



MEDIA RELEASE
February 15, 2010

Peak Business Events Body Sounds Alarm Bells for Lucrative Tourism Industry Sector

The Business Events Council of Australia (BECA) today called for an immediate injection of \$20 million in Federal funding to arrest an alarming decline in the number of conference, exhibitions and incentives visitors coming to Australia.

BECA Chairman Geoff Donaghy said an immediate tax incentive was also needed to boost the domestic market and employer training in such a way that Australian companies would be encouraged to hold their business events at home rather than abroad.

“Latest ABS figures show that visitor arrivals for business events fell by an alarming 23 per cent in 2009 over 2008, with convention numbers faring worse than overall tourism visitor numbers,” Mr Donaghy said.

“This continues a disturbing picture that has been growing. Australia has slipped from fourth in 2000 to 14 last year in the International Congress and Convention Association’s world rankings for international conferences.”

Mr Donaghy said BECA’s call for an immediate injection of \$20 million had been submitted to Canberra in a pre-Budget request seeking a:

- **\$10 million Business Events Bid Fund** to assist organisations bidding to host international business events in Australia,
- **\$5 million International Delegate Boosting Fund** to help boost attendance at business events already scheduled, and
- **\$5 million Branding and Marketing Fund** to enable Tourism Australia to launch a strong overseas campaign to restore Australia’s profile as one of the world’s top 10 business events destinations.

Mr Donaghy welcomed the \$1 million bought forward from Tourism Australia’s 2010-11 business events budget for immediate delegate boosting, but said much more is needed.

“The move provides some current help, but leaves next year’s budget in jeopardy.

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Business Events ~ Australia’s \$20 billion industry
■ conferences ■ exhibitions ■ incentives ■ meetings ■ seminars ■ special events ■ trade shows

BECA members: ■ Association of Australian Convention Bureaux ■ Australian Convention Centres Group
■ Exhibition & Events Association of Australasia ■ Meetings & Events Australia ■ International Congress & Convention Association (Australia Chapter)
Postal: PO Box 380, Spit Junction NSW 2088 Australia. Reg. Office: Level 1, Suites 5 & 6, 1 McLaren Street, North Sydney NSW 2060
ABN: 25 441 791 002 Tel: +61 2 9969 1400 Web: www.businesseventscouncil.org.au Email: info@businesseventscouncil.org.au



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“An immediate R&D-type tax incentive offering deductions of 120 per cent is also needed to encourage Australian companies to spend more on employee training, foster face-to-face information learning networks and stage their business events in Australia rather than abroad.”

Mr Donaghy said conference, exhibitions and other business events attracted high net worth visitors who often travelled with family or a friend and spent five times more on a daily basis than tourists visiting for leisure.

“Major international congresses and exhibitions not only attract thousands of overseas delegates, they also showcase Australian innovation and creativity and forge relations that are crucial to our ongoing industry and trade development.”

But this lucrative market was fiercely competitive and Australia had been losing market share at an alarming rate.

“Our Asian competitors in particular have seen the true value of business events travel and are outpowering us in marketing dollars,” he added.

“For example Singapore responded to the GFC by announcing a \$S90m tourism ‘boost’ fund aimed largely at building its business events sector.”

Pic caption: Australia needs to host more international business events, like the 2008 Pacific Area Newspaper Association Conference opened by the Prime Minister, Mr Rudd, on the Gold Coast.

Media information:

