Regional Tourism Review

Victoria Tourism Industry Council

Submission

August 2019
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About VTIC

The Victoria Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) is the peak body and leading advocate for Victoria’s tourism and events industry. Our vision is for a globally competitive visitor economy, where Victoria is the leading destination for domestic and international visitors, with must-see attractions, must-do experiences, and an unrivalled calendar of major and business events.

VTIC works to develop and support a professional, profitable and sustainable visitor economy. By improving the business environment, we make it easier for our industry to deliver high quality experiences, products and services to all visitors to Victoria.

VTIC’s role is to provide leadership for the tourism and events industry and support our members through:

- Policy development, advocacy and representation;
- Industry development initiatives; and
- Business Development and support services.

VTIC’s key objectives are to:

- Be recognised as Victoria’s leading independent advocate, policy influencer and representative body for the tourism and events industry;
- Grow a diverse and strong membership base that represents all sectors of the industry;
- Support VTIC’s members through valued and relevant business and industry development services; and
- Operate as a financially sustainable and a well-governed organisation with a best practice work environment.
Introduction

VTIC welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Victorian Government’s Regional Tourism Review. The review is crucial to the future growth of Victoria’s diverse and significant regional visitor economy.

VTIC is well placed to contribute to the Government’s Review with 1,500 businesses in our membership ranks, strong links to industry and extensive networks and affiliations across Victoria.

This submission and its recommendations represent a comprehensive and cohesive industry view on the actions needed to support Victoria’s regional visitor economy to grow into the next decade and beyond.

Since regional tourism affects so many areas within the responsibility of government intersecting across economic, industry and regional development, employment, small business, trade, transport, investment, innovation, infrastructure, environment and resources, education and training, it is crucial there is a whole of government response to the industry consultation that has occurred during the review process.

VTIC stands ready to work with policy makers to implement reforms that secure sustainable growth in the regional visitor economy.

Regional Victoria’s Visitor economy is strong and has potential to grow further

Victoria’s visitor economy is highly diverse and incorporates accommodation, food services, clubs and bars, transport, travel agencies, tour operators, business events, major events, sport and recreation, and arts and culture. Victoria is unique in that it features some of Australia’s most diverse natural and aquatic landscapes, all within proximity to a major metropolis.

Victoria’s visitor economy is strong. The latest performance results show that the total number of visitors to Victoria grew by 11.8 per cent to 27.8 million over the year ending March 2019. Over the same period, the value of Victoria’s visitor economy has grown to $30 billion in total.

Visitation is an important component of Victoria’s regional economies, offering world class nature-based experiences, food and wine, and diverse cultural and artistic experiences. In the
year ending March 2019, visitation contributed a total of $7.5 billion to Victoria’s regions.\(^1\) See figure 1 for a breakdown of visitor spend per region.

Regional tourism is also a major employer with 85,600 jobs located in the regions.\(^2\) Figure 2 provides a breakdown of tourism employment across Victoria’s regions.

*Figure 1. Total tourism spend in Victoria’s regions*

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\(^1\) International Visitor Survey (IVS) and National Visitor Survey (NVS), Tourism Research Australia (TRA), year ending March 2019.

However, there are several challenges to deepening and widening this growth.

Victoria lags other states in terms of the proportion of investment in regional accommodation and experience development and the proportion of regional visitor spending. For the proportion of investment in regional accommodation development, Victoria is 10 per cent below the national average.

Figure 3. Proportion of accommodation developments in regional areas

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3 Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR), Regional Tourism Review Discussion Paper, July 2019
4 Idem
The relative dearth of accommodation investment works against efforts to get visitors to travel further, stay longer and spend more in regional Victoria.

Regional visitors in Victoria proportionately spend seven per cent less than the average for regional Australia (see figure 4). In Victoria, 36 cents of every visitor dollar is spent in the regions, compared to the national average for regional spend of 43 cents, making Victoria the weakest performer across all states.

**Figure 4. Regional visitor expenditure (percentage proportion per dollar)**

Overnight domestic visitors and day-trippers currently drive Victoria’s regional visitor economy. For every dollar that domestic visitors spend in Victoria, 48.5 cents is spent in regional Victoria. However, Victorians remain the biggest market for regional Victoria, which attracts a relatively low number of interstate visitors compared to other states and territories.

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5 Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR), *Regional Tourism Review Discussion Paper*, July 2019
6 Idem
7 National Visitor Survey, Regional Expenditure Model (REX), Tourism Research Australia, year ending March 2019, released July 2019.
The picture on the international front is even more dire. International visitors account for just one per cent of visitors to regional Victoria, compared to nine per cent of overseas visitors to Melbourne. In contrast to domestic visitors, international visitors only spend 6.8 cents of every dollar in our regions when visiting Victoria. That same figure at a national level is an average of 14.5 cents, with states like Queensland and Tasmania seeing regional spend figures above 20 cents.

There is great potential for Victoria’s regional visitor economy to grow. To fully realise this potential, private sector investment in world-class products, experiences and transport solutions needs support and encouragement so that visitors have an even more compelling reasons to visit, stay and spend more in regional Victoria.

For these reasons, the Victorian Government’s review into regional tourism is both timely and critical to the sector’s future performance.

**The Government’s response to the Victorian Government’s Regional Tourism Review can determine future industry success**

On 18 March 2019, the Victorian Government announced its review into regional tourism to better support tourism operators, encourage private investment, create more regional jobs and enhance local communities.

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP (Cabinet Secretary and Member for Macedon) was nominated as the Victorian Government’s Special Adviser to the Regional Tourism Review. Ms Thomas leads the review with support and expertise from the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions.

The Regional Tourism Review aims to shape the course of Victoria’s tourism industry over the next decade. In doing so, it will bring a focus to issues that are holding back growth in Victoria’s regional tourism industry.

On 18 July 2019, the Government released its Regional Tourism Review Discussion Paper to begin consultation with tourism industry stakeholders across the state. As part of this process,

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9 Idem
the Government sought views from local communities and industry on opportunities and challenges via a Discussion Paper encompassing five key themes:

- Strengthening our tourism offering
- Making the most of marketing spend
- Supporting industry
- Enhancing Regional Tourism Boards
- Better coordinating effort

The Review aims to identify and explore actions that Government can take to grow regional tourism across the state. This includes steps to help maximise the potential to attract private investment, boost our international performance and position Victoria effectively with key market segments.

**VTIC's Regional Tourism Working Group**

To inform our submission to the Government’s Review, VTIC convened a Regional Tourism Working Group comprising key industry representatives from across Victoria.

Their input has enabled us to provide a coordinated industry view about important opportunities and the direction needed to help grow Victoria’s regional visitor economy.

Working group members are:

- MCDONALD Matt, Working Group Chair and CEO, Searoad Ferries
- DAVIDSON Charles, Chair of VTIC and Founder and Director of Peninsula Hot Springs
- ABBOTT Peter, CEO, Bendigo Heritage Attractions
- BASTERFIELD Catherine, CEO, Phillip Island Nature Parks
- BURGESS Craig, Director, Murray River Paddlesteamers
- COOPER Tracey, Executive Chair, Mornington Peninsula Regional Tourism Board
- DAY Mark, Chair, Business Events Victoria
- FLAMSTEED Will, COO, Sovereign Hill Museums Association
- FOWLES Matt, Fowles Wine Pty Ltd
- GOLDEN Karen, GM, Belgravia Leisure
- KAYLER-THOMSON Wayne, Chair, Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Board
• LANCIA Roger, GM, Point Leo Estate
• MAMONSKI Jon, Chair, Cultural Tourism Victoria
• MARIANI Felicia, Chief Executive, Victoria Tourism Industry Council (VTIC)
• MYERS John, Director, Dunkeld Pastoral Co and Royal Mail Hotel
• PANDAZOPOULOS, The Hon John, Chair, Destination Phillip Island Regional Tourism Board
• PEACHEY Craig, Executive GM, RACV Leisure
• PYKE Dr Joanne, Director, School for the Visitor Economy, Victoria University
• RETTINO Joe, Partnership Broker, TAFE Gippsland
• ROBINSON Terry, VTIC Director and CEO, Destination Gippsland
• SEABROOK Gene, GM, Deep Blue Hotel and Hot Springs
• WEINZIERL Ron, CEO, Gumbuya World
• WHITBY Nick, COO, Grollo Group
• WHITE Elizabeth, VTIC Director and CEO, Victorian Caravan Parks Association
• WRIGHT Steven, CEO, Big 4 Holiday Parks

The Working Group consulted broadly with the VTIC membership through a series of direct interviews and a comprehensive online survey that canvased tourism business input across the state.

This process enabled detailed consideration of the breadth of issues identified in the Regional Tourism Review Discussion Paper. Reflecting the priorities of Victorian regional tourism businesses, this submission, and its accompanying recommendations, focuses on the following issues:

• Reforms to regional destination planning to support increased investment in regional tourism infrastructure, cultural landscapes and heritage tourism
• Statutory planning and red tape reforms to attract increased private investment in the regional visitor economy
• New KPIs to measure the performance and contribution of regional tourism
• Changes to operating structures to support the regional visitor economy
• Measures to strengthen tourism education and training and attract and retain more skilled workers in regional Victoria.

The adoption of these priorities and accompanying recommendations by governments and industry will keep Victoria’s regional visitor economy competitive. It will support the industry to operate more efficiently and capitalise on its strengths to grow visitor numbers and expenditure across Victoria.
Executive Summary

Victoria’s visitor economy is strong and diverse.

