

FutureNow is an independent body that provides industry informed advice to influence skills development strategies across the Creative, Leisure and Technologies sectors. Our work assists Western Australia to be prepared with the new order skills required by the evolving economy and our changing society.

What has happened and where is the sector now?

Tourism

The tourism Industry in Western Australia accounts for more than 109,000 jobs and before COVID-19, contributed \$11 billion in visitor spend to the State's economy.

In the year ending June 2021, 19 million day trips were taken within the state and 10 million overnight visitors travelled within WA. These visitors spent \$8 billion in the state with \$5 billion (62%) was spent in regional WA. The closure of Australia's international border on 20th March 2020 has meant almost no international visitors to WA during this period. Similarly, the interstate border restrictions since the 5th April 2020 impacted interstate visitation for much of the year.¹

Total Overnight Spend by Region

Region	%/Change YE Jun20 - YE Jun 21
Destination Perth	-49%
South West	56%
Coral Coast	38%

The *Wander out Yonder* campaign was launched by Tourism Western Australia (TWA) in November 2020 to encourage West Australians to book a holiday in WA. TWA worked with Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs) and the WA Indigenous Tourism Operators Council (WAITOC) to promote compelling experiences and road trips, to encourage locals to holiday in WA. This campaign resulted in a boost to regional tourism operators as evidence in the table above, however it also had the effect of the Perth region experiencing a high drop in visitor experiences.²

The other effect of the *Wander out Yonder* campaign was the increase in visitors using campsites. Bookings for campsites run by the department of Biodiversity, Conversation and Attractions increased by 50% during 2020/2021.

Travel

Many travel agents (particularly corporate agents) are finding it difficult to recruit staff as many left the industry following the initial COVID shutdowns. However, as vaccination 'passports' proceed and borders reopen, more people are seeking the guidance of travel agents, whose job it is to be up to

date with changing regulations and to troubleshoot issues for their clients.³

Where to from here?

Emerging Industry Developments

Risk

West Australian Tourism businesses have needed to future-proof their forward bookings to cater for the introduction of vaccination requirements by Federal and State Governments. The Tourism Council WA (TCWA) developed standard booking conditions (T&Cs), which accredited businesses are using to manage the impact of vaccination and testing requirements on travellers and guests.⁴

The sector's prospects and areas of opportunity

Regional Tourism Organisations

In January 2021, the State Government, through Tourism WA, allocated more than \$20 million in funding to support Western Australia's five regional tourism organisations over five years.

The funding will be distributed equally to Destination Perth, Australia's South West, Australia's North West, Australia's Golden Outback and Australia's Coral Coast.

The five-year commitment reflects the importance of regional and intrastate tourism to the State's economy as it recovers from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tourism WA will work with the regional tourism organisations to develop destination management and marketing plans that build on the boost in local visitors that are increasingly holidaying throughout the State.⁵

The Mid West/Coral Coast

The Midwest has had a major focus on developing tourism on the Abrolhos Islands. Traditionally the Midwest has been a stopover point, not a destination itself, however a fast ferry service to the Islands has assisted in creating the area as a destination.

Tour Operators and Tour Guides

The Forum Advocating Cultural and Eco-tourism (FACET) has merged with Tour Guides WA and now have a strong remit to advocate for tour guiding. There is a fear that there will be insufficient tour guides available for the April 2023 Solar Eclipse in Exmouth, to meet demand. The challenge is that there are very low enrolments in guiding and tourism qualifications. Many students who enrol in tourism courses attain jobs in the field prior to graduating so are not completing formal qualifications. Some TAFE providers do not have sufficiently trained lecturers to be able to offer guiding courses.

Tour operators working in the Kimberly region who relied heavily on international clients have been extremely hard hit with the COVID travel restrictions. They have switched their marketing activities to eastern states clients; however, the continued lack of certainty regarding dates for the West Australian boarder opening and the threat of future lockdowns and boarder closures has made it very difficult for them to sustain their operations.

Cruise tourism

Amid continuing uncertainty about the resumption of cruising in Australia, Cunard, Princess Cruises and P&O Cruises have all cancelled their cruises to and from Australia and P&O Australia has cancelled its Fremantle homeport seasons for 2022.⁶

Several smaller cruise ships are still operating in the North West region.

What will it take for recovery and future growth?

Representatives from the West Australian tourism industry met with Tourism Minister David Templeman, Parliamentary Secretary Jessica Shaw and senior Tourism WA executives including the newly appointed Managing Director of TWA, Caroline Turnbull, to have their say on practical initiatives to ensure the success of tourism in the State. They conducted extensive state-wide industry consultation around the reset strategy for the tourism industry and as part of that process received feedback on workforce issues.

On the 1st of December the state government announced several new marketing campaigns to attract overseas visitors and workers to the state. Of note to the tourism sector is:

A \$65 million aviation fund, which will go towards re-establishing international and interstate flight routes that were disrupted by the pandemic, as well as targeting new routes including Germany, India, China and Vietnam.

