



Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council (WAITOC)

MEDIA RELEASE

WAITOC helps secure \$40 million national windfall that will benefit local Aboriginal tourism businesses

22 February 2021

The Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council (WAITOC) has announced a win for local Aboriginal tourism operators impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic after it helped secure a federal government commitment for a \$40 million business and grants package into the Indigenous Tourism Fund.

WAITOC CEO Robert Taylor, who helped negotiate the funding arrangement on behalf of Aboriginal tourist businesses across Western Australia said the funds presented a welcome opportunity at a time of unprecedented uncertainty in the tourism sector.

“Aboriginal tourism opportunities in Western Australia have grown significantly over the past six years and its critical we find ways to keep them buoyant and expanding throughout the effects of this pandemic period.”

“I hope this significant boost to Australia’s Aboriginal tourism industry will encourage the State Government to look further at initiatives for local tour operators,” Mr Taylor said.



To ensure this, WAITOC will now seek to work with the State Government on securing funds from the \$17 million allocated for co-investment opportunities with the Commonwealth, and encourage businesses to access to the mentoring and grants programs being made available.





Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Hon. Ken Wyatt said Indigenous tourism businesses have been hard hit by the combined impact of bushfires and COVID-19.

“The tourism sector was one of the first to be impacted by COVID-19 and will be one of the last to recover,” Minister Wyatt said. “This fund delivers on our election commitment and has been designed in consultation with the Indigenous tourism sector who have told us clearly what they need to recover and grow their businesses.”

A National Indigenous Tourism Advisory Group led by Professor Deen Sanders OAM and Ms Helen Martin and comprising an indigenous team of experts from a variety of fields, including Mr Taylor, will advise on funding priorities and implementation.

The funds will be allocated across three key areas – mentoring, innovation and investment – to best support Australia’s indigenous tourism businesses for the long term.

- \$10 million will be used to set up a National Indigenous Tourism Mentoring Program to offer individual support to businesses
- Up to \$12 million will fund a Tourism Grants for Indigenous Business Program to help businesses and community organisations develop new products, and purchase systems and equipment; applications for the grant will open soon
- Up to \$17 million will be made available for States and Territories to co-invest with the Commonwealth on significant Indigenous tourism projects to expand the range of Indigenous tourism experiences across Australia.

I’m proud to be selected to serve on the first National Indigenous Tourism Advisory Group to help roll out these significant funds, and advocate for the interest of Western Australia’s Aboriginal tourism sector,” said Mr Taylor. Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, Dan Tehan said the package would support Australia’s diverse tourism market.

“We want tourists to share and enjoy Australia’s rich Indigenous history, culture and traditions,” Mr Tehan said. “Our Government is supporting Indigenous tourism operators so they can continue offering these unique experiences and also provide employment and business opportunities in their communities.

“Australia’s health and economic success at managing COVID-19 means we are well-placed to recover and grow our domestic and international tourism sector and we want Indigenous tourism to be a key part of the Australian visitor experience.”

For more information on the Indigenous Tourism Fund, visit www.niaa.gov.au/ITF

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