



East Gippsland Business and Tourism Leadership Group
Bush Fire Recovery Meeting #1

Date: Thursday 16 January, 2020

Location: Council Office, 87 Palmers Rd, Lakes Entrance / Phone

Time: 3pm – 5pm

In Attendance:

Name	Organisation
Jaime Savoury – President	Bairnsdale Chamber of Commerce
Janet Burton – Exec Officer	Business and Tourism East Gippsland (BTEG)
Janine Hayes Manager Tourism & Events	Destination Gippsland (RTO)
Alison Conroy – Marketing Manager	Destination Gippsland (RTO)
Hayley Hardy – Marketing Manager	East Gippsland Marketing Inc (EGMi)
Patrick Carlson - Chairman	East Gippsland Marketing Inc (EGMi)
Stephen Kleinitz Senior Eco-Dev Officer	East Gippsland Shire Council (EGSC)
Sharon Raguse Manager Economic Development & Tourism	East Gippsland Shire Council (EGSC)
Alison Brewer	Lakes Entrance Action and Development Association (LEADA)
Shane Kidd - President	Lakes Entrance BTA
John Hilvert – President	Mallacoota Wilderness BTA
Ian Harrison - President	Metung BTA
Maureen Web	Omeo BTA
Lee Fulton	Omeo BTA
Gary Squires – Secretary	Orbost BTA
Tamara Cook – Deputy Chair	Paynesville BTA
Sonya West – Secretary	Twin Rivers BTA
Felicia Mariani – CEO	Victorian Chamber of Commerce (VCCI)
Anne Jamieson – Deputy Chair	Victorian Chamber of Commerce (VCCI)
Scott Veenker – Acting CEO	Victorian Tourism Industry Council (VTIC)
Karyn Sobels - President	Victorian Tourism Industry Council (VTIC)

Apologies:

James Nichols	Bruthen District Citizens Association
David Sturgess	Bemm River BTA
Evelyn Schmidt – Secretary	Buchan BTA
Susy Brady	Cann River BTA
Tanya Coleman - Secretary	Marlo BTA
Jaime Malady – President	Twin Rivers BTA
Bruce Hurley – President	Lakes Entrance Action & Development Association
Martin Richardson - President	Paynesville BTA

Meeting Chair – Sharon Raguse

Agenda:

Sharon R	Welcome & Introductions	ACTIONS
	<p>All were welcomed and were asked to introduce themselves. Purpose of the meeting being to bring all BTAs from East Gippsland together to ensure the industry had a forum to meet, be supported and provided with recovery updates, detailed information to share with their members/business communities and to feed information through to build intel around what's happening locally and to raise awareness of key issues.</p>	None
Sharon R / Stephen K	EGSC update	ACTIONS
	<p>Council recognize that they do not have the capacity or resources to cope with the magnitude of the bushfire disaster and have sought Government approval to upscale significantly in order to support the region through recovery. Things are moving quickly and details of this will be made public in coming days.</p> <p>Under the MEMP (Municipal Emergency Management Plan), RDV (Regional Development Victoria) are appointed the lead agency to assist with Economic recovery working alongside Council. Operating structures are still to be bedded down however, work is already being undertaken behind the scenes to inform Government of immediate response and short-term needs for industry.</p> <p>Rapid Impact Assessment on business survey was issued on Tuesday night, at the time of the meeting over 250 responses had been received. The information gained from this survey is invaluable in understanding the immediate impacts of the</p>	<p>For information only</p> <p>For information only</p> <p>Survey closure date to be extended by an additional week to Sunday 26 January, 2020.</p>

