



Transport SECTOR MEETING
Wednesday 8th April 2008 TCA Boardroom

Meeting Commenced 10:08 am

ATTENDANCE: Warwick Rock (APT), Don McDonald (Alice Springs Airport), Jessica Bonanni (P&WL), Jo-Anne Harkin (Tourism NT), Harry Osborn (Ossies 4WD Tours), Phil Taylor (Wayoutback), Steve Shearer (Thrifty), Brett Hill (Adventure Tours), Ron Johnstone (Palm Valley Tours), Denise Gamon (On Tour NT), Tony Renshaw (DPI)

APOLOGIES: Tija McMullen (ATA), PJ Bester (DUT), Henry Szczypiorski (DPI), Wayne Thompson (Dyson Group), Peter Grigg (TCA)

CHAIRPERSON: Warwick Rock (APT)

GUESTS: Valerie Smith, Damien Hanger (Tourism NT)
Sue Harley, Nicole Bieg (DRDPIFR)

MINUTES: Merrilyn McIver (TCA)

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING:

The minutes of the previous meeting were distributed to the meeting's attendees.

A motion was put forward that minutes of the April 2009 meeting be accepted.

Moved: Phil Taylor

Seconded: Don McDonald

Motion carried.

Jo Harkin introduced Valerie Smith, Damien Hanger, Sue Harley and Nicole Bieg to discuss opportunities for attracting tour guides to CA

Discussion points raised by the meeting:

- § Tour Guides not recognized as a career or profession, seen only as semi skilled under 457 visa classification
- § Only allowed to work for one employer and no one else under this visa.
- § Difficulties in getting people to stay because of housing situation and bad press
- § One advantage we have is a budget airline coming into Alice Springs – need to promote this.
- § Cost of training guides who then leave within 3 months because of accommodation problem.
- § Difficult to retain the employees. Alice Springs is used as a training ground with little benefit to local companies.
- § Working holiday people available but do not have the knowledge/experience.

Leaving the 457 problem aside, need to raise awareness in this climate on attracting guides on marketing Alice Springs as a great place to come and work – a “Desert Change”

- § Accommodation – Regional Development is investigating
- § Chamber of Commerce have rung around to check accommodation situation and found short term accommodation in caravan parks have availability. Caravan Parks also buying in more caravans and dongas to assist with short term accommodation problem.
- § Positives are the budget airline, the robust economy in Alice Springs compared with the rest of Australia but we need to put a new twist on advertising marketing.
- § Local tour guides are leaving for lesser hours and more pay elsewhere in other industries. Pay rates are pretty much the same in tourism as in other states. Tour Guides are not so well respected in certain places locally.
- § Need to recruit employees from elsewhere – need to look outside the square in our marketing campaign. Go to where the employees are and not wait for them to come to us. NT Job Shows are useful to get our information out there, suggest we contact a major current affair show and approach the Gap year market - youth as a career
- § Lack of qualified Tour Guides is a long term strategic issue as well as a lifestyle choice
- § Suggestion on co-operative advertising between say 3-4 local companies (not with Govt) as a generic advert to make a big splash instead of small adverts. Pooling advertising funds.
- § Facebook –social networking to like minded people is another alternative
- § Offer incentive wages to stay for various periods and increasing the longer they stay.

Query on how to now progress the above after today’s discussion:

Action: Meeting to provide profiles, pro formas to the NTG to advertise through their network

BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING:

- § Dave Nixon update on website launch
- § Biofuels workshop invitation to come
- § H endorsements – companies to attend to renewals asap
- Police Dept setting up Crimtrak - Pauline Williams Darwin contact. Advert in Centralian Advocate yesterday. Warwick received letter re system will be changing – looking at restructuring to make process easier. New agency being set up. Price of Criminal check increasing from \$30 to \$50. Tony requested update and copy of letters re this matter
Action: Warwick Rock to provide info to Tony
- § Maps – no road names on most maps – approach Place Names Committee to request these be named. Signage at certain roads re closures.
- § No Grog sign removal/replacement – nothing will be done at this stage, here to stay
- § Anita gave update on 457 Visa – still at a gridlock.
- § Driver Fatigue Management update – ongoing
- § Heavitree/Palm Circuit road changes – needs more public consultation which is on the agenda. Tony advised has received input from others besides TCA

- § Photo gallery on region – photo request from transport members to contribute
- § 50th Anniversary of ASP show – marquee to promote members products – update next meeting

GENERAL BUSINESS:

§ Re Driver Fatigue Management - Tony advised he is working hard on getting exemptions on 12 / 24 seat tourism buses. At this stage no one is saying no and will probably be another couple months. Will be for all of NT not just Alice Springs.

§ Phil advised he has sent documentation to Adam Fletcher of “Integrated safety” who has taken this matter on board for our industry. Adam is an expert in this area and is taking our documentation to the NTC who have requested further information on our grey areas such as guided walks, lunch and dinner time activities. At this stage the NTC have initially said that these additional activities are working but they are prepared to have a closer look. In conclusion this is not great news but it is a step in having some of the critical questions answered.

§ Re Mereenie Loop Road, Tony advised NT has made commitment to maintain natural surface but no commitment on sealing at this stage. Public commitment is to seal so is there another development? Transport sector will not back off on need to have the road sealed.

Action: Tony to clarify.

§ Valerie advised 20/30 comment coming out later this month with comments on roads

§ Tony requested a report on accommodation difficulties from the employee/tourism aspect directly impacting on our sector.

Action: Warwick to provide from comments of this meeting.

§ Phil advised regarding the Driver Fatigue Management matter, he sent drivers out to keep a record in the drivers diary (log book). Great difficulty with the log book being with driver and not the actual vehicle/tour - big areas of grey – ie walking tours/entertainment breakdowns Such tours put drivers over the 154 hours per fortnight.

This problem coupled with availability of staff/accommodation difficulties impacting on our industry will be enormous. Less than 12 seaters will be involved also – will involve every operator.

Definition of a bus is a vehicle of 12 seats or more under Driver Fatigue Management process. Our main argument is that our industry has not been consulted as with - only eastern seaboard operators. Need to look at the unique problems concentrated on Central Australia.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Grey Nomad brochures – TCA marketing to set something up and then see DPI – speed not the gap is the issue.

Next Meeting: 13 May 2009 10:00 TCA Boardroom.
Meeting closed at: 12.15pm