Tourism in regional Victoria is key to this strength, generating $7.5 billion in economic activity and directly and indirectly employing over 85,000 people.

The industry supports small businesses and contributes to the resilience, diversity and vibrancy of local economies across the state.

There is great potential for Victoria’s regional visitor economy to secure deeper, wider and more sustainable growth, but this will not happen by chance.

Regional tourism businesses and partner organisations are taking the lead, becoming more strategic in their planning, marketing and promotion. They are becoming more innovative in the way they provide products and services to their visitors.

The role of policy makers is to support these efforts, helping our regions and their individual businesses navigate opportunities and challenges as they arise.

A sense of urgency must apply to this task. It begins with ensuring the economic and regulatory environment is conducive to tourism business growth and decision-making.

It also requires a shared vision for Victoria’s regional visitor economy and a collaborative and strategic approach to realising that vision. It requires reforms that strengthen our diverse tourism offerings and the way they are marketed.

It requires measures that encourage increased private sector investment in world-class products, experiences and infrastructure, giving travellers an even stronger reason to visit, stay longer and spend more in our great state.

It requires steps to strengthen partnerships and ensure industry and local government remain at the forefront of efforts to harness and coordinate regional tourism.

Importantly, it also requires support to grow the capabilities of tourism operators and their workforces.

While action in these interconnected areas will not guarantee success, it will give regional tourism businesses the best chance of staying competitive.
CHAPTER 1

Reforms to regional destination planning are needed to support increased investment in tourism infrastructure, cultural landscapes and heritage tourism

Victoria’s regional visitor economy has many strengths.

Regional Victoria is rich in unique natural and cultural landscapes whose potential has yet to be fully realised.

The proximity of regional Victoria to its metropolitan centres is broadly perceived as a strength, but this is also a double-edged sword that sees a disproportionate share of visitation to regions within a two-hour distance from Melbourne as the state’s primary entry point. While there is a need to better leverage Melbourne’s prime positioning to disperse visitors across the state, Victoria can do more to create regional hubs from which to disperse visitors to regions further afield.

As visitor numbers increase and technology advances, the demands of tomorrow’s visitors to Victoria for unique experiences will become more varied and diverse.

Meeting future demand will require careful strategic destination planning, investment in game-changing infrastructure that will attract visitors to our regions and coordinated state-wide demand-driving activities. All of these will be vital to growing Victoria’s regional visitor economy.

Regional Victoria Needs a Strategic Destination Masterplan for Victoria

Unlike other states, Victoria does not currently have an overarching 10-year strategic plan to manage the growth of the destination and dictate the supply side needs to maximise the future of our visitor economy. To be successful, such a plan needs to have support and buy-in from key stakeholders as a blueprint to drive our future and create a much-needed focus for our efforts.

Regional plans, performance targets and related KPIs should all be driven by the Destination Masterplan. This document should serve to frame the future visitor economy for Victoria and
inform the state’s response to the sharing economy, pressures from environment and climate change and changes in future travel patterns and modes of transport.

At present, the net economic contribution to Victoria’s regions lags national averages. At the very least, we need to establish targets and action plans that will see us meet the national average of key tourism metrics for international spend and visitation in regional Australia.

Tourism strategies and plans in other states include the:

- The Tasmanian Visitor Economy Strategy 2015-2020 (Tourism 2020 Strategy is now being revised out to 2030 for release shortly)
- New South Wales State-wide Destination Management Plan
- South Australian Visitor Economy Sector Plan 2030
- Western Australia Caravan and Camping Action Plan
- Queensland Planner’s Guide to Managing Caravanning, Camping and RV’s

There needs to be a commitment from Government to developing a long-term strategic plan for growing Victoria’s visitor economy. This plan must be created and delivered in partnership with industry. The longevity and effectiveness of Tasmania’s Tourism 2020 Strategy has been that it is a document created by, endorsed by and subscribed to by the State Government of Tasmania, Tourism Tasmania and the Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania.

A Strategic Destination Masterplan for Victoria is vital for coordinating visitation across the state to maximise benefits to communities and the industry. It is needed to drive a strategic and coordinated development vision for the state.

The Masterplan must have a focus on the visitor’s perspective and have a strong emphasis on enhancing the visitor experience in regional Victoria.

The Masterplan should set a pathway to capture the opportunities of future visitor trends. In this context. The Masterplan should identify and address:

- A strategic long-term vision for key experiences in each region that will respond to visitor trends of the future
- The game-changing infrastructure needed to support those experiences
- The need for a platform to coordinate statewide tourism marketing across Victoria’s regions
• Gaps in industry capabilities and resources needed to deliver the experiences sought by tomorrow’s visitors.
• Mechanisms to ensure that maximum benefit is derived by local communities through the growth of regional visitor economies.

The Masterplan should serve as a guide for Government funding for events, both major and business, along with product and infrastructure development. It should also address the visitor economy’s role in economic growth, environmental management and indigenous participation. Figure 5 provides a hierarchy of how the Masterplan should inform other plans and strategies.

**Cultural and nature-based tourism**

Victoria’s natural landscapes are a strong asset regionally, but we lag other states in creating unique and compelling experiences in and around our national parks.

Victoria is currently the only state without a nature-based tourism strategy.

Victoria is also one of the only states to have restricted tourism development on public land by reducing the maximum term of leases in national parks to 21 years. While such restrictions are in place, private investment in Victoria’s nature-based tourism will remain sub-optimal. Without enabling more substantial new private investment, a nature-based tourism strategy for Victoria will be ineffective.

Victoria’s regional visitor economy, however, extends well beyond nature-based tourism. Victoria has a rich cultural heritage and diverse cultural landscapes that present large untapped opportunities.

Cultural tourism is one of Australia’s and the world’s fastest growing tourism segments with the sector growing 23 per cent over the past five years, compared to total tourism growth of 19 per cent.

According to IVS figures for the year-ending March 2019, international cultural visitors stayed 25 per cent longer and spent 20 per cent more than other visitors to Australia.

• More than 8.5 million international tourists came to Australia during this period, of which over 4.5 million (53 per cent) engaged with culture, heritage and the arts while here.
• International cultural visitors spent $28.4 billion, representing 64 per cent of the $44.3 billion total spent in Australia by all international tourists over the same period.

Visitors to regional Victoria are increasingly seeking opportunities to connect with local communities, engage in cultural experiences and understand the unique history and heritage of the destination. As evidenced by the statistics, cultural experience seekers spend more time and more money in destination. Regional drawcards like the Wall to Wall Festival in Benalla, Silo Art Trail in various locations across the state, Bendigo Art Gallery, Regional White Night series and Lost Trades Fairs all demonstrate the power and attraction of cultural experiences.

As such, enhancing cultural tourism holds enormous potential for regional Victoria. Unlocking the benefits requires a strategy that will attract and support private investment to leverage Victoria’s rich cultural heritage, cultural landscapes and indigenous cultures.

*Figure 5. Hierarchy of plans and strategies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGIC DESTINATION MASTERPLAN FOR VICTORIA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regional Heritage and Cultural Landscapes Tourism Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature-based Tourism Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTB Regional Destination Management Plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Area Plans</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What members tell us about opportunities to promote Indigenous cultural histories and heritage sites across regional Victoria
Indigenous cultural tourism is such a massively ignored segment in too many areas. Victoria needs to ensure that cultural sites and assets are properly protected and valued more appropriately. Further there needs to be a major initiative to better support Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and cooperatives to enhance skills, capacity and opportunity to respond properly this undervalued and under resourced sector. – Gippsland

The Murray Region has as much potential as the top end of Australia for tourism ventures. – Murray

We are working on important indigenous trails such as the Bataluk Trail and Tatungalung Trail. The gallery in our region is working on increasing indigenous art presence. – Gippsland

Living cultural histories should be an essential part of our future. Capturing of lost languages, celebrating the innovations and cultural knowledge, trades and lost art forms. – Goldfields

The Mornington Peninsula is steeped with indigenous and cultural moments in time that reflect both sides of human nature and all are important stories to be told. The advantage of the Peninsula is that there are still many people directly connected to these stories and where they occurred. A trail that tells these stories would be an asset that the region could be most proud of. – Mornington Peninsula

**Tourism infrastructure**

Investment in regional transport and other tourism infrastructure is needed to convert the proximity of Victoria’s regions into a strong competitive advantage for the visitor economy.

Tourism infrastructure is typically thought to include assets such as national parks, public lands, waterways and visitor facilities. However, roads, rail, regional airports, and mobile and broadband connectivity also constitute key infrastructure for the sector.

Game changing infrastructure is needed to support the experiences that global consumers are seeking now, and into the future. The infrastructure should facilitate the movement of visitors across Victoria and create compelling reasons to travel further afield.

Victoria needs better connectivity both within and between regional areas, for which effective rail, bus, ferry services and road infrastructure are crucial.
A lack of reliable, efficient and affordable public transport options and limited services in many regional areas means many visitors must rely on their own transport. This affects spending and can detract from the overall visitor experience, particularly in wine regions where the consequences of drink driving impact the visitors’ ability to experience different cellar doors, restaurants and farm gates. Regional transport also challenges the ability of workers to travel to work, adding to the skilled worker shortfall that exists in many regional locations.

At a time when the death toll on regional roads is two-thirds worse than Melbourne's, the poor state of many regional roads must be addressed as a priority in order to improve the safety of all drivers and take pressure off local roads, especially in peak seasons.

