



Great Southern Touring Route  
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P.O Box 563  
Daylesford  
Victoria Australia 3460

Friday 9 April, 2021

Patrick O'Brien, Committee Manager  
Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee  
Parliament of Victoria

Dear Patrick

**RE: INQUIRY INTO THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE TOURISM AND EVENTS SECTORS**

Thank you for this opportunity to contribute to The Legislative Council's Economy and Infrastructure Committee's inquiry into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism and events sectors.

Great Southern Touring Route is a collaboration of Regional Tourism Boards, Visit Victoria and Tourism Operators who promote South West Victoria to international visitors through a road trip. This marketing effort is highly regarded within the Australian tourism industry and has been in market for 30 years. Throughout 2020 until now the effects of COVID 19 of course have been immense. The resilience, adaptability and positive attitude of many tourism operators as they have struggled to survive has been nothing short of amazing. Where they saw an opportunity to pivot their business they did and their support for colleagues and peers has been impressive.

When the international borders were closed and international visitation ceased some businesses were able to direct their efforts to a domestic audience, not in all locations did this prove to be possible. For example, Lorne on the Great Ocean Road was appealing to Melbournians to stay where as Port Campbell further down the road and home to the 12 Apostles was not as successful. Success depended on distance to Melbourne city and activities in destination attractive to the Melbourne consumer.

All operators and destinations in tourism as in all industries suffered when lockdown was in place, once lifted and depending on the operation and location the region's have seen a huge boom in domestic visitation.

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This boom has been a great opportunity to re-build cash reserves exhausted throughout 2020, however a lot of staff were let go or left of their own accord as work dried up (a lot of internationals work in hospitality and tourism). This put an enormous burden on businesses as they try and cope with huge demand with limited and sometimes non-existent human resources, training for example is essential and takes time, trying to get staff up to speed and whilst dealing with increased demand can be incredibly challenging.

An unexpected result of COVID 19 is the real estate boom in regional centres as Melbournians escape the city, this has meant many regional towns are now experiencing severe housing shortages for hospitality and tourism workers.

Those businesses who can't attract domestic tourists such as Tour Operators who once chauffeured and hosted international guests to the Great Southern Touring Route have been without customers for over a year and are struggling to survive now that Job keeper has finished. Inbound Tour Operators who are vital in the distribution chain (Consumer - Travel Agent - Wholesaler - Inbound Tour Operator - Tourism Operator) have also been unable to attract domestic buyers. They also are struggling to survive and will be vital to the return of international consumers in the future. It is expected the importance of trade when international borders re-open will be key, as consumers seek out travel trade as the gatekeepers of knowledge around safety in destination, vaccine and border information.

Great Southern Touring Route has worked hard to ensure it is still in existence to welcome back international tourists soon, through various government grants and the Job keeper allowance the lights are still on. We are marketing South West Victoria domestically but also continue to promote through Tourism Australia, Visit Victoria and our own in-market representatives (Germany and China) to keep the Great Southern Touring Route front of mind and on the wish list of many international consumers.

Please contact me should you require further information or clarification.

Regards

Tim Grandfield  
Executive Officer  
Great Southern Touring Route



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