

## Out with kitsch in Aussie pitch

By Scott Emerson, National tourism writer  
May 19, 2004

AUSTRALIA will sell itself as having "Baz Lurhmann irreverence" rather than Castlemaine slapstick in a \$360 million tourism campaign that aims to rebrand the nation in the eyes of the world. .

Underpinning the new "brand Australia" is a series of values such as inclusiveness, irreverence, optimism and mateship.

The architects have also focused on Australians being candid, grounded and original, in a plan developed in consultation with some of the nation's leading business identities. Business Council of Australia head Katie Lahey, RM Williams chief executive Hamish Turner and Qantas chairwoman Margaret Jackson, as well as companies such as Southcorp, were among those that helped the Australian Tourist Commission compile the values list along with the use of consumer research.

It concluded Australia was "not just seen, it is lived (inclusive) a serious place that doesn't take itself too seriously (irreverent), and refreshingly free of boundaries and constraints (optimistic)". It is also "a land without strangers (mateship), Australians don't believe in airs and graces (grounded), is the only place that does what it does, in the way that it does (original), and is true and true to its word (candid)."

From these basic "brand values" the ATC created the new "Australia - a different light" campaign, whose centrepiece is a series of commercials that are heavy on emotion while short on the kitsch and Aussie icons such as the Sydney Opera House and Great Barrier Reef that have dominated previous sales pitches.

In what will be the most expensive tourism marketing effort in the world over the next four years, the commercials focus on the light and colour of the country.

They aim to extend "references beyond the reef, roo, and rock and stimulate all the senses", according to the ATC, which developed the campaign for the federal Government.

Federal Tourism Minister Joe Hockey admitted the campaign was a deliberate effort to move the international impression of Australia beyond the "shrimps, wearing shorts on the Harbour Bridge and having a barbie" of the highly successful and much-loved Paul Hogan tourism campaign launched two decades ago.

"They are very different but we need to cut through in the international market place," Mr Hockey said.

Australia will be marketed as an aspirational destination where someone comes for a life experience rather than a holiday.

It will attempt to lure "high-yield" international travellers, choosing quality over quantity of tourist numbers to "inoculate" the \$17billion inbound industry against issues such as terrorism, war and SARS.

The federal Government hopes to get extra marketing leverage for the campaign by forming partnerships with companies that will also use the brand images and themes.

Five of the first six advertisements in the campaign showcase prominent Australians' visions of their homeland - including singer Delta Goodrem, cricket commentator Richie Benaud, poet Les Murray, Aboriginal artist Barbara Weir and British-based television and radio presenter Jonathan Coleman.

The sixth features the voice of British chat show host Michael Parkinson and a painting by late artist Brett Whiteley. In the Weir advertisement, the artist, speaking in her native Arrernte language, quotes from DH Lawrence writing about Australia.

The most humorous of the advertisements has Benaud repeatedly using his trademark expression "maarvellous" to describe Australia.

The advertisements, which will be aired both domestically and overseas, began screening in Australia last night ahead of their international release initially in Britain, Italy and Singapore today.

The Goodrem ads are likely to be recut to include more Asian faces for a Japanese audience, while tourism officials acknowledged the Weir advertisements were unlikely to be used in the growing China market, where little is known about Australia and commercials will need to heavily feature easily identifiable local icons.