Incentives will also be offered to tourists, international students, and workers in order to successfully compete with other global jurisdictions. This will include expanding the Stay and Play campaign, which offers discounts for those who stay in participating hotels, as well as vouchers for tours and experiences.⁷

How will the travel and tourism sector get there?

Industrial Relations updates

Adjustment to minimum wage and Superannuation

In mid-2021, the Fair Work Commission (FWC) announced an annual wage review included an increase to the national minimum wage and Modern Award minimum wages by 2.5 per cent.

Under recent changes to the Superannuation Guarantee (Administration) Act (1992), an employee's superannuation fund will now be 'stapled' to them. The concept of superannuation stapling is that the super arrangement is attached to the individual and therefore when they change employment, their superannuation arrangements go with them.⁸

Federal Government Initiatives

The tourism sector has continually been a driving force of Australia's overall economic growth. Whilst the sector is currently experiencing one of the biggest economic and employment challenges it has faced in recent times, its future prosperity remains strong. The Tourism 2030 Strategy is a Federal Government initiative committed to supporting the tourism sector to achieve sustainable growth. Workforce supply, including re-skilling current workers and skilling new entrants, will play a significant role in facilitating the sector's future recovery and growth. It has therefore never been more important to ensure that training products are fit for purpose and reflect the skills and

knowledge needs of employers.⁹

Skills and Training

FutureNow Career Pathways Project

A suite of occupational and pathway guides and a website (<https://www.thecareers.guide/>) were produced by FutureNow to present career pathways information to prospective learners interested in employment in the Tourism field. These were co-developed by Tourism WA and FutureNow. Five tourism career profiles were selected to highlight: Destination Marketing Manager, Holiday Parks and Camping manager, Tour Guiding, Aboriginal Tourism and Travel.

Aboriginal Tourism

Industry has reported that there is currently a tour guide shortage for Aboriginal Tourism experiences. Central Regional TAFE has offered the Certificate 1 in Tourism – Australian Indigenous Culture for the first time this year with a very good response (9-12 students per cohort, 3 cohorts). FutureNow in conjunction with TWA and with WAITOC consultation has produced an Aboriginal Tourism career profile as an addition to their suite of career pathways. The City of Perth and WAITOC have formed a partnership to enhance the number of Aboriginal Tourism businesses operating in the city and the greater metropolitan area.

In early 2021, TWA launched the Jina Plan: Aboriginal Tourism Action Plan 2021 - 2025. The three main focus areas of the plan are to:

1. Make Western Australia the premier Australian destination for Aboriginal tourism through promoting the State's extraordinary Aboriginal tourism experiences
2. Build capacity for Aboriginal people to participate in the tourism industry through direct employment or by fostering the growth of sustainable Aboriginal tourism businesses
3. Facilitate the development of more authentic Aboriginal cultural tourism experiences across Western Australia to meet visitor demand.¹⁰

There is interest from Aboriginal students to enrol in guiding courses in the North West region, however this is sometime difficult to arrange due to funding issues for lecturers to travel to the student's own country or for the students to travel into Broome for the training. North regional TAFE and the Kimberly Land Council (KLC) have partnered with local ranger groups to offer guiding training.

Lower Fee Courses

As a means of removing barriers from undertaking training the following courses were offered 50% off the fees during 2021

Half price courses
Certificate III in Tourism
Certificate III in Guiding

National SIT Training Package

In November, draft 2 of the Tourism, Travel, Hospitality and Events, Training Package was released for stakeholder review. Key skill areas that were considered included business acumen, communication, data analytics and online and social media, as the tourism sector has evolved significantly in line with technology trends (both at a consumer and business-operational level). It is anticipated that this will be endorsed by early 2022.

While employers continue to navigate their operations through the changing economic environment, it has never been more critical than at present to ensure employers are supported with a skilled workforce that can support their evolving operations and recovery. Employers have voiced that the skills and knowledge base of applicants and entrants to the sector are lacking in key areas including general product and service content.

The current structure of the Training Package Products for the travel sector has been noted as not being fit for purpose as industry practices continue to evolve. There is also a need for stronger pathways for skills in the travel sector, including skills for “2-IC” workers who are an integral part of business succession planning in the sector.

The VET sector is the primary supplier of workers to this sector. Industry therefore welcomes a review of the relevant Training Package Products and proposed qualification pathways to ensure they are current with industry practices, and to address the issues in the sector regarding career progression and retention.¹¹

Please get in touch with FutureNow

FutureNow is continually seeking broad input from stakeholders and representatives in the Western Australian accommodation sector. If you would be interested in providing your perspective on this snapshot or related workforce matters for your sector, our Creative Industries Industry Manager would love to hear from you:

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