

## **AGM 2014**

### **Report from the Independent Chair, Deb Ganderton**

It is with great pleasure that I present my report for the 2013-14 year.

#### **Western Melbourne Tourism Inc operating context**

Western Melbourne Tourism Inc (WMT) is an association incorporated for the purposes of promoting and developing tourism within the western metropolitan region, embracing the municipal boundaries of Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong, Melton, Moonee Valley and Wyndham City Councils. It is a regional tourism association well placed to advocate to state and federal tourism bodies for a fair share of cooperative funding and regional opportunities. It is also well placed to attract industry funds for regional promotions and projects. This role is complementary to the work of individual Councils and does not replicate the fine work being done at a local level.

WMT is funded with the combined support from these six western metropolitan Councils, in addition to other funds raised from the local tourism industry. Each Council has contributed \$25,550 (excl gst) for the 2013-14 year. Each Council also has a board representative. The membership of the board also comprises representation from Parks Victoria, Victoria University, LeadWest and other industry and community representation (this currently including Zoos Victoria, Scienceworks, The Substation Newport, and Quest Apartments).

The board membership is strong, energetic and focused. Our Patron is the Hon Steve Bracks and the West is known to be a stable and high functioning region in the eyes of state and federal tourism bodies.

#### **Summary of activity for 2013-14**

The 2013-14 plan has had a strong focus on building collaboration and leveraging existing resources where possible. There is also an underlying commitment to building stronger direct engagement and support from industry operators and thereby improve the ongoing financial sustainability of WMT.

We have also been optimising our partnership with LeadWest. LeadWest provide office accommodation and administrative support for the Executive Officer (part-time position) in the administration of the association and delivery of WMT projects.

The WMT board has delivered a series of projects based on its strategic working framework agreed for the 2013-14 year. Project delivery is focused in three key areas:

- Communications
- Industry Development
- Digital Collaboration + Brand

Activities for 2013-14 have included:

- Delivery of a one day regional tourism conference – *The Tourism Fest in the West* (held Tuesday 18 February 2014);
- Strengthening networks across the region through the development of a data base and ongoing communications with industry;
- Participating and advising on strategic tourism development for the region in relevant Council and industry forums ;
- Undertaking PR and social media activity on behalf of the region. (As an example the Executive Officer appeared on ABC 774 evening program on 2 October 2013; or in the administration of the *Love the West* Facebook page currently with approximately 1000 followers, serving to complement and amplify Council's own social media activity);
- Facilitating professional development opportunities for the local tourism industry ;
- Pursuing a better structured and more equitable metropolitan partnership with Destination Melbourne to ensure improved representation of the region;
- Sourcing relevant research and sharing this with partner Councils;
- Facilitating support for local operators in applications for government grants;
- Undertaking advocacy on behalf of the region. (As an example Western Melbourne Tourism was a submitter and subsequently appeared before the State Inquiry into Tourism and Ecotourism in Victoria on Friday 7 March 2014)

## **Looking forward**

### *Improving the way the Board works*

WMT is a harmonious, respectful board with all members aligned in their commitment to the West. The Executive officer has invested a considerable amount of time to build interest in the Board and WMT's vision for the West. A consequence of this is that we have a very large board with unwieldy decision-making processes and a lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities. It is recommended that the 2014-15 Board considers appointing an executive committee with agreed powers of delegation to assist with streamlined decision-making.

I acknowledge the excellent work of the working group formed to scope and deliver the *Tourism Fest in the West* this year and recommend that the 2014-15 board consider the reestablishment of project working groups.

### *Creation of Board assets to attract industry buy in*

We have been successful in attracting 100% support from the Councils of the Western Region and Lead West. There is a clear understanding from all stakeholders that the next step is to secure industry support for project delivery. A key priority for the 2013-14 year and leading into 2014-15 is the scoping and development of a digital collaboration project on behalf of the region. The project will aim to repackage/rebrand existing tourist information/digital assets in the region and align this information with consumers via positioning in more mainstream digital tourism traffic. This will deliver an asset to Board and will be a platform from which to invite industry investment.



I am very proud of work undertaken this year, I thank each and every Board member for their contribution, but I particularly wish to thank the Tourism Fest in the West Working Group. It was a hallmark event for the region and this Association and took vision and many, many hours to make it a reality.

I also wish to acknowledge the exceptional partnership we have with LeadWest and thank them for their contribution to the Board. I have found Richard Ponsford, our Executive Officer, a committed tourism professional who has contributed above and beyond the scope of his contract and I have enjoyed our close and resilient working relationship.

It is a privilege to have served as the Independent Chair of Western Melbourne Tourism again this year.

**Deb Ganderton**  
**Independent Chair**