

vecci
INVIGORATING BUSINESS



Achievements and
Future Priorities

2009 Stakeholder Report

- The 2008 Regional Business Convention and 2009 Victoria Summit have both provided additional platforms to drive VECI's policy agenda over the coming years.
- Despite the economic downturn, our member, customer and client base is growing.



President's Welcome

2009 has been a year of challenges for business and the community generally. Ongoing economic uncertainty, media speculation about interest rates and unemployment figures and a decline in business confidence took their toll on many businesses.

The tragic events of Black Saturday were felt across the State, in both regional and metropolitan areas. Many regional communities are still rebuilding, and many more are still experiencing declines in tourism and business activity.

VECCI was prominent in advocating for government and business support, and to this end, established the VECCI Business Relief Fund, which sought to provide financial assistance to small businesses that were indirectly impacted by the fires. With the generous support of VECCI members, customers, clients and government, VECCI distributed almost \$800,000 in grants to over 200 businesses. This was only one component of a broad corporate social responsibility policy applied by VECCI.

VECCI's policy, advocacy or representation work continued to be the primary priority for the organisation, in the key areas of tax relief, red tape reduction, a fair workplace relations system and a balanced approach to matters such as the imminent Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme and national OHS legislation. These areas are of considerable concern to members, and VECCI again demonstrated leadership in pursuing a strong agenda of policy development and refinement with government. A broader focus on economic, environmental, social or cultural public policy has increased VECCI's profile and influence.

The 2008 Regional Business Convention and 2009 Victoria Summit have both provided additional platforms to drive VECCI's policy agenda over the coming years. The 2010 Regional Business Convention in Ballarat will be another step forward in developing a strong vision for the future of Victoria's regional business community.

As in previous years, VECCI's voice on behalf of the tourism, events and accommodation sectors continued to grow. We welcomed Tourism Alliance Victoria (TAV) to VECCI. The unification of TAV with other VECCI brands, Victoria Tourism Industry Council, Victoria Events Industry Council, the Hotel, Motel and Accommodation Association, and the Backpacker Operators Alliance of Victoria, adds further strength to the voice of the industry. With tens of thousands of jobs across the State relying on this sector, TAV joining VECCI has added strength to policy and advocacy efforts as well as enhanced industry development services.

Despite the economic downturn, our member customer and client base is growing.

In this stakeholder report you will find a brief summary of some of the highlights of VECCI's achievements over the past year, as well as a view to future priorities and goals over 2010.

Thank you for your ongoing support of VECCI and I look forward to continuing to work with Victoria's business community to deliver positive outcomes for the wider community through policy direction and advocacy.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeremy Johnson', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Jeremy Johnson



CEO's Welcome

→ While many businesses have faced significant economic challenges over the course of 2009, there has been a strong demand for VECCHI's range of business and professional services.

→ This has been a year of strategic and operational change for VECCHI as we fulfil our mission.

VECCHI has had twin goals over the past year – to cement our position as the leading policy and advocacy organisation for business in this state, and to lead the way for the business community by encouraging excellence in the delivery of a range of business services.

Over the past year, VECCHI has continued to strive towards these goals, with key achievements for business on both fronts.

The commencement of the Port Phillip Bay channel deepening project, additional funding for skills and training, influencing the shaping of the Victorian Transport Plan, investment in road, rail and freight infrastructure and support for businesses impacted by the Black Saturday bushfires and the imminent CPRS are among some of these achievements.

While many businesses have faced significant economic challenges over the course of 2009, there has been a strong demand for VECCHI's range of business and professional services.

The Fair Work Act also led to ongoing demand for VECCHI's Workplace Relations helpline and consulting services as employers worked through the changes, with strong demand for places to VECCHI's series of Fair Work Act briefings.

Tickets for our suite of networking events, which have been taken a new level of excellence, have been snapped up, along with places in our range of training courses.

Our Corporate Social Responsibility agenda has found full practical voice in terms of our bushfire assistance efforts with the VECCHI Business Relief Fund, support for our CSR Partners, and the VECCHI trade mission to Timor-Leste, where we are helping to establish a Chamber of Commerce.



International trade services remained in demand, with VECCI Global taking the step of introducing a range of new services such as business migration to their stable of high-quality offerings.