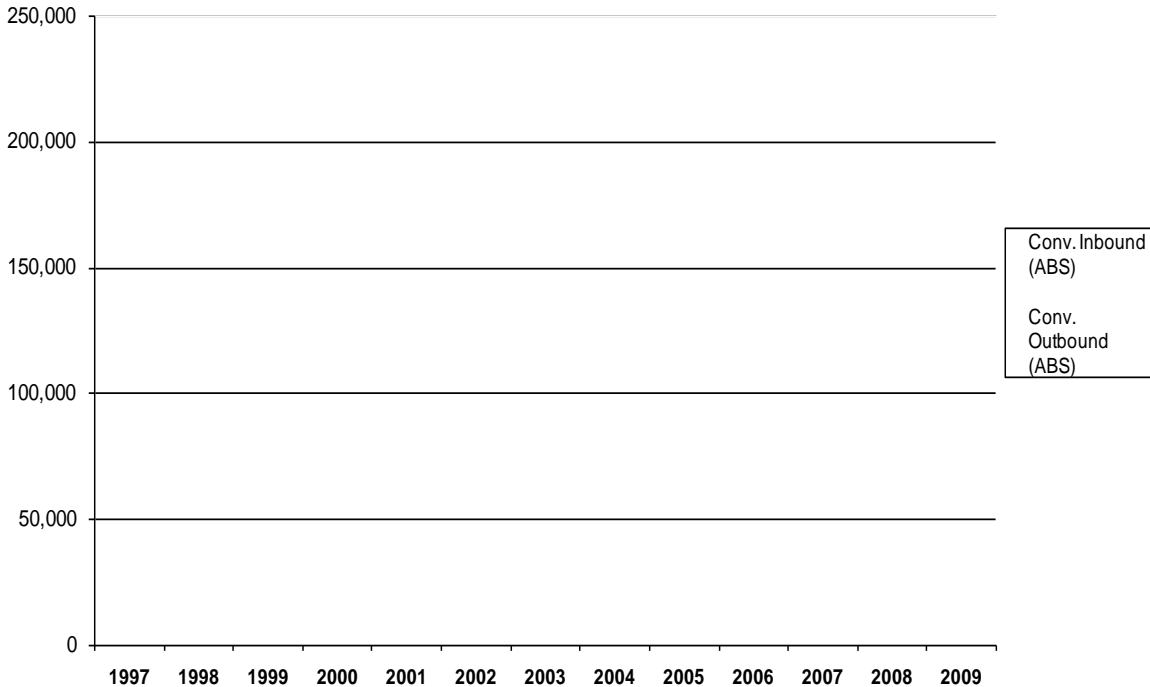
Geoff Donaghy	BECA Chairman	07 3331 5000 or 0419 169 252
Elizabeth Rich	BECA CEO	0414 969 140
Libby Moffet/Bill Gray	MG Media Communications	02 9904 0011

(Graphs below)

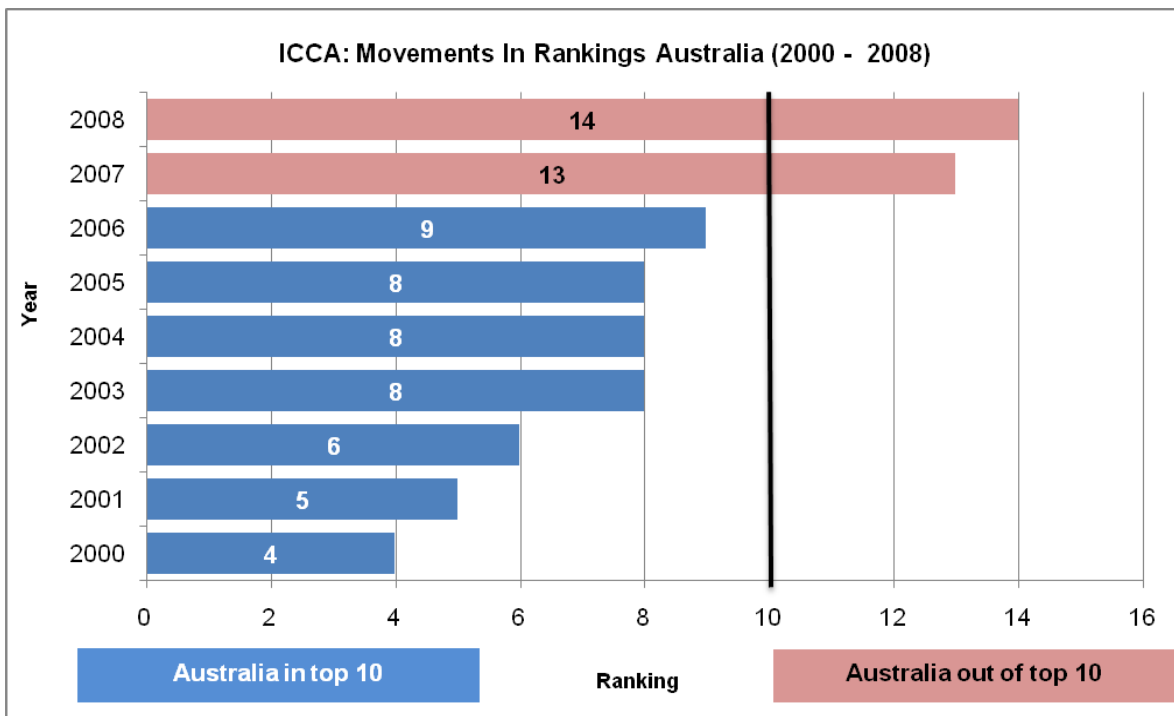
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ABS Convention Inbound and Outbound Visitors (1997 - 2009)



