

Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee inquiry into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism and events sectors

Government Response

Executive Summary

The Government thanks the Committee members for their report into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism and events sectors.

The Victorian Government understands the significant challenges that the Victorian tourism and events sectors have faced through the COVID-19 pandemic and acknowledge that the restrictions that have been in place to slow the spread of COVID-19 and reduce its risk to the health of Victorians have severely affected the tourism and events sectors.

The Government will continue to work together with the tourism and events sectors to ensure that these vital sectors recover strongly from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and are supported to grow through and beyond recovery.

Response to Specific Recommendations

Recommendation		Response	
1	Consider options for support that could be provided to businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and who have been ineligible for support under the Business Support Fund, including sole traders.	Support in principle	<p>The Business Support Funds were targeted towards employing businesses and complemented the Commonwealth Government's JobKeeper program which was available to sole traders until March 2021. The Victorian Accommodation Support Program and Regional Tourism Accommodation Support Program also provided support for tourism accommodation providers that experienced booking cancellations and were open to employing and non-employing businesses.</p> <p>The Business Costs Assistance Program Round Two (BCAP2) and subsequent rounds, the Business Costs Assistance Program Round Two July Extension (BCAP2e), as well as the Small Business COVID Hardship Fund (SBCHF) provided support to both employing and non-employing businesses. In late 2020, the Sole Trader Support Fund (STSF) also provided support to non-employing businesses. Across these programs alone, over 28,000 grants were provided to eligible applicants classified as belonging to the tourism or events industries totalling more than \$1.08 billion in support.</p> <p>Businesses have also been able to access other supports including the Licensed Hospitality Venue Fund, Small Business Digital Adaptation Program, Upskill My Business, Commercial Tenancy Relief Scheme, Business Recovery and Resilience Mentoring, the Commercial Landlord Hardship Fund, waiving of liquor licence fees and payroll tax relief measures. The Business Concierge Service was also established in 2021 to assist microbusinesses navigate the range of available supports.</p>
2	Consider extending the Outdoor Eating and Entertainment Package until the end of spring 2021.	Support in full	The Victorian Government agrees that the Outdoor Eating and Entertainment Package (OEEP) was a popular and successful program, which allowed businesses to offset the impact of limited indoor

			<p>patron numbers under social distancing rules. Businesses were able to operate where they might have otherwise been unviable.</p> <p>The Victorian Government considers that OEEP generally achieved its objective of making widespread outdoor dining safe and practical. Its wide coverage across all local government areas ensured that assistance was provided to most businesses that could benefit from the program.</p> <p>On 18 October 2021, the Victorian Government launched new support programs to build on the success of the OEEP. This included the \$54.5 million Outdoor Economy Package to help support the costs for thousands of businesses of setting up for street trading, and back councils to provide the necessary infrastructure and support. This package also included a \$14.5 million COVIDSafe Outdoor Activation Voucher Program to provide more than 7,000 Victorian businesses, community organisations, not-for-profits and trader associations with \$2,000 grants when they spend at least that amount to support initiatives such as outdoor hospitality and entertainment.</p>
3	Work with the tourism industry to identify ongoing infrastructure needs that can be addressed by an expansion of the Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund.	Support in full	<p>The Victorian Government's four-year Visitor Economy Recovery and Reform Plan outlines actions to support recovery for Victoria's Visitor Economy and is being supported through the \$465 million Victorian Tourism Recovery Package announced in the 2020-21 Victorian Budget.</p> <p>As part of this Package, the Victorian Government is overseeing the delivery of 30 new infrastructure projects funded under the \$46 million Regional Tourism Investment Fund – Stimulus Round.</p> <p>The Regional Tourism Investment Fund (RTIF) – Competitive Round was launched in November 2021. The RTIF – Competitive Round will drive the recovery and sustainability of regional Victoria's visitor economy by catalysing private and public investment and facilitating new and innovative tourism infrastructure projects.</p> <p>The objectives of the RTIF – Competitive Round are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver strategic tourism infrastructure projects that will increase visitation, improve quality of customer experience, and increase visitor yield and length of stay. • Deliver projects that broaden Victoria's tourism offering, and support and encourage year-round visitation and dispersal across regional Victoria. • Leverage and facilitate private sector investment, including through strengthening public tourism infrastructure. • Drive new jobs and improved outcomes for the State's visitor economy. <p>Beyond the allocation of the RTIF – Competitive Round, the Victorian Government will continue to work with the tourism industry to identify ongoing infrastructure needs and build a strong pipeline of</p>

