

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Budget estimates 2020-21 (Pakula)

Melbourne—Thursday, 3 December 2020

MEMBERS

Ms Lizzie Blandthorn—Chair

Mr Richard Riordan—Deputy Chair

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Mr David Limbrick

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Ms Pauline Richards

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Ms Nina Taylor

Ms Bridget Vallence

WITNESSES

Mr Martin Pakula, MP, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events

Mr Simon Phemister, Secretary,

Ms Penelope McKay, Associate Secretary,

Mr Andrew Abbott, Deputy Secretary, Creative, Sport and Visitor Economy, and

Mr Peter Betson, Associate Deputy Secretary, Sport, Recreation and Racing, Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions.

The CHAIR: We thank you again, Minister, for appearing before our committee today. This time we move to consideration of the tourism, sport and major events portfolio. We invite you to make a 5-minute presentation, which will be followed by questions from the committee.

Mr PAKULA: I will do my best to keep it to 5 minutes. I am sure you will tell me when to stop.

Visual presentation.

Mr PAKULA: Tourism has been a massive driver of our economy for a long time. Visitors spent \$32.5 billion in 2019, and industry generated 263 000 jobs in 2018–19. Melbourne is a key driver of that economy. The visitor economy comprised 5 per cent of gross regional product and supported 130 000 jobs in Melbourne in 2017–18, but it is also very important for regional Victoria. It contributed \$8.1 billion to gross regional product in regional Victoria in that same financial year.

Our sport sector contributes \$9.2 billion to the economy and supports more than 71 000 equivalent full-time jobs, and our professional sporting codes are a really important part of our economy and our community. Major events deliver \$2.5 billion dollars to the economy every year. They help drive our national and international positioning and profile, our tourism, our branding and our business linkages, and before COVID our events calendar was amongst the best ever. The record-breaking theatrical productions of *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* and *Come from Away*, the terracotta warriors, UFC 243, the USA basketball matches, the Presidents Cup golf and the Women's T20 World Cup cricket final.

In terms of the state of the sector, the estimated impact on visitor expenditure in Victoria for 2020 is over \$20 billion. That includes impacts from COVID but also the preceding bushfires. As a result of border closures and the impact of social distancing measures on an industry that relies on group gatherings and face-to-face experiences, we do not expect visitor spend to reach to pre-COVID levels till 2023–24.

Professional sport has been highly impacted as well, with the shutdown period and the significant reduction—or in fact omission—of crowd attendance during 2020. A number of professional sporting codes took the decision to temporarily relocate teams and athletes. That included the AFL, the NRL, cricket, Super Rugby, A-League, WNBL and Super Netball. And of course we agreed with the AFL that on a one-year-only basis the grand final could be played outside of Victoria—for 2020 only.

In terms of some of the things that have been postponed or cancelled, there was the Formula One Grand Prix, the motorcycle grand prix, the men's T20 World Cup—which has been postponed—and the Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road Race, given the difficulty if not impossibility of getting international cyclists into the country.

In terms of bushfire recovery, there has been a significant impact of corona, but we are still focused on bushfire recovery through grants for Tourism North East and Destination Gippsland of \$350 000 and \$500 000 respectively, grants of up to \$20 000 for events in fire-affected areas through the bushfire recovery round of the Regional Events Fund and \$8.5 million dollars to support a range of projects in fire-affected areas across East Gippsland and north-east Victoria. And we are still working closely with Destination Gippsland, Tourism North East and Visit Vic to ensure those regions recover from those events and the impacts of COVID.

In terms of COVID industry support, I think at the last hearing we talked about the Experience Economy Survival Package, which included support for the Emerald Tourist Railway Board, national sporting organisations and professional clubs, and a range of other supports, which I think we went into in great detail. There was the regional tourism accommodation support program, which was about supporting accommodation providers that had bookings cancelled as a result of the stay-at-home restrictions. That was open to applications from July to September, and as at 17 November there have been payments made to close to 4000 businesses. In addition, those broader industry support measures have assisted the sector, including the BSF and the Sole Trader Support Fund.