<p>Bushfire on our industry which is then used to inform media and aid decision making at State level.</p> <p>Council, EGMI, Destination Gippsland responded quickly and met with key State Gov stakeholders on Tuesday 7 January. With key outcome being to develop a comprehensive Tourism Recovery Strategy. The group has been working collaboratively on this task since and continues to meet weekly.</p> <p>Focus now is on initial response and immediate support. Short and medium term action will follow closely once confirmation of the suite of Government Recovery assistance packages have been announced. Planning in anticipation is already underway.</p>		<p>For information only</p>
<p>Janine H / Alison C</p>	<p>Destination Gippsland update</p>	<p>ACTIONS</p>
	<p>Destination Gippsland is the Regional Tourism Board and the peak tourism organisation for the region in eastern Victoria and is a not for profit company limited by guarantee.</p> <p>An overview of DG role in recovery, action to date & support available through DG was provided.</p> <p>Access to disaster preparedness can be found here: https://www.visitgippsland.com.au/destination-gippsland/industry-development/crisis-preparedness</p> <p>Over 65 new ATDW subscriptions have been made and Visit Victoria's ATDW team are processing East Gippsland products with priority (in most cases a 24 hour turnaround). Listing with ATW https://atdw.com.au/listing-with-atdw/ contact aconroy@destinationgippsland.com.au</p> <p>A reminder to subscribe to DG's email newsletter in order to stay informed – crisis recovery updates are being issued regularly. https://www.visitgippsland.com.au/destination-gippsland/industry-development</p> <p>Gippsland DMP (Gippsland Destination Management Plan) has already proved invaluable in helping to identify key tourism infrastructure projects which could be prioritized for accelerated implementation given State recovery support. DG will be concentrating on four key areas including Management, Marketing, Infrastructure and Industry Development. East Gippsland priorities have been extracted from the overall plan as a matter of urgency.</p>	<p>For information only</p>

<p>Important that these are prioritized in order of #jobs in construction, #jobs once in operation and potential for sustained economic contribution to GRP. https://www.visitgippsland.com.au/resources/towards-2030-gippsland-destination-management-plan</p> <p>DG has advertised a full time bushfire recovery position that will be based in East Gippsland to assist with recovery. We expect to fill the role in the immediate future.</p> <p>Alison stepped the group in quite some detail through the draft marketing and communications plan. With a focus on Melbourne / Eastern suburbs / Latrobe – a short term digital campaign is in market now to stimulate a “Book now, travel later” message to help generate cash flow to operators.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call to action is www.visitgippsland.com.au • Campaign creative is in development • Major Campaign partner still in negotiation • Multi-channel approach planned (Radio/TV/digital/social) • PR working the phones hard to secure editorial – loads planned and in pipe line (DG focusing on Long lead publications eg: Travel Magasine) • Visit Victoria looking to boost editorial with clever re-working of language for key Melbourne based Indian and Chinese markets. • Visit Victoria also driving a cooperative (Co-op) campaign with Destination NSW focusing on Sydney to Melbourne Touring Route (International trade focused drive experience) 		
Hayley H	EGMi update	ACTIONS
<p>Working hand in glove with DG. Coordinating PR and media opportunities but not crossing over DG activity. Careful planning and collaboration between the two agencies ensure efforts are complimentary and leveraged. EGMi focusing on regional ambassadors for social campaigning, driving motivation to visit though advocacy by key influencers.</p>		For information only
Felicia M	VTIC role & how they can assist	ACTIONS
<p>FM provided an outline of the key role of the State’s Peak Tourism Industry body. A member-based organisation they play an active role in policy development and advocacy with the</p>		Consider membership of your Peak Tourism Industry Body (SR)

