



Australian  
Chamber of Commerce  
and Industry

## TRANSCRIPT

**Event:** Andrew McKellar interview with Ros Childs, ABC News at Noon.

**Speakers:** Ros Childs, host ABC News at Noon; Andrew McKellar, chief executive Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

**Date:** 21 February 2022.

**Topics:** International border reopening, international tourism, tourism operators, labour shortages.

### E&OE

**Ros Childs, host ABC News at Noon:** The tourism industry is looking forward to better times for the reopening of international borders today. Andrew McKellar is the CEO of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and joins us now. Hi, Andrew. So how are you and your members feeling today as overseas visitors start returning to Australia?

**Andrew McKellar, chief executive Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry:** It's a great day. Obviously, there's a lot of excitement within the tourism industry around the country today, as we start to see international tourists and business visitors starting to come back into the country. Of course, to start with, it will be a bit of a trickle, but we will need to get out there and promote Australia as an international destination. We've got to turn around the image of 'Fortress Australia' and just remind people of the great opportunities, the great sights, the great experiences that we have here in Australia.

**Ros:** Yeah. Do you think there's going to be any long-term damage to though, cause by 'Fortress Australia'? Could Australia's reputation be damaged on the international stage because we've been closed for so long?

**Andrew:** Oh, there's no doubt. It will take a little bit of time to get back into people's minds so there will need to be a significant investment in marketing and promoting Australia as an international tourism destination. We are saying in our budget submission, we put forward a proposal for about \$240 million in investment there with Tourism Australia to really get back on the

front foot, to change those impressions and to attract more visitors to Australia in the next couple of years.

**Ros:** The international tourist numbers, they're not expected to return to pre-pandemic levels until 2024. Do you think some businesses can struggle on until then?

**Andrew:** Look, I think absolutely there are many that have pushed through a great difficulty in the past two years. If we can start to build that marketplace again. Look, we've seen that levels have been well under 10 per cent of the normal level in the past two years. We're seeing demand coming back, the early signs are positive. So, I think there's great encouragement, but the sooner we can begin to get those capacity levels restored, then the better it will be.

**Ros:** Andrew, are businesses fully ready to take advantage of a tourist influx? We've been hearing a lot about staff shortages, skills shortage across the board. Are some tourism places struggling to actually be ready?

**Andrew:** Oh, there are pressures there, labour market pressures, for sure. This is one of the reasons why it's all the more important to be bringing back international students. That started to happen. We've had about, I think, 80,000 international students coming back in since that was reopened in November, getting working holidaymakers back in as well, because they perform work in a number of areas, a number of sectors, they're a crucial part of the workforce. So bringing those visa holders back in as well, that's also important if we're going to be in a position to help those businesses, make sure that they've got the people that they need in those critical positions.

**Ros:** Andrew McKellar, thank you.

**Andrew:** Thank you.

## **Media contact**

P | 02 6270 8020

E | [media@australianchamber.com.au](mailto:media@australianchamber.com.au)