In terms of this budget the Victorian tourism recovery package—\$465 million—is the most significant tourism package, I think, that has certainly been in any budget for a long, long time, if not ever. There is more than \$120 million for visitor products and experiences, over \$150 million for a regional tourism investment fund, support for DELWP in terms of infrastructure and flagship infrastructure as well, \$106 million-plus in tourism industry support and \$28 million for regional travel vouchers to help more people holiday around the state.

In terms of other initiatives in this budget, I will go quickly because I do not think we have a lot of time: the Kardinia Park stage 5 support; the support for Whitten Oval; Richmond Football Club, Punt Road Oval redevelopment; the North Melbourne Football Club redevelopment stage 2; and support for professional sport recovery to support the sector, that has experienced significant increased costs and reduced revenue as a result of COVID-19. There is also support in this budget for an increase to the Major Events Fund to \$100 million a year, increase for the Business Events Fund and The Regional Events Fund as well.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Ms Nina Taylor, MLC.

Ms TAYLOR: Thank you. I would like to start with regional tourism. I refer to budget paper 3, pages 19 and 20. Could you provide more information about the government's investment in regional tourism?

Mr PAKULA: Yes, thanks, Ms Taylor. Tourism is absolutely vital to regional Victoria. I think there are a number of members here who do not need to be told that. It contributes to economic development through direct spend and employment creation but also investment attraction, business development and job creation in related industries. In 2017–18 the visitor economy contributed over \$8 billion in gross regional product. That represented a growth rate of a bit more than 5 per cent over a five-year period, but it is constrained by several factors. Regional Victoria typically attracts visitors for day trips rather than overnight stays. About two-thirds of visitors to regional Victoria only go for day trips, and that is particularly the case in those regions that are closer to Melbourne—places like the Yarra Valley, the Mornington Peninsula, Daylesford and the Great Ocean Road.

Regional tourism visitation is highly driven by the intrastate market, so we really need to attract more interstate visitors and international visitors to regional Victoria. There are some highly seasonal visitation trends that do create capacity and growth constraints, and they have all been exacerbated by the effects of the bushfires and then the pandemic. It is why we commissioned the Regional Tourism Review, and through the results of that review we developed the Victorian tourism recovery package. It is all about maintaining our visitor economy market share through the immediate response and early recovery stages. We want to stimulate immediate demand through investment in national events and targeted domestic marketing, but we also want to invest in the supply side. The projects will provide immediate stimulus but will also enable strong differentiated tourism products and strengthen the infrastructure that supports the industry. That is why that \$465 million investment that I referenced includes \$120.6 million for regional tourism infrastructure, another \$150 million for the regional tourism investment fund and another \$28 million for the voucher scheme. We have got some amazing assets out there. I think the review identified that they are not properly appreciated, and there are some infrastructure constraints that stop as many people as otherwise staying overnight and we have got some misalignments with some of our regional tourism boards. I think it is a really strong suite of recommendations backed up by significant funding in the budget.

Ms TAYLOR: Thank you. Can you please provide some detail about the flagship regional tourism infrastructure projects that are funded in the budget?

Mr PAKULA: Sure. Well, there are 10 initiatives directly supported in the budget to improve the visitor experience. They have been selected on the basis that they will drive visitation and help build the profile of that

region, and they also align with some of the strategic pillars which have been identified in the review—that being nature-based tourism, epicurean tourism, First Peoples tourism and creative and cultural tourism.