Many regional locations also lack enough bike tracks and footpaths to connect visitors with key attractions and experiences across regional areas.

Regional airports are another piece of key infrastructure. They are vital for creating new hubs for visitor dispersal. Facilitating direct services from Sydney to Bendigo and international direct services to from Kuala Lumpur to Avalon Airport are critically needed first steps. Consideration should also be given to expanding capacity into East Gippsland to service towns such as Sale, Bairnsdale and Lakes Entrance.

Availability of mobile and broadband connectivity is an issue that continues to impact many regional areas. Service interruptions affect the ability of visitors to navigate Victoria’s regions, find attractions and connect with businesses and events. Regional businesses are also impacted as interruptions hamper communication with customers and impede the ability of operators to transact electronic payments. For example, there are significant mobile black spots along major touring routes like The Great Alpine Road, which is a primary link from Gippsland to NE Victoria. Mobile signal disruption is equally commonplace in closer-in regions like the Mornington Peninsula and Yarra Valley.

Coastal towns in Victoria also require significant Government investment to protect coastal assets. Without the proper mitigation for changing climate conditions, these coastal areas will ultimately be void of private investment development. For an example of the commitment to address these challenges, please see (at Attachment A) a motion submitted by the Bass Coast Council via the annual Australian Local Government Association National General Assembly.
Development of soft infrastructure for the industry also needs to be addressed. The lack of a coordinated state/regional digital strategy and adequate resourcing for industry digital capacity building are impediments for regional businesses. Greater digital capacity will boost regional destination marketing and improve engagement with global consumers. It will also help improve industry participation and contribution to campaigns and promotional activities.

What members tell us about tourism infrastructure in regional Victoria

Transport

No trains, limited bus routes. – High Country

Overseas tourists are unable to reach our destination from Melbourne airport by public transport. There is simply no public transport for any of our visitors or staff to use. – Mornington Peninsula

Arriving by public transport is an absolute nightmare and whilst there you have no ability to see anything the Grampians has on offer because it is not accessible without a car. – Grampians

Car remains only realistic form of travel. – Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges

Virtually no public transport and quality of roads is substandard. – Phillip Island

Signage

Improved tourism signage is needed not only for roadways but also for attractions and accommodation. – Daylesford and Macedon Ranges

Poor signage and no booking office for tours and activities in the area. – Grampians

Other infrastructure

Internet is poor (wireless NBN) and mobile phone reception is poor. – Mornington Peninsula

Need of more public toilet amenities: signage & beautify the areas to present well for guests – Great Ocean Road

There is a lack of appropriate bike paths and walk paths connecting major landmarks. – Daylesford and Macedon Ranges
Marketing and regional events

A strategic approach to how we maximise our major event program in Melbourne to encourage regional visitation is lacking. Brand Melbourne has great appeal in attracting interstate and overseas visitors with our major events calendar, but we need a structured approach for how these events can be leveraged to better connect our regional experiences.

When in the regions, visitors currently miss out on experiencing the full extent of what regional Victoria has to offer due to a lack of easily accessible information.

The current structure of ‘hard’ administrative boundaries for Regional Tourism Boards (RTBs) is at odds with the movement of visitors through regional Victoria.

These boundaries impede coordinated marketing between RTBs for key assets, experiences and events and do little to encourage cross-regional collaboration and industry cooperative investment.

As a result, disconnected ‘Gateway’ marketing can result in missed opportunities for regions and diminished visitor engagement due to a lack of awareness about the attractions and experiences that exist en route to key destinations.

There is also little advertising in each location for events and publicly owned assets that could be big drawcards for the region. One reason for this is that a major proportion of tourism marketing in regional locations is undertaken by the private sector, which rightly tends to focus on the offerings of individual businesses.

The introduction of cooperative marketing programs supported by government agencies and industry could incentivise better promotion of regional assets and events as part of coordinated joint marketing campaigns. It could also assist regional businesses by providing them and their staff with information about complementary attractions that would be of interest to visitor groups.
State-wide marketing is vital for Victoria’s regional visitor economy. However, it needs to do more than just highlight and promote Victoria’s ‘hero’ destinations. A recommended approach is to shift focus to promoting experience-based tourism offerings centred around the passion points of our visitors. For example, Sri Lanka Tourism Marketing promotes itineraries based on passions for heritage, untamed wilderness, well-being and rejuvenation, romantic landscapes and activities.\textsuperscript{11}

The Great Southern Touring Route and Sydney Melbourne Touring are both excellent Victorian examples for visitors who are passionate motoring enthusiasts. State-wide marketing could build on itineraries like these to create opportunities for cross-promotion within and between regions. It would also better support our various visitors to seek out experiences and explore our regions more deeply.

Tourism Australia’s ‘Signature Experiences’ program is a prime example of marketing to consumers’ passion points. This program is used in global markets and taps into the country’s great experiential-based assets: Great Walks of Australia, Great Fishing Adventures of Australia, Great Golf Courses of Australia, Luxury Lodges of Australia, Cultural Attractions of Australia, Ultimate Winery Experiences of Australia, Australian Wildlife Journeys and Discover Aboriginal Experiences. While this program is designed for international engagement, the philosophy is the same and should be adopted as a way of harnessing Victoria’s experience-based tourism assets.

http://www.tourism.australia.com/content/dam/assets/document/1/7/5/3/z/2012831.pdf

Bringing together the best visitor experiences from across Victoria, regardless of their geographic locations, would create new and compelling platforms by which to connect with consumers both here and abroad.

\textsuperscript{11} https://www.srilanka.travel/suggested-itineraries
Chapter 1 Recommendations

Masterplanning and infrastructure

1. Create a Strategic Destination Masterplan for Victoria that links to existing plans across Victoria’s regions. It should set a strategic vision for the visitor economy, addressing demand-side and supply-side needs and opportunities for the next 10 years.
   a. This Masterplan should incorporate any approach to a nature-based tourism strategy for the state.
   b. Commitment to creating this Masterplan is urgently required to prioritise experience/product development and accommodation investment that will engage and inspire our visitors and local communities.

2. Develop a Regional Heritage and Cultural Landscapes Tourism Strategy aimed at attracting investment to leverage regional Victoria’s rich cultural offerings.

3. Create a competitive bid fund supporting private investment in regional infrastructure and assets to improve the accessibility and sustainable development of Victoria’s key regional attractions and accommodation.

Marketing and visitor servicing

4. Plan state-wide marketing and events around regional itineraries to maximise visitor experiences and promote destinations throughout regional Victoria, capturing the passions people travel for, not just a geographic region.

5. Apply the philosophy of Tourism Australia’s Signature Experiences as a way of promoting Victoria’s experience-based tourism assets.12

6. Establish a structured cooperative marketing program that would assist Victorian tourism businesses to promote publicly managed natural assets and attractions along regional visitor itineraries.

12 http://www.tourism.australia.com/content/dam/assets/document/1/7/5/3/z/2012831.pdf
7. Establish a Flagship Gateway Visitor Servicing Centre in Melbourne that acts as a hub for sharing information, creating itineraries and encouraging dispersal of visitors to regional Victoria.

8. Ensure regional Victoria continues to be well represented in Visit Victoria campaigns, with a focus on building awareness in international markets for the experiences of regional Victoria.
CHAPTER 2

Better statutory planning and streamlined processes are needed to attract increased private investment in the regional visitor economy

Improving statutory planning approvals

Efficient statutory planning and business approvals processes underpin a competitive environment for doing business, providing confidence and certainty for investors.

Unfortunately, this is not the experience for many regional tourism businesses. While Victoria offers a wide array of attractive and easily accessible natural and cultural assets, it lags other states that have better planning and approvals processes with less red tape and inhibitors to investment. As a result, tourism investment in strategic assets and their maintenance is below that needed to facilitate sustainable industry growth and national competitiveness.

Many tourism businesses are small to micro and struggle to understand and navigate the complex statutory planning processes without costly professional assistance.

Planning regimes are inhibiting the attraction of private investment in infrastructure and experiences. There are not too many other industries that have as much interest from private investors as tourism; but these investors are not supported in the same way as other industries through the planning process. This issue not only impedes the attraction of investment in new regional experiences, but also deters investment in upgrades and improvements to existing infrastructure, particularly on public land.

Delays in planning approvals also result in significant delay costs for applicants, comprising:

- Rent
- Financing costs
- Staff costs
- Professional assistance to resolve the delay
- Lost revenue and sales
These costs can be very significant and can make or break a project. They demonstrate that reform of the statutory planning system is required. There is no strategic planning framework to support our regions and a failure to identify the visitor economy as an objective in planning legislation and governance at a state, regional and local level. In short, a new regulatory culture must be adopted to understand business processes and the burden created by regulatory compliance. There must be a commitment from all levels of government to provide a 'tourism industry / business-friendly' operating environment within Victoria.

Victoria is already perceived by many tourism developers as being ‘closed for business’ with many indicating it simply falls into the ‘too hard basket’ when other states are so open and amenable to attracting tourism investment. Changes are needed immediately to arrest this impression and to provide investors with the surety and support that is being provided by other states.

**Survey Results**

A strong theme that emerged from our member survey was that planning and other red tape administered or imposed by local governments and other agencies is a significant problem for regional tourism businesses.

