



MEDIA RELEASE

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JUNE'S VOLCANO EFFECTS TOURISM NUMBERS

New figures from the *Overseas Arrivals and Departures* data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), released today, reveal the full impact of the Chilean volcano on the Australian tourism industry. These figures show the number of visitors to Australia fell by 3.8 per cent in June 2011 compared with the same month last year.

“The Australian tourism industry is operating in a fiercely competitive global market place, where factors beyond our control – including a fragile global economy – make business conditions tough,” said the Minister for Tourism, Martin Ferguson AM MP.

“Volcanic ash from the Puyehue volcano particularly impacted our New Zealand market grounding planes in both Australia and New Zealand for several days, forcing some passengers to postpone their trips to Australia or cancel them altogether.

“Australia’s tourism industry has a diverse product offering- when natural disasters impact on one part of the industry, we’re dependent on other operators to maintain visitor numbers and yield. The Australian Government has a suite of measures to help tourism operators to be more competitive, more air services agreements, for example, make it more attractive to visit Australia.”

The ABS data shows arrivals from New Zealand were down 3.7 per cent, and Australian departures to New Zealand were down 17.7 per cent in June 2011, compared with June 2010.

Today’s figures also show arrivals were up 24 per cent from China, the 17th consecutive month of growth, and there was some growth in numbers from Singapore (up 5.0 per cent) and Germany (up 2.9 per cent) in June 2011.

Despite the impact of the Puyehue volcano, the number of Australians travelling overseas increased 5.9 per cent.

The Minister Assisting on Tourism, Senator Nick Sherry, said a long-term strategy for tourism is in place to help counteract the effects of factors beyond the industry’s control.

“It’s important to focus on things we can influence, on the important work we’re doing behind the scenes to improve tourism access and make Australia a more attractive destination.

“*TQUAL Grants* worth nearly \$8.5 million are matched by tourism operators to invest in quality products and services, especially in regional areas where tourism contributes so much to the local economy,” Minister Sherry said.

The *Overseas Arrivals and Departures* data are at www.abs.gov.au

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