

# ALBANY CHARTER COACH PROJECT

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



WESTERN  
AUSTRALIA  
WALKING ON A DREAM

**Important:** Tenders WA is the authoritative source for the final RFP documents, application requirements, closing time, addenda and authorised enquiry arrangements.

## **1. What is the Albany Charter Coach Project?**

The Western Australian Government, through Tourism Western Australia, is seeking proposals to establish or expand a sustainable charter coach operation with a substantive operating base in Albany.

The project aims to strengthen reliable, locally based charter coach services in Albany and the Great Southern from 2027 onwards.

## **2. Why has this opportunity been established?**

Market analysis, stakeholder consultation and business case assessment identified a need for reliable, locally based large-coach charter capacity in Albany.

A locally based operation is expected to provide a more reliable and sustainable service than continued reliance on coaches relocated from Perth or other regions. It would support tourism, cruise visitation, events, schools, community organisations, sporting groups, workforce movements and other regional transport requirements.

## **3. How much funding is available?**

A State Government contribution of up to \$1 million is available to support the successful proponent to establish or expand an Albany-based charter coach operation.

The final amount awarded may be less than \$1 million and will depend on the proposal, demonstrated funding need, value for money, available approvals and funding agreement negotiations.

## **4. What can the funding be used for?**

Subject to the final funding agreement, the contribution may support eligible establishment and mobilisation activities such as:

- establishing or expanding an Albany operating base;
- acquiring, expanding or upgrading an appropriate vehicle fleet;
- establishing a depot or related operating infrastructure;
- recruiting, training and mobilising the workforce;
- implementing systems and other operational arrangements;
- accelerating service readiness; and
- leveraging private sector investment.

Applicants must clearly explain the amount requested and its proposed use.

## **5. Is the funding an ongoing operating subsidy?**

No. The funding is time limited and intended to support establishment and growth. It is not an ongoing subsidy for the operation of the business.

Applicants must demonstrate that their proposed operation can remain commercially sustainable after the Government funding period ends.

## **6. Is this a government contract to deliver a defined transport service?**

No. This opportunity differs from a traditional government service contract.

The successful proponent will be expected to establish or expand an independent charter coach business capable of servicing tourism, community, education, event, workforce and other commercial markets. The business must have a viable long-term model that does not rely on continuing Government financial support.

## **7. Who can apply?**

The opportunity is intended for suitably qualified organisations with the experience, financial capacity and operational capability to establish and operate a sustainable charter coach service.

This may include charter coach, passenger transport and tourism transport operators, including organisations capable of forming suitable partnerships or investment arrangements. Applicants must meet the mandatory requirements set out in the RFP documentation.

## **8. Do applicants need to be based in Albany when they apply?**

Applicants do not necessarily need to have an established Albany operation at the time of application. However, they must demonstrate a practical and credible commitment to establishing and maintaining a substantive Albany-based operation or local operating presence.

Evidence may include existing premises, proposed depot arrangements, fleet deployment plans, local partnerships, workforce arrangements or clear implementation commitments.

## **9. What is meant by a “substantive Albany-based operation”?**

A substantive Albany-based operation is expected to be more than a nominal address or temporary presence. Proposals should demonstrate credible local operating arrangements appropriate to the proposed model, which include:

- depot or fleet storage arrangements;
- vehicles based in or regularly available to service Albany;
- local management and booking capability;
- locally based drivers and operational personnel;
- maintenance, cleaning and support arrangements;
- capacity to respond to local and regional demand; and
- a long-term commitment to Albany and the Great Southern.

The strength and suitability of the proposed local presence will be considered during evaluation.

## **10. Does the opportunity only relate to cruise tourism?**

No. Cruise shore excursions are an important market, but they are only one component of the wider commercial opportunity.

Potential markets include:

- regional touring and group travel;
- events, festivals and conferences;
- schools and education providers;
- sporting clubs and community organisations;

- seniors and social groups;
- airport and accommodation transfers;
- corporate and workforce movements;
- government and local government requirements;
- tourism industry partnerships; and
- private charter and special events.

