Dear Sir,

Please find included in this document is the submission regarding the inquiry into matters relating to heritage tourism and ecotourism in Victoria.

We look forward to discussing any aspect of this submission.

Regards,

Jerome.
Received from the Legislative Assembly on 28 August 2012

That, under s33 of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, an inquiry into matters relating to heritage tourism and ecotourism in Victoria be referred to the Environment and Natural Resources Committee for consideration and report no later than 31 May 2014, with particular reference to:

1. examining the current scope of ecotourism and heritage tourism in Victoria, including the extent to which the current arrangements maximise the benefits to the local industry;

For the MELTours organisation, the current arrangements that benefits URBAN heritage tourism are the spaces that are open for public access enabled by private and government organisations. Note this is not by arrangement but utilizing the available resources that often are available to the public at large.

Our portfolio of History and Laneways tours, Architecture tours and Flinders St Station tour are heavily reliant on heritage built infrastructure. Interiors such as the former CBD Bank chamber at 333 Collins St (1892), the Royal Arcade (1870) and the ANZ (Gothic) Bank Collins St (1889) are examples of what our customers see on our tours:

The external facades of buildings are key to our commentaries such as the Majorca Building (1927), Job Warehouse (1847) and Flinders St Station (1910):
Such tours could have been enhanced and improved if the Australia Building (1889 – formally 3rd tallest building in the world), Equitable Insurance Building (1890 – built with some much granite and opulent interiors its granite and marble is still seen around Melbourne), the Federal Coffee Palace (1888 – a 650 room boom style architecture considered an act of vandalism when demolished in 1972) and the Victorian Parliament building (1855 to 1927 but still missing the dome) were still in existence:

The report Successful Tourism at Heritage Places – A Guide for Tourism Operators, Heritage Managers and Communities (Annie Crawford 2001) states that 'Recognition of the significance of heritage assets, and ensuring their long-term protection, is essential for sustainable and appropriate tourism' (p8).

There is a decided lack of a connection between tourism or heritage tourism and heritage building controls. Most of the buildings shown below –formally in Collins St - have been demolished, effectively robbing the tourism industry of being able to conduct historical tours equivalent in scope and quality to those offered in Paris or similar European city that has effectively preserved their heritage buildings.

Here in Melbourne the general lack of appreciation of history and historical buildings and a tendency to allow developers a largely unrestrained hand to threaten any building – the sort of scenario not even considered in Europe.

The subject of the demolition of a globally significant Art Deco building was given scant appreciation by CoM Council and Labor Government just for the construction of shops: http://www.theage.com.au/national/artdeco-landmark-lonsdale-house-to-be-bulldozed-20090727-dygh.html
In our opinion, what would maximise the benefits of URBAN heritage tourism to the local industry would be the opening of public infrastructure to tourism groups outside of the local controlling bodies. Examples would be the Flinders St Station Ballroom (1910), Victoria Parliament House interior (1855-1927) and the Exhibition building interior (1879) currently not available for access by organisations outside of Metro Trains or Museum Victoria:

The report Successful Tourism at Heritage Places – A Guide for Tourism Operators, Heritage Managers and Communities (Annie Crawford 2001) states that ‘Major constraints on tourism operators include access to the places they want to visit’ (p10).

In our case as a commercial operator we are largely ignored as being important enough to have access to many spaces not already open to the public as our correspondence with Museum Victoria about Exhibition Building Melbourne Tours indicates, having actually been locked out of running an Exhibition Building tour during an events exhibition by Museum Victoria or given a ridiculous option of renting the Capitol Theatre for a whole day (>3000 cost) when our request is the access the building for 20 minutes during an Art Deco Architecture tour.

Access to the Manchester Unity Building has been denied by private company Smile Solutions. Over 8,000 people entered the Open House Melbourne ballot in 2013 for only 400 spots indicating the enormous potential of tours into the building. 16,000 people responded to the Victorian Government calls for responses to the Flinders St Station design competition showing the potential for tours in that building currently managed by Metro Train/Department of Transport who ignore all requests for access except major media outlets.

2. examining best practice in ecotourism and heritage tourism;

There is little evidence of a documented best practice for Heritage Tourism in an urban context. In the Victoria’s Arts, Theatre and Cultural Heritage Tourism Action Plan 2010–2014 (Tourism Victoria 2010), there is no definition, explanation or action for the term ‘Heritage Tourism’. The report mentions that ‘The top two cultural tourism activities for both domestic and international visitors to Victoria in 2008 were visiting heritage buildings, sites or monuments’ (p8) but the list of Tourism Victoria’s key initiatives (p11) do not mention any strategies or improvements related to Heritage Tourism – urban or otherwise.

The question ‘What targets will we use to assess Victoria’s positioning as a leading arts, theatre and cultural heritage destination?’ (p23) doesn’t mention any benchmarks or best practices related to Heritage Tourism – again urban or otherwise.

that is heavily influenced by the indigenous and country heritage assets, not urban building heritage infrastructure.

It's hard to understand the impact of heritage tourism when CULTURE and HERITAGE Tourism UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUES AND SUCCESS FACTORS mentions that many of the assets are not in metropolitan areas: Many of Australia’s historic heritage assets are located in non-metropolitan regional Australia where the contribution of cultural tourism to economic growth is of great importance, as well as being of policy significance. In addition, although Australia’s non-Indigenous cultural assets are only 200 years old, they represent important icons and appear to contribute to a sense of national identity. (p4)

Buildings mentioned above are significant starting from the only World Heritage Listed building – the Royal Exhibition Building – itself narrowly avoiding demolition in 1948!

Industry standards and initiatives such as those noted below don’t include information on best practice specific to heritage tourism:

- National Tourism Accreditation Framework
- National Environmental Forum Business Plan
- OTOA Accreditation Program
- Australian Guide Qualification Program
- Being Green Is Your Business
- Being Green Keeps You Out Of The Red

Based on what this author has found, there needs to be some focus on Heritage Tourism related to non-indigenous building assets as distinct to indigenous and cultural tourism.

3. **examining the potential for the development of ecotourism and heritage tourism in Victoria;**

Urban heritage tourism sites that could be added to the MELTours portfolio of tours or new tours designed as a result (not an exhaustive list):

1. Flinders St Station and Ballroom
2. Federation Square back of house access
3. Exhibition Buildings
4. Capitol Theatre
5. Manchester Unity Building

Urban heritage tourism sites that could be added to MELTours portfolio of tours if there is an ability to interface with existing tours outside of actually joining a static tour

1. Victorian Parliament House
2. Victorian Government House
3. Victorian State Library

The addition of these sites would lead to the creation of 2 or more new tours that could be offered to Victoria domestic and inbound tourists.
4. determining the environmental and heritage issues associated with large scale tourism; and

Nil response.

5. determining whether the local industry is sufficiently advanced to manage increased tourism and any obstacles to this.

There is a general lack of online booking facilities with commercial tourism businesses that is being addressed outside of this inquiry. However, organisations such as Museum Victoria (MV) need to be included in this as bookings in advance are problematic for the Royal Exhibition Buildings as currently being operated.

A request MELTours received from the Ukraine for a school 8 months in advance could not be made with MV for the Royal Exhibition Buildings tour. As a result, the school children did not visit the building but joined other activities. I am sure this is not the outcome all stakeholders seek when such curiosity is not fulfilled by visitors.