



# CONFERENCE PROGRAM

8.30am **Registration** / arrival tea and coffee

8:55am **Session one**

**Welcome**

**Cam Sullings**  
Emcee

**Welcome to Country**

**Tyrone Bell**  
Thunderstone

**Opening address**

**Andrew Barr, MLA**  
ACT Chief Minister,  
Minister for Tourism

**Learnings from the latest Tourism data**

**Robert Dougan**  
Tourism Australia

**Building an Experience  
Business in Canberra**

**John O'Sullivan**  
Experience Co

**VisitCanberra campaign showreel**

**VisitCanberra**

10.35am **Networking break** / morning tea

11.05am **Session two**

**Can tourism businesses operate in more  
environmentally sustainable ways and  
save money without undermining guest  
satisfaction?**

**Prof. Sara Dolnicar**  
University of Queensland

**Getting 0.1% of the \$13.5bn  
accessibility market**

**Giovanna Lever**  
Sparrowly Group





12.25pm **Networking break / lunch**

1.10pm **Session three**

**The Ngunnawal Story & language exercise**

**Tyrone Bell**  
Thunderstone

**Panel discussion:**

**Developing Canberra as a global destination – don't risk FOMO... what it means to be tourism trade ready**

**Russell Jackson (host)**  
VisitCanberra

**Andrew Hogg**  
Tourism Australia

**Jennifer Bruce**  
Australian Tourism  
Export Council (ATEC)

**Simon Bernadi**  
Australia and Beyond Holidays

**Sarah Staruszkiewicz**  
VisitCanberra

**Top Tourism Town Award**

**Debra Beetham**  
Canberra Region  
Tourism Industry Council

2.40pm **Networking break / afternoon tea**

3.10pm **Panel discussion:**  
**Understanding the Travel Media Landscape**

**Blake Riddington (host)**  
TravMedia

**Craig Platt**  
Digital Journalist

**Kate Cox**  
ACM

**Brand Canberra and the tourism story**

**Brodie Fleming**  
Brand Canberra

**Jonathan Kobus**  
VisitCanberra

4.40pm **Networking and drinks**

# YOUR **SPEAKERS**



## **Cam Sullings**

### **Emcee**

Cam Sullings is a long-time radio, television and online presenter in Canberra. He's been behind the mic, in front of a lens or presenting on stage for 30 years. He currently presents two hours of content driven radio on Mix106.3 each Saturday.

Cam hosts many of Canberra's top corporate events, gala evenings, awards nights and community gatherings. He is the on-screen presenter and ground announcer at Canberra Raiders home matches. He's presented at other venues outside of Canberra including Sydney's Olympic Stadium and the SCG.

Through the day Cam manages his business, combining his presenting roles with public speaking and media tuition. He shows CEO's and executives how to speak and present with impact.

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## **Tyrone Bell**

### **Thunderstone**

Tyrone Bell is a Ngunawal descendant and youngest of seven who grew up in Yass, learning traditional culture from his father Don Bell (senior). Challenging early experiences helped shape his lifelong passion for the advancement of Aboriginal issues. Tyrone has become a strong advocate for the recognition of Aboriginal culture and language, in particular the culture and language of the Ngunawal people.

Tyrone's passion for his Aboriginal culture and heritage and his desire to share this knowledge with others led to the establishment of Thunderstone Aboriginal Cultural Services in July 2013. Thunderstone has helped promote awareness and appreciation of the rich Aboriginal culture and history of the local region through delivery of cultural programs, language workshops and Dhawura On Country tours.

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## **Andrew Barr, MLA**

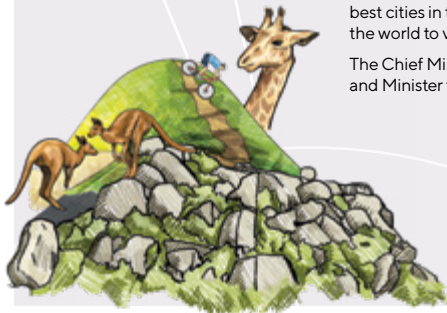
### **ACT Chief Minister; Minister for Tourism**

Andrew Barr MLA has been ACT Chief Minister since 2014 and Tourism Minister since 2006, making him the longest-serving Tourism Minister in Australia.

