

TOURISM FUTURES SETS AGENDA FOR 2020 AND LAUNCHES AN INTERNATIONAL PHENOMENON

Bringing the tourism industry up to a baseline of technological literacy is a key agenda item for tourism, following the Tourism Futures conference this week.

A national delegation of around 300 industry leaders and government policy makers gathered on the Gold Coast to debate an agenda spanning climate change mitigation to the cutting edge technological applications revolutionising consumer purchasing.

It also saw the unveiling of innovative ideas, and futuristic technology which grabbed the attention of media from around the globe, including Japan, Russia, New Zealand and even the British tabloids.

The quantum leaps being made in mobile phone technology and the use of social media were spelled out to the delegation, providing an epiphany for almost all of the delegation.

“The capacity of already-existing technology is breath-taking,” said Liz Ward, head of Australian Tourism Data Warehouse who facilitated the online technology sessions.

“But the anecdotal evidence of operators not having the basic skills to attach a document to an email is very sobering, when according to the presentations we saw at the conference, email itself is almost old hat.

“The industry has some significant up-skilling to do to ensure we have an online presence that meets the expectations of potential visitors, whether they are domestic or international. The best marketing campaigns in the world are pointless if people cannot easily research and book product online, and our record at present is patchy with only 12 to 15 per cent of sales being booked online.”

The three-day event tabled issues which present the industry with a watershed in policy direction.

The increasing trend toward low-cost carriers driving high volumes of visitation was directly challenged by business analyst and futurist Ross Honeywill, and world-leading climate change academic Dr Stefan Gossling.

International climate change expert, Dr Stefan Gossling, from Lund University in Sweden told the delegates it was foolhardy to assume advances in fuel technology would solve the carbon emissions issue of aviation and he concurred with the view that a high yield business model was more compatible with a sustainable tourism industry.

The conference agreed Australia should be striving to be a world leader in eco-tourism, marrying tourism with conservationism at the very highest level.

'Authenticity' was the key message for the conference, being used constantly by speakers to underline the consumer desire for real experiences in their travel and the new paradigm of communication with social media revolutionising the world.

"Despite the very tough times the industry has been weathering, there is amazing energy coming out of the conference.

"And it's more than the brightening of the economy.

"The new technologies presents some incredible opportunities and the discussions around climate change have given the delegates a sense of empowerment and clarity on the sorts of policies we should be pursuing going into the next decade," said Tourism Futures convenor, Mr Tony Charters.

For a conference communiqué please visit our website at

www.tourismfutures.com.au

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