Demonstrating an ongoing commitment to sustainability, Victorian business continued to embrace the product offerings of the Centre for Innovation and Sustainability Excellence, with the Grow Me The Money program moving to a more commercial structure, and the Carbon Down Program successfully launched with partners such as the Collingwood Football Club and Bendigo Bank.

After a long period of uncertainty, the contract for VECCI's Apprenticeship Services was extended, which will be invaluable in linking Victorian businesses to apprentices, particularly during a time of persistent skills shortages.

As well as representing Corporate Victoria, we remain mindful of our primary small business base, and to this end, we have established the Victoria Small Business Council.

The hosting of the inaugural Regional Business Convention in November 2008 and the third Victoria Summit this year further enhances our policy and advocacy efforts by combining the expertise of our members, customers, clients, along with government and community leaders to help build a vision of the kind of Victoria we want to live and do business in.

The upcoming year will continue to present significant challenges for Victoria's business community. Ongoing economic uncertainty, rising demand for skilled labour, general elections in both Australia and Victoria, the implementation of the Fair Work Act, and the roll-out of an emissions trading scheme, national OHS law implementation, the reduction state and federal taxes and duties, minimising of burdensome red tape, and

investment in skills, infrastructure and innovation, will present opportunities and challenges.

A recently released report by the Institute of Public Affairs highlights the rise in the number of non-frontline State public servants and provides food for thought. If further meaningful cuts to business taxation are to be achieved the role, size and efficiency of Government will need to be examined.

These are significant challenges facing Victoria. However, like VECCI and the wider business community have done this year, I am confident we can turn these challenges into opportunities for Victoria.

This has been a year of strategic and operational change for VECCI as we fulfil our mission.

Considerable progress has been made in transforming VECCI into a modern future-focussed Chamber of Commerce and Industry with a mission to be:

- Victoria's most influential business organisation
- A provider of excellent, demand driven business services

I am proud of the efforts and commitment of our management team and staff.

This stakeholder report is a snapshot of some of VECCI's achievements over the year. None of these achievements would have been possible without the support of our members, customers, clients and various stakeholders.

I thank you for your commitment to VECCI and your assistance as we advocate on behalf of and support Victoria's business community.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Wayne Kayler-Thomson', is written over a horizontal line.

Wayne Kayler-Thomson

→ Added voice to small business interests through the year by establishing the Victoria Small Business Council, a peak body of small business leaders whose role is to champion small business views on matters like taxation and regulation reform.



→ Effectively advocated for much needed promotional funding to encourage tourists to visit regions affected by the February bushfires, establishing a fund to help affected businesses.





Business representation

Achievements

- Influenced the shape of the Victorian Transport Plan.
- Added voice to small business interests through the year by establishing the Victoria Small Business Council, a peak body of small business experts and leaders whose role is to champion small business views on important matters like taxation and regulation reform.
- Consolidated Tourism Alliance Victoria (TAV) under VECCI's Tourism and Events Industry Unit umbrella to effectively unite Victoria's most influential tourism associations to speak on behalf of the industry with one voice.
- Effectively advocated for much needed promotional funding to encourage tourists to visit regions affected by the February bushfires, establishing a fund to help affected businesses (the VECCI Business Relief Fund).
- Advocated for policy outcomes of the 2007 VECCI Victoria Summit to be taken up by government including increases in the maximum lease term available for major projects on Crown land from 21 to 65 years and the relaxation of the Victorian Government's moratorium on genetically modified organisms (GMO).
- Hosted the inaugural Regional Business Convention in Bendigo in November 2008, which successfully provided an opportunity for regional business to identify the issues and opportunities facing their economies and communities. Many of the Convention's recommendations are now being adopted by the State Government.
- Held roundtables with delegates of Regional Business Convention and Government and Opposition to discuss further policy development.
- Held 21 Regional Business Leadership Briefings throughout Victoria to update business leaders in regional communities on issues such as the economy, skills, infrastructure and sustainability, and gauge feedback on current concerns.
- Successfully advocated for the Major Transport Project Facilitation Bill with Government and Opposition, and marked the completion of the Port Phillip Bay Channel Deepening Project.
- Maintained strong advocacy to State and Federal Governments seeking to limit the negative impacts of an emissions trading regime on Victorian industries, including small and medium sized enterprises. Our advocacy contributed to Government announcements in May 2009 to delay the scheme by a year to 2011, with a low initial fixed carbon price.
- Continued strong presence in media, with 40 per cent increases in media coverage on an increasing range of public policy issues supporting our advocacy and representation agenda.
- Successfully advocated funding of investment in Cleaner Energy Technologies in the 2009/10 State Budget.
- After VECCI lobbying, the Government has doubled red tape reduction targets to \$500 million per annum.

