



QUEENSLAND
TOURISM INDUSTRY
COUNCIL

The Voice of Tourism

**SUBMISSION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT,
SKILLS, SMALL AND FAMILY BUSINESS
ON THE
TRAFFIC LIGHT BULLETIN –
DIVING INSTRUCTOR (OPEN WATER)
5 FEBRUARY 2020**

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OVERVIEW

The Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business regarding the Traffic Light Bulletin, December 2019 release.

As the peak body for tourism, QTIC supports initiatives for growth in visitation and skilled migration across Australia. QTIC represents its members' views across all levels of government and is advocating on behalf of its members to ensure that the Diving Instructor (Open Water) is not removed from the Short-Term Skilled Occupation List.

QUEENSLAND TOURISM INDUSTRY COUNCIL

QTIC is the state peak body for tourism in Queensland. QTIC is an independent private sector, membership-based tourism industry organisation.

All of Queensland's 13 Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs) are members of QTIC, as are 20 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 and is a member of the Australian Tourism Industry Council (ATIC).

TOURISM IN QUEENSLAND

The tourism industry in Queensland contributed \$27 billion to Queensland's Gross State Product (GSP), representing 7.8% of total GSP and generated \$7.5 billion in exports in the year ending June 2018¹, making it one of the state's largest export industries only behind coal and LNG.

In recent years, government and business communities have recognised tourism is contributing significantly to economic growth in Queensland and generating significant numbers of new jobs. Due to a slowdown in the resource industry, tourism has experienced resurgence and is flourishing against a relatively soft economic backdrop. In Deloitte's *Tourism and Hotel Market Outlook*², it is reported that Australia continues its uninterrupted run of economic growth, however with increasing political and economic uncertainty key inbound tourism market growth moderated in 2018 to 4.9% compared to 7.5% over the last three years.

The World Travel and Tourism Council³ (WTTC) project travel and tourism employment will grow 5.8% (compound annual growth) over the next decade in the Asia Pacific region. In contrast, total economic growth is projected at 4.1% per annum and other industries such as mining and agriculture are forecast to grow at 1.8% and 2.2% per annum respectively.

¹ Tourism Research Australia, State Tourism Satellite Accounts 2017-18

² Deloitte, *Tourism and Hotel Market Outlook*, Edition 1, 2019

³ World Travel and Tourism Council. 2017. *Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2017 Asia Pacific*

The five-year average growth rate for total visitor nights in Queensland is projected to be 4.0% over 2014–15 to 2019–20, or 3.9% over 10 years. This compares to a 4.4% total five-year average annual growth for Australia, or 3.8% over 10 years.

Tourism and Employment

Tourism is a key economic driver in regional Queensland. There are over 55,000 tourism businesses operating across Queensland in sectors including, but not limited to, accommodation, transportation, tour operators, travel agencies and marine operations. One in ten businesses in tourism is a small or medium sized enterprise. The industry supports employment and community growth, employing more than 237,000 people directly and indirectly, or one in ten people in Queensland¹. This is substantially more than mining (2.5% of employment) or agriculture, forestry and fishing combined (2.2% of employment). There is a diversity of jobs within the tourism industry with 11 occupations representing the majority of workers in the industry⁴. Of those directly employed in tourism, two thirds are employed outside of Brisbane, highlighting the value of tourism in regional Queensland⁵.

On average around 79% of tourism employees are sourced from the local region, of the remaining, 11% are from interstate or intrastate and 4% are working holiday makers⁶. Temporary visitors to Queensland play an integral role in the provision of tourism experiences and are vital to an industry with a skills shortage.

The 2017 *Tourism Workforce Plan*⁶ explores opportunities to develop the tourism workforce to address the deficit of skilled workers. A key outcome of the workforce plan is assessing how the tourism and hospitality industry can build the pipeline of foreign workers by better using migration programs. Any changes to the visa system must support regions and industries that require temporary workers to function effectively.

⁴ Queensland Government Department of Tourism Education and Small Business (DETESB) identified occupations: Tourism Workforce profiling: Accommodation and hospitality managers; Housekeepers and Cleaners; Fast Food Cooks and Kitchen Hands; Receptionists; Waiters; Bar attendants and Baristas; Chefs; Cooks; Café workers; Travel and Tourism Advisers; Air Transport professionals

⁵ Tourism Research Australia, 2015-16, Queensland Tourism Satellite Account

⁶ Jobs Skills, 2017, Queensland Tourism Workforce Plan 2017-20

RESPONSE TO TRAFFIC LIGHT BULLETIN

452311 Diving Instructor (Open Water) - MAINTAIN

QTIC is advocating on behalf of members for the continuation of the Diving Instructor (Open Water) on the Skilled Occupations List.

The removal of this category from the Skilled Occupation List potentially poses a health and safety risk for operators around the state. The Queensland Government Workplace Health and Safety Code of Practice for Recreational Diving requires that snorkelers and divers be briefed in a language they understand (first preference) or that written instructions be provided. Staff that speak foreign languages are therefore critical to safety of operations and fulfilling the duty obligation imposed by state law. By removing access to instructors through the skilled occupation list, the Federal Government will be limiting the supply inhibiting the growth of this sector.

Feedback from one operator states, "our business conducts learn to dive courses 6 time a week to English speaking students and 3 time a week for Students speaking German (2) or Chinese (1) to ensure we have staff to run these non-English course and taking into account possible leave (annual and Sick) we require 3 German speaking instructors and 2 Chinese speaking instructors.

It is difficult to find these instructors travelling on working holiday visas and therefore to ensure we have some security to run our language programs being access staff easier as they are on the short term skilled shortage list is critical to our business.

I believe that removal of Diving Instructor from this list would impact detrimentally to the diving tourism industry".

Whilst it is acknowledged that the STSOL is not the most common route to migration for this occupation, it still plays a critical role in providing industry with a source of qualified staff to meet the growing demand of the sector.

The Queensland Tourism Workforce Plan identifies, "attracting the right staff is an ongoing challenge for employers dealing with seasonality and high turnover, particularly in regional communities with small labour pools. Recruitment costs alone can be a large impost for small businesses. Comprising of 6% of the tourism workforce, industry stakeholders report that overseas workers can make a significant difference to a business's ability to serve their visitor markets during seasonal peaks. These workers include skilled migrants on temporary visas who have come to Queensland to work for an approved business.

Maintaining Australia's competitiveness as a destination for overseas workers is fundamental, particularly for regional areas struggling to attract labour". Removing a stream of employees has put the sector into an increasingly difficult position and alters the benefits and potential career opportunities of such a role. The same plan also acknowledges the need for government to work together with industry to break through the challenges and create an industry that is a desired employment of choice, offering benefits and skills development opportunities. By reducing opportunity for international movement and job growth opportunities the government is inhibiting one of the core attracting factors the industry.

Based on the feedback that we have received from our members and given the safety implications it is recommended that the Dive Instructor occupation is maintained on the short-term skilled occupation list.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Maintain Dive Instructor (Open Water) on the STSOL list.

FURTHER ENQUIRIES

QTIC welcomes the opportunity for further discussion regarding the points raised in this submission. For all enquiries, please contact QTIC Policy Team on (07) 3236 1445 or email policy@qtic.com.au.