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For Media General Information

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Information for your staff

A canvass was made over a period of months of Kokoda Track/Trail tour operator companies to ascertain their interest to be part of an Association to represent operators. All operators were asked if they wished to participate in the formation of such a representative body.

As a result of those widespread approaches, on 23 Nov 2015 in Brisbane, 12 Kokoda Track/Trail tour operators gathered as a first time meet for discussions.

The discussions lead to the resolution from those present to form an Association to represent the bona fide tour operators who lead, guide and work with tour activities along and on the Kokoda Track/Trail and the northern beach, Kokoda connected, battle areas in Papua New Guinea.

This letter is an introduction to our Association and our members.

Attending that inaugural meeting were owners or managers of the following tour companies who operate tours along the Kokoda Track/Trail :

- Kokoda Treks and Tours Pty Ltd
- Our Spirit Pty Ltd
- Getaway Trekking & Adventures
- Australian Kokoda Tours
- Kokoda Spirit
- No Roads
- Back Track Adventures
- Kokoda Trekking
- Kokoda Historical
- Escape Trekking Adventures
- Boomerang Adventures
- On Track Expeditions

The Association is now known as the Kokoda Tour Operators Association (KTOA).

Collectively, these member companies represent 75% of tour (trekker) traffic on the Kokoda Track/Trail – verified by the Kokoda Track Authority’s figures, totalled from their records of Kokoda Trail trekking permits issued for 2015 to date.

Of the member companies, a wealth of experience and knowledge of Kokoda Track/Trail tour operations has been accumulated – reaching as far back as 32 years – from along the Track about the country, landowners and the village communities. From direct observation and connection, there is a deep understanding of practicalities, along with the collective desire to see real benefits to the Kokoda Track communities, built over those years of operations and involvement.

The Association has been formed to fully and appropriately represent the Kokoda Tour operators as a group, not as individuals with individual agendas. Listed below are our Association’s committee contact details for media assistance.

It has been fairly suggested that it is the commercial Kokoda “tour industry” that has brought the Kokoda Track/Trail and beach battle areas to the present prominence of interest in the tourism market place and in Australian national veneration levels. It is also fair to say that this public prominence has been greatly responsible for the flow on attention as exemplified by national agreements and benefits plans currently being applied to the Kokoda Track/Trail areas. Similarly attracted NGO benefits have emerged also.

Information indicates that the Kokoda Track/Trail and attendant fighting areas attract the greater tourists’ percentage of Papua New Guinea’s still burgeoning tourism industry. The tour operators of the Kokoda tourism part of that industry have been the driving force – commercial or otherwise – to achieve these numbers and the present, built up awareness for the Kokoda Track/Trail.

Members of the Association, and others, agree that there has been little – if any at all – consultation with the Kokoda tour industry in the planning, design or operation of any of these emergent well intended development and benefit plans and agreements for the Kokoda Track/Trail and linked areas. Some of these plans have had real impact on operators and the industry.

It is the desire of the Association members to be able to contribute positively to see effective benefits move to the “Track” communities with more frequent success in the future, using our collective experience, observations and knowledge to assist. Communication to the Kokoda industry members by using the Kokoda Tour Operators Association and so leading to discussion and consultation with the industry members, would be seen to be a mutually helpful opening. We welcome approaches to assist and to be consulted.

As part of this desire to contribute more to organisational designs and plans, we have sought the return of the Kokoda tour industry’s place on the Kokoda Track Authority Board. This has been put forward at the recent Kokoda Track Operators’ Forum in

November, in Brisbane – approved in principle at that meeting and we await formal advice to implement.

The Association members have agreed to use our unity to be supportive of positives happening in our areas of interest and to be thoughtful - but well noticed - in any criticism of adverse activity, by media or direct message.

That unity will be applied to Track publicity, including considered public response to any negative incidents connected to the “Kokoda Industry”. We welcome the opportunity to give any media inquiries factual information on behalf of our Association members.

We have agreed to foster the historical values of the Kokoda Campaign and encourage the respect due to the military heritage shared by Papua New Guinea and Australia.

The sovereignty of Papua New Guinea is acknowledged and respected by the Association and members in all our activities.

This letter seeks to establish knowledge of the Association and it’s objectives, including the desire to assist in plans and projects involving the Kokoda Track and the related Northern beach battle areas. Our Association is open to provide information and assistance drawn from our members’ collective experience and knowledge. This availability of knowledge is also extended to the media of any country.

We would also appreciate being kept informed as an Association of matters considered relative to the Kokoda tourism industry, the Kokoda Track, the Northern beach battle areas and the Kokoda communities with whom we interact.

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Yours Faithfully,

Frank H Taylor

President