

CORRECTED VERSION

RURAL AND REGIONAL COMMITTEE

Inquiry into rural and regional tourism

Daylesford — 28 June 2007

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Committee for Tourism Victoria, Melbourne Surrounds Strategic Marketing Group.

The CHAIR — It is great to have you here, Athol.

Mr GUY — Thank you very much, Mr Chairman.

The CHAIR — This is an all-party parliamentary Rural and Regional Committee. We are conducting an inquiry into rural and regional tourism. Evidence given before the inquiry is subject to parliamentary privilege, although any evidence repeated outside this building is not protected by that privilege. That privilege is afforded to us by the Constitution Act 1975, the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 and the Defamation Act 2005. Before you start with your evidence, would you be kind enough to give us your full name and address. Could you also provide the committee with the name of the organisation you are representing and the name of your latest group.

Mr GUY — The latest group? It is in formation. We may even audition here this afternoon.

Ms LOVELL — Excellent.

Mr GUY — Wendy has already auditioned. It is okay, she passed. She set a very high benchmark for everybody else. Athol Guy; I am the chairman of the Daylesford and Macedon Ranges campaign committee. I am delighted to be here.

Because of a blackout last night as I sat down at my computer to do you a nice couple of sheets in a bit more detail, I only had time this morning when we came back on air to do it in point form. Hopefully I will be able to elaborate on the points here for you. The minutes, obviously, should make a nice edited extract, hopefully, but I could leave these point form notes here for you, Mr Chairman, if that is a bit of guidance for everybody. I will try not to wander too far.

I am here obviously from the marketing point of view of tourism. I have been involved in tourism since 1969 in many ways that I do not need to bore you with now. The issue for my committee, of course, is regional, because we have six shires in our region. We have Moorabool down the road, which is Ballan, Bacchus Marsh; we have Melton; we have Sunbury; we have Mitchell up the road through Seymour, Broadford; and of course we have the Macedon Ranges council and also the Hepburn shire.

Quite clearly we have a couple of stars in the sense that Hepburn and Macedon are the key players in our region without any doubt, because they have the greatest concentration of tourist product and, I dare say, a much better understanding of what benefits tourism brings to their regions. The others certainly do and they are working. I know, because I have just been around them over the last couple of weeks and having bit of a chat. They have some fairly substantial plans of their own to help the region with their gateways, because they are all very important gateways into this region. Their tourism information centres are gearing up accordingly to tackle the technique of drive-ons for us right through the whole region. It is one area that we are a little concerned about, and I addressed that at a meeting we had locally yesterday.

It is a great region, it is full of iconic tourism product, but in a sense because we get our strategic directions from Tourism Victoria we do not create the strategic direction for ourselves. We certainly create all the tactical opportunities for marketing our region through events structures, through Daylesford Macedon produce that Joy and Roger referred to, plus the Macedon Ranges vignerons.

We are out there for our colleagues in terms of all our stakeholders, to do what we can as an umbrella marketing group for all of them. Given that the head of our comet is Daylesford, it is not dissimilar to other areas around the world, and I will mention two in a moment. We have quite a quirky campaign that was developed for us through Tourism Victoria and its agency. I am happy to pass these around at some stage, or we will have a look at them at the end if you have got time.

Ms DARVENIZA — Pass them around now so we can look at them while you chat.

Mr GUY — You will see the quirkiness of the branding of Daylesford Macedon Ranges. Equally I can tell you without getting into statistics because of what we have done recently with billboard advertising in Sydney, with double-page spreads in a big magazine by the name of *Notebooks* which on research through newsagents is now a huge and appropriate media destination for groups like ours, it is the right demographic, it is the right psychographic, it is the right positioning for the head of the comet, which is Daylesford. My analogy in terms of explaining how all small stakeholders in a fairly diverse region benefit from that is quite simple: if you have got the head of the comet pointed in the right direction, the tail sparkles magnificently. We have hundreds of retail operators as part of our mainstream marketing campaign driven by that particular branding, and so far it has proven to be extremely successful.

One of the main reasons is because we have been able to clearly identify who our market really is. It is very much indulgence; it is very much relaxation; we are the spa capital of the universe, if you like, at Daylesford Hepburn, positioned accordingly, and it is holistic wellness, if you like, as well. So it is indulgence: it is food and wine, as the team has already explained. There has been no collusion really. We have not discussed these issues between ourselves. We are putting forward independent views.

