

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr George Souris.**

**Agreement in Principle**

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS** (Upper Hunter—Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts) [3.21 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

I am pleased to introduce the Destination NSW Bill 2011. Tourism and events is a twenty-first century business with the potential to generate billions of dollars for New South Wales and to support tens of thousands of jobs throughout the State, many of them in regional New South Wales.

The New South Wales Government has made a commitment to ensure the tourism and events sector in our State can fully realise its potential and more effectively fulfil its vital role in helping to rebuild the New South Wales economy. The New South Wales Government has announced the creation of Destination NSW, a new statutory authority that will be strongly resourced, better equipped and more focused on working with the State's tourism and major events sector to sell Sydney and New South Wales to the world.

Sydney and regional New South Wales have some unique and spectacular assets including the world's most beautiful harbour; incredibly varied scenery from outback to rainforest to snowfields; some of the world's best beaches and coastline; and destinations that uniquely represent the Australian way of life and the culture and history of Aboriginal people. These assets have been dealt with in an ad hoc or piecemeal fashion for too long. There has also been a distinct lack of cohesion between our success in acquiring events, our strategies to enhance them, and our marketing and promotion activities in attracting visitors to New South Wales.

Insufficient notice has been paid to industry and the sector has been under-resourced. This Government is determined to change that. That is why, as well as establishing Destination NSW, we have established the Visitor Economy Taskforce. The taskforce will be charged with developing a strategy to double tourism expenditure in New South Wales by 2020, measured by overnight visitor expenditure. The Visitor Economy Taskforce will comprise the new Chief Executive Officer of Destination NSW, once appointed, and three high-level industry representatives. It will be supported by a broad-based advisory committee that will include government and industry representatives and it will be expected to deliver a long-term strategy and work plan to the Minister for approval within 12 months. The taskforce will have a broad ambit including making recommendations on attracting additional airlines and routes and new ship capacity; proposing innovative approaches to visitation growth and product development; establishing destination development strategies; delivering Crown land tourism development schemes; delivering industry development programs; considering appropriate structures to oversee implementation and execution of the strategy; and

delivering destination branding and event calendars.

The bill establishes a new statutory authority to be known as Destination NSW. We have chosen a statutory authority structure because it is the most suitable structure for an organisation that has strong commercial interests, requires partnerships with private industry and manages valuable government collateral, such as the Sydney and New South Wales brands. Specifically, the new entity will encompass the current functions of Tourism New South Wales; it will include the event acquisition, enhancement and marketing functions currently undertaken by Events NSW; it will take on the role previously assigned to the Greater Sydney Partnership for marketing Brand Sydney; and it will deliver the approved strategies developed by the Visitor Economy Taskforce in conjunction with existing bodies such as Business Events Sydney and Regional Tourism Organisations.

The Destination NSW Bill 2011 requires the abolition of the former corporation Tourism New South Wales, constituted under the Tourism New South Wales Act, 1984. Tourism New South Wales will become a division of Destination NSW. By separate process, we will also wind up Events NSW, which will become a second division in Destination NSW. Members of the former Tourism and Events boards will be eligible to be appointed as members of the board of Destination NSW, at the discretion of the Minister. The existing budgets of Tourism New South Wales and Events NSW, along with an additional funding boost of \$40 million over four years and \$5 million in 2011-12 for Regional Tourism Organisations, will provide resources of \$400 million over the next four years. This will support the tourism and events sector in New South Wales through strategic investments, generating strong economic growth and supporting and creating jobs. It will help realise the sector's full potential in helping the Government and the people of New South Wales rebuild the State's economy.

The functions of Destination NSW are set out in the bill and include brand, partnership and event marketing, including event leveraging and regional relationships; events acquisition, retention, enhancement and leveraging international operations; destination development; stakeholder management and communications; management of Brand Sydney; and a range of other initiatives that support Sydney's global positioning. The bill will establish the board of Destination NSW as a board of management. The board will be accountable for the operations of Destination NSW and the strategies, plans and actions that the organisation will implement to achieve its goals. The board will have an independent Chair and it will include the Chief Executive Officer of Destination NSW, the Director General of the Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services, and industry representatives with the relevant skills and experience in tourism and events.

As Destination NSW will be responsible for events, product, destination, regional investment and economic development programs, it is essential that it operates in the context of broader government priorities. In addition, the organisation will control substantial collateral, such as Brand Sydney and Brand NSW, and public funds of over \$400 million. It is therefore necessary for the Government to have the power to direct the board on strategic issues, including the implementation of the strategies developed by the Visitor Economy Taskforce.

The bill also provides that I can appoint the board of management and remove members from the board. The Chief Executive of Destination NSW will manage and control the agency's affairs, as directed by, and in accordance with, the general policies and strategic direction agreed by the board.

The bill provides for stronger, more focused strategic direction and more effective leadership through a fully coordinated agency covering tourism, visitation and events. It will offer this State a real opportunity to achieve the kind of global and domestic appeal it deserves. As indicated in the legislation, Destination NSW will be expected to demonstrate its effectiveness. It will be required to prepare and deliver corporate and business plans that I will approve. The plans will outline the objectives of key activities and strategies including policies and budgets for achieving the targets and criteria against which the performance of Destination NSW will be assessed. New South Wales now has a real chance to help the tourism and events sector in our State realise its potential and make a full contribution to the task of rebuilding the New South Wales economy. I commend the bill to the House.