<p>State and Commonwealth on all matters tourism industry related.</p> <p>They have disaster preparedness guides to inform operators on response/recovery/resilience</p> <p>FM highlighted the challenge facing Australia’s tourism industry as a whole in the face of unprecedented negative global media. Billions in lost tourism income as international visitors cancel their travel plans in the wake of horrific images and media hype. This is extremely difficult to recovery from and will take years.</p> <p>VTIC doing their bit (they are not a marketing agency) but are collating user-generated content/imagery to create a content gallery for media. Images showing the beauty of areas unaffected by fire and (in time) those areas recovering and regenerating. They are using the handle #thisisvictoria And using the focus of the world’s media attention to our advantage.</p>		<p>For info only</p> <p>Encourage your members to upload images onto facebook/Instagram using the #thisisvictoria hashtag handle</p>
<p>Karyn S / Scott V</p>	<p>VCCI role & how they can assist</p>	<p>ACTIONS</p>
<p>VCCI is a member based organization, focusing on policy and advocacy for business operators (small, medium and large corporations).</p> <p>They are currently offering \$500K support package to members AND non-members during this bushfire crisis for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health assistance – EAP hotline • Workplace relations - hotline <p>They are hearing people/businesses need cash. It needs to be made available quickly, easily and get to the right people. This was also the message delivered clearly at the Parliamentary Roundtable for Small Business held in Canberra on Tuesday. Speed and ease must be embedded into the ethos of all recovery agencies. 5-day turnaround targets for obtaining financial support is the aim.</p> <p>Have faith – Melbourne’s corporate sector want to help & VCCI is encouraging them to plan their next conference/Exec planning days in East Gippsland</p> <p>Small Business Victoria – are gearing up to assist and working with Council to mobilise as quickly as next week.</p>		<p>For information only</p> <p>VCCI - 03 8662 5333</p> <p>Note: several representatives from East Gippsland participated. Attached with these minutes is a summary of those proceedings kindly supplied by Gary Squires (Orbost BTA)</p> <p>For info only</p>

They will delivery ongoing support to help deliver funding when announced.		
By Region	Round table discussion - Local impacts / key issues / needs	ACTIONS
Mallacoota	<p>Need to open the road so visitors can come back to collect their cars/vans/belongings – frustration growing within the community as to why it’s taking so long to clear trees</p> <p>Asbestos cleaning program – information needed</p> <p>Major mental trauma crisis emerging. Need specialist to come. Mixed demographic with many over 60s. Depression developing.</p> <p>Town rally cry of “Don’t refund, Rollover”. This was passed on to VTIC for Felicia to highlight in a recent media interview showing the resilience of Mallacoota and the message which we want visitors who had to vacate East Gippsland in the peak of the fire event to consider.</p>	<p>SR to raise at Friday morning Council recovery meeting</p> <p>SR to reiterate this as per above</p> <p>SR to reiterate this as per above <i>(*update: Issue addressed by DHHS who arranged 4 doctors and 2 Psychologists to be flown in on Sunday for the week)</i></p>
Omeo	<p>Road closure of the Great Alpine Way is major issue for the town. (no way in or out!)</p> <p>Swift Creek base camp – hearing that locals are no longer doing the catering – that this has been outsourced to an external catering company</p> <p>Road cycling event “Audax” from Dinner Plain to Falls Creek this month needs HUGE push (if event proceeds) to raise awareness & drive visitation</p>	<p>SR to take this back to Council for investigation. All agencies are aware of the need to contract locally where possible.</p> <p>SR – will take back and have events team make contact with organizer to see what’s the current status of the event is an look to put strategy in</p>

	Omeo mountain bike project – MUST go ahead. Can this be accelerated or fully funded as a priority infrastructure project under recovery.	place with DG & Visit Victoria SK to explore with RDV. EGMi have revised the proposed marketing strategy for the MTB park and have circulated the plan for feedback
Twin Rivers	Visitation down significantly but otherwise not impacted	
Buchan	Will need service support locally – community has been decimated.	Follow up call with BTA
Paynesville	Staying open, businesses have remained positive No visitors however Needs funds available now Working up an offer for consumers (a reason to visit) Key time for non-affected areas to work together eg: FOC boat rides Confusion over DHHS grants – not eligible for payment unless evacuated. Yet Centerlink bus was in Paynesville but not needed but told indirectly impacted were eligible – Clarity required (mixed messages)	
Metung	Evacuation orders were frightening No visitors – SMEs struggling Accommodation boosted by some service providers which helps Most businesses doing only 20-30% or normal trade eg: Village Store Only 1 operator has business interruption insurance Issues of expired stock/loss Extremely worried about next 6 months Worried for welfare of mum & dad business in particular	
Bemm River		Follow up required

