8th July 2016

IGAB Independent Review Panel
Department of Agriculture and Water Resources
GPO Box
Canberra City ACT 2601

Via email: igabreview@agriculture.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

TTF submission to the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity Review

I write to make a submission on behalf of the Tourism & Transport Forum Australia (TTF) to the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources on the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity Review.

TTF is the peak national body for the tourism, transport and aviation sectors across Australia. We are a CEO forum representing some of the leading institutions and corporations in the Australian visitor economy and public transport sectors. Our membership spans accommodation and transport providers, airlines and airports, restaurants and retailers, business and major events organisers, property developers, investors and land managers, amusement and cultural attractions, and professional services. TTF utilises its expertise and networks to develop and advocate public policy outcomes for the sustainable long-term growth of the visitor economy and public transport sectors.

Australia's biosecurity system should be designed to reflect a modern, technology-driven approach that safely and efficiently services passengers at the border; both now and well into the future. TTF recommends the Government take into account the following factors in its Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity Review (IGAB):

- The significance of the biosecurity framework to inbound tourism;
- Building capacity to service future growth in passenger numbers;
- Driving innovation and best practice; and
- Moving towards a more coordinated approach with other border agencies.

The biosecurity system should not exist independently of the overarching aim of streamlining passenger facilitation processes so that Australia can provide the best experience possible. The policy framework should ensure that Australia's biosecurity system supports a world-leading facilitation process that is secure, efficient and welcoming.

The significance of the biosecurity framework to inbound tourism

The acceleration of globalisation has led to a rise in air traffic, with rising incomes and lower airfares driving mobility across an increasingly interconnected world. Growing international visitor numbers continue to generate employment and drive economic growth for Australia.

Passenger numbers are predicted to increase drastically, with inbound visitor arrivals to Australia likely to grow at an annual average rate of 4 per cent per annum to reach 10.6 million by 2024/25.[1] The Discussion Paper for this Review notes that additional pressures - such as changing consumer expectations, biodiversity pressures, urbanisation and declining government resources - will present increasingly complex challenges for Australian government agencies, like the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources; who play a critical role in moving people across the border and setting the policies that impact the border experience.

Australia's reputation and ability to offer a modern experience that satisfies increasingly sophisticated international passengers is at risk. The persistence of these trends will likely lead to a situation whereby existing biosecurity processes and practices are not sufficient in the eyes of the modern traveller.

To meet the challenges and risks facing the industry - that are only set to grow as passenger numbers also grow - TTF believes the Government should adopt a more innovative approach and invest in risk-based technologies that will eliminate unnecessary touch points and streamline processes at the border. Policymakers should be cognisant of the impacts these regulations have at a practical level when assessing reforms for the future, and ensure that we are set up for future passenger growth and the associated risks that come with this.

Building capacity to service future growth in passenger numbers

A nationally agreed approach to Australia's biosecurity should ensure balance between safe and secure borders and a modern, streamlined and efficient facilitation process that is capable of serving the predicted ever-rising passenger numbers. Activities undertaken at the border include inspection of goods and baggage by biosecurity officers, the use of detector dogs, x-rays and other non-invasive detection methods, and management of high-risk animals and plants in post entry quarantine. Such activities should move towards a *risk-based system* whereby the vast majority of passengers who do not likely pose a biosecurity (or other) risk can pass through the border with minimal touch points.

There is now broad industry acceptance that modern technology can provide more accurate and efficient ways of processing passengers in comparison to manual intervention and inspection; and this is also widely accepted and expected by the travelling public. The management of biosecurity risks should not be an exception to this principle. Australian government agencies involved in facilitating passengers across the border should utilise such technologies to cope with future passenger growth and therefore should be constantly evaluating their facilitation processes for potential improvements that achieve the dual goals of streamlined services, while enhancing security measures.

Investing in modern technologies now can divert human resources to where it is needed most and better equip the system to service future passenger growth within an increasingly complex biosecurity system. Indeed, this will likely generate a greater return on investment in the form of higher international visitation and also reduced service provision costs over years to come.

Driving innovation and best practice

TTF strongly supports the ongoing review and continuous improvement of Australia's national biosecurity system. A more collaborative approach to planning and improvement between governments, industry and the broader community will likely see new initiatives implemented more quickly across the entire border facilitation process.

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[1] Tourism Australia (2015) *International Market Update.*

TTF also encourages Government to use modern data capture and analysis capabilities to predict peaks and troughs in passenger volumes and to identify passengers and pest and disease incursions likely to pose a risk well in advance; so that the process of passing through the border is improved for the vast majority.

Proportionate investments should be made by all government agencies whom have a stake in improving the system which will likely generate service improvements for visitors and economic and social benefits for the wider economy. Measuring the success and performance of the system should take into account customer satisfaction and facilitation rate outcomes against our competitors.

Moving towards a more coordinated approach

Australia's biosecurity system forms a critical piece of the overall aviation picture, on which Australia relies to fuel the tourism industry. A successful Aviation industry can also improve the productivity of the wider economy by strengthening Australia's ability to trade, attracting investment and establishing international connectivity. An efficient and secure aviation system relies on an efficient and secure biosecurity system. The ability of the industry to remain competitive on a global scale and meet current and future challenges therefore depends heavily on a coordinated approach to meeting ambitious targets.

While TTF recognises that a joined up approach is in place, greater information sharing (including data) across agencies and with our neighbouring jurisdictions will further enhance the ability to meet ambitious reform targets. The changing components and functions of Australia's national biosecurity system and the practical implications of changing rules and regulations should be regularly communicated to industry and other stakeholders affected by the impacts.

Conclusion

Opportunities to improve efficiencies at the border should be looked at in a holistic manner as no individual agency's function exists independently of another within this framework. Investing in the appropriate resources and getting the right policy settings in place to deliver the best experience possible at our airports is integral to supporting higher visitor numbers, promoting visitor expenditure and ensuring the longevity of Australia's visitor economy. The Department should work with industry to ensure that Australia gives all travellers the best experience while maintaining the highest standards of biosecurity.

Yours sincerely
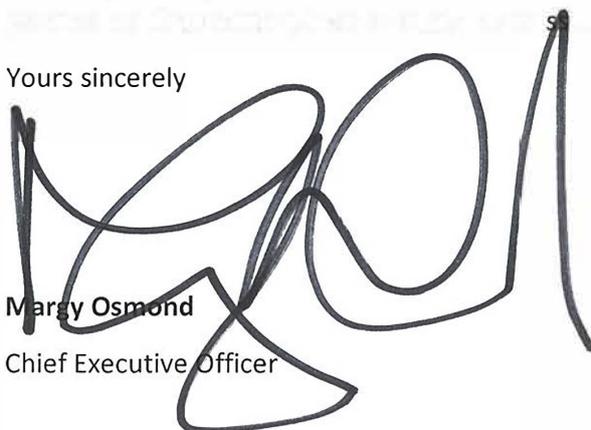
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