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## WA's post-boom tourism sector faces challenges

Attracting a more diverse range of tourists, increasing the number of people visiting regional Western Australia, developing a short-stay visitor market and creating more sophisticated marketing campaigns are just some of the challenges facing the local tourism sector so that it can continue to grow. The latest FACTBase Bulletin released by the Committee for Perth, as part of its Bigger and Better Beyond the Boom research project, has found that in some segments tourism is underperforming but as a sector it has the capacity to create new jobs and drive economic expansion in coming decades.

“During the mining boom, Perth became a place for business tourism at the expense of the leisure market. Now the economy has cooled, we need to make sure that Western Australia is a more appealing and affordable destination for interstate, overseas and even local tourists. We need people to know that WA is a holiday destination,” said Committee for Perth CEO, Marion Fulker.

The Bulletin found that the total contribution of tourism to the WA economy in 2016 was \$10.64 billion, or 4.6% of the state's gross value-added (GVA) economy. It also directly and indirectly employed 109,000 people. By comparison, 23.8% of the state GVA was generated by the mining industry, 13.6% by construction, 5.6% by health care and social assistance and 5.2% by professional and technical services.

Domestic tourism makes the biggest contribution to the Australian economy. In 2015-16, Australians made almost 89 million domestic overnight trips – the equivalent of more than 4.5 trips for every Australian aged 15 and over.

While international visitor numbers to WA have shown steady growth over the past 10 years, intrastate and interstate visitor numbers declined in the year ending March 2016-17. The state only attracted 4.6% of the total national interstate visitors during the same period. The Bulletin revealed that if this downward trend continues it could substantially impact on the contribution of tourism to WA's economy in the future.

“In the March 2017 quarter, there was a significant fall in interstate visitor numbers and intrastate visitor nights, with a 24% fewer interstate visitors, a 2.7% fall in interstate visitor nights, 7.5% fewer intrastate visitors and a 12.1% reduction in intrastate visitor nights compared to the March 2016 quarter,” added Mrs Fulker.

“There's no doubt that the distance to WA from major eastern states attractions and capitals is a disadvantage. However, our beaches, wildlife, unspoilt natural wilderness and island experiences provide abundant tourism opportunities in Perth and across the state. Indigenous tourism experiences have also been identified as a major tourism opportunity for WA, with 78% of people who visited WA in 2015-16 saying they wanted to have an Aboriginal cultural experience but only 24% had one.”

“WA has the fundamental building blocks needed for tourism to grow and the CBD has additional offerings with all of the new developments in the CBD. However, there is a need to identify and develop strategies focused on the distinctive experiences offered here in WA, as well as sophisticated, multi-stakeholder, segmented marketing campaigns to attract short and long-term visitors and visitors from diverse domestic and international markets.”

The FACTBase Bulletin found that WA attracts less than its population based share of visitors and visitor spend from key markets China and New Zealand but the state attracts more than its share of visitors from the United Kingdom, Malaysia, Singapore and Germany.

“Of WA’s five defined tourist regions, tourists from Malaysia Singapore and China are most likely to visit Experience Perth and Australia’s South West with only a small proportion travelling to Australia’s Coral Coast, North West or Golden Outback. By contrast, visitors from Germany, the USA and New Zealand are more likely to visit a range of destinations. This highlights the importance of attracting tourists from all over the world to showcase the many wonders we have in Western Australia,” said Mrs Fulker.

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