			demand-driving public and private tourism infrastructure projects. Investment in infrastructure will be guided by the State-wide Visitor Economy Master Plan, currently in development.
4	<p>Extend the Regional and Melbourne Travel Voucher Schemes. In extending these schemes, it should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> consider ensuring the vouchers are redeemable during off-peak periods for each tourism region consider adapting the schemes to encourage mid-week visitation have regard to adopting a more nuanced approach to targeting the schemes towards the specific needs of each tourism region consider expanding the schemes to encourage interstate visitation to Victoria. 	Support in principle	<p>The Victorian Government has introduced three rounds of the Regional Travel Voucher Scheme, which provided 160,000 vouchers valued at \$200 each to Victorians to contribute to the cost of paid accommodation, experience, tours or attractions during their stay in regional Victoria.</p> <p>The Victorian Government has also introduced one round of the Melbourne Travel Voucher Scheme, which provided 40,000 vouchers to Victorian residents under similar eligibility requirements to the Regional Travel Voucher Scheme, however, applied to the metropolitan Melbourne area.</p> <p>On 6 June 2021, the Victorian Government announced a fourth round of the Regional Travel Voucher Scheme, which will provide a further 80,000 regional travel vouchers valued at \$200. The Victorian Government will announce further details on this scheme, including an eligible travel period, in due course.</p> <p>Victorians were able to redeem their vouchers during lengthy travel periods, which included peak and off-peak periods, including the busy summer period and quieter shoulder seasons. This enabled Victorians to schedule holidays across a broad period that supported their needs and ensured a steady stream of visitation for the travel area.</p> <p>The Regional Travel Voucher Scheme and Melbourne Travel Voucher Scheme have injected \$149 million and over \$13 million respectively into the visitor economy, which has provided tourism operators a much-needed financial contribution during the impacts of COVID-19.</p> <p>The Victorian Government will consider options to extend these schemes as part of determining the most effective approaches to supporting a rapid recovery of the visitor economy from the impacts of COVID-19.</p>
5	Explore options for providing funding for tourism infrastructure projects in greater Melbourne.	Support in principle	<p>The Victorian Government's four-year Visitor Economy Recovery and Reform Plan outlines actions to support recovery for Victoria's Visitor Economy and is being supported through the \$465 million Victorian Tourism Recovery Package announced in the 2020-21 Victorian Budget.</p> <p>As part of this package, the Victorian Government is overseeing the delivery of 30 new infrastructure projects funded under the \$46 million Regional Tourism Investment Fund – Stimulus Round. This includes four projects located in Greater Melbourne:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne (\$3.3 million) Dandenong Ranges Botanic Garden Rebuild of the 2013 Chelsea Best in Show Garden (\$2.83 million)

