bytap

BACKPACKER & YOUTH TOURISM
ADVISORY PANEL

ANNUAL REPORT

2025-2026

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Background

The Backpacker & Youth Tourism Advisory Panel (BYTAP) has a history dating back over twenty years as an unincorporated entity, initially being founded under the auspices of the Australian Tourism Export Council (ATEC).

On 8 June 2022 the association was registered under the Associations Incorporation Act (2009), and this report has been prepared in accordance with that Act.

The 4th BYTAP Annual General Meeting will take place on 21 October 2026 at Bounce Surfers.

BYTAP is the peak national representative body for the Australian inbound Backpacker, Youth, Student and Adventure Tourism industry. The role of the association is to:

1. Act as the critical link between the youth travel industry, the states and territories and federal government in the interpretation of sector specific issues

2. Represent the interests of the youth travel industry to other industry organisations, government and the community on a national level;

3. Facilitate an active and effective policy forum where key industry stakeholders present issues for development and action;

4. Raise the profile of the Australian youth travel industry;

5. Lead the way in the on-going development of growth strategies to maximise the contribution of the inbound youth market to Australia.

At the time of the AGM, BYTAP has ten members from all sectors of the industry including hostels/budget accommodation; adventure tours; transport, inbound program operators, and international education/exchange experiences. This includes three representatives of the respective State-based youth tourism associations, who support BYTAP, being Adventure Queensland (AQ), Youth Tourism NSW (YTNSW) and Youth Tourism Victoria (YTV).

This Annual Report presents the activities undertaken by BYTAP on behalf of its members from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026 (being the end of the association's financial year).

This report is also available for download on the BYTAP website www.bytap.org

If you have any comments or questions about this report, please get in touch at contact@bytap.org

Panel Members

Members of BYTAP have a strong background in the industry, enthusiasm and a vision for backpacking and youth tourism in Australia. They come from various sectors of the industry to ensure broad representation.

Panel members volunteer their time in giving direction to the Association and dedicate their energy, skills and experience for the benefit of the industry across Australia.

BYTAP members as at 21 October 2026 (AGM date)

PETA ZIETSCH
CHAIRPERSON & TREASURER

SILKE KERWICK
SECRETARY & PUBLIC OFFICER

WENDI AYLWARD
PANEL MEMBER

MARK BALDWIN
PANEL MEMBER

ANDREW COWAN
PANEL MEMBER

ALEX HILL
PANEL MEMBER

BRENDAN MCKENNA
PANEL MEMBER

KRISTY MALAPA
PANEL MEMBER

ADAM OGLE
PANEL MEMBER

DAVID THOMSON
PANEL MEMBER

Chairperson's Report

Peta Zietsch

I'm pleased to present this report on behalf of BYTAP outlining key achievements and issues over the period 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026.

Over that period, BYTAP continued to be highly focused on industry engagement, along with federal and international advocacy work relating to the backpacker and youth tourism sector in Australia. However, during the year the industry started facing headwinds indicating that future migration policy settings might cause Australia to be a less desirable destination for many young travellers on Working Holiday Maker (WHM) visa.

Australia's Working Holiday Maker program is one of the most successful of its kind globally, going strong for over 50 years now, having started in 1975 - and with 50 countries now participating reciprocally (see image below).

Australia's WHM Program: Partner countries as of October 2024

Source: Barry, K. & Azaredo, R., The tourism-migration nexus: working holiday visa (2025) Tourism Geographies pp. 1–17. doi: 10.1080/14616688.2025.2506523 (p.11)

These young travellers stay longer, spend more, and become lifelong advocates for Australia, often encouraging friends and family to visit – see statistics below:

Source: www//bytap.org/celebrating-half-a-century-of-working-holiday-makers-in-australia/

Any moves to scale back WHM visa numbers would be a devastating blow to this sector still recovering from the pandemic - not only hurting tourism operators, but that would also impact on the regional economies that they help support. Backpackers play a crucial role in regional areas, particularly in agriculture and hospitality, as they often work casual, seasonal jobs in these industries to fund their travels.