The challenge for us always is to make sure that all our stakeholders understand that the head of the comet is positioned appropriately, strategically in the market place, and all the smaller operators benefit accordingly. We have about eight or nine iconic operators, who are always the ones to buy the full pages in our collateral such as our brochure that you have got there; they are always the ones to come forward with the bigger dollars to help us drive whatever our campaigns are.

Right at the moment we are in bit of a watershed positively, because we are looking at a new two-year marketing plan funded by Tourism Victoria. Over a two-year period it is possible for us if we pass the test and all our submissions are in with Tourism Victoria, to have upwards of \$1.2 million to \$1.3 million over a two-year period to market our region. That has not happened before. There is a huge positive at the moment coming out of Tourism Victoria in terms of funding what our marketing campaign will be over the next two years.

The CHAIR — Athol, that would have to be over and above the announcement that was made six months ago in relation to holistic funding? I understand the holistic spend on marketing from Tourism Victoria is in the vicinity of about \$6 million over two years?

Mr GUY — It could be part of that.

The CHAIR — You are looking to actually take such a large chunk for one region out of that?

Mr GUY — We would like to; whether we get it or not is another matter. It is being independently reviewed by other marketing people outside Tourism Victoria. We were simply asked to put the ask in, to qualify that very specifically in terms of the package that we would like to come out of it. In a sense we are almost going to be acting like a media group, where we will be going to our stakeholders with half a dozen different opportunities to go into publications, such as a touring map, perhaps not a repeat of that big brochure there, but certainly into a campaign that has about half a dozen different sorts of media opportunities into which they can buy a space or buy some editorial.

Equally it applies to public relations through what we call the famils that journalists love to have through a region. That is a critical component of the whole operation, and very much an underpinning for the smaller operators is an opportunity for them to be mentioned in major publications around Australia and internationally. That is the base of the pyramid, if you like, and that is where hopefully everybody gets their chance to get what we like to call equitable exposure

for whatever dollars they put in. If we got what we asked for, we would be more than thrilled, Mr Chairman, I can tell you that.

The CHAIR — I am sure you would be.

Mr GUY — The next task is to spend it very wisely. It is very easy to go out there and blaze away, but with the help of Tourism Victoria and a lot of wise heads on my committee — we have an absolutely wonderful marketing committee — Daylesford and the Macedon Ranges are already famous in many ways, but hopefully even more so over the next two-year period.

From the marketing committee's point of view our ambitions are: to build stakeholder support mechanisms, exactly as we have talked about with this potential campaign; to work on packaging and selling the region in the most appropriate manner; I have talked about our positioning in the market place, which is a little different to a lot of the other regions — some of the other regions tend to be the Coca-Cola for everybody with a mouth, but that is not the way we are working — we have targeted our market very specifically with the help of research, all backed up through Tourism Victoria, and of course our own input from our own local regional tourism organisations as well.

The third point there, from the marketing committee's point of view, is encouraging product development. When you look around you know you have got specific levels of product that attract visitation both locally and internationally. The big challenge for us is to make sure that we encourage product differentiation that makes this region an absolute must for the type of visitors that we are after.

The economic benefits, and taking in point form some of the critical elements of the review here, quite clearly increased visitation to all our towns and villages and attractions is the key motivation. What they do when they get there, hopefully, is spend up big if the accommodation is there. Hopefully we will get more overnights. Hopefully at the end of the day we will get better yield out of the dollars, which is the economic scenario which we will leave here for the time being.

We want also to be able to show our villages and towns under their shire umbrellas, if you like, but without paying huge respect to the demarcation lines of shire boundaries. We would really like to be able to get the message out that these towns and villages are very exciting destinations in which to build a small business with any sort of tourism-related product, whether it is the bit of haberdashery that someone walks into a shop and buys on the day, or the ice-cream vendor, or whoever.