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raptor Rehabilitation Facility, Healesville Sanctuary (\$1.5 million) • Yarra Trail Northern Loop (\$3.35 million) <p>The Victorian Government will continue to work with the tourism industry to identify ongoing infrastructure needs and build a strong pipeline of demand-driving public and private tourism infrastructure projects in Greater Melbourne.</p>
6	<p>Undertake consultation with Regional Tourism Boards and local government, including greater Melbourne, to develop individual support packages, including funding and future marketing campaigns, specific to each tourism region's strengths and needs.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The Victorian Government's four-year Visitor Economy Recovery and Reform Plan outlines actions to support recovery for Victoria's Visitor Economy and is being supported through the \$465 million Victorian Tourism Recovery Package announced in the 2020-21 Victorian Budget.</p> <p>As part of this package, the Victorian Government is supporting the strengthening of the Regional Tourism Board network of stakeholders to ensure that they are the voice for tourism in their region and provide direct feedback to the Department on regional priorities and needs.</p> <p>The Victorian Government has provided more than \$29 million of funding support for Regional Tourism Boards through the 2020-21 and 2021-22 Victorian State Budgets.</p> <p>Specifically, Regional Tourism Boards have been funded to support businesses to develop and strengthen their capabilities and provide general industry support, including crisis support and preparedness programs.</p> <p>Regional Tourism Boards are also working with DJPR to enable new product development and strengthening of visitor experiences.</p> <p>Following the conclusion of a statewide visitor economy workforce review, Regional Tourism Boards will also be provided with funding to understand regional workforce plans.</p> <p>More generally, regional Victoria's economic recovery, supported by a vibrant tourism sector, is being compromised by the limited availability of fit-for-purpose housing required for this sector to flourish. The sector faces challenges in accessing labour following the slow-down in international migration and shortages of suitable housing, particularly in the peak season when businesses are at their busiest.</p> <p>DJPR is engaging extensively across Government to develop deeper understanding of the housing problems faced by the regions and to develop appropriate interventions to address the problem.</p> <p>DJPR has commenced Regional Workforce Pilots to address workforce challenges in parts of regional and rural Victoria, including housing related pressures. As an example, Regional Development Victoria is working with local government on the Great South Coast to develop 140 residential blocks in</p>

			<p>Timboon and Simpson. This development will assist with growing population and additional workers during peak tourism periods.</p> <p>The Victorian Government engages regularly with Regional Tourism Boards and local governments to seek feedback and insights that inform the development of support packages and has delivered a number of specific packages to address industry needs.</p>
7	<p>Increase mental health support for the tourism sector, including by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> targeting mental health initiatives in regions with limited existing access to mental health resources improving communication around available mental health support within the tourism sector. 	Support in principle	<p>The Victorian Government is committed to supporting the mental health of all Victorians during the COVID-19 pandemic, including business owners.</p> <p>The Victorian Government introduced the Wellbeing and Mental Health Support for Victorian Small Businesses program, which provides mental health support to Victorians dealing with the challenges of running a small business to help them navigate through the impacts of COVID-19. The program includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding to Partners in Wellbeing helpline, which provides one-to-one wellbeing support and free access to financial counsellors and business advisors Small Business Victoria (SBV) has funded an embedded mental health specialist with the Victorian Tourism Industry Council Until 30 June 2022. In addition, SBV provided short-term support to the Shire of Yarra Ranges post the extreme storms. This provided an opportunity for small business operators to access immediate mental health support from a dedicated mental health specialist. <p>The Victorian Government also invested \$13.3 million to deliver 20 pop-up community mental health services across Victoria – with around 90 dedicated clinicians providing 93,000 additional hours of wellbeing checks and counselling to many thousands of Victorians. The initiative provides a no-cost, accessible service option for Victorians needing support.</p> <p>The Victorian Government understands the importance of making mental health support readily available for all Victorians. Government will seek opportunities to improve mental health support across Victoria for businesses in the tourism sector, including enhanced communication to ensure all businesses are aware of the measures in place.</p>
8	<p>Advocate to the Commonwealth Government for the resumption of the JobKeeper Payment scheme, or a similar form of wage subsidy, for industries that continue to face significant COVID-19 restrictions on their business and employment activity, such as the tourism sector.</p>	Support in principle	<p>Since late July 2021, the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments have jointly announced \$6.6 billion to help Victorian businesses remain viable through lockdown, with automatic payments and grants to help cover wages, rent, utilities and other costs. This includes a \$2.27 billion jointly-funded package of grants announced on 30 September 2021 to provide support to thousands of small and medium-sized businesses most affected by restrictions.</p>

