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Comments:

I am the Manager of Community Economic Development for West Wimmera Shire Council

West Wimmera Shire is the 4th largest shire in the state of Victoria and has one of the lowest (if not the lowest rate bases) in Victoria. The allocated budget for tourism and tourism promotion is \$35 211 and another amount of \$63094 towards the Johnny Mullagh Cricket Centre (staff and operating costs). This does not include the % of in kind and salary from my position which does a lot of joint partnership promotion of tourism and economic development. Tourism is a component of Community and Economic Development. We support tourism to our area of Victoria but could do a lot more if there was additional support and assistance to rural and remote regions of Victoria from Tourism Vic.

This area of Victoria has been in drought/dry conditions over the past 8/10 years and there was very little if any assistance to tourism and small business during that time. However whenever a bush fire decimates an area there seems to be large amounts of funding given and rightly so, however the bushfire scenario is a fast and devastating impact whereas the drought is an insidious creeping and worsening slow moving impact on tourism and economic development of a region. The major icon for this region is "The Grampians" and that icon is a very iconic and world known area, what about the Wimmera and the Mallee who have the opportunity to be developed for their history, pioneer background, innovative responses to agricultural production and the amount of wetlands and native vegetation. West Wimmera alone has 25% of Victorias wetlands within its boundaries and approximately 35% of the shire is native vegetation, largest amount of the endangered Red tailed Black Cockatoo concentration in Victoria. West Wimmera is part of the Grampians Marketing Inc, the regional tourism body which encompasses a very large diverse area of Victoria, it appears that the major thrust and promotion has been to the icon of the Grampians and very little to the western sector of the marketing region.

Perhaps the best manner of assisting the western sector of our marketing region is the formation of a RTO to assist the western shires of Grampians Marketing Inc to work with the western operators, attractions etc. This would give opportunity for those shires to work with Grampians Marketing to promote the region as a whole whilst giving equity to the diverse nature of tourism opportunities in the Wimmera Mallee section of the marketing region. These 4 western shires are not mountains and Halls Gap.

The answer to assist rural and remote shires may be the input of \$50 000 per year on an annual basis, that would be a total amount of 2.4 million over 48 shires, not a lot when one considers the assistance to tourism, economic development on the shire and regional scale. This would assist the rural and remote areas of Victoria to promote their tourism attractions, operators to become destinations which in turn would encourage regional economic development and the opportunity to enhance the rural sector of Victoria as the place to visit, stay awhile, move to and invest in.

Sincerely  
Mary Lu Amos  
West Wimmera Shire  
Manager Community Economic Development