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**MINISTRY OF TOURISM**

**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**Mr G R Krumbock (DA) to ask the Minister of Tourism**

(a) What are the reasons for the compound annual growth rate decline of 0,1% of Australasian arrivals to the country between 2014 and 2016, (b) to what extent is this below average growth in arrivals due to changes in advertising spend in this region and (c) what are the further relevant details in this regard? NW1747E

 **Reply:**

1. What are the reasons for the compound annual growth rate decline of 0,1% of Australasian arrivals to the country between 2014 and 2016.

In the 2014-2015 financial year the outbreak of Ebola impacted travel to the African continent from Australia resulting in significant decrease in bookings during the height of the epidemic.

The Australia market is plagued by concerns around Safety and Security when it comes to South Africa, amplified by the large population of expats living in the country. Negative stories about safety issues made headline news and opened up a discourse in the media and on social platforms about crime in the country.

Accessibility became another factor with the dissolution of the South African Airways / Qantas codeshare by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) on 31 May 2014 which meant South African Airways would only fly from Perth and Qantas from Sydney, and since the latter does not fly on Wednesdays, this put an end to a seven-day service from the Eastern Seaboard.

The introduction of Travelling with Children regulations in September 2014 also had a major impact on the market as reported by trade partners. Research showed approx. 40% of 25-49 year olds with intent to travel are parents.

Finally, Australia is extremely conscious of issues surrounding animal welfare and conservation and several events over the period sparked backlash around canned hunting and consequent calls to boycott South Africa on social media including Melissa Bachman’s hunting expedition to South Africa, the killing of Cecil of the Lion, the release of the Blood Lions documentary which sparked a march on Parliament in Australia and more recently the CITES decision on the lion bone trade.

1. To what extent is this below average growth in arrivals due to changes in advertising spend in this region.

SA Tourism’s funding was significantly impacted by the depreciating rand against major currencies. This affected SA Tourism’s ability to improve brand positivity in Australia, due to an 8% decrease in budget in 2014.

1. What are the further relevant details in this regard?

SA Tourism showcased South Africa as a fun, friendly and easy-to-do destination through personal interactions with our people, adventure activities and safari experiences; amplified positivity by leveraging the positive narrative through the advocacy of key opinions leaders, media, locals and peers to dispel negative perceptions of safety and security; showcased value-for-money and partnered with trade to educate agents and drive conversion.

To this end, SAT Australia partnered with key free-to-air TV programs to leverage advocacy of their talent and deliver content integration to take the audience on a journey through South Africa, and focussed on media and celebrity hostings and editorial opportunities to change perceptions and maximise ROI in the face of declining budgets. We also engaged in various strategic partnerships including National Geographic Live and Taste Food Festivals to lend big brand reputation and deliver experiential opportunities.

SAT also engaged in conversion-driving initiatives in partnership with trade to mitigate impact on arrivals due to macro challenges over this period including airline partnerships to deliver and co-promote special fares into market and capitalise on the over 40% of Australians who say that a special deal on flights would cause them to consider a trip to South Africa despite all barriers; as well as JMAs with key wholesalers and initiatives with retail travel agencies and OTAs to drive incremental uplifts including Adventure World, Bench, Africa Safari Company, African Wildlife Safaris, OTA Webjet and leading retail outlets Escape and Helloworld.