

STATEMENT

20 July 2023

As the peak body representing the Australian events industry, Meetings & Events Australia (MEA) is both dismayed and disappointed by the announcement that the 2026 Commonwealth Games in Victoria has been cancelled. Annually, the Victorian events and tourism industries together employ more than 320,000 people, host more than 12,000 events and contribute more than \$44 billion a year to Victoria's economy.

We view the Andrews Government's decision to cancel the 2026 Commonwealth Games as yet another blow for the Victorian events industry, with many operators still in recovery phase after the devastation caused by government restrictions and lock downs during the COVID pandemic.

Our belief is that a vibrant events sector is vital to any economy and culture, whether this be on a national, state or regional scale. The Victorian government's withdrawal represents a significant missed opportunity for the regional Victoria events sector.

The decision to cancel the Games is particularly disappointing for regional operators, many of whom held high hopes for positive economic outcomes against the backdrop of rising costs and inflation and saw the event as an opportunity for considerable growth and prosperity in the sector.

Strong expressions of dismay and disappointment at the announcement have been shared by MEA's community of event organisers, venue operators and event suppliers alike with concerns that the opportunity to profile our industry's expertise on a global scale has been lost. Many of our members also expressed concerns that the announcement may damage the state's – and potentially the nation's - reputation and could lead to future event bids being lost to rival states, or even countries.

We urge the Victorian government to honor its commitment to investing further in regional Victoria as a crucial step in restoring the confidence in and financial viability of the Victorian events sector. Furthermore, we urge the Victorian government to implement considered replacement initiatives that will enable the Victorian regional events industry to showcase itself as an international events destination, serviced by businesses and a workforce of global caliber.