For immediate release

Australia suffers second devastating year of decline in cruise tourism

– Losses to local businesses total $1.75 billion over two years –

November 19, 2026 – Cruise tourism's contribution to the Australian economy has fallen by more than 20 per cent over the past two years, from $8.43 billion in 2023-24 to $6.68 billion in 2025-26, according to an economic impact report released today by Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) and the Australian Cruise Association (ACA).

The industry's annual economic report shows that cruise remains a major contributor to the Australian economy, supporting 20,021 full-time jobs and generating $2.15 billion in wages in 2025-26. Passengers are also spending more ashore, averaging A$459 per person per day (up 4.1%).

However, the overall 2025-26 result is an 8.7% decline on the total economic contribution of cruise tourism in the previous financial year, which was itself down 13.2% from the year before. The combined falls mean the Australian economy has lost a total of $1.75 billion over the past two financial years, as ships make fewer visits.

CLIA Executive Director in Australasia Joel Katz said Australians continue to cruise in record numbers, but this latest report underscores that Australia is becoming uncompetitive as a cruise base and has been losing ships to other countries.

"Demand for cruising is at record levels around the world and Australia remains a very attractive cruise destination, yet we are losing economic opportunities at an alarming rate," Mr Katz said. "We have been warning that regulatory uncertainties and rising costs are making Australia uncompetitive, and we can now see this in the devastating losses being felt by businesses around the country."

ACA Chief Executive Officer Jill Abel said cruise tourism delivered vital economic benefits to communities all over Australia, bringing opportunities to regional centres and remote communities as well as the major gateways.

"Cruise visits are crucial for a huge range of businesses like local tour operators, attractions, shops, hotels, restaurants, and travel agents," Mrs Abel said. "Ships also support an enormous supply chain that brings many millions of dollars to Australian farmers, food producers, winemakers, transport companies and maritime service providers – the thousands of Australian workers who keep the cruise economy moving."

In August, cruise industry supporters including farmers, travel agents, tourism operators and other industry suppliers united to create the Australian Paddock to Port Alliance, calling for urgent action to support cruise tourism. The Alliance represents many of the thousands of Australian workers who depend on cruise tourism and has highlighted the need for greater regulatory certainty and positive policy settings to attract more cruise tourism to Australia.

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Australia's loss of cruise tourism comes despite record demand for cruise holidays globally. CLIA's most recent Source Market Report, released in April, shows a record 1.45 million Australians took an ocean cruise last year, an increase of 9.5% on the previous year. Globally, a record 37.2 million people took an ocean cruise last year, a 7.5% increase.

At the same time, Australians are increasingly flying to other countries to cruise. With reduced options at home, the number of Australian's cruising in long-haul destinations increased 17% last year.

The Value of Cruise Tourism economic impact assessment for Australia was prepared by AEC Group on behalf of CLIA and the ACA. Its key findings for 2025-26 show:

- A total economic output of A$6.68 billion nationally (down 8.7% since 2024-25), including direct output of A$2.82 billion and indirect/induced output of A$3.87 billion.
- Total employment of 20,021 full-time equivalent positions nationally (down 11.9%), with total wages of A$2.15 billion (down 8.8%).
- A total of 43 Australian ports and destinations visited (down 23.2%), welcoming 1,567 ship visit days (down 7.8%) and 3.1 million passenger visit days (down 13.5%).
- Total direct passenger expenditure of A$1.65 billion (down 9.7%) and direct crew expenditure of A$50.3 million (down 6.3%).
- An average passenger spend per day on shore of A$459 per person (up 4.1%).
- Direct cruise line expenditure of A$1.38 billion (down 7.7%).
- New South Wales remained the biggest beneficiary from cruise tourism with a total economic impact of A$3.87 billion (down 1.6%), which supported 11,774 full-time equivalent jobs.
- Queensland remained the country's second-largest cruise economy, with a total economic output of $1.84 billion (down 9.4%), which supported 5,493 full-time equivalent jobs.
- Victoria recorded a total economic impact of A$287.7 million (down 32.3%), which supported 831 jobs, followed by Western Australia (A$249.2 million, down 32.3%, and 712 jobs), Tasmania (A$120.4 million, down 19.4%, and 347 jobs), and South Australia (A$74.2 million, down 62.6%, and 219 jobs).
- The Northern Territory was the only part of the country to record an increase, with a total economic impact of A$235.5 million, up 14.6%, supporting 643 jobs.

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About Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA)

Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) is the world's peak cruise industry trade association – the unified voice and leading authority of the global cruise community. On behalf of its members, affiliates and partners, the organisation supports policies and practices that foster a secure, healthy, and sustainable cruise ship environment, promoting positive travel experiences for the more than 30 million passengers who have cruised annually. The CLIA community includes the world's most prestigious ocean, river, and specialty cruise lines; a highly trained and certified travel agent community; and a widespread network of stakeholders, including ports & destinations, ship development, suppliers, and business services. CLIA represents more than 90% of the world's ocean-going cruise capacity, as well as 54,000 travel agents and 15,000 travel agencies worldwide. The organisation's global headquarters are in Washington, DC, with regional offices located in North and South America, Europe, and Australasia. For more information, please visit cruising.org.au or follow @CLIAAustralasia on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

About Australian Cruise Association (ACA)

Australian Cruise Association is the co-operative marketing brand for cruise tourism in the Australia and Pacific region and represents a diversity of interests including regional ports, international, national and state tourism agencies, shipping agents, inbound tour operators and companies dedicated to marketing and delivering the region as a world class cruise destination.