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Time to revisit Vic tourism commitment

THE best leaders in government think ahead, identify sectors ripe for growth and commit to developing them and creating more jobs.

The state government has such an opportunity in next week's Budget to provide a significant boost in funding for Victoria's thriving tourism, events and hospitality sector.

The Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry is advocating for this investment to build on the sector as a key driver of regional and state economic growth, exports and employment.

Each year, Victoria has more international visitors coming to its shores, more money generated by tourism



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and more people employed in the associated sector. Tourism means jobs — 210,000 of them — and the booming sector we have built in Victoria is revitalising our regional areas and pumping money into local communities and towns.

If the government meets its target of 320,700 people employed in tourism by 2024-25, this will only further build our regional hubs and spread gains evenly across the state.

The Victorian Chamber is calling for \$23 million a year in new funding to go towards Visit Victoria activities, made up of \$18 million for domestic and regional marketing campaigns for interstate and intrastate visitors and \$5 million for international marketing campaigns.

Although international visitors spent \$6.7 billion in Victoria last financial year, there are signs we are starting to fall behind other states.

Tourism operators are competing in a market where spending is high, but if they want to grow their operations they must invest their profits back in their own businesses.

Victoria will face many challenges in the years ahead,

with disruption from the Melbourne Metro Rail Tunnel project impacting traffic and ageing and poor infrastructure at some of the state's most well-known tourist attractions.

To overcome these trials the government must provide a substantial boost in funding to support the Victorian Visitor Economy Strategy.

We must also pursue fresh new ideas, such as reducing red tape, extending the CBD Free Tram Zone to include the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre and the Southbank Arts Precinct and introducing a Winter Festival in the Yarra River precinct.

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