			The Victorian Government will continue to monitor the impacts of the evolving COVID-19 environment and will advocate to and work with the Commonwealth Government as appropriate to support businesses most affected by the pandemic, including the tourism sector.
9	Advocate for the Commonwealth Government to implement a second Tourism Aviation Network Support Program that includes Melbourne and regional Victorian airports.	Support in full	<p>The Tourism and Aviation Network Support (TANS) program focusses on destinations that are highly reliant on tourism, such as the Whitsundays, Kangaroo Island and Lasseter. The Great Ocean Road (Avalon) was the only location in Victoria included in the TANS program.</p> <p>The Victorian Government has advocated to the Commonwealth Government for an extension to the TANS program to incorporate more destinations in Victoria, including Tullamarine Airport, Albury Airport, Bendigo Airport and Mildura Airport. Broadening the scope of the TANS program to include additional Victorian airports would increase visitation and expenditure across the state, which will support recovery of the state's visitor economy and positively position it until the resumption of the international market.</p>
10	Increase mental health support for the events sector, in recognition of the significant and ongoing mental health impacts experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional resourcing should ensure equal access to, and effective communication of, these services across the sector.	Support in principle	<p>The Victorian Government acknowledges the events sector has been severely impacted by COVID-19, which has seen revenue cease for many businesses and significant uncertainty for future operations arise.</p> <p>The Victorian Government is committed to supporting the mental health needs of all Victorians, including those heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the events sector.</p> <p>The Wellbeing and Mental Health Support for Victorian Small Businesses program provides mental health support to Victorians dealing with the challenges of running a small business, to help them navigate through the impacts of COVID-19. The program includes funding to the Partners in Wellbeing helpline, which provides one-to-one wellbeing support and free access to financial counsellors and business advisors.</p> <p>The Victorian Government also invested \$13.3 million to deliver 20 pop-up community mental health services across Victoria – with around 90 dedicated clinicians providing 93,000 additional hours of wellbeing checks and counselling to many thousands of Victorians. The initiative provides a no-cost, accessible service option for Victorians needing support.</p> <p>The Victorian Government understands the importance of making mental health support readily available for all Victorians. Government will seek opportunities to improve mental health support across Victoria for businesses in the events sector, including enhanced communication to ensure all businesses are aware of the measures in place.</p>
11	Ensure approvals timeframes for COVIDSafe Event Plans that require approval are expedited in order to	Support in principle	The Victorian Government has supported event organisers and helped to provide greater certainty around successful planning for their events.

