benefit from research and innovation in the next five, 10 and 20 years and why? Please provide examples.

Research into biosecurity risk management and impact of incidents on the tourism industry and visitor economy is currently lacking. Further research into this field would support the preparedness of both the national biosecurity system and the tourism industry, and could be achieved through multi-discipline cooperation and dedicated research funding.
