

Issues Paper Feedback - Public Transport infrastructure for the Great Ocean Road

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The Great Ocean Road is an iconic destination as noted, with a major fundamental issue relating to public transport along the entire Great Ocean Road. As a major destination the area lacks basic daily and timely bus transport in the region in both directions of the major route 7 days a week, 365 days a year. The need for a consistent public transport system would see an increase in overnight visitation in specific destinations which would increase yield in the linking towns. In providing a daily service this would decrease the need for a tourists to rely on the one day tours in and out of Melbourne which the region does not benefit from economically or socially and also reduce the self-drivers who are pressed for time. The one day tours are the only current viable way non drivers can experience the road in a reliable itinerary.

Issue one. Insufficient Daily Public Transport

There is limited transport from Melbourne to Apollo Bay daily stopping in between at coastal towns. There is only one bus on Monday, Wednesdays and Fridays from Apollo Bay to Warrnambool that does not run on public holidays and cannot be used both ways on the same day. This severely reduces the amount visitors can travel on a short amount of time between key destinations specifically on public holidays (E.g if it's Easter the bus will not run on Friday or Monday, so realistically no public transport from Apollo Bay to 12 Apostles/Warrnambool for a week!)

Solution?

Trial and advertise a daily bus service from Apollo Bay to Warrnambool 7 days a week. This would open up the key public transport of the iconic road allowing visitors to get off at any coastal town for a night then continue to the next town the next day. Imagine you could stay at each town over a week and come back whenever you like. At the moment people are stranded in towns for multiple days without any public transport options.

There are no car hire places in the Great Ocean Road towns, where the hire vehicle can be dropped off at different locations.

The trial could be advertised and successful out of Melbourne as a route for people to take anytime of the week.

Having worked in the industry for over 15 years I have seen first hand the frustration of tourists not being able to access a reliable daily service and this is compounded even further down at Apollo Bay where people can be stranded for multiple days. Given my vast experience travelling overseas and domestically I am hard pressed to find anywhere else where this basic daily service is so restricting in a major tourism destination. I have firsthand experience working at front of house full time at the local Lorne Visitor Centre for over 10 years, and this is what we see on a weekly basis. Plus take into account the tourists we do not see who do their research prior to arrival. I have represented the Great Ocean Road Visitor Centres at a state level within the Victorian Visitor Centres Reference Group as deputy chair, with the neighbouring centres of Apollo Bay and Port Campbell constantly experiencing these same issues. We need to consider the traveller who does not want to go on a one

day tourist bus or is not comfortable driving in a foreign country or who are simply not capable of driving (which includes the aging population and/or those not qualified to drive).

We as tourism professionals need to put our minds into the travellers needs and consider if you were a tourist coming to the region who wanted to explore our iconic road at their own free will independent of tourist buses or driving. What would you do and how would you do it?

Issue Two. *Lack of all year weekend lunch time transport from Apollo Bay to Geelong and return.*

Currently the majority of the year (except 5 weeks in Dec/Jan) there are only 2 weekend services leaving and arriving along the coast. One at around 7am, the other late afternoon on Saturdays and Sundays. There is no way to go to the next coastal town and come back in a reasonable time at lunch time. For an example "I want to go to Aireys Inlet from Lorne on Sunday and come back?" You will need to get the 7am bus to Aireys Inlet then you will need to get the 11.20am back or 21.35 back. Sorry there is no bus during the day going there...

Through years of experience and frustration there are insufficient weekend timetables for around a midday service, particularly for visitors needing to meet flights, after attending a function on the weekend (short of getting up prior to 7am) or simply travelling onwards during the daytime.

Reliance is then placed on private transport such as local taxis or private operators when they have no other option, quite often stranded and having to fork out hundreds of dollars to pay for emergency transportation.

Personally I have had relatives who don't have a car wanting to go to a neighbouring town to visit for a couple of hours or to go to an event and come back, which they cannot do.

Solution:

Trial and advertise the midday/1pm service throughout the year on a Saturday and Sunday.

I have broached the issue directly with local council, regional tourism managers, PTV with no result, knowing this is a major issue that could easily be trialled and be successful. This would benefit the region financially and increase stay and yield and thus reduce the amount of day trippers on private tours that do not contribute at all to the economy and reduce dangerous driving, while providing a safe, reliable and basic service.

I am open to supplying further feedback and solutions to better improve this offering and hope that this issue is considered seriously through the taskforce.

Thanks and kind regards,

Leon Walker

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