



Note this response was originally provided by Country Victoria Tourism Council. Country Victoria Tourism Council is now known as Tourism Alliance Victoria.

July 2, 2002

Mr David Mazitelli  
Head  
Tourism Strategy Group  
Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources  
GPO Box 9839  
CANBERRA, ACT 2601

Dear Mr Mazitelli,

Please find attached the Tourism Alliance response to the 10 Year Plan for Tourism Discussion Paper.

Tourism Alliance is the peak body representing local and regional tourism organisations. Tourism Alliance services Victoria's regional centres and rural areas through providing leadership, representation, information, independent advice, communication, consultation and local solutions to develop a professional, prosperous and sustainable regional tourism industry. We deliver services to and/or represent 64 members, 78 Local Councils, over 91 Local Tourism Associations, 48 Regional Tourism Associations and 66 accredited Visitor Information Centres.

Tourism Alliance is a member of:

- Victorian Tourism Industry Council, the recently formed peak policy council for the tourism industry; and the
- Tourism Accreditation Board of Victoria Inc, which oversees the progressive development and implementation of accreditation and quality assurance programs

Tourism Alliance's response to the 10 Year Plan for Tourism Discussion Paper is provided in context of its experience in rural and regional Victoria and therefore its understanding of issues for rural and regional tourism.

Given Tourism Alliance depth and breadth of experience, we would welcome the opportunity to provide the Government with ongoing advice regarding rural and regional tourism issues.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicholas Hunt", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Nicholas Hunt  
**Chief Executive**

## Tourism Alliance Victoria

### Response to the Federal Government's 10 Year Plan for Tourism

#### Achieving Tourism Growth in Rural and Regional Australia

##### Data

Increasing awareness of the realistic value of sustainable tourism and therefore encouraging its growth requires statistical data.

Facts are needed to assist local communities, industry and government at all levels to realise the current and potential value of tourism to a particular community. This information will identify and support greater levels of public and private sector investment.

Economic data is needed to demonstrate "new" income generated from tourism and the amount and type of employment created by tourism. Social and cultural data is needed to estimate the well-being of the local community and health of local culture resulting from tourism. Environmental data is needed to link tourism with the state of the environment both natural and built.

A number of agencies have developed a methodology for calculating the value of tourism to a community ie Bureau of Tourism Research and CSIRO. Each method varies restricting the ability for comparisons to be made and is either too expensive, complex or time consuming for the local community to apply. There is no agreed national standard for calculating the value of sustainable tourism to a local community which addresses the economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects of tourism.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey of Tourist Accommodation, Small Area Data is often used to provide valuable information regarding local room stocks, occupancy rates, guest arrivals, takings from accommodation and employment. However, the data is restricted to hotels, motels and guest houses with 15 or more rooms. As the tourism industry is dominated by small businesses (particularly in rural and regional areas) often consisting of accommodation with less than 15 rooms, the Survey of Tourism Accommodation is not useful to many rural and regional areas.

A Commonwealth Government Parliamentary Report suggests collecting data from small business is difficult<sup>1</sup>. This directly translate to difficult data collection from the tourism industry given its dominance by small businesses. Their inadequate knowledge, skills and processes results in information being sought in an Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey often being not readily accessible to small business people. Additionally the reliance on traditional methods of data collection- the use of survey forms, adds to the paperwork burden faced by small business and there is no perceived benefit to them or their business from filling in the surveys<sup>2</sup>.

##### Strategies

1. Collect ABS Data on Tourist Accommodation with 5 rooms or more

<sup>1</sup> Parliament of The Commonwealth of Australia (1990) Small Business in Australia. Challenges, Problems and Opportunities. Report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Industry Science and Technology. Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid Parliament of The Commonwealth of Australia (1990)

2. Develop nationally consistent alternative methods for collecting data from small businesses in the tourism sector
3. Develop a national standard for calculating the economic, social, cultural and environmental value of sustainable tourism to local communities.
4. Progressively apply the national standard to communities with a population of 5,000 or more to build multiple tourism data reference points.

Tourism Alliance recognises that there are costs associated with the implementation of the above strategies, however the benefits to current and potential investors, public and private, far outweigh the material costs.

### Awareness

Sustainable tourism can be described as being tourism that strives “to influence the following factors:

- Economic health
- Subjective well being of the locals
- Unspoilt nature, protection of resources
- Healthy culture and
- Optimum satisfaction of guest requirements.<sup>3</sup>”

The capacity for a community to benefit from sustainable tourism and the subsequent level of benefit depends on a number of elements including its unique natural and cultural assets, climate<sup>4</sup>, distance from major population centres<sup>5</sup>, type and diversity of industry sectors, the potential for tourism to add value to other industries and the expertise and leadership within the community.

