

Visitor Centre Policy Submission 2014

1. Background

The purpose of this submission is to highlight the issues affecting Visitor Centres across Western Australia and put forward policy proposals for the Minister for Regional Development and the Minister for Tourism.

1.1 Visitor Centres

Any organisation can call itself a visitor centre and offer visitor information. There are over 100 self-identified visitor centres in WA.

This submission refers to accredited Visitor Centres only. These Visitor Centres are accredited against national minimum standards that establish and continually improve the delivery of visitor servicing.

Only accredited Visitor Centres can use the trademark yellow and blue 'i' logo to represent these standards. There are currently 47 Visitor Centres in Western Australia that have achieved these standards and are entitled to use the yellow and blue 'i' trademark. Visitor Centres can be owned and operated by government bodies or non-profit associations.



1.2 Visitor Centre Association of WA

The Visitor Centre Association of Western Australia (VCAWA) is the peak industry body representing Visitor Centres. The VCAWA strives to have a strong voice on matters that impact on visitor servicing.

1.3 Tourism Council WA

Tourism Council WA (TCWA) is the peak body representing tourism businesses, industries and regions in Western Australia. TCWA operates the Visitor Centre accreditation program. Together, TCWA and VCAWA provide a united voice for Visitor Centres.

1.4 State Budget Funding

There is no state budget funding for Visitor Centres, except the WA Visitor Centre in Perth which is partly funded through Tourism WA. However, the 2013 budget allocated \$2.9 million for regional visitor centres in the forward estimates for the years 2014-15, 2015-16 & 2016-17.

1.5 Key Issues

Visitor Centres significantly improve the quality of the visitor experience and the competitiveness of WA's destinations. Visitor Centres also increase tourism yield by promoting additional activities spending and length of visitor stay. However Visitor Centres face significant challenges:

- Lack of consumer awareness of VC services, including bookings.
- Decreasing revenue from booking commissions, due to online bookings.
- Funding for capital works and assets that attract more visitors to the Centres
- Increased penalty rates introduced on Sundays.
- Reliance on volunteers.
- Need to upgrade management and staff skills.
- Inconsistent and unreliable funding from local government, industry and assets.

2. Visitor Centre Policy Recommendations

1. Visitor Centre Marketing

Visitor Centre's that display the yellow and blue 'i' trademark have achieved certain quality standards in their service provision. These Visitor Centres enhance visitor satisfaction and also increase local visitor spending by referrals and bookings e.g. tours. The trademark needs to be profiled to the consumer at a local and state level, to drive visitors to VCs.



Recommended Policy

Development of a co-operative consumer marketing campaign that would promote the value of accredited Visitor Centres to regional Western Australia with a call to action to the already developed trustthetick.com.au site.

Recommended Commitments

- R4R funding to develop a TV advertisement to promote accredited Visitor Centres to WA intrastate visitors.
- R4R and industry cooperative funding for an intrastate public awareness campaign that would promote the value and services that accredited Visitor Centres provide.

2. Visitor Centre Grants

Most Visitor Centre's funding only meets operational costs and they are unable to accumulate reserves to pay for capital works or to develop other assets.

Investment is needed in new shop fittings, displays, attractions and other assets which would attract more visitors to VCs. This would in turn create greater revenue for the local area and the VC.

Recommended Policy

Establish a grants program to accredited VCs with funding for one-off capital works or other projects that will create sustainable assets for VCs.

Recommended Commitments

- R4R funding for VCs grants program.

3. Workforce Development & Training

It is imperative that visitors receive quality servicing from Visitor Centre staff who are friendly and welcoming and also offer a knowledgeable and professional service.

Recommended Policy

Develop a three year strategy that would lift and maintain the quality of labour and skills within the visitor servicing industry.

Recommended Commitments

- Funding for all accredited Visitor Centre Managers to achieve a Diploma or Graduate level training.
- Funding for all accredited Visitor Centre staff to achieve to Cert IV level training.
- Funding for all accredited Visitor Centre staff to maintain a level of quality customer service through attendance to regular Customer Service Workshops.