



Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday 3 June, 2011

TOURIST DEFICIT SPIKES TO OVER 1.4 MILLION

The number of Australians travelling overseas in the last 12 months is more than 1.4 million higher than the number of international tourists coming to Australia, with the latest Overseas Arrivals and Departures figures showing strong growth in outbound travel, according to peak industry body, [Tourism & Transport Forum](http://www.ttf.org.au) (TTF).

Departures for April 2011 were 693,000 – up a staggering 29.0 per cent on last year - while arrivals rose 7.5 per cent to 462,400. Both figures have been boosted by the timing of Easter, the five-day weekend and the impact on aviation in April 2010 of the Eyjafjallajökull volcano.

Using a year to date figure to smooth out seasonal variations, departures for the first four months of 2011 have risen 11.4 per cent, eight times faster than arrivals growth of 1.4 per cent.

TTF Chief Executive John Lee said the disparity could be further exacerbated unless the carbon tax is accompanied by transitional assistance for the tourism industry.

“As the number of Australians travelling overseas continues to soar, largely thanks to the strong dollar, fewer people are holidaying domestically,” Mr Lee said, “and that’s bad news for tourism operators, especially in regional areas of Australia.”

“While we broadly support the introduction of a carbon price, it must come with appropriate transitional support for the highly trade-exposed tourism industry or it could magnify the current trend.

“If international aviation is exempt, but the tax applies to domestic travel, that will encourage more people to head overseas as travelling locally will be relatively more expensive.

“Also, many Australians who travel are unlikely to receive compensation for the carbon price and tourists can change their plans at very short notice, so the impact of the carbon tax will be almost immediate.

“We are concerned that jobs will go and businesses will close without support for additional marketing, concessions to help tourism operators reduce their emissions, accelerated depreciation schedules for accommodation buildings, plant and equipment, and aircraft.

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“In addition, if the dollar remains at around current levels, outbound will continue to grow strongly and the buying power of international visitors is reduced, meaning the tourism trade deficit¹ could top \$10 billion a year.”

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¹ Difference between Australian tourists' international spend and spending by visitors to Australia.