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Interview on Channel 7 Sunrise with Natalie Barr

Topics: Tourism industry recovery

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Natalie Barr: Well, new figures reveal the devastating impact coronavirus has had on Australia's tourism sector. Domestic tourism fell by \$11.7 billion in April and May, compared to the same time last year. Overnight trips dropped by 67 per cent and overnight spending was down by \$4.8 billion. One in 13 jobs in Australia are reliant on tourism. Federal Tourism Minister is Simon Birmingham; he joins me now. Good morning to you. Which states were the hardest hit, Simon?

Simon Birmingham: Well now, we saw a hit right across the board, and now some of those with tighter lockdowns at the time faced it, or those that had border restrictions in place faced a bigger hit. Our \$45 billion international tourism market is of course basically closed right now due to the fact we can't bring visitors into the country. Now we've got this data showing that through April and May we took a \$12 billion hit in terms of domestic tourism activity, Australians holidaying at home. While that was understandable at the time, the message is very clearly in those states where people can safely do so. For those people who can afford to do so, please get out there and support the local tourism operators, and don't just go and relax at the beach, make sure you undertake some tours, enjoy the amazing experiences that Australia has to offer because that's what's really going to keep our tourism industry afloat into the future.

Natalie Barr: What's the federal government doing to help this?

Simon Birmingham: So first and foremost, the more than \$300 billion of support that we're pumping through the Australian economy, most of it going through the JobKeeper program which is of course providing huge assistance to tourism businesses, virtually all of whom qualify as a result of the devastation they're facing right now. That's helping keep their employees supported, helping keep those businesses afloat right now but they really do need to see Australians get out there and support them. And I know these are uncertain times, but in the states where people can travel the best thing you can do to help save the job of a fellow Aussie and have the time of your life is to get out there and make a booking for a wonderful experience somewhere around Australia.

Natalie Barr: Yep, tours, restaurants, cafes, anything you can. Simon Birmingham, thank you.

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