In this portfolio, he has led significant growth in tourism and business travel to Canberra, with the ACT's visitor economy nearly doubling during his tenure to be worth over \$3.7 billion annually. Key successes to enable this achievement include bringing major aviation partners to the ACT for the first time and supporting a booming hospitality industry.

Under his leadership as Chief Minister, Canberra has been ranked by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development as one of the best cities in the world to live and by Lonely Planet as one of the best cities in the world to visit.

The Chief Minister is also the ACT Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action and Minister for Trade, Investment and Economic Development.





## Robert Dougan

### Executive General Manager, Strategy & Research, Tourism Australia

Rob's role is to work with the Executive Leadership Team to help make Tourism Australia a more effective organisation for the Australia tourism industry. Since starting at Tourism Australia in 2019, Rob has written and delivered strategies for the 2019/20 Black Summer Bushfires and helped navigate the organisation through the COVID-19 Pandemic. Prior to working at Tourism Australia, Rob had a 15-year career in advertising that included leading the strategy for key campaigns for Tourism Australia that were produced by Clemenger including Restaurant Australia, Aquatic and Coastal, and Undiscover, among others.



## John O'Sullivan

### Experience Co

John has over 25 years' experience in the tourism & travel, sport & entertainment and media industries. Prior to joining Experience Co, John was Managing Director of Tourism Australia where he oversaw a period of record growth of international visitation and expenditure to Australia.

John has extensive leadership capabilities and experience in sales and marketing, strategic planning, event management and digital technology.

John is also the Chair of Tourism Tropical North Queensland. He holds an Executive MBA and is a Graduate Member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (GAICD).



## Prof. Sara Dolnicar

### University of Queensland

Professor Sara Dolnicar leads the Low Harm Hedonism Initiative at the University of Queensland, which develops and experimentally tests practical measures to entice tourists to behave in more environmentally sustainable ways.

Professor Dolnicar, who published more than 300 papers and won more than 30 awards for her work, is an elected Fellow of the Academy for the Social Sciences in Australia, the International Academy for the Study of Tourism, the International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism, and the Council for Australasian Tourism and Hospitality Education. She won a prestigious Australian Research Council Laureate Fellowship to leave a creative and human legacy around low harm hedonism.

Professor Dolnicar currently serves as the Co-Editor in Chief of Annals of Tourism Research, one of three globally leading tourism journals. She was awarded the Travel and Tourism Research Association Distinguished Researcher Award and named the Slovenian Ambassador of Science, the highest honour the Republic of Slovenia bestows on expatriate Slovenian researchers in recognition of global excellence, impact, and knowledge transfer.



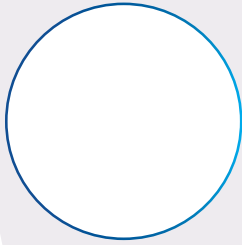
## Giovanna Lever

### Managing Director, Sparrowly Group

Giovanna Lever is the Managing Director of Sparrowly Group co-author of industry paper, Creating Real Inclusion. Her work in the accessible and inclusive tourism sector along with her role as a carer and industry advocate has influenced a significant shift forward to a more accessible and inclusive visitor experience in Australia. In this session, she will provide industry with a step by step guide on how to make their businesses more accessible and inclusive for visitors with disabilities and tap into this growing market.



# YOUR SPEAKERS



## **Russell Jackson**

### **Assistant Director, Industry Sector Development, VisitCanberra**

Russell Jackson is the Assistant Director, Industry Sector Development at VisitCanberra, the tourism body of the ACT Government. With a rich and in depth understanding of the tourism sector, Russell has managed numerous award-winning attractions and held key roles with tourism peak bodies prior to joining the public service.

Russell drives the development and execution of tourism industry sector plans for the ACT region, aiming to enhance the visitor economy, experience, and sector resilience. Before joining VisitCanberra, he served as the Executive Manager of Business and Marketing at Canberra's National Zoo & Aquarium and Jamala Wildlife Lodge. In these roles, Russell oversaw business development, marketing, and management functions, leading both the Zoo and Jamala – a globally recognised boutique luxury hotel – to achieve award-winning status at the National Tourism Awards.

Russell's well-rounded perspective of the tourism sector is further enriched by his tenure as president of the National Capital Attractions Association and his role on numerous local and national tourism boards and committees over the past 9 years.

