



MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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The Future is Bright for the Whitsundays

The future is bright for the Whitsundays despite suffering some loss of visitation from around Australia this year, following Tropical Cyclone Debbie at the end of March.

National Visitor Statistics released on Wednesday (September 20) show that 518,000 domestic visitors came to the Whitsundays in the 12-month period to June 30, 2017.

When compared to the average figure for the past three years, this represents an increase of 0.5 per cent, a great result given the figures include the three-month period immediately following the cyclone.

Of these 518,000 domestic visitors, 300,000 people were visiting the Whitsundays for a holiday. This figure is actually down compared to the average for the past three years, with a drop of 2.3 per cent recorded.

Despite this slight decline in visitors, the statistics revealed that, overall, the number of domestic visitor *nights* was up by 17.2 per cent, to 2.4 million nights, when compared to the same 12-month period last year.

The average length of stay was also up, to 4.7 nights average per person, an increase of 0.7 per cent of a night, compared to the same 12-month period last year.

Tourism Whitsundays Sales & Marketing Manager Tash Wheeler said the results were encouraging given the region had been through a severe weather event.

“We expected visitation to be down for the 12-month period to June 30, 2017, given the cyclone at the end of March and the impact this had on our accommodation capacity both on the mainland and islands, so to have an increase – even a small one of half a percentage point – is fantastic,” Ms Wheeler said.

“What is encouraging also is the fact that the total number of visitor nights was up and the average length of stay was up year-on-year. So while less people from around Australia visited the Whitsundays, they stayed longer and spent more.

“When compared to average figures for the past three years – which iron out anomalies such as cyclones – we are actually up slightly for total domestic visitors to the Whitsundays, which is a great result.”

Wins came from Townsville, Brisbane and Sydney, which were up 8.1 per cent, 3.5 per cent and 8.4 per cent respectively for domestic visitors, when compared with the average for the past three years.

These results follow marketing campaigns carried out by Tourism Whitsundays in these regions. In particular, the efforts in the Townsville market, which have now been continuous for the past three years, are seeing strong results in visitation each quarter.

Also up was the number of intrastate business travellers who visited the Whitsundays in the 12-month period to June 30, 2017. The figure of 119,000 people represented an increase of 38.9 per cent when compared with the average for the past three years and a whopping 85.6 per cent increase when compared to the same period last year. Until now, intrastate business travellers have not been publishable for the Whitsundays, so this is great growth for the destination.

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