

Presentation from Richard Riordan

At our AGM, Richard Riordan put forward an innovative and creative idea to help fund Great Ocean Road infrastructure and help local economies benefit from tourism.

He pointed out that there are currently:

- 186,000 international visitors to GOR per year;
- 5.6 million domestic day trippers per year;
- 3000 vehicles daily on GOR - roughly 90% cars; 10% buses;
- Asian tourism is set to treble in 10 years.

The Great Ocean Road is an iconic tourist attraction, but is completely free to tourists. Most international tourists spend almost nothing on their trip but use many facilities along the way.

Problems encountered in Apollo Bay include:

- No organised bus parking;
- Few facilities;
- Substandard toilets;
- Huge congestion at peak times;
- No fit-for-purpose infrastructure;
- Conflict over foreshore land management;
- Environmental damage;
- Poor roads;
- Infrastructure backlog.

The GOR experience is primarily a vehicle/drive experience, with a single route clockwise/anticlockwise, much like a conveyor belt. Apollo Bay is at the midway point of the day trip experience; 12 Apostles is the “selfie point” of the trip.

We need to manage the conveyor belt by smoothing the peaks and troughs. The conveyor belt is managed by too many operators, including 3 Shires, VicRoads and various other State Government agencies. No single agency has the resources or the income to manage it as a whole system

Some examples of other tourism regions and revenue raising:

- Kakadu \$40 per visitor;
- Kimberleys \$152;
- Uluru \$25 parking;
- Mt Kosciusko \$29/car \$6.60/bus passenger;
- Mt Hotham \$47 car/\$18 bus;
- Philip Island penguins \$25.70;
- Pioneer Settlement Swan Hill \$30;
- Sovereign Hill \$55.

Richard then asked rhetorically what options there were to fund GOR. He quickly ruled out a road toll, Shire rates and additional government grants. Instead, he put forward his idea for a vehicle pass: a Vehicle Infrastructure Permit or VIP.

This would lead to:

- Real increase in income;
- Funding for parking locations to manage conveyor belt;
- Funding for world class toilet and stop facilities;
- A reduction of impact on local areas;
- Create the world's best visitor experience;
- Potential data collection from visitors.

Suggested charges:

- Vehicles:
 - Flat fee \$20 per vehicle;
 - Seat fee for buses;
- Cost built into car hire;
- Cost built into tour bus operators services;
- Day passes sold by shops.

Some income calculations:

- \$20 per passenger @20 buses per day = \$7.3 million per year;
- 1.8 million day domestic car trips = \$36 million;
- Total of over \$40 million added to the local economy.

Richard suggests that Surf Coast, Colac Otway and Corangamite Shires come together to set up the VIP. He sees it as a positive to have local communities manage their own authority and keep the revenue in coastal communities

The Chamber looks forward to working on this idea with Richard and brokering relationships between the shires to make it a reality.