A native Canberran, Russell is passionate and dedicated to promoting the region as a premier tourism destination and is committed to assisting the tourism industry in achieving sustainable growth and success.



## **Andrew Hogg**

### **Executive General Manager, Eastern Markets & Aviation, Tourism Australia**

Andrew Hogg joined Tourism Australia in June 2015 as Regional General Manager Greater China, promoted to Executive General Manager Eastern Markets and Aviation in April 2020. Andrew works closely with colleagues across Asian Market and leads international aviation restoration.

As the Executive General Manager for Eastern Markets and Aviation, Andrew is responsible for driving Tourism Australia's strategies to grow demand from Australia's fast-growing tourism markets for international visitors. With over 20 years working experience in aviation industry, Andrew's strong aviation background will help Tourism Australia develop and maintain long-standing relationships with key airline partners. Andrew is based in Sydney since 2024 January.

Before the current role, Andrew was the Regional General Manager North Asia and successfully led North Asia team across China, Japan and Korea to build great milestones and deep relationship with key stakeholders in the region.

Andrew's career has included a number of senior roles in a career spanning more than 26 years with Australia's national carrier, Qantas Airways, across finance, sales, marketing and operations.



## **Jennifer Bruce**

### **Regional Manager, ATEC NSW, ACT & South Queensland**

Jennifer is a strategic partnerships and stakeholder engagement specialist with over 15 years' experience in inbound, outbound and domestic trade distribution and marketing, predominantly in the tourism and hospitality sectors. Currently, as the Regional Manager for NSW, ACT and South Queensland for ATEC, Jennifer assists many Australian tourism products in elevating their offering for suitability to international markets. With a passion for creativity and finding the most effective solutions for all stakeholders, Jennifer balances professionalism and personality with every challenge – relishing the opportunity to maximise partnerships across all levels of government and business with her extensive experience.

ATEC's recent partnership with the team at VisitCanberra has helped local businesses and organisations understand what is required to become tourism trade ready, including how to be the most 'ATE-ready region' and how to maximise opportunities in specific inbound markets such as India.



## **Simon Bernadi**

### **Managing Partner, Australia and Beyond Holidays**

Simon is managing Partner of Australia and Beyond Holidays (AABH). AABH works with industry customers and wholesalers globally, with its team based in Australia, Melbourne, Sydney, Gold Coast and Internationally, New Zealand, Japan India, and representation in the Middle East. The company focused on Tailormade FITs, groups, incentives, and series group programs. The company's main markets being Sth East Asia, India, Japan

Simon has extensive experience in the travel industry. Most of these years spent with Qantas Airways where he held several senior commercial roles within Qantas and associated companies, including leadership of Qantas Holidays globally for 8 years. Most recently prior to establishing AABH with his partners, Simon was Executive General Manager for Travel Partners Australia with responsibility for marketing, supplier relations and company owned stores prior to its sale to Flight Centre Group.

Simon has a wealth of management experience including, financial, strategic, system improvement, business agility, marketing, corporate governance, and employee engagement. He has participated on several boards both as representative of the Airline and in his own right.

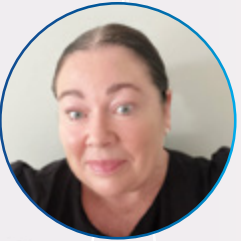


## **Sarah Staruszkiewicz**

### **Director, International & Partnerships, VisitCanberra**

Sarah Staruszkiewicz is the Director, International and Partnerships for VisitCanberra — sharing her love of Canberra with visitors since 2017. The tourism sector is Sarah's passion, having also worked with Tourism Australia as the Strategic Partnerships Manager — responsible for managing global agreements with airlines and key distribution partners.

Before joining the tourism sector, Sarah worked in a variety of communication roles across the private, not-for-profit and government sectors in Canberra, Sydney and London. Although she's not Canberra-born and has spent many years in other cities, Sarah grew up in Canberra and is a passionate advocate for this beautiful city; she loves promoting it as a must-see destination for international and domestic visitors alike.