The projects are: \$23 million for Wilsons Prom to increase capacity with more accommodation and improve visitor facilities—we would expect that to increase park capacity by 200 000 visitors a year; \$25.8 million for the Great Ocean Road to upgrade facilities and infrastructure to boost visitor numbers and support jobs—so that includes funding to extend the Great Ocean Road coastal trail from Fairhaven to Grey River, to provide additional camping locations and upgrade visitor facilities like toilets, viewing platforms and car parking; just under \$5 million to upgrade the Mallee Silo Art Trail—an amazing trail; if you have not visited it I encourage you to do so—including major works at the Lascelles silo in Rainbow to enable projections on the outside of the silo and access inside the structure; \$13 million for building new trails on the Grampians Peaks Trail and upgrade visitor facilities at Mackenzie Falls; \$15 million towards the Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing to create an iconic facilitated walk across the high plains between the two ski resorts—and having spoken to the proponents up there, some of the local tourism boards and council, it is really about making that a year-round attraction rather than just being about the snow season; \$10.3 million to upgrade walking and cycling tracks and river infrastructure along the Murray River Adventure Trail—that would expect to attract 55 000 extra visitors a year to the cities and towns along the trail, and it extends more than 1000 kilometres from Lake Hume to Mildura; \$11.85 million for the Gippsland Tourism Recovery package—that includes the building of eco-pod accommodation at Cape Conran Coastal Park, support to help the establishment of the Metung Hot Springs and the Nunduk spa and eco resort, to upgrade the Raymond Island Koala Trail down at Paynesville, rehabilitation of the Snowy rail bridge at Orbost, and additional camping facilities in far East Gippsland; \$5.8 million to reinvigorate the Brambuk cultural centre in the Grampians—one of our flagship Aboriginal cultural tourism attractions; \$6.7 million to establish the National Centre for Photography in Ballarat; and \$4.32 million for early works along Prosecco Road, which runs from Wangaratta to Whitfield, improving signage in the area to make it easier for visitors to navigate their way around the region. We were up at Whitfield just a week or two ago to announce that, and the level of excitement amongst the operators, the winery owners and the local community is really palpable.

Ms TAYLOR: Yes, that is great. Can you tell us about what further investment the government is making in regional tourism infrastructure?

Mr PAKULA: Well, yes. The investment is really important because it enables us to transform those natural assets into a quality and diverse tourism offering in regional Victoria, but sometimes the private investment does not occur unless it has been incentivised through some public investment in enabling infrastructure. That is particularly the case in regional areas where some of that infrastructure is limited to townships, and there are some capacity considerations. The previous pressures that were inherent in that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. There are higher levels of risk and uncertainty for private investors, and so it is probable that that private investment will be severely constrained without a clear signal from government that it will actively support those projects. So there is a \$150 million Regional Tourism Investment Fund. It is all about considering the next tranche of infrastructure projects. It will be targeted at investment in the development of high-quality tourism products to support the realisation of that visitation potential in regional Victoria. It will principally be focused on nature-based, First Nations, arts and culture, and food and wine tourism projects. They are the priorities that were identified in the regional tourism review. That program will support tourism projects in regional Victoria but also in the Mornington Peninsula and the Yarra Valley. There is some really, I think, long overdue investment in some of that infrastructure, and some of that public support for infrastructure, that will be possible as a result of that fund.

Ms TAYLOR: Thank you. And can you provide some more detail about the Victorian regional travel voucher scheme?

Mr PAKULA: Yes. Well, we want to give people an opportunity to explore the state, and as someone who has in the last couple of weeks been to King Valley, on the Mornington Peninsula and down in Geelong, as well as having been all over the state in previous times, the opportunities to enjoy Victoria are immense. So those vouchers will be able to be used for accommodation but also for tourism attractions and tours that are undertaken in regional Victoria, the Mornington Peninsula and the Yarra Valley. Victorians who get a voucher will be able to seek reimbursement of \$200, provided they have spent least \$400, so it requires some co-investment from the traveller. We have been talking to Visit Vic, the RTBs and VTIC to finalise the details of the program. That should happen in the next few days.