I think that is a very important point for our councils from now on, to be able to say to them — because we do have to go to them for dollars; probably more often than we would have wanted to in the past — and under this new collective umbrella scheme hopefully we can go to them with a major structured plan for an investment with us as a stakeholder which shows some very clear opportunities. We would like them to get that take, to have their area seen as a terrific place to come and build a new business of whatever sort. When you look at Gisborne, Woodend, Kyneton, Daylesford and Hepburn, they are all unique with a pretty iconic product base; they are certainly competitive in a lot of respects. But equally, in the tail of the comet we have such a diverse range of tourism opportunities. But we are not quite finished yet in many ways. I will touch on one or two in two seconds.

Our gateway partners are important; I wanted to make that clear. Sunbury and Melton may not immediately spring to the minds of everybody as tourism destinations, but they are great gateways, and they have terrific information centres as part of that drive-on flow to bring tourists right throughout the region and disperse the dollar value right through.

As to the future positives in terms of the economic benefits that will flow through our region, there is a plan at the moment engineered by Tourism Victoria called Destination Daylesford. You may have already heard about it from some of the other participants. It is a no. 1 destination in the eyes

of Tourism Victoria, and rightly so. It is a plan that will probably go over, I think, nearly a decade by the time it comes to full fruition. It will certainly establish what is required in Daylesford, from the infrastructure point of view, right through — the A to Z, if you like. I think it is a fabulous concept, and some of our colleagues here today are working on that committee, and working very hard. It is at the next level from our regional campaign committee; this is a totally different level of tourism development, from A to Z.

We have the redevelopment of the Hepburn bathhouse happening, which has been funded along the way by the government, various departments and several members of my committee are very closely — there is a lot of interconnection from the campaign committee with all these local groups. We have got our tentacles out into all the areas that count with our stakeholders. That is a very good example.

There is one area of potential that is a bit dear to my heart — I do not want to steal anybody else's thunder in this, because I know locally our colleagues at the Macedon shire are working up for a federal grant — that is, an indigenous proposal. Hanging Rock and Macedon are very interesting areas of this state within cooee of Melbourne, which are not being exploited in terms of being presented as an indigenous tourist product. That may be about to change.

I sit on the federal minister's Indigenous Tourism Australia Advisory Board, chaired by Aiden Ridgeway. That now sits alongside Tourism Australia. Research over the years highlights the fact — and this is where the future of this region will be in terms of the yield, in terms of the visitations — that the big picture, which this area is now moving into, is to attract international tourists into the region. Yes, and we have to keep doing the housekeeping with our local intrastate and interstate visitors.

Indigenous product has huge potential. There has never been a better time for some positives in that area. I should say right up front that John Morse, the chairman of Tourism Victoria, knows a helluva lot more about these sorts of things than me. He is on the indigenous board. I would like to think that at some stage you could possibly run some of these thoughts through with John. He has such an understanding of the indigenous communities around Australia, especially in the cultural and artistic areas.

What we would hope we might develop here would be a performance-based indigenous business which would be a very, very big attraction for our overseas visitors. They say they want to come to Australia for an indigenous experience. That does not mean to say that when they get here they want to jump on a plane and go to Uluru or Kakadu; preferably they would like to have it within an hour of their hotel. So we are dealing with issues like that. Having said that, Mount Macedon and Hanging Rock are within an hour of Melbourne, so there is potential for something to be developed there. I just think it has so much mileage to it that it could be an iconic attraction here, not just for our international visitors but equally for our domestic visitors as well.

There is already indigenous product right around Victoria. In any of the booklets you will see a lot of them that have been nurtured. The Koori centre in Melbourne is classic case; it is excellent, but what we are talking about here is really a performance-based scenario, perhaps not dissimilar to Judy Freeman's Tjapukai set up at the back of Cairns off the Kuranda Rail. Judy Freeman is the sort of person who has been involved in these areas for many, many years. Along with Rhoda Roberts, who runs all the indigenous festivals around Australia, there are a couple of wonderful people there for input as we try to develop this particular concept. But I do think at some stage it is going to need some state government input and support.

I think it really will lead to a real joint venture between what the federal government is doing with indigenous tourism and Tourism Victoria or wherever — I believe there is a great opportunity to set up an indigenous owned and operated facility. That is the key to whatever we nurture from ITA and our endeavours. There is funding from Indigenous Tourism Finance, which can come into things as a joint venture partner. That can be anything as long as the indigenous component is

appropriate. We would be clearly looking for something that was owned and operated by the right indigenous people. That is one of the real future positives for this region, which I would really appreciate some ongoing dialogue on.