Our survey asked members about the ease of navigating statutory planning process. Figure 6 shows that the vast majority (69%) of survey respondents rank this as a 5 or below (with 10=Excellent and 1=Extremely poor).

*Figure 6. Ease of navigating statutory planning processes in Victoria*
What members say about the burden of navigating statutory planning processes

*The Great Ocean Road hinterland used to have various galleries & tearooms which created alternate activities/routes. Planning overlays have restricted the growth of these types of businesses.* – Great Ocean Road

*Our shire is terrible and offers little support, instead they make local lives difficult and so much time caught up in the planning processes and compliance.* – Great Ocean Road

*Walhalla is a town which is covered by a range of heritage, fire and flood overlays in the planning scheme managed by Baw Baw Shire. The complexity of the planning controls makes development particularly difficult.* – Gippsland

*Current changes to the Victorian Building Authority and planning make navigating red tape challenging at best, frustrating and time consuming and prohibitive at worst.*

*Our experience with planning and permits and this area is very time consuming and expensive.* – Grampians

*Wages, energy, too much red tape are just a few of the priorities we need assistance with* – Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges

Regional tourism planning approvals are also complicated by the fact that there are several referral authorities that may need to be involved in planning approval for a new tourism project. The broad range of referral authorities with varying responsibilities and remits makes it very difficult for project proponents to fully understand the nature and extent of required regulatory approvals before making an application. These authorities include:

- Water, drainage or sewerage authorities
- Electricity supply or distribution authorities
- Country Fire Authority
- Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change (Requiring Access Over Crown Land)
- The relevant gas supply authority
- Executive director specified in the Heritage act 2017
- Environment Protection Authority
• Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change (Native Vegetation)
• VicRoads
• Relevant Floodplain Management Authority
• Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation
• Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police
• The National Trust of Australia (Victoria)

When planning a new business or business expansion, many SME tourism businesses may be unaware of the large number of associated regulatory hurdles imposed by referral authorities that are embedded in the statutory planning process. For example, the ability of the CFA or water authorities to block or impose conditions on a project relating to fire access or sewerage capacity.

Tourism businesses also report significant delays associated with the approval and installation of utilities.

Work undertaken to streamline planning processes within the Latrobe Valley Economic Growth Zone has been very successful in driving increased investment in the region and shows what can be achieved when a concerted effort is made to tackle planning red tape.

Reducing red tape

Regional tourism businesses in Victoria are required to obtain approvals for several licences and permits in order to establish operations, operate and expand. Reducing the burden of approval processes is a key step in making Victoria a better place to do business.

Regulatory barriers can prevent small tourism businesses from starting altogether or influence their choice of where to locate. Streamlining local government interactions with business provides clear benefits and cost savings to new and existing small businesses which can be reinvested in business expansion and jobs growth.

There are currently antiquated definitions within the identified Green Wedge that need to be revisited urgently as we are losing investment in tourism experiences in relevant regions. An
example of the difficulties encountered by business in a designated Green Wedge Zone is provided at Attachment B.

Tourism businesses interact with local governments in a multiple of ways, with local governments acting as regulator, service provider and purchaser.

Local governments regulate and provide a broad range of approvals for business activities, including food premises, planning and building, environmental health, signage and footpath trading, and festivals and events.

They provide services to businesses such as economic development, waste collection, local roads and footpaths and parking.

Many businesses require multiple local government licenses and approvals to conduct their trade (e.g. building, planning and food safety and footpath trading).
Small tourism businesses starting out often struggle to find out what approvals are required and what information is needed to submit a successful application. Some businesses need to submit multiple applications to the same local government and approvals are often delayed due to the way councils process applications.
The Victorian Government’s Better Approvals Project is reducing the time it takes for a small business to get the regulatory permits they need while also reducing the administrative burden on both business and councils.

VTIC is a strong supporter of the program as it makes life easier for businesses while also achieving productivity gains for councils. We have been working closely with Small Business Victoria, the Commissioner for Better Regulation and business members to promote the take up of the program among local governments.

One of the key elements of the program relates to the establishment of business concierge services within local governments that help get businesses set up and trade as soon as possible. The concierge hosts pre-application meetings with specialist council staff to ensure applicants have all the necessary information before submitting their application.

While the roll out of the program is progressing (20 completed, 22 underway), it is limited to only one area of local government interaction with business (regulatory approvals) and many local governments have yet to participate.

Regional tourism businesses would benefit from both the completion of the roll out of the current program as well as an expansion of the program focusing specifically on streamlining approvals for tourism businesses in regional areas. For example, an expanded program could focus on streamlining all local government approvals required to start or expand a regional tourism business while also assisting business throughout the process to ensure the best chance of success for their applications. The Victorian Chamber of Commerce has a proven track record in working with local government and industry on the Better Approvals Project and would welcome the opportunity to support the expansion of this work into the tourism sector.

The prevalence of small businesses within our sector explains why the red tape issue is such a burning issue for Victoria’s Visitor Economy. With the complexities of navigating the local and state planning processes, coupled with the multiple Ministerial offices, government agencies and authorities that all have an influence on the success of our sector, a Visitor Economy Commissioner should be created to coordinate more effective engagement pathways across
government and its agencies. The structure would be similar to how the Victorian Skills Commissioner operates across government agencies with a Visitor Economy Advisory Committee formed as the Industry Advisory Panel to feed into this process.

**Commercial leases on public land**

In Victoria many tourism assets are partly or wholly owned by Government and investments on crown land are hampered by leases that are shorter in duration than those available in other states.

Commercial leases on public land are managed by a range of land managers who are appointed as a committee of management or trustees under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978. Land managers include local government, statutory bodies or government agencies such as Parks Victoria. The *Leasing Policy for Victorian Crown Land 2018* provides a consistent approach to commercial leases on Crown Land.

Inconsistency and uncertainty are raised as real and ongoing issues by member businesses operating on public land, as is the conflict between government land managers’ dual purpose of protecting and conserving public land and facilitating visitation.

Businesses highlight that in addition to the initial investment associated with developments on Crown Land, there is a need for the ongoing maintenance and upgrade of these assets, together with the provision of supporting services. Failure to prioritise maintenance creates an impediment to industry growth.

Lease uncertainty results in underinvestment in asset maintenance which impacts on the tourism experience for visitors. We want to encourage high quality tourism assets that are managed sustainably, providing sustainable opportunities for tourism operators and an improved visitor experience.

We consider that the commercial operation, maintenance and upgrade of many tourism related state assets can most efficiently managed via the private sector through the development of more commercially realistic lease structures.

A problematic issue for Victoria relates to the maximum term of leases in national parks. This has been a contentious issue for some years with the previous Government passing legislation
in 2013 extending the maximum term of leases in national parks to 99 years and the Andrews Government subsequently passing legislation to reduce the maximum term to 21 years.

Tourism operators recognise that a strong social license to operate is a crucial step for the tourism industry to secure the duration of Crown Land leases needed to allow for profitable and sustainable investment. It is important to ensure that longer leases contain the appropriate conditions to assure communities that tourism developments are sustainable and will contribute to the long-term prosperity of local economies.

Currently, a lack of tourism facilities on or near national parks diminishes their value to the community and visitors.

Increasing private investment in tourist facilities in national parks will improve the investment climate for new tourism development in Victoria.

This will require increasing the maximum duration of leases in national parks and a review of existing leasing requirements. Current maximum lease terms of 21 years do not provide operators with enough time to realise a return on investment, meaning that many developments that could increase visitation and access to national parks and deliver economic and social benefits, do not go ahead.

The limit to 21-year leases in national parks is simply not commercially viable. Private investors seeking commercial funding arrangements cannot source the necessary capital as their return on investment cannot be achieved within this limited time period. Many assets need to be depreciated over 50 years, but this is incongruous with the term of an available lease being only 21 years.

There is also the issue that following the end of the lease term, the current leasee is required to tender on the same terms as any other proponent with no consideration for the significant financial investment in infrastructure and brand equity that has been made over the term of their lease.
Chapter 2 Recommendations

1. Establish a fast track process for the tourism project planning applications that addresses barriers to investing across regions, on public land or in developments that involve multiple agencies, or multiple land use categories. This must be addressed as a matter of urgency. Priority action must be given to ensuring that the planning and commercial leasing system is conducive to private sector tourism investment, taking into account the nature of the industry and characteristics of investments in the industry.

2. Ensure commercially realistic lease structures for crown land and extend maximum length of leases in national parks to at least 49 years. This will ensure the continued commercial investment in maintaining and upgrading assets to a high standard that often does not occur with shorter lease terms.

3. Create a Commissioner for Victoria’s Visitor Economy. The role of this position would be to provide a key facilitation capability across the state and ensure all the various bodies that have the ability to drive success for the sector are working collaboratively to achieve agreed goals.
   a. A Visitor Economy Advisory Committee should be formed as part of this process to advise of emerging issues, engage across Government and monitor success against agreed KPIs.

4. Roll out the Better Approvals Project to all remaining regional councils.

5. Expand the Better Approvals Project focusing specifically on streamlining approvals for tourism businesses and providing a concierge service to assist with applications. For example, an expanded program could focus on streamlining all local government approvals required to start or expand a regional tourism business.


7. Fast track the Red Tape Commissioner’s current Planning and Building Approvals Process Review.
8. Allow businesses in the Mornington Peninsula Shire and Yarra Ranges Shire to access the lower regional payroll tax rate and duty concessions for the purchase of regional commercial and industrial properties.

