

**By Email** : VVEsubmissions@ecodev.vic.gov.au

2 April 2015

Mr Nick Foa  
Project Director  
Victorian Visitor Economy Review  
Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources  
GPO Box 4509  
Melbourne VIC 3001

Dear Mr Foa

### **Victorian Visitor Economy Review**

We understand the Premier of Victoria has recently announced a review into the Victorian Visitor Economy.

Western Melbourne Tourism Inc (WMT) is an association incorporated for the purposes of promoting and developing the tourism sector within the western metropolitan region, embracing the municipal boundaries of Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong, Melton, Moonee Valley and Wyndham councils. WMT is overseen by an independent board comprising representation from the six western metropolitan partner councils as well as Parks Victoria, Victoria University and representatives from the tourism industry and the arts sector in the region.

WMT has a strong strategic interest in the profile and development of a stronger visitor economy for Melbourne's west. The WMT board is committed to working together with other key stakeholders to enable an increase in recognition and greater contribution of tourism to the region's economy. It is also seeking to ensure potential visitors are aware of the unique factors that make Melbourne's west a compelling place to visit and this interest converts to visitation growth.

It is understood the terms of reference for this inquiry cover:

- *Identifying the growth prospects for the visitor economy;*
- *Examining, through comprehensive analysis, strategies and management practices of competitors in Australia and overseas, in relation to Victoria's current strategy/ies and management practices;*
- *Examining and recommending how to better leverage Victoria's current best practice approaches to co-ordinating the branding and economic benefits across the different segments of the tourism, events and relevant elements of the creative industries sector, taking into account related marketing activities such as Study Melbourne;*
- *Examining and identifying any areas for improvement to maximise the benefits from the visitor economy in terms of other economic policy objectives such as investment attraction, export growth and attraction of skilled labour and international students;*  
*and*
- *Given the above, recommending the most effective governance/institutional arrangements and funding models for Victoria, to further grow the benefits of the visitor economy to all of Victoria.*

We have had very limited notice to assemble a response to this review and will not seek to respond to each of the specific terms of reference in detail. Notwithstanding, in broader terms the following submissions are offered to support the inquiry:

- The current architecture of tourism development and promotion does not provide adequate recognition and support to metropolitan Melbourne. Metropolitan Melbourne often falls between the cracks of the promotion of 'the city' (i.e. focused on the central city) and 'the regions' i.e. outside of metropolitan Melbourne. The traditional structure of the Jigsaw model has been very effective, but we submit it may be time to apply some more creative layering/variation to this model;
- We believe there are dimensions of the Melbourne product and experiences to be found in the non-central city areas that could be afforded greater focus in promotional effort. The overall Melbourne economy is now so diverse and large that we believe there is value in reviewing how this can be promoted in smaller strategic units, rather than as a single Melbourne city region;
- There needs to be stronger recognition of the shifting population dynamics of the city, particularly the geo-cultural landscape across metropolitan areas. While once the inner and central region of the city was a focus of multi-cultural diversity, this is no longer the case. There are many examples of emerging ethnic concentrations in other metropolitan Melbourne locations. Examples in Melbourne's west are the large ethnic concentrations of Vietnamese in St Albans or Sunshine, or horn of Africa communities in Flemington and Footscray;
- We also observe other trends in the shifting nature of the city community itself such as the emergence of significant creative communities (driven by housing affordability) which is making Melbourne's west one of the key hubs of arts and creativity nationally. Our point is tourism development and promotion needs to track and keep pace with these trends to keep itself contemporary and relevant;
- We highlight examples of comparative major international cities eg New York, Hong Kong, London, Paris where visitor promotion is focused on the precincts and districts in these cities. There is a great opportunity to promote the equivalent districts and precincts in Melbourne to offer greater differentiation and product interest. The urban brand and positioning of Melbourne can be significantly enhanced as 'Melbourne +' experiences, or as a series of more localised urban visitor brands;
- We support a strengthening of the role of local councils in promoting tourism across Melbourne and improving the local engagement and recognition of the value of visitors to LGA economies. The City of Melbourne holds a great primacy and we believe there is significant opportunity for other local governments across Melbourne to be more directly engaged in tourism development and leverage the opportunity the sector offers. For example it would be of great assistance if visitor data for each LGA area was more readily available to foster this (as is the case in New South Wales - <http://www.destinationnsw.com.au/tourism/facts-and-figures/local-area-profiles>);
- To support an expansion of the visitor economy more investment is required to promote the broader accessibility/ connectivity of tourism sites in the metropolitan region by public transport, such as through the Myki system. There also is a significant opportunity to enhance the water-based transport services connecting the central city to Melbourne's west;

- There is significant scope to support the development of economic opportunities associated with international education student communities. We flag the recent joint strategic initiative by Victoria University and the City Maribyrnong in the development of the Footscray University Town concept – as a further dimension to the development of Footscray as a destination. <http://www.vu.edu.au/footscray-university-town>

Currently approximately 4 million people visit Melbourne's west annually and the outlook for future growth of the visitor sector for the region is very positive. We believe there is a particular economic opportunity to enhance the profile of locations in Melbourne's west as attractive destinations in the context of the broader metropolitan region of Melbourne.

Please note that WMT also participated in the stakeholder interviews in the review of Regional Tourism Boards and Destination Management Planning conducted by Dr Claire Ellis in November 2014. Our comments in this review were along similar lines to the comments above.

WMT has operated to fill what is a perceived gap in the structural management of tourism - to provide greater profile and support for the tourism sector in a metropolitan sub-region. A copy of our 3 -year strategic plan is attached as further background.

If you would like to contact me to elaborate further on these submissions I am available on 0417 545141 or email [richard@melbourneswest.com.au](mailto:richard@melbourneswest.com.au). We also welcome the opportunity to present directly to the inquiry.

WMT greatly appreciates the opportunity to provide input to this inquiry. We look forward to receiving further information as the inquiry progresses.

Yours sincerely

**Richard Ponsford**  
Executive Officer  
Western Melbourne Tourism Inc

Attach.

cc. John Dalton, Tourism Victoria