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Voluntary ATAS makes sense

As the AFTA Travel Accreditation Scheme (ATAS) transitional workshops kick off this week, AFTA today reinforced the multiple benefits of the voluntary scheme for the travel industry and consumers.

Transition workshops are being run in November and December across the country which will reveal the all-important details about ATAS and mark the launch to market of the supplier insolvency insurance initiative.

“We already know that good agents who are striving for a solid future are keen to embrace the flexibility of ATAS and choose the relevant insurance for their needs and those of their customers. This is exactly the reason why the scheme is optional so companies can choose the structure that best suits them,” AFTA Chief Executive Jayson Westbury said. “We already have proof of the success of the voluntary approach with the New Zealand model and ATAS builds on that approach to deliver a solution tailored to the Australian marketplace.”

“ATAS has been developed with the diversity of our industry in mind. Our accreditation scheme will elevate travel standards across Australia and empower participating agents in the marketplace while the insurance options boost support for both consumers and travel providers across the board.”

“The simple fact is that without AFTA none of this would be possible. It seems to me that those agents and organisations that want to question this reform while in the middle of implementation do so for their own commercial gain rather than for the good of the industry at large.”

Mr Westbury said ATAS addressed two major failings of the current national scheme under The Travel Compensation Fund (TCF) – restricted scope and minimal consumer awareness.

“The reality is that consumers are increasingly booking with suppliers directly or via non-Australian travel websites, all of which are outside the scope of the TCF. Consumer awareness of the benefits of the TCF was also extremely low with 97% of those booking through travel agents completely unaware of the TCF’s existence or its benefits. The reality was that a growing number of consumers weren’t covered and that there was a growing imbalance between those funding the TCF and those benefiting from it.”

“The ATAS reforms bring the travel sector into line with the rest of the Australian economy through the application of Australian consumer law, corporations law and industry-specific measures and oversight as the principle protection mechanisms.”

“It also provides a far more level and consistent playing field for the Australian travel industry while restricting red-tape and raising consumer awareness of the benefits of dealing with ATAS participants. Plus, as a result of these reforms and through the work of AFTA, the industry now finally has the option of taking out supplier insolvency insurance, travel intermediary insolvency insurance along with scheduled airline failure insurance, end supplier failure



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insurance and ATAS Participant insolvency insurance. While the TCF was in place, this simply wasn't an option."

Travel agents, Travel Management Companies, Travel Aggregators, Wholesalers, Travel Distributors, Online Travel Agents, Inbound Tour Operators, and Consolidators will now all be eligible to join ATAS providing they meet the essential participation criteria and abide by the Charter and Code of Conduct.

"This is a very exciting time in the history of the travel industry. We welcome your feedback and any questions you have at the up and coming workshops," Mr Westbury said.

The workshops are being held in Canberra (11 Nov), Gold Coast (12 Nov), Adelaide (13 Nov), Brisbane (19 Nov), Sydney (20 Nov), Melbourne (21 Nov), Darwin (26 Nov), Hobart (28 Nov) Perth (2 Dec). To register visit

<http://aftamembers.memnet.com.au/AFTATravelAccreditationSchemetransitionalwork.aspx>.

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Notes to Editors:

The Australian Federation of Travel Agents (AFTA) is the peak body in Australia representing the retail travel industry. Founded in 1957, AFTA represents the majority of travel agents in Australia and includes all of the major travel agency groups.

AFTA's role is to uphold the interests of members in matters relating to the operation of all travel agencies in Australia. In broad terms these issues are ones that are not addressed by agent chain or corporate entities on behalf of their members, and are ones that involve the industry as a whole.