

Senator Nick Sherry
Assistant Treasurer
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2601

21 June 2010

Dear Minister

Concern over reductions in ABS survey data for tourist accommodation

I write to you in your capacity as Minister responsible for the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

On behalf of the Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC), I wish to express our concerns over the removal of hotels, motels and serviced apartment properties with 5 to 14 rooms, caravan parks, visitor hostels, holiday flats, units and houses from the coverage of quarterly ABS tourist accommodation surveys. These recently announced reductions will have considerable implications for future planning in the tourism and hospitality industry.

The availability of quality national statistics is both an integral part of the tourism supply chain and is a means of measuring the success of the chain itself.

With this in mind, the consequences of these reductions will include operators losing comparative data for benchmarking; state, regional and local tourism organisations losing reliable occupancy data on which to measure campaign success; potential investors receiving fewer information sources and industry associations losing data previously used to inform policy submissions and base decision making.

QTIC contends that there is a strong case for continuing with the current scope of ABS' tourist accommodation statistics. Australia has historically been one of the forerunners in the collection and analysis of tourism statistics and, as the global tourism market becomes increasingly competitive, quality research and statistics will be crucial to maintaining Australia's competitive edge.

As has been all too apparent in recent times, the tourism industry relies heavily on discretionary spending and is vulnerable to external factors, such as global economic conditions, security concerns, pandemics and inclement weather.

For these reasons, continual and appropriate statistical monitoring is vital to help tourism businesses and government make informed decisions to create an environment conducive to business success.

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The recent global economic downturn is a perfect example of the need for comprehensive national statistics to understand the impact of external crises on visitor numbers, visitor expenditure and business profitability. For these reasons, QTIC believes that there is a strong case for robust and comprehensive tourism data collections - which are well resourced by government.

In light of the detrimental impacts that these reductions – and given the imperative need for comprehensive national statistics to inform policy directions and decision making - QTIC urges you to reconsider these changes to ABS survey data for tourist accommodation.

QTIC will continue to coordinate the concerns of tourism industry stakeholders in Queensland and looks forward to your reply.

Please feel free to contact me on (07) 3236 1445 should you wish to discuss any aspect of this correspondence further.

Kind regards



Daniel Gschwind
Chief Executive