We have, as I said, a definitive positioning here, and I do not think that is going to change. We know we are getting the right message out to our target market. A lot of other areas feel they are doing the same thing, and I am sure they probably are, but I cannot comment on that. The examples I could probably give you just in closing that part of it include Napier in New Zealand — has everybody been to Napier? It is the art deco capital of the world. It is a fantastic place.

Alongside is Hawkes Bay. It is like the head of the comet over there. Within two hours of Hawkes Bay you have all these other fantastic attractions — the vineyards; it even has a little town called Gisborne in its region, so it is a sister city to our friends up the road. It is a great example of what is happening here. If you like, you could look at Beechworth and the way Beechworth has developed. It has become such an iconic destination for its region. I think Wendy would know a lot more about it than I do. I have been there a few times. I love it, but from there you can spread out and go to a whole lot of other regions as well.

The impediments — there are some structural and attitudinal impediments that hopefully we might be able to tackle from the committee's point of view as you progress. A combination we know needs to be developed within our region — especially for the international visitors, because we want them for more than just a day trip; day trips are great, but really we want them overnight or for two nights in the region — is a combination of the, dare I say it, five-star variety to really attract them, although there are other levels that we can work at.

The big problem of course is that whilst you are within 90 minutes of Melbourne, it is a bit hard if you are not getting all the backup from the right areas to have people turn left at Tullamarine. 'Turn left at Tulla' is my mantra. We have to get them when they get off that aeroplane instead of going straight to Melbourne for the penguins or the other iconic day trip excursions. We have to find a way to get them out here.

We are starting to talk about the aviation industry and the new airlines that are coming in, and of course they are great packages for the destination. Make no mistake, we need to be getting in with them as an organisation. We will be selling pretty hard when we go to the Australian Tourism Exchange next year. We will be there for the first time in conjunction with the Shire of Macedon Ranges.

We will be selling hard. By then we hopefully will have our product well and truly finetuned in order to present it properly. But if we do not get an attitudinal change from inbound tour operators and wholesalers, we are really going to be banging our head up against a brick wall. Because I have spoken with potential investors for our region and the point they make is, 'How the hell do we get them to turn left at Tullamarine? Tell us how we can convince the inbound tour operators and the wholesalers and everybody else to clearly define this region as first cab off the rank when you hit the airport'. We are working on that.

But I believe, especially from the government's point of view, these people are just too blinkered to the potential. I am not saying they want the easy options or that they are lazy about it, because a lot of them are very successful and internationally they do fantastic trade, but if you look at the tour buses that go around here and through our region, I am not saying they are non-existent but that clearly is a market that we have to crack one way or the other, and I do not think we are going to do it without any real support. I do not know that I am talking money here; in fact, I do not know exactly what I am talking about, quite frankly.

But if you can help me find a way to get this on an agenda, where within the industry structures we get some support from the government's policies, I think that would be great, and not just for this area — it probably applies to the other regions out of Melbourne and Melbourne's surrounds.

As far as events are concerned, we have our icon attractions and venues to a certain extent and we are making good progress but what tends to happen is people come up with great ideas and then it sort of gets left on the table. I am not an administrator; I hate it, I am not good at it, I do not like it. I love ideas and I love working with people in terms of creating events.

We have a few going at the moment that are a lot of fun. I did not have anything to do with it but the Woodend Winter Arts Festival is a classic case. In its second year not only did it sell out over that whole weekend, I have never seen so much traffic in Gisborne, Woodend, Kyneton, right around the whole region not just because the event itself attracted one level but also as a spin-off made so many more people aware of the area as a great place to come on that day or weekend — I am not sure what the B & B figures would show, but we need more events like that.

I cannot speak for them in this sense. I know that the Macedon council have been very supportive in terms of their basic structure but we could have more of these if we had some sort of administrative support base to help with the circuits and with the staging. I know that Tourism Victoria are fairly conscious of the overall events scenario. I mean, Melbourne is saturated with events, and that is fantastic — it is the event capital of the world.