These concerns came to a head after the end of the financial year, when on 1 July 2026 steep increases to WHM visas fees were announced with the cost of Working Holiday (subclass 417) and Work and Holiday (subclass 462) visas going up from $670 to $840, making Australia's Working Holiday Maker visa the most expensive of its kind in the world. The increase came alongside an increase from $670 to $1,000 for a second or third year WHM visa (that can be granted subject to specified work being undertaken in regional areas for 88 days or 176 days respectively). This was also accompanied with a pause and delay in the processing of most offshore WHM visas from that date, threatening the international reputation of the program.

BYTAP continues to represent the industry on matters such as this, through bringing together the various State-based youth tourism associations into a national forum to address the challenges and opportunities facing this sector. BYTAP is pleased to have Memorandums of Understanding with Adventure Queensland (AQ), Youth Tourism NSW (YTNSW), and Youth Tourism Victoria (YTV) to financially support the critical work that BYTAP does. This also includes having a representative from each of these State-based associations on the Panel.

Close connections also continue with aligned industry and related bodies, including Tourism Australia, the Australian Tourism Export Council (ATEC), the National Farmers Federation (NFF), and the Backpacker Youth Tourism & Adventure Tourism Association New Zealand (BYATA).

On the positive side, a major collaboration during the year, aimed at fostering future industry leaders, was the third year of a tripartite youth-sector-focused development scholarship - the Tourism Australia Youth Sector ELITE Scholarship in conjunction with BYTAP and ATEC - see https://bytap.org/winner-announced-of-2026-tourism-australia-youth-sector-elite-scholarship/ - with the winner being announced as Nora Kisser, based in Sydney.

Sincere thanks go to our members and industry partners for their support of this vibrant and vital segment of the visitor economy, that BYTAP continues to advocate for at many levels.

Peta Zietsch

Peta Zietsch, Chairperson

Secretary's Report

Silke Kerwick

MEMBERSHIPS

At the end of the financial year ending 30 June 2026, the association had ten members.

One new member was appointed at the 2025 AGM held on 6 November 2025, being Kristy Malapa.

MEETINGS

Attendance by the Panel members from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026 is laid out below:

PANEL MEMBER	ATTENDED	POSSIBLE
Peta Zietsch (Chairperson and Treasurer)	2	3
Silke Kerwick (Secretary & Public Officer)	2	3
Wendi Aylward	2	3
Mark Baldwin	3	3
Andrew Cowan	1	3
Alex Hill	3	3
Kristy Malapa	2	2
Brendan McKenna	3	3
Adam Ogle	1	3
David Thomson	2	3

Silke Kerwick

Silke Kerwick, BYTAP Secretary & Public Officer

Treasurer's Report

Peta Zietsch

For the financial year 2025-2026 (ending on 30 June 2026):

1. Annual membership fees were $2.00 per member (in addition to an initial joining fee of $1.00 per new member).
2. Total income for the period was $4,807.66 (against $9,627.07 the prior year, with the variance being mostly due to timing differences regarding payments by State-based youth tourism associations).
3. Notable income items included financial support from the State-based youth tourism associations of $4,800 (against $9,600 the prior year).
4. There were no notable expenditure items, with expenses totalling $770.50 (against $1,009.81 the prior year, being comparable).
5. This resulted in a net surplus of $4,037.16 (against $8,617.26 the prior year).
6. The assets of BYTAP are entirely held as cash with $29,759.13 (compared to $25,721.97 the prior year) being held in the association's account with ANZ Bank at 30 June 2026.
7. The Panel have considered a projected budget for 2026-27. These forecasts indicate that BYTAP is expected to continue to operate, based on an assessment of predicted forward income and expenditure, and existing cash levels, which are being conserved with minimal expenditure outflow unless essentially required.

Peta Zietsch

Peta Zietsch, BYTAP Treasurer

Acknowledgements

Thanks go to all BYTAP members. Without these volunteers, who invest a significant amount of their time for the greater good of the industry, our Association would not exist.

BYTAP would also like to express appreciation and extend our sincerest thanks to Tourism Australia for their support, along with Adventure Queensland, Youth Tourism NSW and Youth Tourism Victoria.

Finally, we would like to thank Allsopp Bunting Insurance for their ongoing support of BYTAP and the youth tourism industry.

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