

GIPPS

all kinds of wonder

LAND



TOWARDS 2030

GIPPSLAND VISITOR SERVICES

Synced. Seamless. Spirited.

STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

Acknowledgement of Country

We respectfully acknowledge the Gunaikurnai, Bunurong and Wurundjeri people, who are the traditional owners of Gippsland—the land on which we work and live and recognise their enduring connection to this Country. We also acknowledge all First Nations peoples, the traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owners of the sea and waters of the Australian continent and recognise their custodianship of culture and Country for over 60,000 years. We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present, and to the emerging leaders who are shaping the future of their communities.

We recognise the importance of their culture, history and ongoing contributions to the community and environment. We are committed to working together towards reconciliation and creating a more inclusive and respectful society.



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Background

Project Background

Funded By

The development of this Strategy was proudly funded by the State Government's Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions' Visitor Services Fund.



State
Government

Jobs, Skills,
Industry
and Regions

Aim of the Strategy

The primary aim of the Gippsland Visitor Services Strategy (Strategy) is to set a strategic direction that will not only improve visitor servicing across the region but also enhance the overall visitor experience. This involves creating an environment conducive to increased spending, longer stays, and higher levels of visitor satisfaction. By achieving these outcomes, the Strategy seeks to elevate Gippsland's position as a leading destination in the Australian tourism industry.

Project Scope

The recommendations in this Strategy are a result of extensive stakeholder engagement, workshops, Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Aspirations (SWOTA) analysis, online industry and consumer surveys, case studies, professional insights, and research into future national and global visitor servicing trends.

Strategic Objectives

The Strategy focuses on several core objectives:

- **Innovative Service Coordination:** Enhancing the coordination and allocation of resources across Gippsland's visitor services to streamline operations and improve efficiency.
- **Enhanced Connectivity:** Improving the integration between Visitor Information Centres (VICs) and the Regional Tourism Board's actions, which include brand marketing, event management, and data collection, to foster a unified approach to visitor servicing.
- **Technological and Inclusivity Advancements:** Utilising advanced technology and providing inclusive and multi-cultural service options to cater to a diverse visitor base, including those with accessibility and sustainability needs.
- **Consistent and Comprehensive Servicing:** Establishing standards for visitor servicing, alongside robust volunteer and ambassador programs, to support the region's expanding events calendar and enhance visitor engagements.

Project Deliverables

The project has culminated in the creation of this comprehensive Strategy that includes:

- **Detailed Analysis and Strategic Direction:** A thorough assessment of current trends, issues, and opportunities in the visitor services sector, resulting in a strategic plan with clearly defined priorities and actions.
- **Implementation Framework:** A practical implementation plan detailing timeframes, responsibilities, and success metrics, aligned with the Victorian Visitor Services Framework and principles of Experience Victoria 2033.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Collaborative consultations with local governments and key stakeholders to ensure the Strategy is comprehensive and inclusive, addressing the needs across the Visitor Services Network, including those in areas without existing VICs.
- **Industry Best Practices and Case Studies:** Integration of global and national consumer trends and best practices to guide the Strategy's development and ensure it meets industry-leading standards.

Strategic Term This road map is designed to help Gippsland achieve both short and long-term Visitor Services goals to 2030. This plan outlines Gippsland’s ambition, targets, and actions to help achieve them.	Stakeholder Gratitude Message This Strategy would not have been possible without the input, feedback, passion and support of all stakeholders, including the dedicated teams at Destination Gippsland, Bass Coast Shire Council, Baw Baw Shire Council, East Gippsland Shire Council, Latrobe City Council, South Gippsland Shire Council, Wellington Shire Council and consumer survey respondents. Besides sharing ideas and insights, stakeholders were extremely generous with their time and expertise in strengthening visitor services for the region.
State and Regional Frameworks The development of the Gippsland Visitor Services Strategy is underpinned by significant state and regional frameworks which aim to enhance visitor experiences and support the tourism sector. Key among these is the Victorian Visitor Services Framework, developed by the State Government through the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions. This framework has led to the establishment of a Visitor Services Fund, providing the financial backing necessary for this strategic initiative. Further strategic guidance is provided by Destination Gippsland’s Towards 2030 Destination Management Plan (DMP), updated in February 2022. This pivotal document outlines a vision for Gippsland’s tourism future, emphasising the need to meet contemporary visitor service needs through innovative, visitor-centric approaches and effective resource allocation.	
Consultation and Proposal Submission Process Potential consultants were invited to submit proposals that demonstrated their capacity, methodology, and experience, particularly in regional tourism stakeholder management. Proposals needed to clearly articulate an understanding of the project brief and the unique aspects of Gippsland’s visitor service’s needs in December 2023. This Strategy represents a proactive step towards redefining visitor services in Gippsland, with the ultimate goal of creating a seamless, innovative, and highly effective visitor servicing framework that supports sustainable tourism growth and enhances visitor satisfaction across the region. For Destination Gippsland, crafting a comprehensive narrative that encapsulates the essence of its Visitor Services Strategy involves highlighting the innovative approaches currently employed, identifying the roles and stakeholders pivotal to the execution of elevated services, and pinpointing the key visitor segments that form the foundation of Gippsland's tourism efforts.	Governance and Project Management Destination Gippsland, responsible for overseeing the Strategy's development, were supported by a Project Working Group that included representatives from local governments and Parks Victoria. This group has ensured the Strategy is robust, well-researched, and capable of delivering measurable outcomes that significantly benefit Gippsland’s tourism sector. Strategy Development The Strategy was developed in 2024 by Hipscotch in collaboration with Destination Gippsland, the project lead partner, and a variety of stakeholders. Disclaimer While Hipscotch directors, employees, and associated entities provide all representations, statements, opinions, and advice in good faith, they cannot be held liable for any damage or loss resulting from taking or not taking action in response to any representation, statement, or advice contained in this document.