I have had a very close association with that for many years. Back when the Victorian Government Travel Authority was originally set up that was the original theme that was suggested — Victoria: the big event. In those days it was Victoria: the big event. I would like to see that come back because I think there are so many opportunities around regional Victoria for the staging of what could become iconic events that you would then get a nice, seamless flow of activity right through the year — keep out of each other's road. I do not know who is working on that though. I know my committee is looking at two or three — in fact, more than that, about half a dozen — major events for the next calendar year which we are just about to get into, which my committee will support all the way through with whatever help we can give from the marketing point of view. We can only do our dollar in, dollar out from the marketing point of view, we cannot help with structure.

We cannot even in a sense get the sort of dollars we would like for our own administration. If I can move away from events for a minute and come back to the structure of the campaign committee, we have a fantastic operative, our project officer, who is absolutely superb, is part time. What she does part time is extraordinary. The other regions will have to speak for themselves but I think professionally we need that sort of backup from a campaign committee's point of view in terms of its administration.

I have eight or nine very, busy people running their own fabulous businesses who find the time once a month for half a day but equally the emails that fly backwards and forwards across the grid are unbelievable. It is a great way to keep admin stuff out of the meeting when we have a campaign meeting but equally I think if we had full-time professional support built in, both through our campaign committees — through Tourism Victoria if that is appropriate — and certainly from the events point of view, and I know they are thinking about it. I think it would also be so beneficial to the industry regionally if we had an events structure of some sort that helped them put the circuits and the staging together and ran it as an annual program. Let us have 'Victoria: the big event'. We can do it. It is such a unique state in so many ways. Probably people will tell you that they are looking at and they are thinking about it. I think it would be great if we acted on it, and we can help in our ways like these. I do not know how I am going for time, Mr Chairman.

The CHAIR — Just about out of it.

Mr GUY — Thank you. I only had one other point to make which was about current programs. Branding, branding, branding: we are all branding everything at the moment. You will see our brand there. For retail action it might seem a bit of a strange thing — we represent hundreds of retailers — but tactically I think we are in control of that.

Just one point to finish with if I may: funding at local government level, dollar for dollar, really needs some clarification. This is one major, major point that I need to finish on. We must go back to our councils and councillors a lot more often with information about what we are doing as a committee, how the industry is working. Tourism, if you like, is just a marketing term — do not even talk about it as an industry for just a second. But it is a marketing action that helps the visitation, helps all small business right throughout all your regions.

What we need to get through with our local government colleagues, because there is so much money there that we will get a dollar for dollar for from Tourism Victoria, is it is a cost-shifting problem. They will do their budgets and through economic development they have specific areas that the dollars go to specifically. When we come on the scene and say, 'Hey, we are the marketing committee, we have this great strategy for the area you are in', usually we are asking them to find money outside what they have already committed to.

As much as they try very hard to deliver for us, the first thing that happens is they do not get recompensed at the other end. It is like a mandate from Tourism Victoria to us to go to our local councils and say, 'Here's the scheme, give us that dollar and we will add another dollar on', but if they are taking the dollar out of health or welfare or somewhere else, they do not get it back. It is a huge, huge problem.

If this committee, please, would take that on board, I think, firstly, it needs some clarification, and secondly, I think councils need a lot of support if Tourism Victoria is going to maintain our major stakeholders, who are our councils. If they have to find the funds elsewhere after they have done their finite budgeting, it is a huge problem. I would like to think over the next couple of years we will get ahead of the game rather than be behind it. But if your committee can help in some way, that would be great.

I can leave the other points — they are all a bit academic. I could talk all afternoon about them.

The CHAIR — I gathered that, Athol.

Mr NORTHE — Athol, going back a little, obviously in this particular region I guess a lack of mid-week tourism has huge ramifications. One of those is retention of employees as such. Is your committee addressing this particular issue? If so, what can we do to resolve that particular problem?

Mr GUY — It is the problem from day one when you are in a daytrip region, when you have not expanded that region to be a genuine day-night/second night region. We have put a lot of effort into the extended visitation scenario. That is why our focus is on a specific market segment. We know we will get daytrips to a certain extent, so the coffee shop will keep ticking over and all those other basic ingredients will keep ticking over.