Applicants are encouraged to propose a diversified operating model that supports year-round fleet utilisation and long-term commercial sustainability.

### **11. Is there a requirement for the operator to service Esperance?**

The primary requirement is for a sustainable Albany-based operation capable of servicing Albany and the wider Great Southern.

Applicants may also outline how they could support Esperance and surrounding regions if this is operationally and commercially viable. Any proposed regional coverage should be clearly explained in the service model.

### **12. Is a minimum fleet size specified?**

Applicants should propose the fleet composition that they consider appropriate for their service model and the identified markets.

The evaluation will consider fleet availability, size, suitability, accessibility, age, quality, reliability, presentation, maintenance arrangements and deployment strategy. Applicants should also explain how their model will respond to cruise days, events, seasonal peaks, service disruptions and other periods of increased demand.

### **13. Are accessible vehicles required?**

Applicants are encouraged to explain how their proposed fleet and service model will address accessibility and the needs of different customer groups.

Accessibility will be considered as part of the service model, community outcomes and broader public value delivered by the proposal.

### **14. Can an applicant rely on existing local assets, personnel or contracts?**

Applicants should not assume that existing regional assets, vehicles, depots, personnel, school bus contracts, government transport contracts or other business arrangements will be available to them.

Where an applicant proposes to rely on any existing arrangement, the assumption must be clearly identified and supported. The applicant should also demonstrate how its operating model would remain viable if the arrangement is not secured. Tourism Western Australia does not guarantee the availability, transfer or acquisition of any existing asset, contract, personnel or business interest.

### **15. What are the mandatory requirements?**

Proposals will be assessed against mandatory requirements that include:

- legal status and authority to contract;
- appropriate insurance or demonstrated insurability;
- financial viability and capacity;

- relevant licences, permits, accreditations and regulatory approvals, or a credible pathway to obtain them;
- a credible Albany operating presence or implementation pathway; and
- submission of all mandatory application documents.

Failure to satisfy mandatory requirements, or to demonstrate an acceptable pathway where expressly permitted, may result in the proposal not progressing to weighted assessment.

## **16. What financial capacity must applicants demonstrate?**

Applicants must provide evidence that they can fund mobilisation, their proposed co-investment, unfunded establishment costs and ongoing operations.

For the mandatory assessment, the evidence should demonstrate the capacity to maintain at least the first three months of proposed operating costs. Financial evidence may include financial statements, management accounts, finance approvals, bank letters or other evidence of working capital and borrowing capacity.

## **17. When must services commence?**

Applicants must provide a mobilisation schedule demonstrating how services could commence within 12 weeks of executing the funding agreement, unless a different commencement date is specified in the final RFP documentation or agreed by Tourism Western Australia.

The schedule should address fleet procurement or redeployment, depot readiness, workforce recruitment, regulatory approvals, operational systems, dependencies and key risks.

## **18. How will proposals be assessed?**

Assessment will involve:

- mandatory compliance assessment;
- weighted merit assessment;
- due diligence and approvals;
- preferred proponent selection and negotiations; and
- execution of a formal funding agreement, where the State elects to proceed.

A government-led evaluation panel will assess submissions, supported by independent probity oversight where required.

## **19. What are the weighted evaluation criteria?**

Compliant proposals will be evaluated against four criteria:

- Experience and Capability: 20%
- Service Model and Operational Delivery: 30%
- Value for Money, Financial Capacity and Sustainability: 25%
- Strategic Alignment and Public Value: 25%

Applicants should ensure their responses directly address each criterion and are supported by relevant, credible evidence.

## **20. Will the highest-scoring proposal automatically be selected?**

Not necessarily. Weighted scores will inform the evaluation, but the overall recommendation will also consider value for money, public benefit, risk, financial viability, deliverability, additionality and the return on the State's investment.

