

16 April 2021

The Secretary
Economy and Infrastructure Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002
By email: tourisminquiry@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Secretary

Legislative Council Standing Committee on Economy and Infrastructure's *Inquiry into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism and events sectors*

Committee for Melbourne (the Committee) welcomes the opportunity to contribute a submission to the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Economy and Infrastructure's *Inquiry into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism and events sectors* (Inquiry).

The Committee is an apolitical, not-for-profit, member-based organisation that brings together over 140 organisations from Greater Melbourne's business, academic and civic sectors whose common purpose is to shape a better future for Melbourne.

As an independent organisation, the Committee represents no single interest group or political position but seeks to challenge conventional thinking and to develop innovative ideas to continue to enhance Melbourne's position as an economically prosperous and highly liveable global city.

The Committee has established its Visitor Economy Reference Group (VERG) to outline the steps and recommendations required for an effective visitor economy, more important than ever in a post pandemic period. The Committee's VERG membership, brings together skills based and representative experts from the Greater Melbourne area (city and suburban) including: Attractions; Accommodation; Hospitality Food & Wine; Major Events; Meetings Incentives; Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE); Education; Creative Industries; Urban Tourism Place making; Office Re-population; and Retail (listed in the appendix). The VERG is well placed to identify the key areas of focus to once again revitalise the state.

The visitor or 'experience' economy in Victoria plays a significant role in the state's economy, with the value of the sector worth \$32 billion to the state and employing over 250,000 Victorians directly and indirectly in tourism businesses at the end of 2019¹.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an extremely challenging environment for Melbourne's visitor economy. With continuing lockdowns to deal with the health pandemic, pressure has been imposed across our economy and upon Melbourne's reputation, and particularly in key sectors relating to tourism and events.

Greater Melbourne is known for its high standards of liveability and vibrant experience economy. Sectors such as hospitality, arts & culture, sports, education, tourism, aviation, attractions, accommodation and events remain essential to underpinning Melbourne as a great place to live, work, visit and do business. For Greater Melbourne in particular, the impact on the visitor economy with the loss of business travel for meetings and business events as well as visitors to friends and relatives from interstate and international markets has been substantial.

The impacts upon these sectors have been significant and well documented during the COVID pandemic (many of these are documented in this submission below). The continued closure of international borders will pose a significant challenge over the medium term:

¹ VTIC economic recovery submission 2.0, p 3

- Of the \$32 billion tourism spend in 2019, visitors to Melbourne spent \$20 billion, with 40% of that being from international visitors.²

This makes competition for national visitation and business visitation particularly important – and therefore a plan to ensure Melbourne’s strategy for visitation and brand is significant and strong.

In December 2020, the Committee’s VERG also launched its *Road to Recovery, Greater Melbourne’s visitor economy* report, with recommendations for the recovery of Melbourne’s visitor economy (attached). Along with the Committee’s submission to the Victorian Government’s Regional Tourism Review in 2019 (attached), the Committee has provided a range of short, medium and long-term actions that Government should take in supporting the tourism and events sectors.

We understand that this Inquiry seeks to identify key issues and areas of concern related to the impacts of the covid 19 pandemic on the tourism and events sectors and to obtain recommendations for the Victorian Government to support the tourism and events sector in the Victorian economy and restore lost jobs. Further to the issues and initiatives outlined in our Road to Recovery report and Regional Tourism submission, we provide the following key recommendations:

- A. Development of certainty and consistency in safety responses (including across borders and economic sectors) – with lock-downs being reserved for only serious cases**
- B. Establish industry stakeholder group with direct reporting to the Victorian Treasurer to advise on strategic approaches and to develop a Visitor Economy Destination Masterplan and an Effective Engagement Model for the Future**
- C. Expand and promote the Greater Melbourne travel voucher scheme - supported with a significant marketing campaign to drive visitation from regional areas**
- D. Focus on specific tactical responses in relation to the following specific issues and sectors:**
 - 1. Develop an appropriate calendar management response**
 - 2. Map the key demand driving agencies and ensure they have long-term secure funding**
 - 3. Support events and business events**
 - 4. Develop an aviation recovery strategy**
 - 5. Support the accommodation sector**
 - 6. Immediately support the return of International Students (specifically through a dedicated quarantine program, developing a community education program and working with industry to improve the student experience)**
 - 7. Significantly invest in supply-side capability to enable greater tactical responses and expanded product offerings**
 - 8. Map skills requirements and target policies to fill skills gaps (eg wage subsidies and flexible IR arrangements)**

Detailed commentary on the following major areas of concern for the future development and sustainability of the industry is outlined below.

