

Western Melbourne Tourism Inc

Independent Chair Report

2016 Annual General Meeting

It is with pleasure I present the Chair's report for Western Melbourne Tourism for 2016.

Western Melbourne Tourism continues to work in the paradigm where tourism resources are focused on inner Melbourne and regional Victoria. The west, like other areas of Greater Melbourne, falls into the gap between the two.

The alliance of Brimbank, Hobson's Bay, Melton, Mooney Valley and Wyndham City Councils, which financially contribute to Western Melbourne Tourism, is an important one. Along with our industry partners, we recognise that together we can achieve more than as individual entities. And that's a powerful thing when it comes to advocacy, funding and influence.

Western Melbourne Tourism has a strong focus on collaboration and leveraging existing resources where possible. There is also an underlying commitment to building stronger engagement from industry operators and thereby improving our financial sustainability.

It is my first year as Chair and it has been a productive and successful 12 months.

The Board is well into the process of delivering a series of projects based on its 3 year strategic plan (2014 – 2017).

The projects are focused on 5 key themes:

- Advocacy
- Visitor Experience
- Industry Development
- Communications/Engagement
- Organisational Performance

What has been accomplished in the past year?

- Successful advocacy – in particular developing positive professional relationships with Tourism Victoria and newly formed Visit Victoria, Destination Melbourne and the Victorian Tourism Industry Council
- WMT has led the briefing and early project development of the new Greater Melbourne Destination Marketing Plan on behalf of the 5 councils
- Western Melbourne Tourism developed a new map of Melbourne's west for inclusion in *Melbourne's Official Visitor Guide*

- Further customised research was commissioned specifically profiling the visitors to the west - by segment group and at an LGA level
- A new website was completed and provides a significant resource for industry
- WMT has contributed to an economic impact study of the Werribee Tourism Precinct - completed by Ernst & Young. This study has been a key piece of strategic advice which has supported the funding of the Duncans Road Interchange
- We worked closely with Airbnb and hosted an industry forum in August 2016. This was the first event of this type Airbnb has undertaken with a regional tourism organisation anywhere in Australia
- Western Melbourne Tourism delivered its third successful one day industry conference, *The Tourism Fest In the West*, attended by 80 industry representatives and stakeholders
- There has been continued distribution of the newsletter *Loving the West enews* to 400+ stakeholders
- Development of more content for West Side stories, profiling local businesses, personalities and stories of the West
- *LovetheWest* Face book page has now reached 2000 + likes
- Western Melbourne Tourism has supported each local Council's tourism development initiatives. Executive Officer Richard Ponsford has been an active participant in economic development forums, networking events, as well as providing direct support and advice to local tourism operators
- And importantly, we have exercised strong fiscal control to ensure WMT is in a positive financial position
- Working Groups have been streamlined and activated (with additional industry expertise) to ensure projects are delivered which in turn enables the Board to have a more strategic focus

What's ahead?

- A new 3 year plan will be developed in the first half of next year
- A major project for the 2016 - 17 will be the development of the Greater Melbourne Destination Plan. This is a significant and important piece of work. Western Melbourne Tourism has a key role in representing the region and ensuring the best outcomes for our local Councils and the local visitor economy
- There will be detailed evaluation of a consumer campaign on behalf of the region
- WMT will execute a new program of professional development forums for the tourism sector
- We will continue to work in partnership with Leadwest on key issues of advocacy
- We will continue to expand and develop the WMT website
- We will continue to work to achieve the right balance of strategic influence and professional skills on the Board, including the adoption of new Rules of the Association
- And WMT will support a strong bid for the region to host the State Tourism conference in 2017

I would also like to underscore the importance of Western Melbourne Tourism partnership with LeadWest, which provides office accommodation and admin support for the Executive Officer.

The relationship is so much more and we are indebted to Leadwest and its Chief Executive Craig Rowley for its continued support.

I would like to acknowledge our executive officer Richard Ponsford, who works tirelessly on behalf of Melbourne's West to agitate for a seat at the table; to ensure tourism in the west has a strong voice in the conversation.

And my colleagues on the Board, your energy, focus and insight is appreciated.

Jan Jacklin

Independent Chair

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24 November, 2016