

November 8, 2013

Hotel leaders build bridges across the Pacific

New head of the American Hotel & Lodging Association highlights need for industry to have a stronger voice in Government



Photo – (l to r) Rodger Powell, MD of TAA, Andrew Robb, Minister for Trade & Investment, Ron Vlasic, Chair of the American Hotel & Lodging Association

American Hotel & Lodging Association Chair, Ron Vlasic, was in Australia recently to meet with his Australian counterparts, to talk at the Australian Tourism Directions Conference in Canberra, and to participate in Tourism Accommodation Australia's annual meetings

Mr Vlasic, who was appointed as Chair of AH&LA last year, is also Regional Vice President of major American hotel group, Kimpton Hotels and Restaurants.

During his week-long visit to Australia he met senior hotel industry leaders in Sydney and Melbourne at events organised by Tourism Accommodation Australia (TAA), which sponsored his visit to Australia to participate in the Tourism Directions forum.

The AH&LA plays a key role in America advocating to Governments on behalf of the hospitality and tourism sector. The travel and tourism industry in the USA generates some US\$1.5 trillion dollars in economic output and supports 7.5 million USA jobs and accounts for 7% of all American exports.

During his Australian visit, Ron Vlasic and TAA's Managing Director, Rodger Powell, caught up with Australia's Cabinet Minister responsible for the Tourism sector, Andrew Robb, the Minister for Trade & Investment.

Reflecting on his visit to Australia, Mr Vlasic said: "I was struck by many similarities that characterise both the Australian and American hotel industries. The significance of the tourism and hospitality sector to both economies is profound, but in some cases its true value is underestimated. It's up to the industry in both countries to highlight the industry's role as a major generator of taxes, export income and jobs.

"It was pleasing to see how vibrant the Australian hotel industry is, despite difficult global economic conditions. Its work in catering for growing Asian tourism – particularly from China – is impressive, as is the range and quality of the hotel product that I witnessed.

"But my enduring memory is the enthusiasm and passion for the industry that hotel managers expressed whenever I met them."

Mr Vlasic said that it was very beneficial and productive to be able to share knowledge and best practices across the Pacific, and he was looking forward to welcoming TAA MD, Rodger Powell, to America this week, where he will address the AH&LA Conference in New York, as well as attend a number of AH+LA committee and Board meetings to provide an Australian perspective to American hoteliers.

Tourism Accommodation Australia (TAA) represents the interests of the 24 Australian Accommodation Chains and over 800 individual members in the Hotel, Serviced Apartment, Integrated Resort, Motel and Vacation Ownership sectors. Servicing owners, operators, managers, franchises and other industry stakeholders, TAA is a division of the Australian Hotels Association, a federally registered organisation of employers representing hotels since 1836.

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