9. Establish a dedicated business engagement unit within DEWLP and Parks Victoria to assist businesses investing on Crown Land and act as an internal champion for these projects.

10. Develop a tourism investment prospectus for individual regions. These would highlight relevant economic and workforce characteristics, available land and supporting infrastructure, regulatory requirements, development incentives and market opportunities.

11. Align investment attraction and infrastructure planning for regional tourism with wider regional and state government infrastructure plans and agendas. Relatedly, require project proponents and planners to consider ways in which tourism infrastructure can contribute positively toward the achievement of broader regional objectives such as localised employment opportunities or workforce or industry restructuring.

12. Enhance and refine the availability of data at a regional and local level to better inform tourism planning and investment decision making.

13. Undertake a review of planning and zoning regulations in Interface Councils to recognise that tourism developments can provide a meaningful connection between rural and urban areas that can also have economic and environmental benefits to local economies.
CHAPTER 3

New KPIs are needed to measure the performance and contribution of regional tourism

Timely and accurate market analysis and research, appropriately accessible to industry, is crucial to the industry’s ability to identify growth opportunities early and drive investment.

Market analysis is important but for many businesses (particularly SMEs) the associated costs with obtaining and interpreting information can be prohibitive. As such, government support is needed to make existing data more affordable and accessible to the industry and community.

Greater support for market analysis and research is key to the growth of Victoria’s tourism industry.

Yield, dispersal and overnight stays data

As the Victorian Government’s focus has moved towards a ‘direct jobs creation’ metric, tourism is overlooked compared to many other sectors due to the fact that it is a significant driver of ‘indirect’ jobs.

There is inadequate inclusion of regional outcomes and dedicated KPIs in Victoria’s Visitor Economy Strategy. This has led to decades of underinvestment and inadequate demand and supply from government resourcing.

Development and assessment of regional marketing campaigns based on visitor number metrics – rather than yield, dispersal and overnight stays – only compounds the issue.

Data on visitor yield, dispersal and overnight stays for Victoria is not currently captured.

The ABS’s Survey of Tourist Accommodation data which provided accommodation occupancy and yield statistics, has not been available since 2010. The data was used by the tourism industry and aviation sector to inform investments in business and route development and substantiate marketing decisions.

The Caravan Industry Association Australia (CIAA), provides a research service which addresses the data gap for their segment of the visitor economy sector. Each year, CIAA
releases around 50 monthly snapshots, 40 quarterly snapshots and several research projects providing insights and key performance data for their industry.

An equivalent research service for the whole of Victoria’s visitor economy is strongly needed.

We want to see more direct measures on the performance of tourism in regional areas, as it relates to intrastate, interstate and international visitation. We cannot continue to merely measure the overall numbers of people visiting the state and how much they spend as being an accurate reflection of performance.

Melbourne has done the heavy lifting for Victoria’s growing visitor economy for too long now and we must implement KPIs that better reflect the performance of regional Victoria and its contribution to growth.

There needs to be a deeper investment in research to drive our strategy formation. Research is needed that goes beyond consumer market testing and performance of advertising campaigns. We need to reinstate our commitment to research that considers future trends in travel experiences and destination-based perception studies to inform business development activities. The consumer needs to be at the centre of our destination planning.

**Data on tourism’s contribution to community development and well-being**

It is important that tourism is strongly connected to economic and social development measures for regional Victoria.

We need to reframe what tourism means to growing the viability of regional economies and its contribution to liveability.

**Metrics for monitoring the progress of government implementation**

Metrics need to be developed to drill down into the areas of success and hold key stakeholders (RTBs, VV, Local Govt) to account for their achievement.

Our key metrics need to be expanded to track progress in achieving strategic objectives. This should include metrics such as the number and value of visitor economy planning approvals by regional area, approval times, the private investment pipeline, and the number of new leases issued on Crown Land.
Regional specific outcomes must be identified and measured against key outcomes of the Destination Masterplan.

**Research data (lack of data and publicly available research)**

Tourism Victoria used to have a dedicated research arm that was accessible to industry and provided insights beyond the TRA IVS/NVS data.

Publicly available research and analysis is needed to allow Victoria’s tourism industry to respond early to the opportunities that emerging and high growth markets might offer.

There needs to be a wholesale improvement in strategic research undertaken on behalf of the industry with better coordination between the Tourism, Events and Visitor Economy (TEVE) and Visit Victoria. We also need to see better utilisation of the research capabilities within the TAFE and University sectors to inform decision making within the industry.

Federal Government funding used to be available through the Cooperative Research Centres (CRC) Program for longer term and big picture research undertaken by university and industry collaborations. This included research on trends in emerging markets, the impacts of rising international mobility and the impacts of climate change on the visitor economy. Such research has since diminished and a funding mechanism to support university research needs to be reinstated.
What members say

Lack of up-to-date performance data on business events in Victoria

There needs to be greater recognition of business events as a driver of economic growth, particularly in regional areas. Business events provide key training and networking opportunities that augment economic activity well beyond direct measurable metrics.

According to an EY report commissioned by the Business Events Council of Australia, business events in Victoria sustain 69,480 direct jobs and contribute $10.6 billion through domestic and international visitation.

Deloitte Access Economics has described the business events sector as “a high-value, fast-growing component of the visitor economy” where one in five dollars spent by international visitors in Australia is spent by an international delegate attending a business event.

Yet there is a lack of up-to-date research data that accurately captures the full extent of value that domestic business events contribute, particularly outside of the capital cities. The most recent figures were released over four years ago by Ernst & Young. In the NVS data, reporting on domestic business events isn’t even available due to the low sample size, therefore it is difficult to get an accurate gauge on the true value of domestic business events.
Chapter 3 Recommendations

1. Performance metrics need to be expanded to include points beyond macro-level arrival numbers and spend for Victoria. Metrics must monitor key trends, for example, regional dispersal (including overnight stays and spend in regional areas), the number and value of visitor economy planning approvals by regional area, approval times, the private investment pipeline in regional Victoria, and the number of new leases issued on Crown Land.

2. Appropriately fund Victoria’s Tourism, Events and Visitor Economy (TEVE) research unit to undertake future trends analyses and other significant research projects that will inform the direction and strategies of Victoria’s visitor economy over the next 10 years.

3. Continue to support the important work of Tourism Research Australia in undertaking the International Visitor Survey and National Visitor Survey.

4. Undertake an analysis of the data requirements necessary to inform tourism investment planning and decision making and identify platforms and mechanisms for making data accessible and useable by tourism investors and decision makers, including SMEs.

5. Establish a fund for university research to support the implementation of applied research with industry and academic collaboration.

6. Use Regional Development Victoria’s definition of ‘Regional Victoria’ for the purposes of collecting and reporting performance data on Victoria’s visitor economy.

7. Support VTIC with research funding to collect and analyse current accommodation transaction data that visitor economy businesses can access to gather industry insights and inform investment decision-making.
CHAPTER 4

Effective operating structures - with strong local industry and local government participation - are key to supporting the regional visitor economy

“Regional Victoria faces significant challenges in improving its national competitiveness. Effective structures and integrated, strategic planning are needed to ensure these issues are urgently addressed”.

Felicia Mariani, VTIC Chief Executive

Regional tourism operating structures are characterised by diverse but important networks

Managing and growing the regional visitor economy is a shared responsibility.

It starts with the private sector. Regional businesses are the key drivers of economic activity and job creation. They are major partners in promotional and marketing activity that builds the brand and profile of a destination and drives conversion.

Regional Tourism Boards (RTBs) play a valuable role in coordinating the marketing activities of our regions and developing strategic, region-specific objectives to address supply side issues. This includes identifying collaborative approaches around industry development to assist businesses of all size – small, medium and large – to grow and prosper.

Local government plays an important role in managing local development and supporting the visitor economy in their areas.

Local tourism associations work closely with the community and have a key role to play in servicing visitor needs.

Governments at state and federal levels help businesses to grow by creating the right conditions for private investment and undertaking targeted strategic investments that have been identified as projects that will contribute to regional visitor economy growth.

This diverse and at times complex model of support impacts priority setting, investment attraction, visitor servicing and other activities that occur across a range of areas. It is a challenging characteristic of current regional tourism operating structures.
Regional Tourism Boards play a key role in connecting interests and coordinating resources to grow the visitor economy

Regional Tourism Boards (RTBs) are the key linkage between State Government initiatives, local tourism businesses and local areas. They set regional strategic direction and work with industry, local councils and the State Government to drive regional tourism.

There are currently 11 (RTBs) operating across Victoria: Phillip Island, Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges, Greater Geelong and the Bellarine, Mornington Peninsula, Daylesford and Macedon Ranges, Goldfields (Ballarat and Bendigo), Grampians, Tourism North East, Great Ocean Road, Gippsland, and the Murray.

While boards have been set up to cover all of Victoria, there is significant variation in how they operate, the size of the region they support and the specific challenges they face.

Each RTB is structured differently to enable it to focus on the needs of the area. The emphasis across the core areas of destination management, marketing and promotion, industry development and advocacy, vary to best reflect their own region’s views and needs.

RTBs use different governance structures. Some have representatives from every local government, others have skills-based appointments and the size of boards varies widely from region to region.

They also have different funding structures, such as contributions based on visitor numbers for each council or minimum funding amounts with additional charges for specific activities. Some are member-based, others are not, and all rely heavily on cooperative marketing investment from their industry to underpin their funding sources.

