

LTCCP 2009/19 Submission: Tourism Marketing Funding

This submission is in support of further investment in the marketing of Christchurch as a tourist destination. Vbase does not wish to support (nor are we opposed to) the specific funding requests by Christchurch & Canterbury Tourism in its LTCCP submission. Vbase believes the promotion of Christchurch as a tourist destination is a substantial matter that requires a long-term strategic approach and significantly greater funding than is currently provided. We are therefore supportive in principal for the CCT's desire for greater funding.

Destination marketing plays a critical role in support of attracting lucrative business tourists to a city. The primary consideration of a company or organisation looking at where to hold a conference is what city to hold it in, either internationally, or within a particular region (eg Australasia). Other factors such as the conference venue are important, and while venue size, quality of products and services, and availability can affect the final decision, those factors usually only come into play once the destination has been chosen or short listed.

The marketing of Christchurch is therefore important to Vbase in securing international and national business events. The regional economic output from the convention facilities operated by Vbase is estimated at \$80m per annum from which economic value added of \$40m per annum is derived. This does not take account of the large numbers of business visitors who later return to Christchurch as leisure tourists.

To build on the contribution of business events to Christchurch the city must compete not only with the infrastructure other cities offer, but also with the cities themselves, many of which are successful in securing conference business on the back of reputations built from powerful, and expensive, marketing.

The business of conferencing is growing and that has been the catalyst for large-scale investment in conference facilities across Australia. Christchurch has responded by supporting through the draft 2009/19 LTCCP the expansion of the Christchurch Convention Centre. The redevelopment of Christchurch International Airport and the development of new hotels in the city will also play an important role in positioning Christchurch to play a larger role in this growing market. By way of supporting infrastructure the city is well placed.

However, if Christchurch is to remain competitive in attracting business events it must invest in PROMOTING Christchurch as a destination. It must compete with well-funded and clever marketing campaigns being undertaken by other cities. Unfortunately, in our experience as a company selling Christchurch as a conference destination in the international market place, Christchurch has a low profile and some negative perceptions exist.

Sufficient funding needs to be available to market the city throughout the year, targeting both the business and leisure markets. The seasonality of the two markets are complementary: the majority of leisure tourists visit Christchurch in the summer while business events are held primarily from April to November. Also, the role of business events in growing leisure tourism should be considered. The South Island is an attractive destination for pre- and post-conference touring while Australian studies show up to a third of delegates attending international conferences will return as leisure tourists.

The funding of marketing Christchurch as a destination must support a long-term strategic marketing/promotion framework that can be "bought into" by key stakeholders. In our view a critical starting point is the establishment of a consistent, compelling, positioning message for the city that provides a marketing umbrella for a wide range of businesses and organisations. These include the Convention Bureau, Christchurch International Airport, tourism operators, hotels, Canterbury Development Corporation, Vbase and others.



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