Just to put it in context, in the year ending December last year Victorians spent over \$10 billion on interstate travel and \$17 billion on outbound travel, taking 2.8 million short-term trips overseas. That was \$28 billion on travel spent outside of Victoria by Victorians—and by comparison, only \$9 billion was spent on intrastate overnight travel in Victoria. So we have been underweight in overnight trips to Victoria, and even a small conversion of some of that interstate or overseas travel could generate significant additional economic benefits for regional Victoria. So if we were to convert 25 per cent of interstate and outbound travel to intrastate overnight trips to and within regional Victoria, that would generate over \$1.3 billion in visitor spend, based on the domestic average overnight visitor spend in regional Victoria of just over \$400. So for a bit of effort the potential dividend for regional Victorian communities in terms of jobs and economic growth is potentially quite substantial.

Ms TAYLOR: Yes, that is good—very good. I would just like to pivot to AFL club funding, if that is okay. I refer you to budget paper 3, page 84, which includes a number of initiatives to support infrastructure redevelopment at AFL clubs. Can you please provide further info on these initiatives and why the government is investing in these projects?

Mr PAKULA: Well, it is important to recognise that there has been a massive growth in participation rates for women and girls playing footy in recent years. The number of AFL female teams in Victoria has grown from 58 in 2010 to 1092 in 2019, and last year there were 28 500 registered women and girls playing footy in Victoria. At least 80 per cent of those were junior sides, so the pipeline is astronomical. With the expansion of the AFLW competition, many of the clubs' high-performance facilities do not meet best practice or they are too small or they are too constrained, and it is inhibiting player development, it is inhibiting pathways and the capacity for clubs to deliver integrated women and men's high-performance programs.

Many of the traditional homes of the AFL clubs—so Punt Road Oval in Richmond and Whitten Oval—offer really limited match-day spectator experience, with dated seating, bad amenities, very limited food and beverage facilities. And they do not meet AFLW match-day requirements and they do not meet broadcast requirements. So home games need to be relocated to other venues that do have suitable facilities. And in addition to many of those constraints, a lot of the clubs do not have adequate space to deliver community programs. So North Melbourne has the Huddle, Richmond has Korin Gamadji, and they are incredibly important programs for their local communities.

So all of the allocations in the budget are about improving those facilities and the ability of AFLW teams and the like to play games at those grounds. So that is the case for the \$7.3 million at North Melbourne, for stage 2 at Arden Street. It is also the case for Richmond's redevelopment at Punt Road Oval. The support for the Essendon community education and events centre will also help fund facilities for female participation from grassroots to elite. The support at the Danny Frawley Centre for Health and Wellbeing is all about mental health programs at Moorabbin. And then there is the support which we have already talked about at Whitten Oval.

So they do have undoubtedly benefits for the AFL clubs, but the community involvement, the community benefit and the benefit for female pathways is immense, and it means many of those programs that would otherwise have to be moved elsewhere can take place in those traditional homes.

Ms TAYLOR: Yes, for sure. There is certainly a huge uptake of women. It has been outstanding. Anyway, I stay on track. Can you give a bit more detail about the Danny Frawley Centre for Health and Wellbeing? You just mentioned that now—just information on the benefits of the centre.

Mr PAKULA: Well, I think as committee members know, Danny Frawley was a passionate advocate for mental health. I dealt with him quite a bit in his role on the board of harness racing, and he was incredibly committed to the work that he was doing in that regard. The Danny Frawley Centre for Health and Wellbeing at Moorabbin will be used to establish mental health and wellbeing services, and education programs. Danny was one of the first players to open up about his mental health struggles, he supported research into mental health, he inspired and supported others to speak up—and I have heard the bell, but the funding there I think will be go to really critical programs in support of that.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Minister, and I will pass to Ms Bridget Vallence, MP.

Ms VALLENCE: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Minister and team. Budget paper 3, page 84, referring to major events. Minister, what was the cost to cancel the 2020 grand prix?

Mr PAKULA: I recall having a question about that from Mr Hibbins, I think, at our last hearing, and we indicated that the decision to cancel was made by Formula One following information and advice from a range of health experts, including the CHO, the chief medical officer and the WHO—

Ms VALLENCE: Appreciating the reasons, just what was the cost, if you could let the committee know?

