Your Talking Points

Context

* To maximise your impact, you need to deliver key facts in an organised, concise way.
* The Federal Member of Parliament you are meeting with meets with many local constituents every week and has an extraordinary volume of information to process as part of Parliamentary duties.
* The most effective meetings are those that provide relevant information from a local perspective and have a clear ask for the MP to act on.
* In addition to providing a clear overview, you need to leave time for questions. Most electorate meetings run for just 30 minutes so being organised is important.

Introduction: Why We’re Here

* I appreciate you taking the time to meet with me today.
* As a local business owner operating [Business Name] in [Suburb], I employ [X] people and have been serving our community for [X] years. Like many accredited travel agents, tour operators, and wholesalers in our electorate, my business plays a crucial role in helping Australians travel safely and confidently while keeping money and jobs in our local economy.
* Now more than ever, travellers are turning to accredited travel businesses like mine for support. Whether it’s finding the best travel solutions, dealing with last-minute flight cancellations, securing refunds, or navigating complex itinerary changes, we are the frontline support system for travellers.
* However, many consumers still don’t understand the risks of booking with unaccredited operators—businesses that may not be financially sound, professionally accountable, or able to provide assistance when problems arise.
* We need a public awareness campaign to ensure more Australians understand the importance of booking with accredited travel businesses. This is critical not only for consumer protection but also for sustaining the local travel businesses that keep our economy strong.

Key Issues Affecting Local Travel Businesses

**1. Keeping Local Travel Businesses Strong and Protecting Travellers**

* There are [X] accredited travel businesses in [Electorate], supporting [X] local jobs.
* Travellers are increasingly relying on local travel businesses for expert guidance, protection, and assistance when things go wrong.
* Unaccredited travel providers put consumers at risk—without financial security, professional standards, or support when a problem arises.
* We need your support for a co-funded national consumer awareness campaign to educate Australians on the unmatched safety and benefits of booking with accredited, local travel providers.

**2. Strengthening Airline Competition to Lower Fares and Improve Services**

* Families and businesses in [Electorate] are struggling with rising airfares, up 13% nationally, with some routes soaring 95% but we are paid less because.
* Fewer airline choices mean fewer flights, higher costs, and reduced connectivity for travellers and businesses.
* We need the ACCC to conduct bi-annual market concentration studies and extend airline competition monitoring beyond 2026 to drive down costs and improve service.
* A consumer-focused approach to international air service agreements is needed to ensure better affordability and accessibility.
* We know that every dollar spent on air is not spent with Australian tour operators and this means higher profits for airlines and not small businesses like mine.

**3. Supporting Local Jobs and Workforce Development**

* The travel industry workforce is 72% female, making this an important issue for working women in [Electorate].
* Over 80% of travel businesses report a shortage of skilled workers, making it harder for businesses like mine to hire and grow.
* We need a long-term funding model for traineeship incentives so we can afford to train the next generation of skilled workers in travel and tourism.
* Without this funding we can’t take the time away from servicing our clients train the next generation of travel professionals.
* Aligning federal and state training funding will ensure clear career pathways and keep the industry viable for locals.

**4. Ensuring Fair Payment Systems for Small Businesses**

* Like many travel businesses in [Electorate], I operate on thin margins and rely on surcharges to recover the true costs of electronic transactions.
* Some businesses in our industry are required to hold over $1 million in bonds just to maintain a merchant terminal, an unsustainable burden on small operators.
* We need fairer payment regulations that protect small businesses from rising transaction costs and unfair chargeback risks.

**5. Keeping Industry-Led Regulation Effective**

* Airlines—not travel agents or tour operators—set fare rules and hold consumer funds, yet some airlines are pushing to include agents in the proposed Aviation Industry Ombuds Scheme.
* Businesses like mine already have an effective independent dispute resolution system through ATIA’s accreditation framework. This was scheme was established to align to the ACCC principles and has the support of the consumer group CHOICE
* We need your support to ensure this Ombuds Scheme focuses on airlines and airports, rather than unfairly burdening small businesses like mine with unnecessary red tape.

**Why This Matters**

* Local travel businesses like mine keep money in our community, create jobs, and help travellers navigate a complex travel landscape.
* Without these changes, we risk **higher costs, fewer services, and more job losses** in an industry that supports millions of Australians each year.
* Travellers are increasingly turning to accredited travel businesses for help—but many still don’t understand why accreditation matters. Without action, more Australians will fall victim to unaccredited operators, facing financial risk and lack of support.
* We are not asking for handouts—we are asking for policies that let us compete fairly and continue providing vital services to our community.

**What We Need from You**

**Commit to Supporting Our Election Asks:**

* Champion stronger airline competition to lower fares and improve connectivity.
* Support fair consumer protections that hold airlines accountable—not travel agents—for cancellations and refunds.
* Promote training programs that ensure a pipeline of skilled workers for our industry.
* Back a **co-funded national public awareness campaign** to educate travellers on why booking with accredited travel businesses matters.

**Advocate for Local Travel Businesses in Parliament:**

* Speak with key ministers about these critical issues affecting local businesses
* Engage with your party to push for practical policies that protect small businesses and their customers.

How to deal with Difficult Questions

Agency questions

**Travel agents are almost extinct – why should we support you?**

Quite the opposite in fact.

In 2024 alone, ATIA members booked $13.5 Billion TTV of retail bookings, $11.8 Billion of Corporate Bookings and $5.6 Billion of Land Operations. Typically, at least 70% of all international air sales in Australia are through our members, and over 90% of corporate sales (medium and large businesses), rather than directly through airlines. Whereas with cruises, 73% of travellers use travel advisors to book.

**Don’t most people who use a travel agent travel overseas?**

The expertise and personalized service provided by travel agents ensure that travellers have safe, well-planned trips, makes Australians traveller safe and with dedicated support.

When things go wrong when travelling, it is where an ATIA accredited member really shines and means less government money is spent on helping people.

**Should we also be supporting tour operators?**

Absolutely.

From my experience an Australian tour operator provides the best service to me as a small business owner but also the people we book.

It this collaboration that ensures travellers are safe and supported.

Land supply questions

**Why should I care about businesses who employee most of your employees in another country**

Supporting tour operators who employ people internationally can also lead to job creation within Australia.

It also underscores your commitment to inclusivity and the promotion of cross-cultural understanding, values that resonate strongly with a broad spectrum of the electorate.

**Should we also be supporting travel agents**

Absolutely.

From my experience the travel agents here today provide the best service to me as a small business owner but also the people we support while they are travelling.

It this collaboration that ensures travellers are safe and supported.