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THE NEW WAY TO DO UNI

# SCHOOL FOR THE VISITOR ECONOMY

E-NEWSLETTER



Dear colleagues,

The team at VU's School for the Visitor Economy has a busy year planned, after a productive first year of operation in 2019. Last year, we were pleased to achieve successes across industry engagement, program development and events.

VU established the School for the Visitor Economy to support the sector – which has been growing at a rate of more than five per cent per annum – through research and partnerships, and courses that educate and train individuals to become qualified professionals in hospitality and tourism.

We start the year, however, with the visitor economy heavily impacted by bushfire and coronavirus (COVID-19). Regional tourism operations have been particularly hit by low visitor numbers in a period when they would normally generate the majority of yearly income. The impacts will be long-term with a down-turn in international bookings and cancellations. So we encourage efforts to support bushfire affected regions such as the 'Empty Esky' movement that calls for people to go on a road trip to Australian towns to inject money back into bushfire affected communities. Tourism Australia's campaign to "Holiday here this year" is also encouraging recovery through visitation to fire affected areas.

COVID-19 adds to these impacts and restrictions on travel to and from China, Iran, South Korea and Italy, is expected to cost billions in services exports.

Given the magnitude of these events, the School will contribute to VU's wider efforts towards bushfire recovery and working with industry on wider industry recovery programs.

While these events will shape what we do, from 2020 to 2024, our focus is on growing student enrolments, further integrating programs, deepening industry connections, growing the visitor economy research profile, and delivering executive programs in event management.

I want to thank everyone across the university and in industry who contributed to the School's establishment and implementation in 2019. I'm looking forward to building on what we have all started, both this year and beyond. Please get in touch at any stage if you'd like to partner or collaborate with us.



Dr Joanne Pyke  
Director, School for the Visitor Economy



## Modelling the Visitor Economy

We work with students and industry across all aspects of the visitor economy and on November 15th, our focus was squarely on the research needed for informed strategic decision-making within this rapidly expanding sector.

At the Grand Hyatt in Melbourne we partnered with the Victorian Tourism Industry Council to launch 'Modelling the Visitor Economy'. This work was specifically commissioned to build the evidence and knowledge necessary to address contemporary challenges and to plan ahead. Through an interdisciplinary research team we were able to draw on expertise in economics, marketing, finance and tourism.

At the launch, Associate Professor Janine Dixon and Professor John Madden from VU's Centre of Policy Studies presented the insights and challenges for the sector that emerge through detailed economic modelling. Industry partners – Ms Felicia Mariani, Executive Officer from VTIC, Ms Liz Price, General Manager, Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism, and Mr Mark Dalton and Mr Mark Griffiths, NEM Australasia – added their perspectives.



## **Hanging Local: exploring the tourism hotspots of Melbourne's west**

The School is partnering with Western Melbourne Tourism and Get Lost Travel on an exciting programme for international students to explore and discover the hidden gems of Melbourne's west. Working closely with international students to design the program, Western Melbourne Tourism and Get Lost Travel have designed a suite of experiences, activities and the production of a series of video clips showcasing activities they enjoy in Melbourne's west. The project will include running day trips for international students along with resources to help plan a visit from friends and family.

The experiences include days out across the region with themed itineraries, immersive experiences such as nature walks or cycle tours, student nights out with food, drink and music at selected venues, an open weekend for international students featuring special offers, and attending major events/festivals in the region.

The program was launched officially on Wednesday, December 4th, 2019 and over orientation week, students were invited to sign up to go on these tours. You can see the program [here](#).



## From Vietnam to the Eureka Skydeck: the School for the Visitor Economy goes visiting ...

Twenty-two students from the School embarked on a tour to Vietnam, sampling the finest culinary delights. At the Grand Saigon Cooking School, they were served pan fried salmon with beetroot, orange and pickled radish, smoked labneh and local micro-herbs, followed by baked orange soufflé with praline, mint and local fruits. The menu was equally impressive at the Pegasus Cooking Studio masterclass.

The students, accompanied by a VU team, also attended cooking demonstrations at local cooking schools, enriching their understanding of Vietnamese cuisine and cooking methods, along the way.

A group of 14 Bali Tourism Institute/STP visited Victoria University in August for a week-long Staff Capability Program. A highlight of the week was dropping in to see one of our industry partners, the Eureka Skydeck. The visitors were delighted to see and experience one of Melbourne's great assets from an elevated height ... and out there on the Edge!

Maria North, who ran some of the group's activities across the week said that the group, "loved the event ... and there were lots of laughs at the end of the day".