Mr PAKULA: Well, the point that I made then and the point that I make now is that the race promotion fee that would normally have been paid by the AGPC to Formula One was not required to be paid. The cost of that fee is in the many tens of millions of dollars, and it is outlined in the department's annual report. What was required to be paid was obviously ticket refunds for everyone. Now, I do not have exact figures in front of me. What I can say to the committee in broad terms is the ticket refunds on the one hand and the non-payment of the licence fee broadly cancelled each other out, but to a greater level of detail than that, I would need to take it on notice. But they broadly cancelled each other out.

Ms VALLENCE: If you could take it on notice, thank you. You mentioned earlier that \$225 million for the AFL was announced in 2018 and that investment in the privately owned Marvel Stadium. How much of the \$225 million has been paid?

Mr PAKULA: If you hold on a moment, we might have that number. Given that substantive construction has not yet commenced, it will not be a large amount, but we will either get you that number now—

Ms VALLENCE: On notice is fine, Minister.

Mr PAKULA: or we might have to take it on notice.

Ms VALLENCE: You will take it on notice then.

Mr PAKULA: As I say, the point is that, as you know, planning is underway but construction has not commenced, so it would not be a substantial proportion.

Ms VALLENCE: Budget paper 3, page 277, tourism and international visitors. Given the high percentage of pre-COVID tourism from China and knowing now the increasing tensions with China, are you aware the Chinese communist government has travel restrictions or travel advice to not travel to Australia or Victoria? And if so, if you could provide any of the advice to the committee.

Mr PAKULA: Not that has been specifically notified to us, but I do recall there being some media reportage about an advisory about Australia more generally rather than about Victoria specifically. In any case, we are in an environment where international travel has been substantially compromised, so whether or not there is an advisory is not particularly relevant at this immediate moment in time given that international travel, other than those coming from the travel bubble in New Zealand and returning Australians, has all but ceased.

Ms VALLENCE: Understanding that with COVID and borders closed, the immediacy is not there, however, as we have seen over, I guess, the last quite some time tensions increasing and that advisory is there, can you let the committee know what your concerns or I guess your projections are in relation to that and how it will impact Chinese visitors, which are a large proportion—

Mr PAKULA: Well, you are asking me to crystal ball gaze to an extent, Ms Vallence, but if there is a substantial ongoing diminution of visitation from China given the size of the Chinese component of the overall tourism market, that would have an impact. In fact we saw—

Ms VALLENCE: Is that something that you are worried about?

Mr PAKULA: Well, as someone who has a deep and abiding concern for the tourism sector, I would be concerned about anything that would lead to a significant reduction in revenue for that sector—of course I would be. We saw already in fact before those sovereign tensions started playing out a significant reduction in Chinese visitation as a consequence of the outbreak in Wuhan. It had a very substantial impact on tourism operators around the state and indeed around the country—particularly in Queensland, but we were not immune to that—when travel from China effectively stopped as a consequence of COVID. So there is no doubt, given the size of the historic Chinese market in terms of tourism numbers into our state, that if that were to be substantially curtailed for a long period of time, that would have an impact on our operators—undoubtedly.

Ms VALLENCE: You are right. Look, I represent the beautiful Yarra Valley, so I am very familiar with, right from January, how that has impacted and hard hit tourism operators right across our regions. On that, in your jobs plan, page 30, which is also in—

Mr PAKULA: Page 30 of?

Ms VALLENCE: budget paper 2, page 60, it refers to tourism-reliant regional areas, including the Yarra Valley—and it is right there in the second paragraph. I am just wondering if the Yarra Valley is now classified as regional?

Mr PAKULA: No, it is not. I am not the Minister for Regional Development—

Ms VALLENCE: But it says it there, Minister—it says ‘tourism-reliant regional areas such as ... the Yarra Valley’.