² VTIC economic recovery submission 2.0, p 10

A. Development of certainty and consistency in safety responses (including across borders and economic sectors) – with lock-downs being reserved for only serious cases

Certainty and consistency in lock-down processes will be required to ensure business and consumer confidence.

The snap five-day lockdown in Victoria had a particularly significant impact after businesses and individuals started to feel optimistic after a long period of lock-down, and businesses had begun preparing for a Valentine's day weekend. This is summarised by VTIC as follows:

“The State Government’s \$143 million Circuit Breaker Relief Package helped industry to recover some of the losses incurred during the snap five-day lockdown in February 2021. Unfortunately the resulting loss of business and consumer confidence cannot be compensated and the impact of this continues to reverberate across the state.”

The most recent lock-down in Brisbane similarly came before the Easter long-weekend, sending travel plans for many into disarray.

Ongoing border closures have damaged the confidence levels of the airline consumers and caused falls in domestic air travel. With offices empty, corporate travellers see no need to visit the city to see their staff and with no events, there is no travel for conferences, meetings and incentives. This has led to a dramatic drop in hotel occupancy levels across the city in 1 to 5 star properties.

The Age's Rachel Clun identified the problem:

“Business Council of Australia chief executive Jennifer Westacott said domestic border closures cost \$2.1 billion a month and more than half of Australians say they won't travel over a fear of snap border closures.”³

Additionally, the inconsistent rules around mask wearing, attendance numbers and distancing requirements, acts to the detriment of consumer confidence and understanding of the rules. Additionally, there seems to be inconsistency in how sectors are treated – with some areas like hospitality having more lenient rules around visitor numbers and distancing than theatres.

Key areas of consideration, are the:

- consistency across Victoria and Australia – in relation to how sectors are treated, as well as the safety rules themselves - to allow for easy domestic travel as well as implementation and compliance;
- reduction in lock-downs ensuring that they are only used in very serious cases;
- the acceleration of the vaccine roll-out is also crucial for a consistent and safe health strategy across the country; and
- the opening of international borders in agreed stages to encourage the return of international visitors including students.

³ Rachel Clun, The Age, Business lobby wants states to end snap border closures that 'sap confidence', 30 March 2021 <https://www.theage.com.au/national/business-lobby-wants-states-to-end-snap-border-closures-that-sap-confidence-20210330-p57fba.html>

B. Establish industry stakeholder group with direct reporting to the Victorian Treasurer to advise on strategic approaches and to develop a Visitor Economy Destination Masterplan and an Effective Engagement Model for the Future

Stakeholder industry group

A stakeholder industry group, made up of leaders from across the visitor economy should be able to provide direct reporting to the Victorian Treasurer – and be convened to provide economic, social and environmental analysis and strategies for the future of the sector.

Those leading thinkers could also assist with development of a Visitor Economy Destination Masterplan and examine an effective ongoing Engagement Model for the sector – outlined below.

Visitor Economy Destination Masterplan

Importantly, a comprehensive long-term strategy for the visitor economy is needed. At the beginning of this year, the NSW released its 2030 NSW Visitor Economy Industry Strategy. There are three phases to the plan, Recovery; Momentum; and Accelerate. South Australia has also released its visitor economy strategy.

There is no clear or single plan for tourism or the visitor economy more broadly in Victoria, putting the state at a significant disadvantage in an environment where competition for visitors is going to accelerate as the borders and economies open.

Work must commence immediately on a state-wide Visitor Economy Destination Masterplan for tourism in Victoria to 2030, which needs to include a Melbourne gateway to regional tourism strategy, Greater Melbourne urban tourism strategy, a nature-based tourism strategy, and a drive/touring routes strategy to market interstate.

The level of consumer confidence towards aspects of the visitor economy like travel, eating out, staycations etc has declined, especially with unpredictable lock-downs and a CBD that doesn't carry the vibrancy levels it had prior to the pandemic.

Around two thirds of Victoria's total visitor economy occurs in the Greater Melbourne Region, with Melbourne being a major gateway to the state. Given the co-dependency between Greater Melbourne and the regions, and that Melbourne acts as a gateway to the regions, the development of a tourism strategy that includes promotion of attractions throughout Greater Melbourne and the regions would be welcome.