	<p>provide necessary assurance to event organisers, with a maximum response time of four weeks for Tier 1 events and a maximum response time of two weeks for Tier 2 events seeking approval under the COVID-19 Public Events Framework (PEF).</p>	<p>COVIDSafe Plans were submitted and reviewed by the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions to ensure they complied with PEF requirements before being evaluated by the Department of Health against infection control criteria. The plans were then reviewed by the Public Health Advisory Panel and the Chief Health Officer before a final decision on whether the event could proceed.</p> <p>The prescribed time for approval of COVIDSafe Event Plans under the PEF reduced over time. In December 2020, the PEF noted that Tier 1 event organisers would receive a decision on their application within 12 weeks. This was reduced to 8-10 weeks in early January 2021.</p> <p>In February 2021, the average processing timeframe from application to approval was 5 weeks, and the average time for processing applications between March and May 2021 was 10.5 weeks. The additional processing time during this period for some events was caused by a combination of the event's complexity, event postponement and delays due to further information being requested from event organisers.</p> <p>Public events and the use of the PEF paused in May 2021, in accordance with public health advice and restrictions.</p> <p>Almost all remaining restrictions in Victoria were eased from 11:59pm on 18 November 2021 – reaching Phase D of the National Plan. The settings detailed in Victoria's Roadmap: Delivering the National Plan from Phase D and beyond allow venues and organisers to host events (except major events) without the need to register or submit a COVIDSafe Event Plan.</p> <p>Major Venues over 30,000 capacity now require once-off approval of a CovidSafe venue plan. This process incorporates reviews from the Department of Health, Public Health Advisory Panel, endorsement from the Chief Health Officer and final approval through the Major Events Taskforce. This robust yet timely approvals process allows major events that require an extra lens of mitigation to receive adequate and updated approvals based on current circumstances.</p> <p>The Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions continues to engage with venue operators, event organisers and the broader event supply chain to inform them of setting updates, as well as seek insights from them as to the impacts of any changes on the viability of events and consumer confidence.</p> <p>Venue operators and event organisers continue to be able to be able to obtain support from the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions in response to specific enquiries on the application of the health orders to events.</p>
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12	<p>Ensure that the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions' Public Events Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can provide timely support and advice in relation to the COVID-19 Public Events Framework and the safe coordination and management of events • establish additional mechanisms for communicating changes in restrictions and responding to common questions or issues with the events industry. This could include, for example, virtual information sessions and webinars. 	Support in full	<p>The Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions established a Public Events Team to support event organisers to understand and adhere to the public health settings and to provide guidance and support to ensure public events could be managed and delivered in a COVIDSafe way.</p> <p>Since Victoria reached Phase D of the National Plan on 18 November 2021, there have been fewer restrictions and requirements for the COVIDSafe hosting of public events. The majority of events no longer need to submit or register COVIDSafe Event Plans under the current COVIDSafe settings (as at January 2022). Events with fewer than 30,000 fully vaccinated attendees can proceed without government approval. Outdoor events with 30,000 or more only need to publish their COVIDSafe Plan online and indoor events with 30,000 or more require a one-off approval through the Public Events Framework (PEF).</p> <p>The Victorian Government continues to engage with the events industry to ensure the sector is aware of, and understands, the settings in place and what it means for their events and venues. This includes engagement through virtual information sessions, sub-sector roundtables, individual meetings with event organisers, broadcast emails and by responding to individual stakeholder queries.</p> <p>DJPR has continually refined its approach to communicating with the sector, including the use of different communications channels, timing and method of communications following changes to COVIDSafe settings. These changes are based on feedback from event sector stakeholders, and include sector specific information sessions, bringing together stakeholders with shared information needs and common interests. This change has ensured all information is targeted and highly relevant to stakeholders, and has supported greater sharing of information between different event organisations and venues.</p> <p>Events continue to operate in line with the COVIDSafe settings and wider public health advice, with ongoing support available from the Public Events Team.</p>
13	Publish clear guidance on the types of triggers for the imposition or lifting of density quotients and venue capacity restrictions in order to maintain and support business confidence.	Support in full	The Minister for Health decides on public health measures to be implemented or eased in pandemic orders, after considering advice from the Chief Health Officer and any stakeholders the Minister regards are relevant. The Minister's statement of reasons for a pandemic order, and the CHOs advice to the Minister are both published.
14	Advocate to the Commonwealth Government for the resumption of the JobKeeper Payment scheme, or	Support in principle	Since late July 2021, the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments have jointly allocated \$6.6 billion to help Victorian businesses remain viable through lockdown, with automatic payments and grants to help cover wages, rent, utilities and other costs. This includes a \$2.27 billion jointly-funded package of

	a similar form of wage subsidy, for industries that continue to face significant COVID19 restrictions on their business and employment activity, such as the events sector.		<p>grants announced on 30 September 2021 to provide support to thousands of small and medium-sized businesses most affected by restrictions.</p> <p>The Victorian Government will continue to monitor the impacts of the evolving COVID-19 environment and will advocate to and work with the Commonwealth Government as appropriate to support businesses most affected by the pandemic, including the tourism sector.</p>
15	Work with National Cabinet to revise the National Plan to transition Australia's National COVID Response to include dates and vaccination rates that will trigger changes to Australia's national COVID-19 response to provide certainty for the tourism and events sectors.	Support in principle	<p>Victoria worked with National Cabinet to revise the National Plan and agree vaccine thresholds. On 6 August 2021 the National Plan was updated with vaccination rates that trigger transition to the following phases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 70% double dose vaccination rate of people aged 16+ to transition to Phase B. • 80% double dose vaccination rate of people aged 16+ to transition to Phase C. <p>At that time, indicative dates were not outlined at a national level given supply constraints, and eligibility had not been expanded to all age groups.</p> <p>On 19 September 2021, Victoria's Roadmap to Deliver the National Plan was released. In addition to vaccine rates that trigger changes, indicative dates were also outlined for transition through phases. Estimated changes to key settings for business and the community provided industry with more certainty and ability to plan, including the tourism and events sector. The Roadmap was updated on 17 October 2021 to bring forward the easing of restrictions, following record vaccination rates.</p> <p>Almost all remaining restrictions in Victoria were eased from 11:59pm on 18 November 2021 – reaching Phase D of the National Plan. This easing of restrictions was made possible by Victoria's vaccination rates with Victoria reaching the 90 per cent double dose milestone for eligible people.</p>
16	Provide public guidance on how public health mechanisms and policies will change in conjunction with the vaccination thresholds established under the National Plan to transition Australia's National COVID Response.	Support in full	<p>Victoria's Roadmap to Deliver the National Plan was released on 19 September 2021. It was subsequently updated on 17 October 2021 to bring forward the easing of restrictions, following record vaccination rates.</p> <p>The Roadmap outlined certain venues for opening and settings once Victoria reached certain vaccination thresholds. Importantly, the Roadmap provided public guidance on how public health measures were expected to change and clearly outlined conditions that all eligible attendees would need to be fully vaccinated to attend most venues and events. The Roadmap provided clarity and confidence to industry and the public on the transition to re-open.</p> <p>The Victorian Government continues to monitor and review public health settings support the well-being of all Victorians.</p>
17	Provide adequate financial and strategic support to Regional	Support in full	<p>The Victorian Government works closely with Regional Tourism Boards and regularly engages with them to provide strategic support.</p>