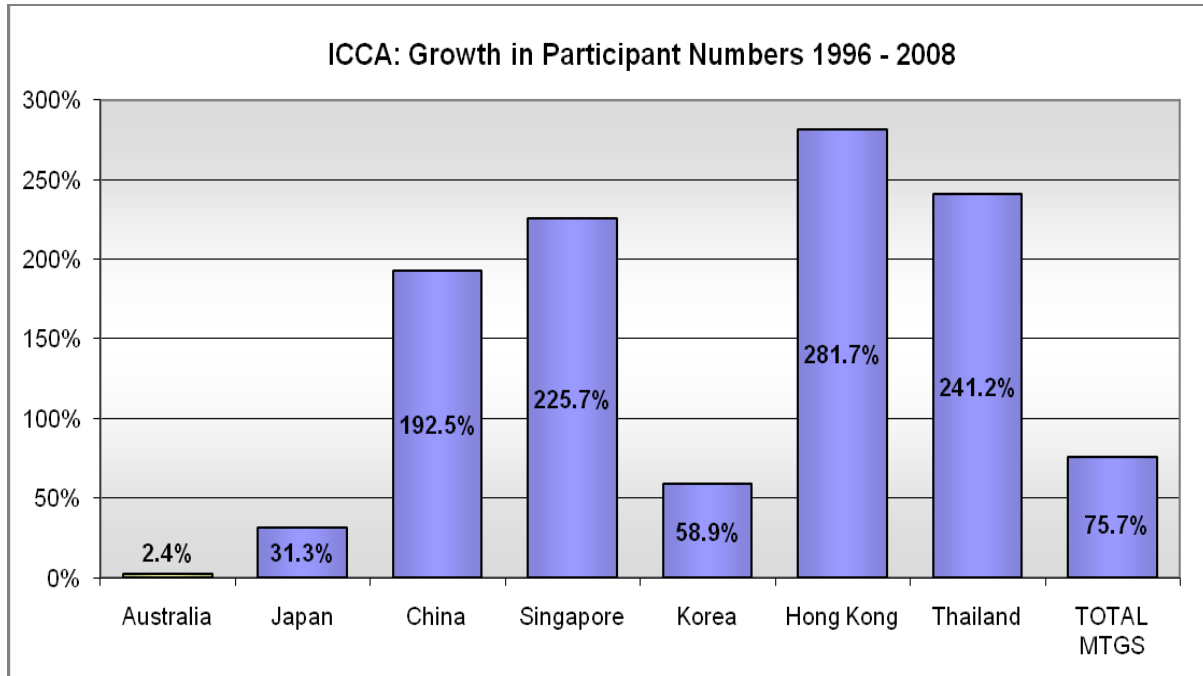
ICCA: Movements In Rankings Australia (2000 - 2008)



Ranking based on number of meetings

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Australia's growth compared with Asian competitors

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