The Committee encourages the government to consider opening a formal dialogue with local visitor economy groups such as a "Stakeholder industry group" (outlined above) to determine a *road to recovery* strategy that will encompass a connected plan for Greater Melbourne and Regional tourism and will influence interstate and international travel decisions.

Effective Engagement Model for the Future

At this time, it would be appropriate to review the best future Effective Model for the Management of the Visitor Economy – for Greater Melbourne and how it needs to be managed alongside Regional Victoria.

There is a need for an adequate framework for representative industry engagement across Greater Melbourne for communications, advocacy and coordination across the visitor economy sectors as well as with all levels of government. The VERG recommends the investigation of an effective engagement model for Greater Melbourne's visitor economy.

This analysis would involve considering the work that is currently being achieved by many organisations and governments at all levels. The analysis could determine whether there are any gaps in the program of activity and also whether there are opportunities for greater coordination that could improve the efforts already being undertaken.

The analysis would consider all levels of government and industry across Greater Melbourne's and Victoria's visitor economy and include the good work being done across the sectors. This would include Visit Victoria, Creative Victoria, Department of Transport, Department of Education, Department of Jobs Precincts and Regions, all local councils, Victoria Tourism Industry Council and others. There are already many collaborative processes and forums that have commenced

pre- and post-COVID. The analysis would also need to understand the work being done by collaborative groups.

It would involve also identifying data needs and ensuring that data can be collated and shared across the industry.

C. Expand and promote the Greater Melbourne travel voucher scheme - supported with a significant marketing campaign to drive visitation from regional areas

Following the Bushfires and COVID, regional tourism required support and received various commitments from the Victorian Government including the \$465million Regional Tourism Recovery Package which included the Regional and Melbourne Travel Voucher Schemes.

Of the 200,000 vouchers provided as part of the \$465 million *Victorian Tourism Recovery Package*, announced in the last budget, 40,000 vouchers have been offered under the *Melbourne Travel Voucher Scheme*. The Melbourne Travel Voucher Scheme applies across 26 local government areas across Melbourne. The Committee considers that the Melbourne

Travel Voucher Scheme should be extended with more of the recovery package being directed towards Greater Melbourne.

The State Government's travel voucher initiative has been a very successful incentive to encourage Victorians to travel again.

Given the challenges the city is facing, *it is crucial that a further allocation of travel vouchers implemented for Greater Melbourne and supported with a significant marketing campaign to drive visitation from regional areas.*

Whilst there has been significant advertising campaigns (e.g. City of Melbourne's FOMO) as well as direct support through the Victorian Government's Metro Melbourne Voucher Scheme, the CBD continues to be impacted as return to the office has been slow.

With the opening up of offices to 100% capacity, there is hope that office workers might return in greater numbers after the Easter school holidays.

The return to normal for the city is a slow recovery. Estimates have indicated that there are presently hundreds of empty shops in the city further reducing foot traffic and intrastate/ regional travel and interstate travel is negligible. The City of Melbourne has a list of activities that they have rolled out, but additional activities will be required – we have only seen less than 50% return to the office in the CBD to-date.

A visitor economy plan must necessarily include a strategy for the Greater Melbourne, the CBD and the alignment with the broader tourism and events across the state. For example, NSW's 2030 Visitor Economy Industry Strategy has been released this year. The Accommodation Association states that:

“At a time of significant uncertainty, the Strategy forms the basis of a clear roadmap for recovery pointing to stronger government commitment to:

- *Sydney and Greater Sydney. For the first time the strategy recognises the metropolis of 3 cities encapsulated in the Greater Sydney Commission vision and the importance of Western Sydney Airport (2026) in escalating growth.*
- *The Strategy recognises the significant economic contribution of the Sydney market to the NSW economy committing to the development of a compelling brand, programs and campaigns for Sydney.”⁴*

⁴ Accommodation Association of Australia, Accommodation Association welcomes NSW Government's 2030 Visitor Economy Industry Strategy, 18 January 2021

D. Focus on specific tactical responses in relation to the following specific issues and sectors:

1. Develop an appropriate calendar management response

Major events, attractions and organisations cannot be competing against each other for share of voice, footfall and revenues, without having unintended negative consequences for the industry as a whole. A collaborative roadmap that creates shared priorities, must be developed by leaders across Greater Melbourne which can lead to the development of a comprehensive Melbourne Calendar for all aspects of the visitor economy. Calendar management must ensure that peaks and troughs are managed to ensure maximum visitations over the year.