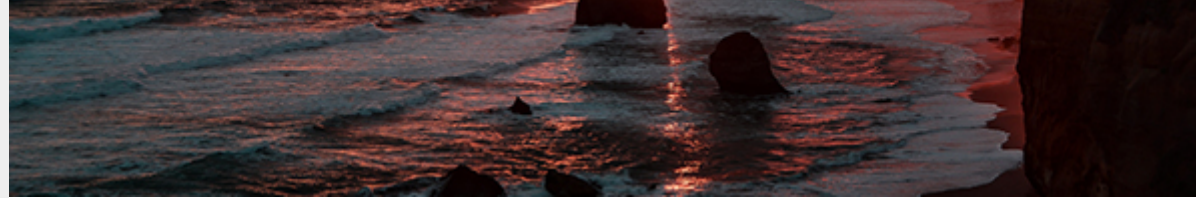
## The School in action and planning for the future

More than 50 industry stakeholders came together at the Tourism Strategy Beyond 2020 Workshop, at Austrade, Melbourne to help shape state and federal government tourism strategies to 2030. Spiro Kavadias, Manager, Tourism and Infrastructure, opened the session saying: "I don't need to tell everyone here of the value of the Visitor Economy...", given the recent news that it had reached \$30 billion! The recurring themes raised by stakeholders were sustainability, social license, regional dispersal, skills/ labour development and infrastructure.

It was wonderful to see VU Bachelor of Business Tourism Graduate, Nicole Poort, a Policy Officer at Austrade, assist with the co-ordination of the event. Nicole will be actively involved in helping collate the outcomes of all States' workshops and drafting the proposed paper to be reviewed and approved by government tourism ministers in mid-2020.

Pictured here: Nicole Poort, Policy Officer, Austrade, with James Tranter, Tourism Marketing Executive, MCC, VU Tourism Graduates, who coincidentally both undertook their VU Tourism WIL Program with Qantas at LAX!





## Regional Tourism Review

As has been widely reported, the visitor economy has been heavily impacted by bushfire over the Christmas period followed by a significant slow-down in travel due to the Coronavirus. The impacts of this are still playing out and is a major disruption to previous growth rates of around 5 - 7 per cent per year and worth more than \$55 billion.

Before these catastrophic events, a key issue for the Victorian government has been to address the relatively low visitor spending in regional areas where it is estimated that only 36 cents out of every dollar is spent outside of the Melbourne metropolitan area. Over 2019, the Victorian government undertook a major review of how regional tourism can be strengthened.

VU's School for the Visitor Economy was part of an industry working group formed and led by the Victorian Tourism Industry Council to respond to the review and identify key priorities for industry.

Five key priorities were identified with an emphasis on the need for stronger destination and statutory planning. There is a need for better measures of the performance of the visitor economy and more effective operating structures with greater local government participation in tourism planning. Of key relevance to education and training providers, however is the need to strengthen tourism education and training and attract more skilled workers to regional Victoria. The announcement of the findings has been delayed due to the disproportionate impact of bushfire and the coronavirus travel restrictions on the regions. It is expected that the review findings will be announced soon and you can read the full Victorian Tourism Industry Council submission [here](#).





## PhD spotlight: Roopa Sreedhar explores tourism's potential to support sustainability in India

VU has around 30 PhD students who are investigating various aspects of the visitor economy. A major theme of research at VU is sustainable tourism development and diverse topics currently in progress. In this edition, we highlight Roopa Sreedhar, PhD candidate, who is exploring the potential of tourism to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in her home state of Karnataka, India. The following is an abstract of her research.

*One of the key claims of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) is that tourism has an important and vital role to play in the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, policy analyses of India's tourism industry show that a narrow focus on economic growth has been at the expense of social and environmental sustainability. Further, there has been little research in India on the relationship between tourism and its social and ecological impacts and there is little available government data to enable critical examination. The research undertaken aims to address this gap by exploring the question, "Can tourism contribute to achieving SDGs in the case study of Karnataka?" The research is informed by interviews and focus groups with the wide range of community, government and industry stakeholders. An SDG Framework is applied to the data analysis to reveal policy problems, their causes and relationships. The findings expose fundamental systemic disconnections between tourism policy and the SDGs in tourism due to neoliberal policy directions, highlighting the need for a paradigm shift in planning and development of the system to contribute to SDGs.*



# In to bat: a masterclass on planning and running major events

With Victoria's \$27 billion visitor economy facing some of its toughest challenges ever, VU's School for the Visitor Economy gathered industry officials, researchers and event planners on 28 February for a 'masterclass' exploring major events as a catalyst for positive change.

The masterclass was set against the backdrop of the Women's World Cup Cricket at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground, as presenters shared insights into what it takes to run a successful event, the social and economic value of major events, and opportunities for inclusion.

Keynote speaker Chyloe Kurdas, a former elite Australian Rules footballer, described how she spent nearly a decade changing a male-dominated culture to help build the country's first-ever national women's professional competition as AFL Victoria's Female Football Development Manager.

Other presenters included Professor Clare Hanlon, Susan Alberti Women in Sport Chair on a panel discussion about the importance of inclusion of all kinds.

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