As I think a couple of my colleagues mentioned, we need to profile our food and wine in a better way so that it is an experience that you really need to spend a couple of days enjoying and it is not just the quick weekend, hit-and-run job. Internationally, quite clearly, we need to get in with the tour operators who are packaging the three, four or five-days out at Melbourne airport, go do penguins, Sovereign Hill and stay in Melbourne. It is a long-term goal but we have to start now. We have got the investors. We have got people here now who have put huge money into their premises — if you look at the Lake House and Peppers, and quite a few of the others — and there are vineyards over the other side like Hanging Rock, run by John Ellis and a few of his operatives there, which are open seven days a week. I will not get into that one, because wine is a very separate issue.

It is the extended-stay and the come-and-have-a-holiday mentality that we have to generate for here. We have done the positioning, we have got the product and now we have to put the proposition to the marketplace in the most appropriate manner. It is a marketing job, without any doubt.

Mr EREN — Thanks for your submission; it has been great. Just in relation to the indigenous tourism and the market that you want to capture, what segment of the tourism market did you want to attract to this region?

Mr GUY — The international visitor would give us the best opportunity for putting down the base of a business that will require quite a bit of money to establish it — the investment that would have to go into what I am seeing first of all simply as a performance-based experience, wherever that might be, but within close proximity to Melbourne.

I think there is an educational job still to be done at the local level, though, from intrastate to interstate. That is something we have not tackled yet in that indigenous tourism up the road. It has been more an industry-to-industry panel to make sure that we have been able to collate all the bodies that are currently involved in indigenous tourism and get them to feel part of the one fraternity, because it is a very disparate group at the moment. There are hundreds of organisations all dealing with bits and pieces of indigenous tourism.

I would think that it is the international market that would give us profitability and the cream on the cake at the end. Locally, without getting too far off the track, I would love to see an educational and entertaining road show around our state based on indigenous performers and the indigenous product. I think that would be a great start. And then, like a lot of these things, it will bite somewhere, and you just never know where the next idea will come from to consolidate that. I think rather than get too carried away, if there were an investment in that sort of start-up kit to see what potential the end product might have, that would be a great starting point.

I do not think it would be all that expensive to get it up and running. I have seen this happen in other areas before, and it is a travelling road show, if you like, in a way. It could go through a whole year. It would not have to be every day of the week. You could simply change your performance and you could change the structure until you researched the thing through. It would be a bit of a test market.

Ms TIERNEY — I just wanted your thoughts on the international market. I understand in terms of Peppers and the Lake House that they are probably already fairly well connected in that world of 5-star and 6-star luxury network. In terms of that group that we want to get from Tullamarine up here who would normally go down to the penguins or the Great Ocean Road, how do we break that nexus of it being a one-day destination, even if we can get them to do the U-turn? I am assuming that you would be looking at groups of visitors who are similar to the client base that we already have doing the penguins and the Great Ocean Road.

Mr GUY — Yes.

Ms TIERNEY — Because we have had some discussions with people from places like Wollongong who have put in a lot of time and effort with personal contact with Chinese and Japanese communities, where there has been ongoing dialogue for a long time to build up that real trust and rapport. I am just wondering whether you have had discussions along those lines.

Mr GUY — We are very much coming along on the coat-tails of our experienced operators who already have a link with the international packages. We are not kidding ourselves; we know how difficult that is. We have got some arrangements made with Tourism Victoria to go and sit with it shortly and get a real education in terms of what we need to put together at ATE. We will use that as the starting point for what we need to put together as a regional experience — accommodation et al, everything — whatever we can put together at that time, bearing in mind that there will be some deficiencies. But I think we need to infiltrate the mindset of the inbound

tour operators and the wholesalers that this is a regional experience and that it is at a certain level — it might be one coach every second week, to get it as definitive as we can get. It is a real challenge, because we know in 5 to 10 years time this is where the real benefit will come through, and that is the thing that will encourage more investment in the region.

I suppose it is a matter of what comes first: do you build the hotel first and hope they are going to turn up, or do you go out there and test the market, get your experience, get the experience of the product locked in there and hopefully have it picked up by the operators? But you are dead right; it is a long-term thing, and we really are relying on those connections that our iconic operators have developed over the decades.

Ms LOVELL — Athol, it is great to hear you speak so passionately about the region. Obviously you still have that dream in your pocket.

Mr GUY — I like living here.