2. Map the key demand driving agencies and ensure they have long-term secure funding

Supporting Victoria's demand driving agencies, such as Visit Victoria, MCB and Business Events Victoria, with long term secure funding to drive demand across the state – but ensuring a significant focus is included for revitalising the demand for Greater Melbourne.

With long-term planning requirements now needed to plan for international visitor return, the security of long-term funding is necessary to ensure strategies can be put in place.

3. Support events and business events

It is important that governments assist with recovery packages to support the events industry. Funding is needed to ensure the pipeline of events both Business, Sport and Cultural events after 2022. This is in addition to the marketing, branding and calendar activities that are necessary to support the events industry.

Business events

In relation to business events, in April 2020 it was estimated the lost business in the business events sector due to COVID are anywhere from \$29.4 billion to \$35.7 billion⁵ over the following 12-15 months. Given that most business events were cancelled in 2020, this meant 100,000s of job losses⁶.

There are significant ramifications for the events industry, and in particular the business events industry, from these shut-downs. For example, finding staff to ramp up activities again is difficult. Of the staff laid off between the end of 2019 and March 2020, four in five (78%) were working in a casual or freelance/contractor capacity⁷. This means those workers are mobile and could have taken up new opportunities, within Victoria or around the country.

Business Events Council of Australia's recent industry survey (March 2021) has found that 93% of respondents' employees have been made redundant, stood down or had reduced hours.⁸

Additionally, planning and bookings for events take long lead times and therefore opening the economy does not mean that events can begin immediately. The BECA March 2021 survey 47% of businesses suggested it will take them 3-5 years to return to pre-crisis levels.⁹

⁵ https://www.businesseventscouncil.org.au/files/BECA_LostBusinessReport_McCrindle_23Apr2020.pdf, McCrindle, Business Events Council of Australia, Lost Business Report – Impacts of COVID-19 on the business events industry, April 2020, page 6

⁶ https://www.businesseventscouncil.org.au/files/BECA_LostBusinessReport_McCrindle_23Apr2020.pdf, McCrindle, Business Events Council of Australia, Lost Business Report – Impacts of COVID-19 on the business events industry, April 2020, page 7

⁷ https://www.businesseventscouncil.org.au/files/BECA_LostBusinessReport_McCrindle_23Apr2020.pdf, McCrindle, Business Events Council of Australia, Lost Business Report – Impacts of COVID-19 on the business events industry, April 2020, page 7

⁸ Business Events Council of Australia, Government Support and Future Confidence Report – Business Events Industry Survey (Victorian Edition), March 2021, p. 1

⁹ Business Events Council of Australia, Government Support and Future Confidence Report – Business Events Industry Survey (Victorian Edition), March 2021, p. 1

Business Events Council of Australia's recent industry survey (March 2021) indicates that respondents believe without ongoing support, 55% of businesses will need to close or are uncertain how they will survive, with a further 39% suffering severe repercussions.¹⁰

In Melbourne, a significant proportion of business events involve international activity. This means that not only will Melbourne business events need to try to reach original capacity levels but will also need to compete with other states to attract and grow the domestic

business events. This will certainly require additional funding for specific agencies and organisations to co-ordinate and ramp up activities, such as additional funding support for MCB. It may also require supports like tax concessions and waivers of late penalties for tax payments for events participants¹¹.

4. Develop an aviation recovery strategy

There will be a need for aviation recovery to ensure international airlines return to the city. This will need increased funding to incentivize the airlines to choose Melbourne over other Australian cities.

International air travel to Melbourne has fallen to 2 per cent of its pre-COVID numbers, with domestic air travel to Melbourne hovering around 20 per cent of the usual figures.

The state's aviation industry faces competitive threats from interstate, with the finalisation of Western Sydney Airport, Brisbane adding a new runway during COVID-19, and airlines increasingly funnelling operations through Sydney with the prolonged absence of Melbourne in accepting international flights.

We are calling for the urgent development of an aviation recovery strategy to attract direct airline services back to Melbourne and Avalon airports. VTIC has suggested \$20 million per annum over four years to incentivise international airlines to resume direct services back to our destination.

The Committee welcomes the latest announcement in late March, by the Victorian Government, of plans for the Melbourne airport rail link (MARL).

The Committee has long been calling for a MARL as an essential piece of infrastructure for Melbourne's future connectivity. We must maintain the sense of urgency for completing this project so Melbourne can compete on a national and international stage. The rail link should deliver an efficient solution which provides speed, world class amenity and improved connectivity for Greater Melbourne and the regions.

