

Domestic tourism set for horror year

Julian Lee
Marketing Editor

THE days of the traditional Australian family holiday have reached a peak, with the market set to remain flat for the next decade as more Australians travel further afield for their annual break, figures show.

The Tourism Forecasting Committee says that domestic tourism will record its worst year since the '90s with the number of nights spent away from home

falling to 261 million – or 16 nights per person – a drop of 13 per cent on the peak of 2002. More than \$2.5 billion on accommodation, meals, tours and attractions will be lost this year alone, forecasts from the federal body show.

A price war in airline tickets is fuelling a boom in short and long-haul travel by Australians, dashing any short-term hopes domestic tourism will make up for the shortfall in international visitors. More than 200,000 fewer

visitors are expected to come to Australia this year, before a recovery next year when numbers are expected to rise by more than 3 per cent.

But the Tourism Forecasting Committee is forecasting a flat domestic tourism market as older Australians – who are among the most active travellers – have seen their savings evaporate and stay at home.

"Domestic tourism is urgently looking for renewed consumer confidence in Australia that will

encourage more people to take leave and take a local holiday," concludes the forecasting committee in its summary.

The committee's chairman, the social demographer, Bernard Salt said outbound travel by Australians will remain "relatively strong while air fares are cheap". In May alone half a million Australians flew abroad – a rise of 2.4 per cent on last year, with Indonesia, New Zealand, America and Malaysia recording the strongest growth.

The committee forecasts that within the next decade 2 1/2 million extra people will fly out of the country for overseas holidays, joining the 5.8 million who already do so.

Travel agents are reporting a spike in overseas trips. Haydn Long, a spokesman for Flight Centre, said: "If you are going on holiday then there's some pretty compelling reasons to go overseas." Fares to Europe have been slashed by up to 40 per cent and increased competition between

carriers for the route to America has pushed some prices to below \$1000. However Mr Long said that when the economy picks up so too will fares.

The managing director of the Tourism and Transport Forum lobby group, Christopher Brown, said the accommodation sector had lost 5600 jobs in the six months to March. "Assuming a similar rate of job losses across the 497,800 employees of the tourism industry, more than 20,000 jobs may already have

gone." Mr Brown said the tourism-dependent regions – in particular Far North Queensland and the NSW North Coast – are being hit hardest.

The Australian Hotels Association said its members in Sydney and Cairns, cities heavily dependent on domestic tourists, were bearing the brunt. "We are seeing a drop-off across the board. It wasn't for the stimulus package then it would have been greater," said AHA spokesman Hamish Arthur.

Former raider is bankrupt, owes \$35m

Margie Blok and Elisabeth Sexton

THE businessman Rodney Price, once of Sydney, latterly of Monaco and now retreated to his birthplace of Adelaide, filed for bankruptcy on Thursday as property deals in Europe and Australia turned sour.

Mr Price was best known for his role as the Australian chief executive of the corporate raiding empire of New Zealander Sir Ron Brierley.

He was a former chairman of the forerunner of Fairfax Media, publisher of the *Herald*, signed a petition saying he had \$300m in two Australian bank accounts and owed creditors in Australia and overseas \$35 million.

The Australian trigger was a demand from the Sydney property developer Andrew Richardson, who signed a \$20 million contract with Mr Price in December for a penthouse with Hyde Park views.

The bankruptcy documents show Mr Price paid just \$100 of the \$2 million deposit. Mr Richardson terminated the contract in May and began chasing Mr Price for the outstanding \$1,999,900 deposit last month.

A court hearing scheduled for yesterday was postponed when Mr Richardson received a call on Thursday from an Adelaide insolvency practitioner, Alan Scott, who was appointed bankruptcy trustee by Mr Price.

Mr Scott said yesterday he would investigate any links between Mr Price's personal affairs and the vast Murrumbidgee rural empire of Four Arrows Group, said to be a family trust.

The bush telegraph was in overdrive yesterday with rumours of a \$100 million sale of six Four Arrows properties to Nick Paspaley of the pearling family. The flagship South Tahara holding – listed for more than \$20 million – failed to sell late last year.

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Networks coy on plans to copy MasterChef format

Emily Dunn
Entertainment Writer

AT THE Hemsworth household in Wahroonga, home to Amanda, 13, and brother Andrew, 11, the kitchen is something of a war zone.

Each weekend, the pair battle it out over baked goods – she makes biscuits and cakes while he fine-tunes his toffee recipe.

But when it comes to what to

'It is not people sitting there and criticising.'

LES SAMPSON, Channel Nine

watch on television, the arguments stop. Both are dedicated fans of Channel Ten cooking reality series *MasterChef Australia*.

"There was an episode where they made wedding cakes, so I made my own profiteroles," Amanda said yesterday, elbow deep in dough at Brasserie Bread, the Banksmeadow bakery that is running school holiday baking classes.

The teacher, Matthew Sobierajski, said he began

watching *MasterChef* after questions from students left him stumped. "I had one kid ask me what ingredients I thought [contestant] Poh put in her Malaysian dish the night before ... I had to say I didn't know," Mr Sobierajski said.

The elimination episode on Thursday drew a series record of more than 2.3 million viewers as contestants Julie Goodwin and Poh Ling Yeow became the two who will contest the final tomorrow night.

Heralded as the TV hit of this year, the show has drawn the kinds of ratings that rival networks envy. But channels Seven and Nine deny they have plans to launch similar shows.

According to Les Sampson, the head of acquisitions at Nine, the success of *MasterChef* has little to do with cooking and much more to do with the "feel-good factor".

"It is not people sitting there and criticising others. They are advising and supporting," he said. "And on that we are looking at programming that fits that feel-good genre. Does it mean that we do another cooking program? I don't know."



In the thick of it ... Koko Van de Laak, 14, Amanda Hemsworth, 13, Andrew Hemsworth, 11, Sam Bell, 12, Nathan Cohen, 12, and Aaron Fenech, 12, at the bakery school. Photo: Simon Alekna

The head of programming at Channel Ten, Beverley McGarvey, said the network had left behind the "mean-spirited" reality television model of shows such as *Big Brother*.

"Reality television doesn't have to be like that ... this is family viewing," Ms McGarvey said.

Channel Ten is already working on a spin-off series of

Celebrity MasterChef and is expected to use the episode tomorrow night to call for contestants for a second series of *MasterChef Australia*.

Every television trend has its

detractors and not everyone at the Banksmeadow baking class yesterday was a *MasterChef* fan.

Friends Tom Scullion and Anthony La Rosa, both 11, do not watch the show.

Nor did they make any claims to be aspiring chefs.

"Weetbix is my limit," Tom said, while Anthony would be happy with "learning how to make toast."

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Kelly Executive

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Total remuneration valued to \$80,746 – \$90,274pa, including salary component \$68,231 – \$76,283pa (HEW Level 8), employer contribution to superannuation and annual leave loading.

Applications close: **Monday, 3rd August 2009.**

Specific enquiries about the Marketing Manager position may be directed to Miss Erin Brown, Administrative Officer (Faculty of Business), on (02) 9739 2937 or at erin.brown@acu.edu.au

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Full-time, fixed term position
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Specific enquiries about the Senior Research and Planning Officer position may be directed to Mr Con O'Donnell, Director of Properties on (02) 9739 2102, mobile 0418 143 923 or at con.o'donnell@acu.edu.au

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