	Tourism Boards to ensure that Destination Management Plans are in place in each region and that they reflect regional needs in terms of recovery and rebuilding in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.		<p>The Victorian Government has also provided more than \$29 million of funding support for Regional Tourism Boards through the 2020-21 and 2021-22 Victorian State Budgets.</p> <p>This includes around \$3 million for industry development activities to Regional Tourism Boards. Approximately \$2 million for regional destination management planning and local area action planning will be committed to Regional Tourism Boards across 2021-22 and 2022-23.</p>
18	Advocate to the Commonwealth Government to prioritise for entry into Australia, when international borders fully reopen, those workers who can fill skills shortages in the tourism sector, including hospitality. Alternatively, this could form part of commercial trials for limited entry of economic visa holders under the National Plan to transition Australia's National COVID Response.	Support in full	<p>The Victorian Government agrees that Australia's closed borders have exacerbated skills shortages in the tourism sector in Victoria and that filling these shortages will help facilitate the rapid recovery of the sector. The Victorian Government has created a pathway for chefs and cooks through the state nomination visa program to support the sector in its recovery.</p> <p>As part of the Victorian Government's Visitor Economy Recovery and Reform Plan, Workforce Planning and Skills Audits are being developed to identify critical gaps and potential opportunities in the tourism sector's workforce.</p> <p>From 15 December 2021, fully vaccinated eligible visa holders can come to Australia without needing to apply for a travel exemption. Eligible visa holders include skilled workers, international students and working holiday makers. The return of these visa holders will help to fill skill shortages and support recovery of the tourism and hospitality sectors.</p> <p>The Victorian Government will continue to advocate to the Commonwealth Government to prioritise entry into Australia of workers who can fill skills shortages. While noting there are also opportunities for training or re-training of Victorian residents to support the recovery of the sector.</p>
19	<p>Establish an events industry taskforce to review and revise its consultation processes with the events sector in Victoria, in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify departmental structural changes to facilitate ongoing consultation and inform the long-term recovery of the sector, including revision of the COVID-19 Public Events Framework 	Support in principle	<p>The Victorian Government has worked with the events industry to attain feedback and test ideas, allowing stakeholders to influence decision-making impacting events during the pandemic.</p> <p>The Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions has hosted more than 70 stakeholder consultations and information sessions with over 2000 event organisers and industry stakeholders. These sessions were hosted with stakeholders from various sub-sectors including creative, sport, education, business and arts and entertainment, to facilitate ongoing consultation and obtain input from varying areas of the sector.</p> <p>Establishment of these groups provided a forum for the exchange of ideas and information to address issues the sector is facing and to inform the development of policy and programs to support the recovery of these areas of the industry.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognise its value independently of tourism and other sectors • provide clarity around the scope of the sector and its crossover with other sectors • ensure small and medium sized businesses have a greater voice. 		<p>The Victorian Government will continue to work closely with the events sector and engage expert groups to ensure that a wide range of views are incorporated to guide restart and recovery initiatives into 2022.</p> <p>The Victorian Government has also made significant investments to secure a strong pipeline of events for the state and support the sector’s recovery.</p> <p>The 2020-21 Victorian Budget provides new funding of \$20 million over four years for the Regional Events Fund to support the staging of events outside of Melbourne.</p> <p>The 2020-21 Victorian Budget also provides an additional \$152 million over four years to boost the Major Events Fund to \$100 million per annum. The funding boost will help Victoria to secure an additional seven to ten major events per annum and ensure Victoria is in the best possible position to attract and acquire the best events and attractions in the recovery phase of COVID-19.</p> <p>The 2021-22 Victorian Budget delivers new funding of \$42.9 million over four years to the Business Events Program to continue to attract a strong pipeline of business events to Melbourne and regional Victoria to support the State’s economic recovery.</p> <p>The Victorian Government has also launched the National Business Events Program to assist national business event organisers to hold their events in Melbourne. The program provides eligible event organisers funding of up to \$25,000 to support actual costs for hosting their event in Melbourne.</p>
20	<p>As a matter of urgency, consider the issue of the events sector’s inability to insure against the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This should be done in consultation with the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority working in cooperation with the Insurance Council of Australia and representatives from the events sector. This should also consider the merits of establishing a shared risk underwriting scheme.</p>	Support in principle	<p>On 14 November, the Victorian Government launched an Australian-first COVID-19 Event Insurance product to give Victoria’s events industry the confidence to plan events in the new year.</p> <p>The pilot scheme provides up to \$230 million in cover for events that are cancelled or held at reduced capacity because of State or Federal Government-imposed COVID-19 restrictions.</p> <p>The cover is available for creative, sporting, business and community events held in Victoria with estimated revenue or cost of between \$20,000 and \$10 million. It was launched in December 2021 through the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority.</p> <p>In addition to the launch of the COVID-19 Event Insurance product, the Victorian Government has also introduced various targeted support programs for the sector, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two rounds of the Live Performance Support Program (Presenters), which provided funding to presenters of live performances events cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions. - Two rounds of the Live Performance Support Program (Suppliers), which provided funding to suppliers of goods and services to live performance events cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions. - The Sustainable Event Business Program, which provided up to \$250,000 to major event organisers, hosts and suppliers who have suffered a loss due to government restrictions, and

