

MINUTES OF MEETING

**Monday 11 September 2006, 2:00 – 3:30 pm
Monash Conference Centre
Level 7, 30 Collins Street, Melbourne**

1. Apologies and attendance**Attendees:**

Prof Betty Weiler, Prof Sam Ham, Prof Peter Forsyth, Ms Jennifer Laing, Monash University
Dr Mark Dimech, TTF Australia
Dr Claire Ellis, Tourism Tasmania
Ms Bindi Gove, Tourism Alliance
Mr Campbell Gome, Tourism Victoria
Prof. Leo Jago, ST CRC
Ms Judith Muir, Polperro Dolphin Swims
Ms Laura Mumaw, Zoos Victoria
Ms Maxine Sando, Tourism Frankston
Peter Wirne, Consultant and ex-Tourism Research Australia
Mr Paul Fairweather, Tourism Research Australia (representing the Hon. Fran Bailey)

Apologies:

Jan Penney, The Mint Inc. and ex-Chair, Heritage Victoria
Prof Edwina Cornish, Monash University
Mr Mark Manteit, Philip Island Nature Park
Mr. Garry Burns, Sovereign Hill

2. Overview of TRU

Betty Weiler welcomed the members of the TRU Advisory Board to the inaugural meeting and asked each member to provide a brief introduction of themselves. An overview of TRU, its mission and its outputs was provided. Peter Forsyth, Sam Ham and Betty Weiler each outlined an example of a current partnership between industry and TRU (the national tourism satellite account model, the development of the Interpretation Evaluation Tool Kit, and a suite of training, planning and research initiatives with Zoos Victoria).

Discussion was then invited as to how TRU and the Advisory Board might work together.

3. Feedback from Advisory Board members**TRU's Communication with Stakeholders / Dissemination of Information**

Claire Ellis noted that research communication is an issue that all stakeholders – industry, government and universities – struggle with and must take responsibility for. It requires different strategies in different contexts.

Campbell Gome observed that links back to industry is a strength of TRU and would like more focus on disseminating information in a form that industry can use. He noted that TV often use information drawn from a variety of sources when making decisions, in an incremental process. Fact Sheets are good but verbal presentations should be used wherever possible.

Paul Fairweather felt that TRA also grapples with this issue of dissemination and noted that face to face communication of findings or results, while valuable, might create a lot of extra work.

Judith Muir said that she saw a challenge in getting smaller organizations to tap into this research and not to see it as an 'impost.' She noted that there is a great variation

in the quality of research and that operators lack skills to critically evaluate and select research. She suggested that there might be an advisory role that TRU could play in this regard. She also encouraged TRU linkages with regional and bodies and industry associations such as Mornington Peninsula Tourism and TTF, especially organizations that can take input from operators and feed it “up” so that research is being initiated from those on the ground.

Discuss with TRU Exec and report back at next meeting

Maxine Sando also suggested that TRU work with the regions and start at this grass roots level to find out what people need. These groups have budgets and may be willing to fund research.

Follow up with peak bodies, regional organizations and industry associations

Leo Jago commented that unlike an industry such as agriculture, tourism doesn't have 'extension' offices which provide an interface with industry. Consequently, there is more of a gulf between research produced and the uptake of findings by industry. White Paper flagged this issue but it has not yet been addressed. TRU might contribute to the development of extension offices for tourism research. Leo also noted that dissemination of findings through operators has the advantage of operators becoming advocates, with the result that the message is likely to be more powerful.

For Laura Mumaw, one of the strengths of having Zoo staff members doing research (e.g. as PhD candidates) is that it provides scope for linkages and common research interests to develop. Universities might want to consider how they might encourage more people 'on the ground' to enroll in higher education, particularly postgraduate research.

Discuss with TRU Exec

Impact of Research Quality Framework

The national Research Quality Framework (RQF) was discussed, including what its introduction might mean for partnerships between industry and academia. There is a risk that an exclusive emphasis on “quality” as measured by the journal status of academic publications might lead to less industry-focused research. It was suggested that the Advisory Board assist TRU in lobbying government for the valuing and recognition of research “impact” as part of the RQF, i.e. industry-relevant research where findings are taken up by industry should be rewarded within the RQF scheme.

Re-visit as RQF is rolled out

TRU's Research Strengths

Paul Fairweather felt that there were a lot of research strengths identified by TRU and suggested that the key ones need to be identified in such a way as to be more honest and transparent as to what TRU can do. Betty Weiler acknowledged that the first three (tourism planning and management in protected areas, strategic communication in tourism and tourism economics) are the current core strengths of TRU and others are emerging. However, Betty also noted that TRU can broker links to other Monash researchers and other universities both within Australia and overseas, so that the real capacity of TRU is somewhat fluid at any given time. Betty advised that the TRU Executive would revisit the research strengths based on the Advisory Board's feedback and find a way of distinguishing and communicating core vs emerging strengths without underselling the capacity of TRU.

Discuss with TRU Exec

Claire Ellis commented that these strengths need to be demonstrated to research partners and TRU research capability in these areas need to be entrenched and formalized with industry partners rather than on a project-by-project basis or at an individual level, so that the partnerships continue even if projects finish and/or staff members leave.

Judith Muir would like to see more research directed at the value of tourism from a non-economic perspective i.e. the value of natural capital. This would result in a more balanced research effort. The impact of tourism should be considered from a wider perspective.

Terms of Reference

The terms of reference circulated with the agenda were discussed. Three sub-items were added to the Terms of Reference:

- “4. Act as a voicepiece, advocate and disseminator of TRU research to industry, including research in which Advisory Board members are not necessarily active partners.
5. Ensure that research effort is balanced to capture triple bottom line accountability.
6. Act as a lobby group for recognizing the importance of including industry “impact” in the new Research Quality Framework (RQF).”

Bindi Gove reiterated that bodies like Tourism Alliance and TTF can act as a bridge between industry and academia, but that industry needs to be used in less token ways in research projects. The Advisory Board could consider this issue in future meetings.

Annita to add to documentation and update website with Advisory Board names, Terms of Reference and photo

Explore options at next Advisory Board meeting

4. Next Meeting

It was agreed that another meeting would be scheduled in 6 months time, to progress the discussion and recommendations.