
MEDIA STATEMENT
27th November 2009

INDIGENOUS TOURISM MOVING AHEAD INTO MAINSTREAM TOURISM

Tourism Council WA (TCWA) “The Voice of Tourism” has reached an important and historic milestone in advancing the cause and awareness of Indigenous Tourism in WA.

TCWA President Paul King and CEO Graham Moss have been meeting with Western Australia’s Indigenous Tourism Operators Association (WAITOC) over the past year, with the view of WAITOC joining with TCWA to raise awareness of Indigenous Tourism issues at all levels of government and industry. This partnership will assist indigenous tourism operators enter the mainstream tourism sector with both industry and government support.

The partnership sees the Chair of WAITOC, Neville Poelina, join the Board of TCWA. Neville and his nominated proxy Robyne Reynolds attended their first TCWA Board meeting last Tuesday in Perth.

Neville owns UPTUYU Adventure Tours, which won the Indigenous Tourism Category in the 2009 WA Tourism Awards, announced at last Saturday nights Gala Dinner at the Burswood Entertainment Complex.

Neville operates tours on his country, on the Fitzroy River north of Broome, in the State’s magnificent Kimberley region. Robyne and her husband, “Doc” Reynolds, own and operate Kepa Kurl Eco Cultural Discovery Tours in the Esperance region.

Neville and Robyne are two of the many passionate Indigenous Australians offering a wonderful and unique tourism experience.

Mr Poelina said “A recent review of WAITOC, carried out by Tourism WA, has recognised the vital role that WAITOC plays in advocacy, marketing and supporting Indigenous communities to develop Indigenous tourism businesses. Funding is required for us to continue to operate and to provide this crucial service to our people and accelerate the growth of our industry in Western Australia”.

“We currently have over 55 authentic Indigenous experiences in Western Australia and have the opportunity to become the premier destination for visitors wanting an Indigenous experience. Although it is not the sole reason visitors come to Australia, it is certainly part of a “must do” list while they are here”.

Mr Poelina said that “the new partnership with TCWA will assist in raising the profile of the Indigenous tourism industry with mainstream tourism, as well as educate non-Indigenous people about Aboriginal culture through tourism.”

Mr King said “Indigenous tourism offers Western Australia a unique selling proposition in an environment where we are facing many challenges and strong competition in the Global tourism landscape. It provides wonderful experiences where aboriginal people can tell the stories of their land and culture in their language. Tourism WA research has shown that over 80% of visitors to Western Australia are seeking an indigenous tourism experience, however 80% are leaving without it”.

He said that the initial investment required to continue funding WAITOC will be far outweighed by the boost in tourism revenue from tourists seeking indigenous tourism experiences.

“Unfortunately it appears that, with the transition of Government, WAITOC funding has been pushed down the list of Government priorities. The Premier Colin Barnett is keen to see an Indigenous Art & Cultural Centre established on the Perth foreshore and whilst TCWA wholeheartedly supports this, it is a way off. We need these businesses growing now and without them a real opportunity for Perth, Fremantle and regional WA will be missed.

Without understanding and initial funding a really huge opportunity is being wasted in this state and TCWA urges all the various government agencies to engage with WAITOC and what it can bring to the WA economy” said Mr. King.

END

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