			<p>the ongoing viability of their event or business has been significantly affected by the pandemic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Impacted Public Events Support Program, which delivered funding to eligible event organisers and suppliers of Tier 1 and Tier 2 public events under the Public Events Framework. - An Independent Cinema Support Program, which delivered funding to independent cinema operators unable to operate due to COVID-19 restrictions.
21	<p>Consider implementing a voucher scheme for events that are organised and take place within the state as a consumer incentive measure. This should be aimed at improving public confidence and promoting support for the events sector's recovery.</p>	Support in principle	<p>The Victorian Government considers consumer and business confidence is critical to stimulate expenditure in the events sector and ensure its successful and long-term recovery.</p> <p>The Victorian Government will consider options to accelerate recovery of the events sector to reinstate Victoria's position as the events capital of Australia, including opportunities to incentivise consumers to attend events across the state.</p>
22	<p>Investigate options for supporting skills growth in the events sector through targeted apprenticeship programs or subsidised courses. This could be through inclusion of apprenticeship pathway and other courses for the events sector in the Victorian Government's Free TAFE for priority courses initiative, and in consultation with the events sector to identify priority needs.</p>	Support in principle	<p>The Victorian Government is committed to and will continue to investigate options for supporting skills growth in the tourism and events sectors, including through targeted apprenticeship programs or subsidised courses.</p> <p>The current Free TAFE offering provides good alignment to the tourism and events sector, with courses including Certificate III in Hospitality and Certificate III in Tourism.</p> <p>Through the Jobs Victoria Fund – Innovation Projects, the Victorian Government also offers support for tailored 'earn and learn' training in the events sector via large-scale job creation projects in partnership with industry.</p>