→ Advocating for increased tax relief, red tape reduction and infrastructure spending to take cost pressures off business.





→ Continuing to lobby government for realistic solutions to street violence problems that focus on offenders rather than bureaucratic solutions that will damage our vibrancy as a state.

Business representation

Future priorities

- Advocating for increased tax relief, red tape reduction and infrastructure spending to take cost pressures off business as budget position improves. Reflecting member expectations, we will continue to advocate comprehensive reform of payroll tax and guard against the introduction of new taxes and charges.
- Continuing to make the case for responsible economic management at State and Federal levels to keep interest rates and inflation down, thereby helping take pressure off wages.
- Hosting the second Regional Business Convention to explore both the challenges and opportunities confronting regional communities over both the short and longer terms.
- Striving to ensure Victoria's interests are effectively represented at the national level through input to major ACCI submissions, policy statements and advocacy.
- Lobbying for a facilitation Bill for non-transport major projects.
- Continuing to lobby government for realistic solutions to street violence problems that focus on offenders rather than bureaucratic solutions that will damage our vibrancy as a state.
- Advocating for renewed strategies and whole-of-government support to grow the economic return from our tourism and events industry which is facing serious challenges.
- Examining public sector growth in non frontline service delivery.



→ Rolled out Fair Work Act briefings across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria to inform members about the legislative changes (total attendance of 6,486).



Business compliance

Achievements

- Rolled out Fair Work Act briefings across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria to inform members about the legislative changes (total attendance of 6,486).
- Advocated for Local Government members concerning the modern Local Government Award 2010 before the Full Bench of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission in October 2009.
- Participated in the review of the Equal Opportunity Act 1995 and represented members' interests on core components of potential changes.
- Assisted members with complex industrial relations matters through the Workplace Relations helpline and consulting services.
- Launched CCI Lawyers as a rebranded practice, which included a new website, email alerts and seminar series, and also expanded the professional capacity of the Practice.

Future priorities

- Reinvigorating workplace relations policy agenda in light of new workplace relations challenges for employers.
- Ongoing assistance to members in the form of our telephone helpline, consulting services and briefings as employers continue to work through the Fair Work Act changes including the National Employment Standards and modern award process.
- Providing high-quality assistance and support to members in complying with new national OHS laws including briefing sessions, consulting and information.
- Increasing the reach of CCI Lawyers professional services to members and clients.

→ Reinvigorating workplace relations policy agenda in light of new workplace relations challenges for employers.



→ Continued the implementation of VECI's Corporate Social Responsibility program, broadening and deepening VECI's community focus, including the VECI Business Relief Fund, which allocated almost \$800,000 to 200 businesses indirectly impacted by the February bushfires.



→ Continuing advocacy to Governments to help prepare business and the wider community for the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS).



Business results

Achievements

- Launched the Carbon Down program – a joint initiative of the Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Victorian Government – in November 2008. Partnered with six organisations (including the Collingwood Football Club and Bendigo Bank) focused on helping Victorian SMEs improve their carbon management awareness and performance.
- Completed world-first research into the climate change knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of SMEs.
- Developed a range of products and services to help small business understand climate change including carbon management training delivered to over 300 Victorian businesses.
- Launched new VECCI Radar weekly e-communication, resulting in increased traffic to website.
- Continued the implementation of VECCI's Corporate Social Responsibility program, broadening and deepening VECCI's community focus, including the VECCI Business Relief Fund, which allocated almost \$800,000 to 200 businesses indirectly impacted by the February bushfires, and a trade mission to Timor-Leste, where VECCI is helping to establish a Chamber of Commerce.
- Coordinated the 'Tourism Attractions Bushfire Appeal Day' initiative, in which 29 of Victoria's premier tourist attractions donated their Labour Day takings to the bushfire relief effort, raising in excess of \$108,000.
- Undertook a range of improvements to sustainability at our Albert Street offices, including a comprehensive waste management system, a water audit and several energy saving initiatives, which created a three per cent reduction in energy use in real terms.