Cann River		Follow up required
Orbost	<p>Not directly impacted No loss Wider district – big damage Compounds pre-bushfire issues of: Drought (3 years), loss of Timber Industry, Mouth of the Snowy River being closed (salting farm land) Cashflow is a major issue Getting roads open – noticed DEWLP stood down their road crews as there were not enough supervisors!? Qualified Arborists checking and marking kill-trees? We have this expertise and resources locally – use us! VIC Roads coordination required – replace damaged signs now so that opening roads isn't delayed Need key assets repaired – eg: Rainforest Reserve (swing bridge lost) – use local resources to fix these Can we sort Corporate Australia to accept back stock or right it off? Long-term: closer the Princess Hwy for major clearing works (wide road reserves as per NSW) Need permanent emergency power supply</p>	<p>SR to raise key issues and concerns with Council and push back through ICC and state gov for their consideration.</p>
Marlo	<p>Not affected but no one there</p> <p>Can't get to Conron – Parks VIC have closed access to the park.</p> <p>Emergency services at the hotel but caravan park is closed (no guests)</p>	
Lakes Entrance (BTA)	<p>Peak holiday period – visitor numbers decimated</p> <p>Parks Victoria – need access to parks restored ASAP to allow international tour operator from Melbourne to return.</p>	<p>VTIC to talk with Board Member who is also head of Parks VIC</p>

	<p>Exec Committee (BTA) struggling with pressure of representing industry in a crisis.</p> <p>Could we establish a mentoring program (buddy system) of those who have been through disaster before to support those who haven't?</p> <p>Need to push out 'shop local' message</p> <p>Suggestion made for Coastal villages to consolidate BTAs as not enough resources, tired committees and industry better served with united regional voice.</p> <p>Only financial support currently available to business - Income support (13 weeks) is available for staff pays but forms are overwhelming</p>	<p>Council to organize support and counselling to build resilience across BTA committees (Vicarious Trauma is real)</p> <p>VTIC & Council to look at matching mentors</p> <p>Consider as part of recovery efforts – shop local East Gippsland – Council to investigate</p> <p>Should seriously consider exploring what this could look like post recovery as 11 BTA is not sustainable or effective for the industry.</p> <p>SR to push up the line and see if we can get DHHS to address & remove burden.</p>
<p>Lakes Entrance (LEADA)</p>	<p>No income / cash flow No employment – many casuals put off (many uni-students working to save before returning to study) Concerned for financial and mental wellbeing of business owners Risk that many small businesses will fold in 6 months Building regs/Permits need to be fast tracked – Council</p>	
<p>Bairnsdale</p>	<p>Accommodation full with emergency service and agency personnel but not spending locally the way tourist do</p> <p>Highlight the importance of Metung Hotsprings as a critical, shovel ready project for funding.</p>	

	<p>Creates immediate jobs during construction, jobs in operation and injects \$M in economic benefit to the region.</p> <p>SR – in addition, projects which do not rely on access to the lakes to deliver their visitor experience will be key to recovery as a second disaster will follow the fires – Algal Blooms once contaminants make their way to the Lakes system (depending on rain events, could be as early as 12 months)</p> <p>VIC App has full summary of recovery financial and grant assistance available to individuals and to business</p>	<p>See VIC Emergency App Press menu Press relief and recovery Press financial and legal support</p>
Sharon R	Wrap up / Next meeting	ACTIONS
<p>Thanked everyone for their time and input. Acknowledged the good timing and opportunity for special guests VTIC/VCCI to join today's meeting – creating new network contacts and building relationships with your peak bodies is invaluable.</p> <p>Group agreed to value of the meetings It was agreed to continue meeting fortnightly Thursday afternoons until such time stakeholders feel timing needs to swap to evenings (based on speed of business recovery). Next meeting to be held in Orbost (TBC) VTIC & VCCI to dial in</p> <p>Discussion items include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Parks update • RDV update / potentially BRV • Priority infrastructure projects <p>Offer was made to facilitate local business and tourism sessions and this could coincide with a business recovery team visit to assist impacted businesses as well as a mental health expert to talk to business groups.</p> <p>Meeting ended at 5.15pm</p>		<p>Next meeting: Thursday 30 January 3pm – 5pm Orbost (TBC)</p> <p>Agenda to be issued in advance. Please provide agenda items by Monday prior to meeting.</p> <p>Advise Council if you would like a representative to attend your next local BTA meeting</p>

Thank you	
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