Mr PAKULA: Yes, and I have indicated already in my commentary that a number of the packages that we have announced, including the voucher scheme and including some of the infrastructure funding, will be available to both the Mornington Peninsula and the Yarra Valley.

Ms VALLENCE: Would that be the Regional Tourism Investment Fund? Will that be available to Yarra Valley businesses?

Mr PAKULA: Are you talking about the Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund or the Regional Tourism Investment Fund?

Ms VALLENCE: The Regional Tourism Investment Fund. You mentioned it earlier.

Mr PAKULA: Yes, they will be eligible for the Regional Tourism Investment Fund, but that does not change their designation under the relevant Act, which as you know, does not define either the Mornington Peninsula or the Yarra Valley as part of regional Victoria. So some of these tourism programs—

Ms VALLENCE: Thank you for the indulgence. I am asking on behalf of the many tourism businesses in the Yarra Valley that would like that change. Budget paper 2, page 56, refers to the visitor economy, and as we know, that has been hard hit. Minister, will you please provide to the committee the findings of the regional tourism review?

Mr PAKULA: We have indicated already that we will release to the stakeholders that have participated in that the findings of the review along with the way that the budget acquits as many of those recommendations as possible. We will do that in the not-too-distant future. We are proposing to do that shortly as part of the total acquittal of the visitor economy recovery and reform plan. So I do not have it for you today, but it is my intention that it be released.

Ms VALLENCE: Will you commit to a rolling four-year funding program for regional tourism boards to give them certainty of funding?

Mr PAKULA: Well, I am not in a position, Ms Vallence, to commit to rolling anything, because they will be decisions of subsequent budgets. I am well aware of the fact that not just regional tourism boards but Visit Victoria have in the past been somewhat constrained by the year-to-year budget cycle that they have been subjected to. It is always my objective as a minister to get stakeholders and agencies that work to me the greatest budget certainty that I possibly can. But like all ministers, I am subject to the decisions of ERC. This budget does, however, provide four years of base funding for those networks. Whether or not that four-year cycle continues with budgets in the future will, I suspect, be a matter for someone other than me.

Ms VALLENCE: The same budget paper reference—budget paper 2, page 56. Of that funding pool for support packages for tourism what is the percentage attributable to the administration of those packages?

Mr PAKULA: Well, there is normally—

Ms VALLENCE: You can take it on notice, even.

Mr PAKULA: I am happy to do that. I will make the point that they are still being designed. But normally there is a very small percentage which is put aside for the administration of those funds—and it is properly a very small percentage.

Ms VALLENCE: Can you take that a notice?

Mr PAKULA: Okay.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Vallenge, your time has expired. Mr David Limbrick, MLC.

Mr LIMBRICK: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister. Actually, my question is on a similar line—my first one. The Victorian regional travel voucher scheme in budget paper 3, page 20—I think the Premier announced that it was going to be 120 000 vouchers of \$200 each, and this initiative has \$28 million allocated, but my maths says that the vouchers would only add up to \$24 million. What is the other \$4 million going to be used for?

Mr PAKULA: I think we can come back to you on that in detail. Some of that will be administration of the fund, and some of it is probably some contingency. But it should not be underestimated—the administrative requirements to deal with 120 000 vouchers and probably substantially more applications than that. I would expect this to be oversubscribed, and so the work involved in not just releasing the vouchers but then acquitting the receipts et cetera will be significant. You should probably think of it as a \$24 million fund with some money put on top to cover the administrative costs of running it.

Mr LIMBRICK: But I think you said in your answer before to Ms Vallenge that these administrative costs are a small component, whereas this is 14 per cent of the allocation—the \$4 million is 14 per cent of the allocation.

Mr PAKULA: As I have said, I am not suggesting that all of that \$3.9 million difference is administrative. A significant part of it will be. It is a pretty intensive program which will be rolled out over a reasonably constrained period of time, and it will require some resources to do that. The last thing we want to see is people unable to get their vouchers or unable to get their reimbursement because—it goes back to a question that was asked of me earlier about other payments—it is under-resourced at our level and we are unable to deal with the volume of applications that come through.