RTB reliance on State Government partnership funding also varies widely, ranging from small to significant shares of their overall budgets.

Figure 7 shows Victoria’s eleven official Regional Tourism Board boundaries overlaid on Victoria’s nine regional partnerships and regional local government areas.
Making Regional Tourism Boards even more effective

Without Regional Tourism Boards, the State Government’s effectiveness in harnessing knowledge, specific expertise, leveraging resources, and consolidating contributions from regions would be diminished.

A key challenge VTIC has identified, however, is that RTBs need to better communicate their activities and impact with stakeholders at all levels – to Visit Victoria; to local government; to their local industry/members; across the RTB network; and to other industry associations like the business events sector.

Similarly, while there is closer RTB engagement with Regional Development Victoria (RDV) through the Regional Partnerships program, the process has also added more demands on regional leaders and at times has not connected effectively with the broader visitor economy strategies across the regions. There have been disconnects in certain areas with the approach
of the Regional Partnerships which, in some instances, have excluded the RTBs or issues relating to the visitor economy in the planning and resourcing for their designated region.

During the same time that funds have stagnated for RTBs, the funds and resources that have been added to Regional Development Victoria to address the Visitor Economy have increased. There has been concern noted by RTBs around project funding choices made by RDV and the disconnect to regional priorities identified in the destination management plans for the respective regions. Based on the recent VAGO report on Regional Development Victoria, it seems these concerns may have been warranted as the report raised concerns about this process as an effective delivery model.

Of further concern is the fact that the RTBs that have been able to continue growing during this time, have done so via their access to the RDV funding streams. In the case of the Greater and Outer Melbourne destinations and RTBs, this alternate funding source has had little benefit as they have no access to the programs or funding potential. This is an issue that must be resolved as part of this process to create a level playing field for growth and development.

Overall, VTIC considers the current framework to be working reasonably well. Essentially, everything is not broken, so this process should not start from that position. However, the Regional Tourism Review provides a timely opportunity to examine the scope for further improvements in coordination, focus and resourcing that maximises the participation and resources already devoted to regional tourism.

Doing so will help avoid or reduce duplication and leverage more of the advantages that regional tourism can provide, like economic growth, job creation and community development and wellbeing.

It is critical that the review process defines and confirms a clear and concise role for RTBs. It must articulate what is expected from them into the future and fund them properly to deliver on this expectation.

Over the past five years, the lack of certainty for RTBs has been hampering their effectiveness and direction. Since 2015, there has been roll-over after roll-over of contracts that has resulted in single year funding agreements since that time and no increase in the funding model for at
least 8 years. In addition, in 2015, an additional region was added to the mix with no additional resource to the pool of funds available, meaning the pie was sliced even thinner.

Regional Tourism Boards have made clear their concerns about this issue, but it has been categorised as a necessary step while the Government considers the future role for RTBs and what they want them to achieve.

Getting the most out of the RTB partnership

To gain the most from the RTB partnership, State Government must enable RTBs to get on with business. To do this, they require adequate RTB partnership funding, distinct clarity regarding roles, coordinated engagement, and a shared vision for growing the visitor economy.

In the context of efforts to reduce the disparity between Melbourne and regional visitation growth, the challenges facing the RTB partnership, which require coordination and support, are:

- Clarification and profiling of the RTB role, purpose and potential value to stakeholders
- Navigation support for RTBs in a potentially more complex State Government environment
- Ongoing and effective engagement across both supply and demand within the broader range of centrally driven regional tourism and event activities within Visit Victoria and TEVE
- The provision of adequate funds and/or in-kind support to RTBs to professionally perform their distinctive role sustainably, and to pursue strategic projects
- Fostering effective state-wide partnerships with local governments and other key stakeholders
- Closer collaboration within the RTB network itself.

The problem is, review after review has never resolved this issue and RTBs have been impacted by the absence of an agreed direction which has affected their position with industry and the
services they can provide. VTIC is looking to this Review to break this nexus and deliver the direction and funding support necessary for our RTBs to be effective in well-defined roles.

**Local government is at the forefront of tourism**

The contribution of local government to the visitor economy is significant and local governments have a significant interest and role in the visitor economy, especially as this sector drives the creation and maintenance of local jobs. Facilitation and planning work undertaken by local governments affects tourism investment, and they are instrumental in providing for visitor services, event support, and financially supporting RTBs.

The work of local government not only directly impacts the visitor’s impressions and experiences in a destination, but local government also plays a critical role in engaging the community and creating positive social outcomes.

Importantly, industries that support tourism (e.g. accommodation, retail, restaurants, bars and cafes) all have reciprocal relationships with, and exist within, local government jurisdictions.

The priorities determined in RTBs’ strategic and destination management plans are important inputs to local government tourism planning and development. RTBs help determine enabling economic infrastructure (e.g. convention centres, transport) and stimulate other iconic tourism infrastructure provided by the private sector.

The ongoing partnership between local government, industry and RTBs continues to grow but there are challenges.

Some tourism industry development proposals are being held back by the lack of regional land constraints assessment, guidelines for land development proponents and plans for the provision and sequencing of infrastructure.

Many councils report a lack of capacity to undertake the work required for decision-making on complex tourism land development proposals in sensitive landscape settings. There are several interests to be weighed up when evaluating major land development proposals.

For example, while most communities embrace tourism growth; others want to see better management of visitors to minimise certain impacts and outcomes and create greater social
returns. Active management is therefore essential to avoid unwanted issues, just as it is required to maximise benefits.

Councils can also find it difficult to balance the local and state priorities on major development proposals. Some local councils prioritise tourism more highly than others, depending on the area’s primary industries and perceived benefits from tourism.

All councils fund tourism to some extent but with tightened budgets, partly due to rate capping, it is even more important that the Victorian Government continues to actively support the role of local government in regional tourism development, including in their capacity to leverage the visitor economy to help address structural issues such as regional youth unemployment and population growth dispersal.

**Clear roles and responsibilities are key to effective operating structures for regional tourism**

To ensure the most efficient working relationships it is essential that the roles of each stakeholder are clear. Foremost among these stakeholders are the individual operators within the regional visitor economy.

How we structure, fund and resource RTBs into the future is vital to get right. This process needs to start with being very clear on the role and purpose of these RTBs and what it is they need to achieve as part of growing the visitor economy for the state. We need to find efficiencies across all RTBs that will allow for better engagement and better use of the allocated resources. Duplication across RTBs currently diminishes the funding pool that could be put to better use to achieve key outcomes.

**What might a governance structure consider?**

We need to be careful that the functions of a regional tourism board are not taken over by self-interest and that they should not be “representative” based boards. To be effective, RTBs going forward must be skills-based and be held accountable to stakeholders through professional reporting processes.

All members should be formally appointed as directors, hold the defined skills necessary to understand corporate governance, sound financial management and provide a strategic overlay to the discussions.
To be most effective, an RTB should be made up of funder-appointed and skills-based members. Future funding agreements must span three years and be required to be updated no less than 12 months out from contractual termination.

The Regional Tourism Review also needs to ensure that any new boundaries defined as part of this process align across government. There are currently too many boundaries across various agencies of government and the lack of alignment in certain areas, including with Victoria’s interface councils, is detrimental to performance and outcomes.

The current RTB structure does not effectively acknowledge the role and contribution of interface councils to Victoria’s overall visitor economy. Interface councils are critical corridors that connect consumers with regional experiences, particularly within that 2-hour halo around Melbourne. With the demise of Destination Melbourne, the Review must address this gap and ensure a consolidated solution is found as part of the rationalisation of operating structures.

In considering any future operating structures, we need to acknowledge the role and potential of various players to affect the performance and success of Victoria’s future visitor economy:

**INDUSTRY OPERATORS**

- Need support to deliver high quality experiences, accommodation & services
- Invest in new experiences
- Maintain high levels of service to their customers

**REGIONAL TOURISM BOARDS**

- Set the strategic direction for the region
- Ensure that the agreed strategic direction is communicated to all stakeholders
- Advocate at the local level to ensure the concerns of local industry are on the agenda
- Maintain a key coordination role for the marketing and promotion of the region
- Act as the conduit between industry in the region and Visit Victoria, local government and the Victorian Government
LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- Work with Regional Tourism Boards and other regional tourism organisations on activities including investment in public infrastructure, experience development, investment attraction and events
- Define key metrics within the local government Act relating to growing the local visitor economy
- Policy alignment within local government with destination management plans for the region
- Closer collaboration between RTBs and local government to understand roles and responsibilities and create efficiencies
- Encourage local community engagement to be ambassadors for visitors in their area
- Take into account the value of the visitor economy to the local area in broader decision making and policy development

INDUSTRY ORGANISATIONS

- Victoria Tourism Industry Council (VTIC): As the peak industry body for tourism and events, VTIC has a key role in leading advocacy at the state-wide level and driving industry development initiatives to build the capacity for success across Victoria.
- There are several other industry and sector-based organisations active in the regional visitor economy and each have their own critical role in supporting their members to drive growth in the visitor economy

VISIT VICTORIA

- Drive demand for regional tourism experiences through a range of marketing initiatives, including direct to consumer marketing, trade and distribution partnerships and international engagement
- Create a shift to promoting “passion points” as the central marketing theme, regardless of the destination/region
- Increased use of data analytics to perfect our marketing approach
- Provide leadership for industry and government, encourage collaboration and drive evidence-based decision making throughout the visitor economy
• Work with industry partners, investors and other key stakeholders to drive increased aviation and cruise ship capacity and guide the development of new and refreshed accommodation and experiences

OTHER PARTS OF STATE GOVERNMENT

• Ensure appropriate direct investment in the regional visitor economy is maintained and grown
• Support the growth of regional tourism by ensuring policy decisions take into account the economic contribution of the visitor economy sector

COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT

• Through Tourism Australia, promote Victorian products and regions to drive international visitor expenditure
• Through Austrade, drive the development of strategy and policy relating to the visitor economy, and ensure the provision of high-quality research to quantify the impact of the visitor economy
Chapter 4 Recommendations

1. Form a Sub-Committee of Cabinet to set whole of government visitor economy strategic priorities and consider responses to tourism proposals and developments with a value exceeding an agreed threshold.
   a. The sub-committee should be supported by a Committee of relevant departmental Secretaries and agency CEOs across, for example, parks, industry, employment, environment, planning and infrastructure.