Future priorities

- Continuing advocacy to Governments to help prepare business and the wider community for the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS).
- Working with Carbon Down partner organisations and continuing to build a strong pipeline of opportunities for partnerships over the next two years.
- Launching the new VECCI social media strategy to improve communication with members, stakeholders, customers and clients. This will include the VECCI Blog, Facebook page for our premium events and Twitter.
- Re-invigorating the HMAA and BOAV associations, inclusive of membership re-structure and Awards program.
- Delivering collaborative strategic tourism development projects and programs.

→ Successfully advocated the State Government to extend the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Completion Bonus and agree to fund an extra 15,000 training places over the next three years.





Business skills

Achievements

- Successfully advocated that the State Government extend the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Completion Bonus and agree to fund an extra 15,000 training places over the next three years.
- Achieved an extension from the Australian Government to VECCI Apprenticeships Services (VAS) contract until 30 September 2011.
- Assisted over 25,000 apprentices and trainees in 2008-09 through VAS.
- Provided Australian Apprenticeships Support Services to more than 5000 employers and over 300 Registered Training Organisations.
- Achieved an average result of 99.35 per cent administrative compliance score from the Federal Government across all four contracted regions for the monitoring period 1 January 2009 to 30 June 2009.
- Assisted City West Water and Silcar Pty Ltd's application for the 2009 Minister's Awards for Excellence for 'Employers of Australian Apprentices'. Both clients won the award for their respective regions which were presented by the Minister for Education, the Hon. Julia Gillard MP, in a ceremony at Parliament House in Canberra.
- Successfully tendered to the Australian Government to be members of the Employer Broker and Innovative Training Panels.

Future priorities

- Further cementing VAS's position as a leading provider of Australian Apprenticeships Support Services by exceeding minimum government benchmarks.
- Lobbying Federal Government to increase the commencement bonus for apprentices and trainees to overcome the drop in apprenticeship take-up from the economic downturn.
- Delivering addition metropolitan and regional training courses through partnerships with local providers.
- Showcasing the new VECCI-Swinburne Masters Programs, which includes mentoring from VECCI Board and Executive Council members.



Business globally

Achievements

- Introduced a second and more comprehensive electronic Certificate of Origin service for exporters.
- Established migration services due to growing demand for offshore skilled labour.
- Consolidated and built on Chamber of Commerce networks in China as well as with the International Chamber of Commerce and World Chamber Federation.
- Continued to conduct export training and mentoring to regional businesses in Victoria, under the auspices of Regional Development Victoria.
- Facilitated a high-powered delegation comprising of 100 business leaders from Malaysia and led by the Minister of International Trade and Industry.
- Awarded a contract with Department of Primary Industry for China in-market representation and research.
- Undertook several trade missions, including one to Timor-Leste.

Future priorities

- Implementing a comprehensive electronic export documentation package incorporating 'Secure Doc', which will enable exporters to lodge commercial invoices and packing lists electronically and more securely.
- Continuing to increase new business migration and investment attraction activities to further assist members.
- Consolidating support to Timor-Leste including further assistance to the Timorese government and businesses in establishing a formal framework for a Chamber of Commerce.
- Implementing a global Education Services Strategy for both in-market and Victoria delivery.
- Becoming a licensed estate agency assisting members, customers and clients through enhanced business facilitation and brokerage services.



→ Presented a series of high-profile speakers at our rebranded networking events including the Business Leaders' Lunch and Women in Business.



Business connections

Achievements

- Presented a series of high-profile speakers at our rebranded networking events including the Business Leaders' Lunch and Women in Business. Speakers ranged from business leaders to sporting identities, and the events were taken to the 'next level' in terms of quality.
- Hosted a series of human resource events including the annual Human Resources Conference and a series of HR Breakfasts focusing on changes as part of the Fair Work Act.
- Held a series of tourism sector events designed to facilitate networking within the industry, provide practical advice and support to business owners, and promote thought leadership in the sector.
- Held the inaugural 'Tourism Student Summit' designed to inspire the next generation of undergraduates to pursue a career in tourism-over 600 persons registered to attend.
- Hosted the Hotel, Motel and Accommodation Association's Annual Awards for Excellence at the Radisson, Flagstaff Gardens to celebrate outstanding accommodation businesses across Victoria.

Future priorities

- Improving VECCI's events with high-profile business relevant speakers, interesting locations and dynamic topics to facilitate increased networking opportunities for members.

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