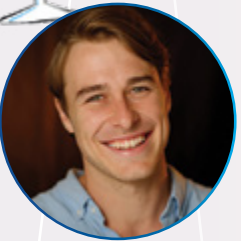


## **Debra Beetham**

### **National Capital Attractions Association Canberra Region Tourism Industry Council**

Debra manages the National Capital Attractions Association and Canberra Region Tourism Industry Council, which includes the coordination of the Canberra Region Tourism Awards program and events, Quality Tourism Accreditation and Star Ratings. She has an extensive background in leading and inspiring tourism services in the Canberra Region. With over 20 years in experience, Debra brings a multifaceted understanding of high-quality tourism experiences from her various roles with major Canberra tourism attractions, including the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS), Questacon and the Australian National Botanic Gardens.

Debra has thrived on working on exciting events such as Enlighten and the G20 Summit, through to successful delivery of numerous successful Canberra Region Tourism Awards Galas. Debra is a board member of the National Capital Attractions Association and holds a Post- Graduate Degree in Business Management from the University of Canberra. Debra is passionate about high quality tourism and educational experiences as a way to increase and sustain tourism in the Canberra Region.



## **Blake Riddington**

### **Regional Director, TravMedia Australia & New Zealand**

Blake Riddington is a dynamic leader in the travel industry, serving as the Regional Director for TravMedia Australia and New Zealand. With a degree in public relations and communications, Blake began his career at Australia's telecasting powerhouse, MCN. Transitioning to the travel sector, he worked as a digital marketing consultant for an innovative social travel app before joining TravMedia as PR and Marketing Executive.

Blake is passionate about creating connections and building key relationships within the industry. He hosts the webinar series TravMedia Insider, providing valuable insights and fostering community among travel professionals.

A seasoned traveller, Blake has explored over 30 countries, fueling his passion for the industry.

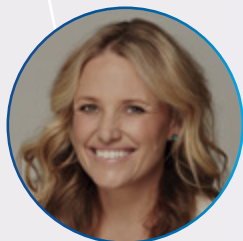
# YOUR SPEAKERS



**Craig Platt**  
Digital Journalist

Craig is one of Australia's most experienced digital journalists and editors and has worked in journalism for more than 25 years. He has managed The Age and Sydney Morning Herald's digital travel publishing since 2007.

Craig was managing editor of Nine's standalone travel website, [traveller.com.au](http://traveller.com.au), Australia's leading travel publishing website, incorporating the Traveller sections of The Age, The Sydney Morning Herald, Sun-Herald and The Sunday Age and featured across these masthead's websites as well as the Brisbane Times and WA Today, and remains the digital editor of Traveller since its reintegration as part of Nine Publishing's major mastheads.



**Kate Cox**  
Head of Travel, ACM

Kate Cox is Head of Travel for ACM, overseeing the Explore travel section that runs in 15 daily newspapers across Australia, as well as travel content across the network and on [exploretavel.com.au](http://exploretavel.com.au). ACM has 140+ mastheads in every state and territory in Australia, servicing regional and community audiences with news, features and events. We have loyal audiences and many years of history. Our publications include: The Canberra Times, Newcastle Herald, Illawarra Mercury, Warrnambool Standard, Bendigo Advertiser, Launceston Examiner and Border Mail. Explore is also an end-to-end travel business, with engaging storytelling alongside excellent travel deals (at [book.exploretavel.com.au](http://book.exploretavel.com.au)).



**Brodie Fleming**  
Director, Brand Canberra

Brodie Fleming is the Director of Brand Canberra for the ACT Government. Brand Canberra supports you – Canberrans – to express Canberra's value and distinct attributes in a way that make sense for your work and your audiences.



**Jonathan Kobus**  
Executive Branch Manger, VisitCanberra

Jonathan Kobus is the Executive Branch Manager, of VisitCanberra. VisitCanberra leads the Canberra and region tourism industry to create and implement a range of marketing and development programs that aim to increase the economic return from domestic and international visitation.

Prior to joining VisitCanberra, Jonathan was the Senior Manager, for trade and investment programs in the ACT Government promoting Canberra as place to invest and do business as well as connecting Canberra businesses with opportunities in international markets. Jonathan has led the development and implementation of several strategic directions for the ACT's tourism industry including T2030 – ACT Tourism Strategy 2023-2030. Jonathan was also central to the establishment of the Canberra-Wellington Sister City Agreement.

With more than 15 years experience in the tourism industry across private sector and government, Jonathan was awarded the Public Service Medal for outstanding public service to the Canberra and region tourism industry through the COVID-19 pandemic.



There's **more than** they're telling us