2. Provide Regional Tourism Boards (RTBs) with a real increase in guaranteed operational funding for a minimum of three years, enabling them to operate at scale and to represent and promote the interests of their region and industry.

3. As a priority, rationalise Regional Tourism Boards to generate scale efficiencies and deliver cross-regional collaboration beyond administrative boundaries of individual RTB areas. This will allow for improved response to shifting preferences for experience-based offerings rather than being destination-focussed.

4. Acknowledge the role of interface councils as significant contributors to Victoria’s visitor economy by including them in any rationalised solution for operating structures.

5. Amend Section 3C of the Local Government Act 1989 which defines the objectives of a Council to specify that promoting the visitor economy is one of the core objectives of all local governments.

6. Improve engagement and coordination between Visit Victoria, Regional Development Victoria, Victoria’s Tourism, Events and Visitor Economy (TEVE) branch and any resulting Regional Tourism Board structure.

7. Strengthen Regional Tourism Board credentials and capability by recruiting on the basis of competency and experience. Ensure all RTB candidates undergo a formal induction process that educates them in:
   a. The role of an RTB Board member and the purpose of the RTB
   b. The relationships between RTBs, other stakeholders and State Government entities
   c. Understanding the local visitor economy across demand and supply perspectives
d. Key strategic imperatives for growing the region’s visitor economy.

8. Strengthen the capability of regional tourism businesses in digital skills, cultural awareness, customer service and entrepreneurship by working with industry to reinvigorate the Tourism Excellence program.

9. Work with Visit Victoria, Invest Victoria, Regional Development Victoria, the Victorian Local Government Association and VTIC to:
   a. Develop a Local Government Tourism Strategy to deliver local tourism outcomes. This should include the development of individual Investment Blueprints (prospectuses) for each LGA
   b. In collaboration with education and training providers, investigate tourism education and training options for local government.

10. Identify opportunities for interface councils to collaborate with RTBs to jointly promote metropolitan and urban growth corridors that deliver tourism outcomes

11. Increase investment in Business Events Victoria (BEV) to grow regional Victoria’s share of the meetings, conference and events market.

12. Improve research on the value of regional events and business conferences to local communities.
CHAPTER 5

Action is needed to strengthen tourism education and training and attract and retain more skilled workers to regional Victoria

People and skills and are vital to regional tourism

Tourism is a people business, and we are highly reliant on having quality people with the right skills, experience and attitude to deliver a memorable engagement for our visitors.

Skilled labour is crucial to the delivery of quality tourism experiences, especially as demands and expectations for quality service increase. A vibrant tourism workforce is critical to growing tourism in regional Victoria. The sector offers employment opportunities for all age groups, from young people new to the workforce to mature-aged workers seeking flexible work that suits their lifestyle.

Tourism is one of the fastest growing and most important economic sectors in the world. According to the UNWTO, by 2030, one in four people globally will be employed in the tourism industry.

In Australia currently, the tourism industry is growing three times as fast as the rest of the Australian economy. The effects of rising household income and growing efforts to facilitate international visitor flows, mean the numbers of visitors to the APEC region is predicted to reach close to 700 million by 2030.

This future growth presents both opportunity and challenge for Victoria as the industry must grow its base of human capital to support the predicted increases in visitor numbers. The labour requirements of Victoria’s tourism workforce fall into two broad areas: semi-skilled employees that cover both a permanent and casual base; and higher skilled, career-oriented employees.

13 Developing the Tourism Workforce of the Future in the APEC Region, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Tourism Working Group, February 2017

14 World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) 2016a, WTTC Data Gateway in Developing the Tourism Workforce of the Future in the APEC Region, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Tourism Working Group, February 2017
Tourism related job vacancy rates across Victoria are high at 10 per cent, with approximately 32,000 additional workers forecast to be needed in Victoria between 2015 and 2020, including around 9,000 skilled workers. In all, 30 per cent of the national skilled labour shortage exists in Victoria.\footnote{Australian Tourism Labour Force Report 2015-2020 accessed via \url{https://www.tra.gov.au/Archive-TRA-Old-site/Research/View-all-publications/All-Publications/australian-tourism-labour-force-report-2015-2020}}

However, the sector’s growth trajectory and the scale of employment opportunities that will accompany it, is not well known. Similarly, the tourism industry is not always an industry of choice for some students and employees even though the number of people employed in tourism in Australia grew at a much faster rate than total employment over the period 2016-17 to 2017-18.\footnote{State Tourism Satellite Accounts 2017-18, Tourism Research Australia. August 2019.}

There is a perception that the industry is characterised by hard work, unfavourable conditions, poor work-life balance and relatively low pay scales when compared to many other sectors. There is also a perception that roles in tourism are simply an entry point to the workforce, rather than a longer-term career option.

Labour and skills shortages are particularly acute in some parts of regional Victoria where competition for labour is high and staff retention can be difficult. This is accentuated by seasonality issues, where employment can be limited in off-peak periods, high levels of casual employment and perceptions of limited opportunities for advancement.

There is also emerging evidence that popular tourism areas have become unaffordable due to high house prices, rents and long travel distances. This makes it harder to attract and keep trained and experienced staff in regional tourism businesses. An ageing workforce and the migration of young people to cities also compound these challenges.

These barriers impact on the ability of regional tourism businesses to attract suitably skilled employees or access seasonal staff which in turn impedes the delivery of excellent tourism services and affects the productivity and competitiveness of the sector.
Reasons for difficulty in recruiting and retaining employees

The Australian Tourism Labour Force Report 2015-2020 found a lack of required skills ranked as the most significant reason for difficulties in recruitment in Victoria. Followed by lack of applicants and lack of appropriate flexibility.

When it comes to retaining staff, a lack of commitment to the role, being unsuited to the role and employment being short term in nature were identified as key reasons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What members say about their ability to attract and retain skilled workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“It’s very difficult. Chefs are limited and all the good skills are in Melbourne. Difficult to get Ballarat staff to travel for work to Creswick.” – Goldfields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It’s very hard. There are no housing options in the area and people will not travel to work. High demand for personnel during peak season with not enough staffing options.” – Grampians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Local workers find it hard to commit. Many eligible workers are not readily available and if they are, they are often not motivated. We have chosen the path of backpackers after locals have disappointed us again and again. Affordable accommodation is a massive issue.” – Grampians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Very difficult to attract staff especially housekeeping and laundry staff. Due to the nature of the industry and the fluctuation in workload throughout the year we find it difficult to find casual staff.” – Mornington Peninsula</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Skills deficiencies

The Australian Tourism Labour Force Report 2015-2020 also found 66 per cent of Victorian tourism businesses identified skills deficiencies among their workers. The top three occupations in Victoria experiencing deficiencies are cleaners (42 per cent), cooks (23 per cent) and waiters (22 per cent).

The top reason given for skill deficiencies was a lack of experience, followed by a misalignment between capability and the requirements of the role. Across all occupations, lack of experience was the most common of the three deficiencies (skills, experience, qualifications) in Victoria.
Figure 8 shows the ranking of reasons for skills deficiencies in Victoria and nationally.

**Figure 8. Reasons for skills deficiencies in employees**

The lack of experience of the average worker in the sector means more needs to be done to ensure graduates are ‘tourism ready’.

A lack of recognition of transferable skills within the tourism industry in relation to other industries has also been identified as an issue that contributes to the perception of the sector as a short-term option, lacking in progression opportunities.

The industry also requires training and education beyond the two Certificate III courses in hospitality and tourism provided under the State Government’s free TAFE program.
How industry is responding

In response to employee deficiencies, tourism businesses are primarily seeking to establish more flexible working arrangements, as figure 9 demonstrates. This is followed by encouraging formal external training and establishing formalised internal training.

Figure 9. Business responses to all employee deficiencies

![Graph showing business responses to all employee deficiencies]


Even though many businesses report that employees lack a long-term commitment to the sector, formal workforce planning was the lowest ranked response from industry in terms of action taken to address recruitment difficulties. Given that effective career planning can reduce employee turnover, it would be advantageous to encourage a stronger uptake of this tool among tourism businesses.

Alternative labour sources

Those businesses exploring alternative sources of labour in response to skill deficiencies are relying most heavily on mature-age workers, with just over half of all businesses exploring this source (see figure 10).
There is considerable scope for the Victorian Government to support the industry to build capacity in this segment of the labour market. Market research undertaken in 2016 found that many mature age workers would be interested in taking up a role within the sector if there were government funded training or related re-skilling support to help them to do so.\textsuperscript{17}

International visas also play a critical role in fulfilling demand in regional and seasonal roles. In this regard, reforms to working holiday maker visa arrangements (such as including tourism on the list of eligible first-year work sectors for visa holders wishing to extend for a second year or expanding the age limit from 30 to 40) would help ease conditions in the labour market.