5. Support the accommodation sector

The impact of COVID-19 on the Victorian accommodation sector saw losses in room revenue alone of around \$1.7 billion as of year ending February 2021 according to modelling conducted by AHS Advisory for the Accommodation Association.

The impact of COVID on the sector has resulted in significant job losses and modelling undertaken by AHS advisory demonstrates that the path to recovery for the tourism accommodation sector will take, at least, four years.

Melbourne hotels saw the greatest impact of \$1.4 billion losses of rooms revenue, while regional Victoria saw a net loss of over \$285 million of rooms revenue. These losses encountered by hotels in Victoria will continue, with estimated losses of more than \$1.16 billion through to calendar year 2022.

While the direct impacts during 2020 were clear, what is more concerning are the unknown impacts on how investors and hotel owners change their investment patterns based on property valuations. In the most recent survey of investors, valuations by financial institutions of Melbourne hotels have recorded decreases as high as 30%.

On average, 78% of hotels across Australia are experiencing a skilled labour shortage posing a significant barrier to recovery. Prior to COVID and the international border closures, Melbourne

¹⁰ Business Events Council of Australia, Government Support and Future Confidence Report – Business Events Industry Survey (Victorian Edition), March 2021, p. 1

¹¹ https://www.busesseventsCouncil.org.au/files/BECA_LostBusinessReport_McCrimdle_23Apr2020.pdf, McCrimdle, Business Events Council of Australia, Lost Business Report – Impacts of COVID-19 on the business events industry, April 2020.

and regional hotels were able to flex to meet seasonal demand challengers. The current labour shortages often mean that current workers are required to put in excessive hours to fill the gap or hotels have kept portions of their hotels closed.

Some ways in which the accommodation sector can be supported include, incentivising smaller-scale corporate events through grants, direct COVID financial hardship supports, and through some of the other measures such as the skills and tactical investments outlined in this report.

6. Immediately support the return of International Students

Australia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant disruption to Victoria's international education sector. Thousands of international students enrolled in a Victorian tertiary institution have been unable to return; impacting the vibrancy of our cities and regions, and various economic sectors.

Victoria depends on international education more than any other state in Australia, having earned \$12 billion in export income in 2019. International education is Victoria's single largest international export and our fourth largest national export, adding \$37.5 billion to our economy last financial year. It is estimated to support 250,000 jobs. International education brings skills and investment to our city with enormous benefits for our economy, our community and our health.

Universities are not the only beneficiaries of international education. As Minister Tudge points out in a recent speech to RMIT, only around 40 percent of the economic contribution of international students is in fee revenue. The majority of the economic contribution is from students and their families spending money in Australia on housing, food, transport and tourism. 40% of our graduate students are researchers who contribute to our knowledge, including on key public health challenges such as fighting COVID, cancer and mental health challenges.

Working alongside the Federal Government, the Victorian Government could consider a three-step approach to enable the timely return of international students to Victoria.

- Step one could entail establishing a robust, dedicated quarantine system, including consideration of a specific hotel quarantine facility. We are aware the government is considering this policy. The proposal to establish this facility somewhere like Avalon Airport has merit.
- Step two could include educating the community on the importance of Victoria's international education sector. This education program could highlight the contribution international students make to our community, the need to encourage inclusion and to provide a safe, welcoming environment.
- Step three would involve welcoming international students back to Victoria and working with relevant industry bodies to provide an experience which is better than that experienced by students before the pandemic.

Given the importance of international education to the state, the Victorian Government should work with the Federal Government on the development and delivery of the proposed *Australian Strategy for International Education 2021-2030*, to ensure it meets the needs of Melbourne and Victoria.

7. Significantly invest in supply-side capability to enable greater tactical responses and expanded product offerings

Some consider that prolonged lock-down in Melbourne has done some damage to the brand. What is clear is that the vibrancy across Melbourne needs to be reinvigorated and certainty in activity needs to be supported.

There are considerable efforts being undertaken to promote Melbourne, including ongoing Visit Victoria activities, intrastate and interstate marketing campaigns, Let's Melbourne Again campaign and the Melbourne City Council "FOMO" campaign.

These are welcome steps and need to be underpinned by tactical activation and calendar certainty. For example, product distribution links should accompany advertising campaigns to drive consumer decision-making and spending in Victoria and Greater Melbourne. Support and innovation for collaboration across the visitor economy (eg hotels, theatres, sports, restaurants) to ensure that the benefits of travel and spending can be accessed across the entire sector.