A lower-cost proposal will not necessarily represent the best value, and the highest-scoring proposal may not be recommended if another proposal is assessed as delivering a stronger overall outcome for the State.

## **21. Will preference be given to an existing Albany operator?**

No automatic preference will be given to any existing or prospective operator. The RFP is an open and competitive process, and all compliant proposals will be assessed against the published requirements.

The credibility of the proposed Albany presence, regional capability, local workforce and supplier benefits, regional partnerships and long-term commitment to Albany and the Great Southern will be relevant to the assessment.

## **22. Is applicant co-investment required?**

Applicants should clearly identify their proposed financial and non-financial contribution. The evaluation will consider the extent to which Government funding leverages private investment and whether the overall funding request represents value for money.

Applicants should also demonstrate that they have sufficient working capital and investment readiness to deliver the proposal under a milestone-based funding arrangement.

## **23. How will the funding be paid?**

Funding will be provided through a formal funding agreement and paid against agreed milestones, deliverables and outcomes.

Milestones may include establishment of an Albany operating base, fleet acquisition or deployment, workforce mobilisation, service commencement and achievement of agreed operational outcomes. The final payment structure and timing will be negotiated with the successful proponent and remain subject to relevant approvals.

## **24. What due diligence may be undertaken?**

Before appointing or approving a preferred proponent, Tourism Western Australia may verify:

- financial forecasts, cashflow and funding sources;
- company, director, ownership and beneficial ownership information;
- licences, regulatory compliance and insurance;
- credit, insolvency, litigation and other material matters;
- experience, references and performance claims;
- fleet, assets, premises, systems and partnerships;
- the proposed Albany presence and implementation pathway; and
- legal, contractual and probity matters.

Evaluation or negotiations may be discontinued if due diligence identifies material inaccuracies, unacceptable risks or an inability to satisfy relevant requirements.

## **25. Does selection as the preferred proponent guarantee funding?**

No. Selection as a preferred proponent does not constitute final funding approval, a binding commitment by Tourism Western Australia or authority to commence work.

Funding remains subject to required Government approvals, satisfactory due diligence, successful negotiations and execution of appropriate contractual documentation.

## **26. What reporting will be required from the successful proponent?**

A formal funding agreement and benefits management plan are expected to set out the required milestones, performance measures, reporting, acquittal and review arrangements.

Measures may include the establishment of an Albany operating base, fleet availability, local employment, cruise and non-cruise services delivered, community and event servicing, customer satisfaction, private investment leveraged and progress toward long-term commercial sustainability.

## **27. Can applicants ask questions during the application period?**

Yes. Applicants may submit questions through the enquiry process specified on Tenders WA.

Where information is relevant to other applicants, it may be made available to all applicants to maintain a fair and transparent process. Applicants should not contact evaluation panel members or seek information outside the authorised enquiry channel.

## **28. Can an applicant update or make revisions to its proposal after submission?**

Applicants should submit a complete proposal by the closing time.

Tourism Western Australia may seek clarification to explain, verify or substantiate information included in a proposal.

## **29. How must proposals be submitted?**

**Proposals must be lodged electronically through Tenders WA by Friday 4th December 2.30pm ASWT.**

Applications submitted by email or through another method will not be accepted. Applicants are responsible for ensuring their submission is complete and lodged before the deadline.

## **30. Where can applicants access the RFP documents and updates?**

The prospectus, evaluation guidelines, application form, terms and conditions, probity information, closing time and authorised enquiry arrangements will be available through Tenders WA.

Applicants should rely on Tenders WA as the primary source and regularly check the listing for updates or addenda during the application period.

## **31. What happens if no suitable proposal is received?**

Tourism Western Australia reserves the right not to award funding if the proposals do not meet the requirements, present unacceptable risk or do not represent an acceptable outcome and value for the State.

It may also accept or reject a proposal, verify information, seek permitted clarification, modify or discontinue the process, or award less than the maximum available funding, subject to the RFP conditions.