Mr LIMBRICK: Thank you, Minister. On to another topic that we covered a little bit before, we know that tourism is going to be constrained to intrastate and interstate. I imagine all of your interstate counterparts will be busily ramping up their campaigns to try to attract Victorians to come and visit their states. The other states all have their unique things that people might go to—you know, Queensland might be marketing theme parks, for example, or that sort of thing. What is Victoria's unique proposition going to be to try to attract those interstate tourists to here?

Mr PAKULA: Let me say at the outset, I am not a marketer.

Mr LIMBRICK: Fair enough.

Mr PAKULA: Look, I think—

Mr D O'BRIEN: That is debatable, Minister. You are selling your political skills short there.

Mr LIMBRICK: But we must have an idea of what we are going to talk to them about.

Mr PAKULA: No, I do. But I will not put it as well as someone who has got expertise in marketing.

You have seen already in terms of the intrastate campaigns, whether it has been Click for Vic or Stay Close, Go Further, a very strong element of that has been about: in Melbourne city, our restaurants, hospitality, laneways, coffee culture and our architecture; and in regional Victoria, coastal attractions, Indigenous tourism, food and wine offerings, the High Country. One of the great things about Victoria is: depending on which direction you head—north, south, east or west—the offerings are very, very different. I do not know if you have seen some of the visuals that have already been created, some of the creative that is out there. If it is focused on Paynesville and East Gippsland, for instance, it is about fresh seafood, waterways and some of the amazing restaurant offerings that are there. If you go to the High Country, it is the wine regions, the hiking opportunities, the trails,

the beautiful bush surroundings, the ski fields. If you go west, down to the Great Ocean Road, it is the natural visual attractions of the Twelve Apostles and the rest of the Great Ocean Road, but right down through Warrnambool and Port Fairy and some of the Indigenous attractions in that part of the state. So I think through that suite of natural attractions, Melbourne's reputation as a city of culture, Indigenous art, the silo art—

And our major event offering is one of the other key elements of bringing visitation in from other states, whether it is the Boxing Day Test, the tennis, our theatre shows, the fact that we are one of only three cities in the world with Harry Potter. We have got to get all those up and away again. I recognise the challenge in that, but in terms of drawing people in from interstate, business events, major events and some of those unique attractions, I think, present a pretty compelling piece. I hope I have done the state proud in that brief dissertation on its attractions.

Mr LIMBRICK: No, it is quite good. Another issue with tourism is with some operators, their customers are almost exclusively international customers. I know some of these Great Ocean Road tour operators and some of the Yarra Valley tour operators. As we already know, we are not going to get a lot of international tourists coming back soon. What in the budget is going to be enable them to sort of pivot to a local or interstate market or intrastate market?

Mr PAKULA: Well, a few things: first of all, the intrastate marketing that we are doing; secondly, the regional travel voucher scheme, which is about trying to get people down to those parts of Victoria; thirdly, the money to support the building of enabling infrastructure but also to create some accommodation infrastructure ourselves, whether it is Wilsons Prom, Cape Conran and the like; support for making what might be seasonal attractions year-around attractions, so something like that Hotham to Falls trail; and all of the work that the Great Ocean Road authority is doing to try and at the same time support the pristine environment but also make it a more welcoming tourism offering. So whether it is the infrastructure fund, whether it is the support for Victorians to travel within Victoria or the marketing budgets, the Business Events Fund, the Regional Events Fund, the Major Events Fund—all of those things are components in what is a pretty substantial overall attempt to support our industry.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Mr Limbrick. That concludes the time we have for consideration of the tourism, sports and major events portfolio. We thank you and your officers for appearing before us in this capacity today.

The committee will follow up on any questions taken on notice in writing, and responses are required within 10 working days of the committee's request. The committee will now take a short break before consideration with you of the racing portfolio.

Witnesses withdrew.