Ms LOVELL — Just a couple of questions. First of all, you spoke earlier about the strategic direction coming from Tourism Victoria not being developed locally. Do you feel that that is the right way for it to happen, or do you feel that the local area should have more input into that? And also, if we were to drag you out of retirement for one day and make you the Minister for Tourism, what would you do to change tourism in Victoria?

Mr GUY — I would probably retire the next day! I do not think it is a dramatic change thing, Wendy. Let me briefly take you back to 1975. This is quite nostalgic. I sat as a young state member of Parliament at a federal committee of inquiry into tourism, and I also wore the hat of representing Sir Freddie Laker of Laker Airways at the all-party committee of inquiry into tourism. Tourism was not an industry in those days. It was not recognised by the government at all. It was recommended that Laker be given landing rights. You can imagine what Qantas did to that. It was absolutely unbelievable.

As to the changes over the years — there has been an evolutionary path. When you look at where we are at now with our tourism industry, even over the last decade, it has made phenomenal gains. Rounding up tourism operators — people like vigneron — is like herding cats sometimes. They are a fantastic group of people, but to get that collective impetus which we need to gather in takes time and effort. You are relying so much on these good people giving up their time to sit on these boards like the Melbourne surrounds marketing group, although some of them are professionals with other regional groups.

I think it is evolutionary. I do not think there is anything that you could do overnight, except I would certainly tackle the knowledge side of it. I still do not think there is a clear understanding. I think my region is doing very well in terms of our relationship with our councils and our understanding of what the tourism product can do for the region, but we need to do more. We need to be in closer contact with all our players on a much more regular basis, but we are all in there basically with an amateur status. If I could change one thing, I suppose it would be to better equip regional Victoria, because it is such a unique state, Victoria; it has got everything.

So what would I do? I would put up on a wall all the pigeonholes and pretend that I did not have any tourism product at all. I'd say, 'Let's pretend we haven't got any. What do we need? We've got one of those. We've got one of those, and we've got one of those too. We've got that'. And then at the end of the day you would see what you have not got to have the complete picture, and I do not know that that has ever been done.

That would be my 24 hours. I would sit there and just put the pigeonholes up there, tick off what we have got and look at what is left, and then go out and manufacture them. I would go out and make them up, with all the key players in the industry and all the funds that are around. Superannuation funds — they do not know where to put their money!

The CHAIR — Thanks, Athol. Just to finish off, does Macedon Ranges have a strong indigenous community as it is at the minute?

Mr GUY — No.

The CHAIR — So if you were going to do something like that, it would be in a sense a bit contrived initially?

Mr GUY — No, we have got connections. The connections are all there, but we do not have, as such, an indigenous community. Bendigo has, and we are in close touch with all our aunts and everybody up there, a terrific group. We have also got the connections from the industry point of view. At Macedon or Hanging Rock it would be a structure built from bringing in the right indigenous operatives. We have got our finger on a couple.

The CHAIR — Athol, turning left out of Tullamarine is something that really interests this committee. Do you know who the international visitors are? Are they business people who are tacking a few days onto their business trip and then have that discretionary two or three or four days, or they people that are specifically targeting Melbourne for events? Do we know who that 'Turning left out of Tullamarine' target is or do we still need to do more data collection to find out who they are so we can then target those people?

Mr GUY — More data collection, but my gut feeling would be working with all the airlines, if you could get into some fly-drive programs and tackle that part of the market first before you get hold of your coach operators and all the others, because that is a bigger job. I think working with the airlines who are bringing the people in, working back through there product that they put out to their passengers. I think it is a fly-drive start up kit

The CHAIR — Have there ever non-any financial viability cost benefits done in relation to rail through Tullamarine, so effectively people can jump on a rail into town or they can turn left on that rail line and end up in regional Victoria?

Mr GUY — I think it went as far as Tullamarine. I think that got shelved. There was a fast rail scenario envisaged for Tulla to the city.

The CHAIR — In and out, but not linked by — —

Mr GUY — No, I think that would be well ahead of the game. I do not think that has been envisaged at all. I think we are pretty much reliant on the fly-drive

The CHAIR — Thanks very much for your time. I appreciate we have gone a bit over time, but I appreciate the evidence you have given. We will give you a copy of that evidence in a few weeks and if there are any typographical errors, you can make those adjustments. Thanks very much.

Witness withdrew.