



Professional development and the role of advisory committees

Council has received a media inquiry about the professional development of Council staff and the role of Council advisory committees.

The inquiry made specific reference to the Victorian Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) annual conference held in mid-2018. Questions were also asked about the attendance at the conference of a member of Council's Visitor Economy Advisory Committee.

The visitor economy is a significant employer in Warrnambool and growing. It is appropriate that Council, which has a role to play in the city's economic development, ensures that it is up-to-date on industry trends and that Council staff are exposed to new ideas and improved ways of delivering services to visitors.

Tourism in the Great Ocean Road Region captures around 7 million visitors annually, contributes over 7,000 jobs and has a direct economic output of \$1.1 billion per annum. The Great Ocean Road Region captures more domestic and international visitors than any other tourism region in regional Victoria. Source: Great Ocean Road Destination Management Plan.

When comparing tourism to other industries and the total economy it must be understood that tourism is not a distinct industry, rather it comprises a portion of the economic activity classified to ANZSIC industries in the core national accounts. Tourism is therefore an amalgam of activities across various industry sectors such as retail, accommodation, cafes and restaurants, and cultural and recreational services.

It is estimated that the tourism sector in the Warrnambool economy contributes:

- 800-plus jobs
- \$140 million in output/gross revenue
- \$40 million in wages and salaries; and,
- \$62 million in value-added

Source: Remplan

The VTIC conference is an excellent professional development opportunity that covers all areas of the visitor economy.

The 2018 conference program is available at this link:

<https://victourismconference.com.au/programs/>

Council values professional development opportunities, particularly in a sector such as the visitor economy, which is such a significant economic driver of our city's economy.

As with many employers, Council has a staff professional development budget and the Visitor Economy Branch chose to send key staff to the 2018 VTIC conference.



Council had seven representatives at the conference including two councillors. Crs Tony Herbert and David Owen attended because they both served on the Council's Visitor Economy Advisory Committee.

Council staff in attendance were all from the Visitor Economy Branch and worked in areas including Holiday Parks, Flagstaff Hill and Destination Marketing.

Following the conference, staff who attended developed actions and tasks that were added to workflows.

A range of new marketing tactics have been used following the conference as well as new approaches on engaging with consumers to improve lengths of stay, yield per visit and to enhance our product development.

Important connections were also made with tourism-related stakeholders across Victoria, including the new VTIC chief executive.

VTIC held a follow-up tourism meeting for Warrnambool stakeholders in late 2018. A presentation on key themes and findings of the conference was also made to all Visitor Economy staff at a staff meeting. Key learnings of the conference were also discussed at Councillor briefings.

Expressions of interest in attending the conference were sought from the Visitor Economy Advisory Committee (VEAC). One member, Warrnambool Racing Club Chief Executive Officer Peter Downs, responded.

Council has seven advisory committees. The committees do not have decision-making authority but play an important role in providing advice and in supporting and delivering the Council Plan.

Advisory committees typically contain people with a relevant interest, experience or professional expertise. For instance, the South-West Victorian Livestock Exchange Committee includes representatives of local stock agents.

Appointments to advisory committees are made through an open Expression of Interest process with final appointments made at public Council meetings.

Community and industry members of the advisory committees give their time in-kind.

The purpose of VEAC is to:

- provide expert advice and recommendations on all tourism-related matters;
- conduct tasks and projects to strengthen the visitor economy on WCC behalf;
- build and enhance relationships and partnerships of the visitor economy; and
- collect, evaluate and determine trends and outcomes to enable evidence based advice.

Council believes it was reasonable for members of the VEAC to attend the VTIC conference.

The minutes of all Advisory Committee meetings are reported at open Council meetings. In relation to Mr Downs' membership on the VEAC, no matters pertaining to the development and implementation of the Belfast Coastal Reserve Management Plan have been discussed at Visitor Economy Advisory Committee meetings.



The events conducted by the Warrnambool Racing Club are significant economic contributors to Warrnambool's local economy, particularly within the retail, hospitality and accommodation sector. It is appropriate for the Warrnambool Racing Club to have representation on the Visitor Economy Advisory Committee.

Cost of attending conference

Separate budget allocations are made for professional development within Council departments. Flagstaff Hill, Holiday Parks and Councillors each have budget allocations for professional development.

A considered decision was made to send key staff, using funding allocated through the annual budgeting process, to the VTIC conference for the reasons outlined above.

The total expenditure was within the budgeted allocations.

- ferry - \$65 x2= \$130
- accommodation - \$3,934
- tickets - \$4,830
- food - \$270.90
- total - \$9,164.90
- per head - \$1,309.27