Similarly, removing or reducing limits to the time which workers are permitted to stay in a single job may help them build experience in an occupation, reduce turnover and increase the return on investment for employers. Working holiday makers are currently only permitted to stay with a single employer for six months.

\textsuperscript{17} Austrade, Tourism and Hospitality Careers Report, 2016
Chapter 5 Recommendations

1. Conduct a state-wide skills gap analysis for the sector to present a comprehensive view of gaps, needs, and the potential for collaboration within regional destinations and use this to develop a Victorian Regional Tourism Workforce Strategy.

2. Fast track the development of a suite of micro credentials for tourism enterprise skills.
   
   a. Include options for interactive, online delivery modes to ensure accessibility by casual or part time employees to build their skills and career path options, as well as by those already undertaking a vocational course.

3. Ensure training curriculums include new skills in cultural awareness and digital technologies and increase the support for regional tourism small businesses to develop these skills.
   
   a. For example, the Chinese Customer Engagement and Business Skills project funded under the Workforce Training Innovation Fund (WTIF) could be included in regional TAFE curriculums.

4. Support industry and training providers, including regional TAFEs, to work more closely at both a regional and occupational level to ensure curriculums and training delivery modes meet the evolving needs of industry, better equip workers with ‘employability’ skills and deliver real employment outcomes.

5. Ensure high demand tourism occupations are considered under the Victorian Government’s State Migration Plan. Advocate to the Federal Government appropriate adjustments to visa categories and conditions, such as extending the time working holiday makers are permitted to stay in a single job; including tourism on the list of eligible sectors that allow for second year extensions triggered by working 90-days in a regional area; and increasing the age limit for WHV from 30 to 40.
   
   a. Such a policy has already been proposed in the Developing Northern Australia White Paper suggesting that WHMs in Northern Australia be allowed to extend their visa for six months if they work in a high demand industry, including tourism.
6. In conjunction with the university sector, support the creation of stronger linkages between regional employers and international students and graduates of tourism courses.
   
   a. Assist regional tourism businesses to leverage the Skilled Graduate (485) visa, an 18-month temporary visa that allows graduates to remain in Australia and seek employer sponsorship to attract qualified students to regional areas, particularly in high demand occupations.

7. Engage the Commonwealth Government to improve tourism businesses’ access to sponsored skilled migration visas, including the processes and timing relating to lodgement and assessment; and ensure high demand tourism occupations are included in the General Skilled Migration (GSM) Program.

8. Fund a careers outreach campaign, that works with the education and training sector to target high school students entering their final years to increase awareness of the future growth in tourism and promote the diversity of different roles and career paths available.
   
   a. This initiative should strengthen the reputation, desirability and positioning of careers and jobs in tourism; including positioning industry qualifications, jobs and careers as offering skills that can be used for life and delivering career mobility.

9. Support the establishment of an industry internship or cadetship program hosted by VTIC that facilitates partnerships between employers and education and training institutions to provide students with an insight into regional career-based opportunities prior to graduation.

10. Drive growth by optimising the experience of international students and their families in Victoria through partnerships with educational institutions.

11. Strengthen pathways to connect high performing students to the sector; for example, connecting tourism businesses with year 11 and 12 students undertaking or interested in VCAL studies and work experience opportunities.
Concluding Comments

VTIC’s recommendations in this submission have been informed by feedback from over 200 industry representatives covering the diversity of the Victorian visitor economy.

Our submission provides a comprehensive and cohesive industry position on the actions needed to keep regional tourism competitive and grow regional jobs.

Tourism is a key contributor to Victoria’s regional economy, generating $7.5 billion in economic activity and directly and indirectly employing over 85,000 people, or nearly 10 per cent of regional Victoria’s workforce. It supports many small businesses and contributes to the resilience, diversity and vibrancy of local economies across the state.

Regional tourism businesses and partner organisations are taking the lead to stay competitive, becoming more strategic in their planning, marketing and promotion. They are becoming more innovative in the way they provide products and services to visitors.

The role of policy makers is to support these efforts, helping our regions and their individual businesses navigate the opportunities and challenges that are emerging.

As a pathway to supporting the efforts of the industry, VTIC’s recommendations focus on key areas that can inform the Government’s response and actions, including:

- Reforms to regional destination planning to support increased investment in regional tourism infrastructure, cultural landscapes and heritage tourism
- Statutory planning and red tape reforms to attract increased private investment in the regional visitor economy
- New KPIs to measure the performance and contribution of regional tourism
- Changes to operating structures to support the regional visitor economy
- Measures to strengthen tourism education and training and attract more skilled workers to regional Victoria.
The adoption of the recommendations put forward in VTIC’s submission will support the industry to capitalise on its strengths and grow visitor numbers and expenditure across Victoria.

Given the intersection and interdependence of regional tourism with so many areas within the responsibility of Government - industry and regional development, employment, small business, transport, infrastructure, the environment and education and training - it is crucial to have a whole of government response to the Regional Tourism Review to set our industry on a strong and sustainable growth trajectory into the next decade and beyond.

For further information and comment, please contact:

**Felicia Mariani**

Chief Executive

Victoria Tourism Industry Council (VTIC)
That the National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to support initiatives by councils to develop and implement coastal climate change adaptation plans, to improve the sustainability and resilience of coastal settlements vulnerable to increasing climate change risks.

Objective:
This motion is directly related to two of ALGA’s 2019 Federal Election initiatives and within the advocacy document, 5. Protect communities from the impacts of natural disasters, and 6. Support communities with their climate change response.


Key Arguments:
This motion directly reflects the 2018 Australian Coastal Councils conference communiqué. Representatives of Australian coastal councils attending the Australian Coastal Councils Conference at Geelong, Victoria, from 21 to 23 March 2018, identified a critical need for additional support from the Australian Government to strengthen the capacity of local government to respond effectively to increasing climate change risks. These risks include widespread coastal erosion, more severe extreme weather events, and rising sea levels. The delegates attending the conference resolved to issue a communiqué concerning this matter.
Hi Roger,

It was nice to catch up last night and thanks to the MPRT board for organising both the Future Leaders and the Beer, Cider and Spirits meetings. Both were extremely valuable, and I think will be springboards to future growth in our industry.

As discussed last night, Dainton Brewery has begun a dedicated sour beer program using the Brettanomyces (Brett) “wild” yeast to create funky, unique beers in the Lambic, Saison, Flemish Red, as well new experimental styles. We are one of only a handful of breweries in Australia currently producing beer using this method.

Brett beers have a very distinctive flavour profile compared to “normal” beers brewed with the standard Saccharomyces yeast. The flavour profile of Brett beers emphasises funkiness, spice, fruit and a bit of tartness. These beers are often combined with fruit and put into oak barrels to age for between 1 to 3 years until they reach peak maturity.

Brett yeast naturally grows on fruit skins. In many places in Europe, and now also in America, breweries use a piece of equipment called a coolship (which is a large, rectangular, shallow vessel that takes up the span of a room and lies open to the elements) to pick up airborne yeast and microflora to inoculate the wort and give the beer it funky or sour flavour. This means that the “wild” bacteria and yeast that inoculate the wort will depend on things like time, place and season, which creates the wild beer’s unique terroir.

In order to create truly unique beer with its own terroir, we have a vision of setting up a dedicated sour brewery on an agricultural site in the Mornington peninsula. It is vital that this brewery is located on a substantial agricultural property because we intend to grow our own fruit trees in order to promote the wild Brett yeast and to use the fruit produced by these trees in the fermentation process. Such a property would allow us to create world-class sour beer that is unique to the particular climate, soils and terrain of the Mornington Peninsula. This venture would also include a tasting room, restaurant and a retail outlet where the beers and other local produce and products would be featured. On top of this, we intend to create, market and sell experiential products such as brewing master classes and tours of the farm and production facilities.

For the last 12 months we have been looking for a suitable property on the Mornington Peninsula for this world-class venture. We have found a number of properties that would have been suitable for our sour brewery but, on each occasion, we were told that council would not allow a production brewery in a property zoned as Green Wedge. Almost by definition, all properties that meet our criteria in the Green Wedge Zone. Also, even if we put aside the inability to set-up a production brewery, we were told by council that there are very strict rules around the number of patrons allowed at any hospitality venture in the Green Wedge Zone. In order to make this venture viable, we would
need for council to approve a capacity of at least 250 people for the hospitality and tourism side of the business. It was our understanding through conversations with council that we would need to purchase a property with more than 100 acres for them to even consider such numbers. As you can imagine, 100 acres on the peninsula is a bit out of our price range!

These rulings by the council have put an insurmountable road block to our vision and our plans on the peninsula. We have been forced to start to look at other locations outside the peninsula to bring our vision to fruition.

We believe that whilst this venture may not strictly fit within the rules of the Green Wedge Zone, it is in the spirit of the zoning and has the potential to bring a unique artisanal and agritourism business to an underutilised part of the peninsula. We ask for the bodies that govern the usage rules and regulations of the Green Wedge Zone to consider the potential contribution our venture and other similar ventures would have to the tourism industry in the region when reviewing these policies.

Kind Regards

William Smith

GENERAL MANAGER

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