

5 July 2016

CANBERRA MUST BE READY TO TAKE-OFF WHEN INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS LAND

Over 80 tourism operators and sector experts met this morning to examine the ACT's capacity to build on opportunities created by direct international flights when they begin in September.

"For the first time in our history, frequent direct international flights into Canberra are going to be a reality. Excitement is growing as the start date gets closer," Canberra Business Chamber CEO, Robyn Hendry said.

"However, we can't be passive and simply let international flights start without the Canberra Region doing any preparatory work. We need to make sure that from the first minute the first visitor steps off the first plane, they have such a good experience that they encourage their friends and family to travel to the ACT and they come to stay here again in the future."

"Collaboration is vital in the Canberra Region because, unlike many other destinations, we do not have a strong tour sector that commercially brings together products and service offerings. Therefore, the industry itself has to assist visitors to have a seamless experience where they cannot really see where one business provider ends and another begins."

The Canberra Business Chamber's Tourism Industry Advisory Council convened the International Flights Forum to bring all key industry players together to explore visitor expectations and the sector's readiness to meet those expectations.

Attendees at the Forum came from across the industry, including tourism, sports and arts, hospitality, accommodation and transport service providers.

"We want to ensure there is a coordinated approach to providing the best possible visitor experience," Ms Hendry explained. "Through this forum, we have started to make sure all of those who will be a cog in the visitor experience understand how important their role is."

An exceptional experience will be vital to the Canberra Region's reputation as a holiday and business destination.

"VisitCanberra must be commended for its success in promoting the ACT," Ms Hendry said. "We are seeing record visitor numbers, even before direct international flights begin. However, we have to make sure the actual visitor experience matches the marketing."

"When visitors arrive at the airport there needs to be tourist information available, then transport has to be easy to access and of high quality, hotels and restaurants have to suit their needs and help them enjoy their stay. Throughout a person's visit, we have to make it easy for them to know what's on and move around the city to attend events and institutions"

During the forum, attendees were briefed on the expectations visitors from Singapore and New Zealand will have. Based on these expectations, the group looked at possible gaps and each industry sector will now work to address any relevant to them.

"Hotels, transport, hospitality and others are all getting ready for international flights, but this is the first time everyone has come together to discuss the overall experience and how we can work together to enhance it," Ms Hendry said.

"We are very optimistic that our tourism sector will shine and visitors to the Canberra Region will be impressed by all we have to offer."

Media Contact: Robyn Hendry, CEO Canberra Business Chamber 0418 462 151