New and innovative programs such as the Wonderful Copenhagen Strategy (<http://localhood.wonderfulcopenhagen.dk/>) should be considered. That program aims to enhance the visitor experience by looking to the citizens to assist in creating positive experiences and engagement with visitors.

Opportunities such as the Melbourne Airport Rail Link, the Yarra River revitalization and Greater Melbourne projects such as Museum Victoria's Museum of the Future at Scienceworks in Spotswood need to be fast tracked now to create jobs and assist with the recovery. Consideration should be given to other immediate funding that can be applied to major attractions and infrastructure to assist with recovery.

While demand is important, we must see the focus on supply side investment that has been lacking in Victoria for over a decade. VTIC has suggested an investment of \$3 million per annum over 3 years to build capability in the industry, including experience development that responds to a post-COVID consumer, improving the digital capability and profile of Victorian operators, and supporting segments of the industry most affected by the loss of international visitors to reimagine their product offering to suit new target markets.

8. Map skills requirements and target policies to fill skills gaps (e.g. wage subsidies and flexible IR arrangements)

Across the visitor economy sector, staff have been made redundant and have left the industry. Visiting working holiday and skilled visas weren't supported during COVID and this forced many to leave the country. This is creating a shortage across the industry due to Covid – 19. After JobKeeper was terminated on 28 March, it is estimated this would cause over 100,000 job losses¹², many of which would be in the visitor economy sector. As reported by Alex Brewster on [savings.com.au](https://www.savings.com.au):

"That's according to Commonwealth Bank (CBA) economists, who said employees in travel sensitive industries would see up to 25% of JobKeeper recipients lose employment.

"We see transport, arts & recreation and accommodation & food services industries most at risk of job losses at the end of JobKeeper (i.e. we classify them as high risk)," they said."¹³

Some initiatives that might be considered and have been variously proposed by industry organisations, include¹⁴:

- Extending targeted proportionate wage subsidies for specific industries;
- Considering flexible workplace and industrial relations arrangements;
- Initiate skilled migration and development policies and plans to map and deliver where workforce gaps are seen.

¹² <https://www.savings.com.au/savings-accounts/cba-jobkeeper-end-will-result-in-over-100-000-job-losses>

¹³ <https://www.savings.com.au/savings-accounts/cba-jobkeeper-end-will-result-in-over-100-000-job-losses>, 9 March 2021 (accessed 1 April 2021)

¹⁴ Accommodation Association of Australia, Saving Australia's Accommodation Sector, Summary of 2021 Pre-Budget Submission

Melbourne is, and will continue to be, the most attractive city in Australia to live, work, visit and do business. As we emerge from the crisis, we must act swiftly to ensure Greater Melbourne and regional Victoria's recovery is as strong as it should be, by acting now to secure the support that the visitor economy needs.

We look forward to working with you to further support Victoria's recovery.

Yours sincerely



Clive Scott
Chair, VERG



Martine Letts
CEO, Committee for Melbourne

Appendix: The Committee for Melbourne, Visitor Economy Reference Group members

Many of these groups and organisations are already working on recovery plans around the various timelines set by the Government. The intention of VERG is not to 'reinvent the wheel' where these groups have already made sound and valuable recommendations to government on recovery, but to amplify and consolidate those recommendations.

Sectoral interests

Clive Scott, CEO, Sofitel Melbourne on Collins | Chair VERG
David Mansfield, COO, Quest Apartments | Accommodation, South
Steve O'Brien, CEO, Puffing Billy | Attractions, East
Richard Ponsford, Executive Officer, Western Melbourne Tourism | West
Chris James, CEO, Northlink| North
Padmini Sebastian, Director, University of Melbourne | International Students
Anthea Loucas Bosha, CEO, Food and Wine Festival| Hospitality & Festivals
Natalie O'Brien, CEO, Natalie O'Brien and Associates| Precincts & Hospitality
Suzana Bishop, CXO, Federation Square | Events

Industry

Felicia Mariani, CEO, VTIC
Michelle King, AAOA
Louise Scott, Director Tourism and Events, City of Melbourne | Melbourne City

Committee for Melbourne

Martine Letts, CEO
Clive Dwyer, Director of Engagement
Leanne Edwards, Director of Policy and Research

Disclaimer

Please note, the views in this publication reflect the synthesis of the Committee's diverse and cross-sectorial membership and Greater Melbourne's stakeholders. All material expresses a merging of these differing perspectives. The concepts presented in this paper should not be attributed to any individual member or stakeholder organisation.