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TTF AUSTRALIA Tourism & Transport Forum

Free Trade Agreements and Stakeholder Engagement Division

23 October 2025

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Email: FTAmodernisation@dfat.gov.au

RE: Southeast Asia Free Trade Agreements (FTA's) modernisation review

Tourism & Transport Forum (TTF) is the peak industry body representing the aviation, tourism, and transport sectors. TTF represents a range of stakeholders driving the visitor economy.

TTF welcomes the review of the Southeast Asia Free Trade Agreements (FTA's) and the focus on goods, services, and investment as well as new and emerging trade issues that could be better reflected in our network of FTAs. Those that pertain to people movement and easing of aviation/tourism investment barriers are of particular interest.

According to Tourism Research Australia, the visitor economy contributes significantly to trade, investment and community links between Australia and Southeast Asia, adding A$2.3 billion and A$4.5 billion to the respective economies in 2022 from visitor spend alone. To attract a greater proportion of the outbound Southeast Asian tourism market, Australia will need a targeted approach from both industry and government to realise the opportunity and grow market share from competing destinations.

Whilst Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) do not usually prioritise Tourism and Transport front-and-centre, this is an important opportunity to consider them and impactful strategic levers within the modernisation exercise.

Thank you for considering this recommendation, should you wish to discuss our feedback further, please contact Suzanne Morgan, Manager Government Relations, and Policy.

Sincerely,

Margy Osmond,

Chief Executive Officer

Tourism & Transport Forum Australia

Air Services & Connectivity:

TTF acknowledges that air service agreements are negotiated separately, however FTAs do create a more favourable climate for increased routes, airline partnerships, and aviation investment. There is no doubt that the volume and speed of travel and trade is going to exponentially increase to and from South East Asia through visiting friends and relatives, business, study, and holiday travel.

To facilitate the successful outcomes of the Agreements we must have more efficient productivity in supply chains and more certainty in Australian border arrangements ie. Seamless Border Management.

TTF implores the Government to invest accordingly in progressive regulatory alignment and technological system to ensuring people and goods move more productively through highly automated border protection systems. Relevant countries such as Singapore are already delivering this vastly enhanced passenger experience.

TTF supports expanding digital border initiatives such as the current Australian Border Force (ABF) and Qantas digital incoming passenger trial, which allows passengers travelling between Auckland, Queenstown, and Sydney to complete their declaration digitally via the Qantas app. Implementing a Australia Travel Declaration – a fully digital alternative to the paper Incoming Passenger Card (IPC) – should be considered as part of each countries future bilateral agreements.

Importantly TTF also recommends the importance of investing in South East Asian language versions of the Electronic Travel Authority (ETA) for the FTA countries. It is a very clear visitor growth action and a statement of cultural respect.

Investment in Tourism Infrastructure:

TTF acknowledges that whilst the FTAs will continue to nurture Australian exports and investment in Southeast Asia, they should use this platform to attract more foreign investment in Australian tourism. Australia has an immediate need for significant new hotel stock, and the relevant FTA countries Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia and for the purpose of this submission New Zealand have a renewed focus with investors willing and able to meet our investment criteria, particularly in regional Australia.

Please note that it is also not unusual that these development companies may be vertically integrated, providing internationally recognised and patronised tourism product. It is imperative that the FTA's strategically influence appropriate tourism investment barriers to be eased to maximise outcomes.

TTF supports a strong, competitive, and sustainable partnership with Southeast Asia that capitalises on the volume of growth and advancement that technology can provide to improve productivity.

Thank you for your consideration.