Well documented projected growth rates for tourism within Australia makes it an attractive industry for communities and in particular local government to turn to. As the perceived clean industry lacking the usual trappings- industrial plant, pollution and by-products<sup>6</sup>, tourism is seen as a solution to declining local economies, degraded local environments and the break down of the community fabric.

The overall lack of understanding and awareness about the complexity of the tourism industry, the benefits it can deliver and the negative impacts it can have, results in some communities over emphasizing tourism’s value and therefore over investing in tourism or the reverse- under emphasizing its value and therefore under investing in tourism.

Developing or maintaining a sustainable tourism industry is a complex task which begins with increasing the awareness of the realistic value of sustainable tourism to the whole community and to local councils’ desiring tourism as a mechanism for growth.

Equally, overall awareness of the value and role of sustainable tourism across State and Federal government departments is essential to its growth.

---

<sup>3</sup> Hardy, A.L & Beeton, R.J.S (2001) Sustainable tourism or maintainable tourism: managing resources for more than average outcomes *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* ( 3) 168:192

<sup>4</sup> Mayo, E (1975) Tourism and National Parks: a psychographic and attitudinal study. *Journal of Travel Research* (14) 14:18

<sup>5</sup> Hunt, J.D (1975) Images as a factor in tourism development. *Journal of Travel Research*, X111.1

<sup>6</sup> Craik, J (1991) Resorting to Tourism. Cultural Policies for Tourist Development in Australia, Allen &Unwin, North Sydney, NSW Australia

**Strategy:**

**Increase awareness of the value of sustainable tourism.**

5. Provide funding to measure existing awareness levels of the realistic economic, social, cultural and environmental value of sustainable tourism to local communities, every 3 years for a period of 9 years.
6. Provide funding to conduct awareness campaign to increase the awareness of the realistic economic, social cultural and environmental value of sustainable tourism to local communities, every 2 years for 10 years.
7. Provide funding to evaluate effectiveness of campaign every 2 years for 10 years.
8. Include tourism portfolio within Federal Cabinet (cost to implement- nil)
9. Introduce tourism industry representatives onto key Government working groups ie Export Advisory Councils etc (cost to implement- nil)

Tourism Alliance would suggest an indicative cost for the above to be considered as part of a whole of Government approach to supporting a small business driven industry.

In considering Strategies 5 & 7, we estimate \$200,000 per period would achieve a valid outcome for each Strategy.

In relation to Strategy 6, we estimate that upwards of \$2,000,000 be allocated to ensure effective consumer reach and the program be conducted at least twice to maximise impact.

**Professionalism and Standards**

Planning for Tourism

The capacity for a community to benefit from sustainable tourism and the subsequent level of benefit depends not only on its aforementioned unique natural and cultural assets etc, it depends on planning- strategic and long term planning.

The Federal Government’s initiative to form a 10 Year Plan for Tourism is an encouraging start to the planning process. Tourism Victoria has developed a 3 Year Strategic Plan and Regional Tourism Development Plans have been prepared for each region of Victoria.

However, Local Government is a key driver of regional tourism and it faces significant challenges from development of any kind (particularly in coastal areas.) A strategic plan for tourism is therefore required to articulate the character of a town or region, its topography, geology, botany, wildlife, vernacular, architecture or special local features; to support consultation with the community where developments are likely to impact on its tourism potential or growth<sup>7</sup>. Sustainable tourism does not destroy local character.

Local strategic plans for tourism need to link with regional, state and the national plan(s) yet identify local issues and local solutions.

The industry also seeks greater consistency in the assessment of tourism development planning permits through integrating local strategic plans for tourism with the Local Planning Policy Frameworks (which are primarily based on land use) by providing guidelines for tourism development that are applicable, at least, across the state.

<sup>7</sup> Rogers, M.F., Collins Y.M.J (2001) The Future of Australia’s Country Towns. La Trobe University.

Local strategic plans for tourism are deemed to be time consuming and costly to prepare. Many Councils lack the resources to prepare an integrated strategic tourism plan.

Planning for and integrating tourism into economic development requires community capacity building. Community capacity building within in this submission means the combined influence of a community's commitment, resources and skills that can be deployed to build on community strengths and address community problems to deliver community led control, change, development and sustainability<sup>8</sup>.

The absence or inadequacy of local planning for tourism results in stagnant, ad hoc and unsustainable tourism growth in rural and regional areas.

**Strategies**

10. Provide funding for the preparation of Guidelines for Tourism Development in rural and regional areas for inclusion in Local Tourism Planning Policy Frameworks.
11. Provide funding to increase community capacity in the development of local strategic tourism plans.
12. Provide incentives for the preparation of local strategic tourism plans through linking government funding programs to projects identified in local strategic tourism plans (cost to implement- nil)

Tourism Alliance estimates that the cost for implementing the Strategies 10 is \$250,000. Tourism Alliance envisages that Strategy 11 costs could be on a dollar for dollar basis over the term of the project with the project becoming self sustaining in the longer term.

	Public	Private
Year One	\$200,000	Nil
Year Two	\$100,000	\$50,000
Year Three	\$50,000	\$100,000
Year Four	Nil	\$150,000

Local and Regional Tourism Organisations

As previously stated, the tourism industry is dominated by small business, as such its ability to represent and express itself to government and benefit from government support is through the formation of a local or regional tourism organisation.

Generally the organisations are volunteer based and rely on a combination of industry contributions, state and/or local government funding and in-kind support from Local Government. They often lack expertise, leadership, business and financial management and planning skills, sound meeting procedures and an understanding of governance. It is therefore common for the organisations to be inefficient and lack effectiveness. Given the reliance on these organisations to deliver federal, state and local government programs, co-ordinate and represent tourism businesses, run Visitor Information Centres, administer co-operative marketing campaigns and grow the industry, their performance is central to the success of the industry.

**Strategies**

13. Provide funding to develop a national standard for Best Practice Principles
---

<sup>8</sup> Aspen Institute (1996) Measuring community capacity building: Workbook in progress for rural communities.

of Local and Regional Tourism Organisation administration and management.
14. Provide funding for preparation, progressive distribution and training of Best Practice Principles of Local and Regional Tourism Organisation Guidelines and Resource Kit.

Tourism Alliance estimates that the cost for implementing the Strategies 13 is \$250,000. Tourism Alliance envisages that Strategy 14 costs could be \$350,000 ongoing promotion and development of the program could be handled by Tourism Alliance if it was implementing the original program.

### **Tourism Accreditation**

Tourism Alliance is a member of the Victorian Tourism Accreditation Board and is associated with the Australian Tourism Accreditation Association (ATAA). Tourism Alliance developed and manages the Visitor Information Centre Accreditation Program for Victoria and recognises the extreme importance and value of accreditation to the development of a professional sustainable tourism industry, which, by definition delivers quality customer experiences.

### **Strategy**

15. Tourism Alliance, therefore, supports the ATAA's response to the 10 Year Plan for Tourism.
--

### **Regional Infrastructure**

In many parts of rural and regional Victoria, tourism's success is based (amongst other things) on its ability to add value to existing local industries such as agriculture, manufacturing or forestry. The health of those industries, therefore, is as important to the prosperity and sustainability of tourism.

Sustainable rural and regional tourism, along with other industries operating in rural and regional areas, shares a dependency on local infrastructure. Of particular importance to the tourism industry is the provision, maintenance and standard of roads and rail.

The lack of sufficient funding for maintaining local infrastructure is a well documented and ongoing issue that has been taken up by a number of representative bodies such as the Victorian Farmers Federation, Municipal Association of Victoria and the Australian Local Government Association.

For example, the Victorian Farmers Federation states:

“ The Victorian Government has a target of \$12 billion of food and fibre exports from Victoria by the year 2010. This represents a tripling of the current figure...

Rural Victoria is also a crucial part of the Federal Governments “Supermarket to Asia” program, which seeks to make Australia the food bowl of Asia. Reliable, competitively priced infrastructure is vital to achieving the \$12 billion export target.

Poor infrastructure is holding back the growth of agriculture and is hampering achievement of the Government's targets. The standard of infrastructure provision in

country areas, most notably roads and electricity, is lower than that in urban areas.<sup>9</sup>

Inadequate infrastructure is not only a key challenge to the Federal Government's growth targets for agriculture, it is a key challenge to the Federal Government's growth forecasts for the tourism industry.

More recently the public sector has increasingly privatised infrastructure and embraced a 'user pays' principle, which has been to the detriment of rural and regional areas.

However, the provision of infrastructure stimulates general economic activity which in turn generates tax revenue for the Government and investment in infrastructure needs to be viewed as an effective tool to stimulate regional development.

### Strategy

16. Tourism Alliance supports the Victorian Farmers Federation strategy to provide adequate government funding for local infrastructure (roads) at a level of \$500 million over five years.

### Australian Regional Tourism Network

In its response to the 10 Year Tourism Plan, the Australian Regional Tourism Network has identified a number of key issues including value of tourism, research, product development, communication and industry education, transport access and professionalism and standards.

Key issues identified within this submission parallel many of the issues outlined in the Australian Regional Tourism Network's 10 Year Tourism Plan Response.

### Strategy

17. Tourism Alliance supports the Australian Regional Tourism Network's 10 Year Plan Response

---

<sup>9</sup> Victorian Farmers Federation: [www.vff.org.au](http://www.vff.org.au)