Destination Overview

Growth Metrics

The DMP aims to foster sustainable and significant growth by 2030:

- **Expenditure:** Achieving a total of \$1.79 billion in annual visitor expenditure.
- **Nights:** Reaching 10.6 million visitor nights annually.
- **Jobs:** Creating 16,800 jobs directly supported by tourism spending.

DMP Strategic Priority 6: Meet contemporary visitor service needs

Revitalise visitor servicing across the region. High quality visitor engagement plays a critical role in enhancing the overall visitor experience by creating a positive image of our region. We have a distinct opportunity to embrace change and attract new markets through a new model of engagement.

Guiding Principles

- **Inclusive:** Encouraging businesses and attractions to be more accessible, inclusive, and appealing, to offer the same opportunities to all.
- **Sustainable:** Building our visitor economy by thinking and acting in ways to better ourselves, our communities, and our region. Ensuring long term sustainable management of natural and cultural assets incorporating sustainable tourism principles.
- **Resilient:** Ensuring plans are in place to adapt and respond to the risks and opportunities associated with climate, crisis and changing markets.
- **Compelling:** To grow the visitor economy market share, spend and yield in Gippsland.
- **Commitment to Excellence:** Strengthen assets by lifting product price and quality and aim for excellence in servicing standards to remain competitive.
- **Engaging:** Connect with and inspire the community to build understanding about the importance of tourism to the economy. Work collaboratively as a region, across jurisdictions to grow tourism.

Goal and Measure Summary

- **Increased Destination Awareness:** Measured by growth in the target market and intention to visit, aiming for broader recognition of Gippsland as a key destination.
- **Increased Overnight Visitation:** The objective is to raise the number of visitor nights from 7.2 million to 10.6 million, indicating a significant boost in tourism activity.
- **Increased Visitor Expenditure:** Targets to escalate the value of regional expenditure from \$1.2 billion to \$1.8 billion, reflecting enhanced economic impact from tourism.
- **Increased Length of Stay for Domestic Visitors:** The average number of nights spent by domestic visitors is expected to increase from 2.6 nights to 3.7 nights, suggesting a deeper engagement with the region.
- **Increased Dispersal:** Aims for comprehensive visitor nights throughout Gippsland, targeting a total of 10.6 million nights evenly distributed across all months and areas.

Roles and Stakeholders

Gippsland Visitor Services Network Ecosystem

- **Local Government & Visitor Service Teams:** Local Government is the primary source of funding for VICs. Together with assistance from Destination Gippsland they steer the overarching strategy. VICs act as the heart and soul of visitor interaction, providing insights, recommendations, and a warm welcome to travellers.
- **Destination Gippsland:** Coordinate regional marketing and promotional activities, building a narrative to raise awareness of the Visitor Services Network as an extension of destination marketing initiatives.
- **Parks Victoria:** Provide visitor information online and through Customer Service centres, offer nature-based tourism experiences, facilitate over 450 Licensed Tour Operators, and manage parks that cover a significant percentage of the region.
- **Tourism Operators and Businesses:** Offer hands-on experiences, accommodation, dining, and activities that define Gippsland's visitor appeal. Partner with LGA visitor services teams to share relevant information and support.
- **Cultural and Community Groups:** Infuse the visitor's experience with local traditions, stories, and art, offering a genuine connection to Gippsland's heritage.

Strategy Statement

Stakeholder feedback during the research phase indicated a strong desire for a streamlined, overarching strategy to guide the delivery of contemporary visitor services across Gippsland. This Strategy establishes a framework for alignment across the Gippsland Visitor Services Network, focusing on vision and values, performance metrics, data collection and sharing, professional development and training initiatives, destination/corporate-branded promotional material, and exploration of digital and in-person innovation options. The goal is to develop a balanced approach that each LGA can agree to at a high level and then adapt and implement locally based on funds and operational resources.

To drive the delivery of this Strategy and Action Plan, it is proposed to form a **Gippsland Visitor Services Network Group**. This group should consist of visitor services decision-makers from each LGA, Destination Gippsland, and Parks Victoria.

Key Elements

Enhancing Visitor Services for ROI

- Focus on increasing visitor services engagement.
- Promote engagement via in-person, remote, partnership, or digital visitor services initiatives.
- Standardised performance metrics to demonstrate the economic value and provide a framework for measuring and improving ROI.

Consumer Insights and Preferences

- Reflects strong consumer preference for in-person visitor services across a contemporary network.
- Complemented with a multi-channel approach.
- Aligned Gippsland network to benefit from a collective centralised source of information and purchasing power.

Contemporary Standards for In-Person Visitor Servicing

Maintain a high standard with co-located art spaces or cafes, boutique local produce retail outlets with interactive elements, and modern facilities focused on sustainability, inclusivity, and accessibility.

Local Investment and Funding

- Each LGA to identify preferred investment or funding sources.
- Consideration of alternative funding sources.
- ROI calculation and consideration as a priority for investment decision-making.
- Encourage greater visitor spending through in-VIC and e-commerce sites to support daily operational costs.

Extension of Destination Marketing

- Leverage Visitor Services Network as primary hubs for visitor engagement, information dissemination, and local promotion.
- Enhance overall effectiveness of destination marketing efforts.
- Increase visibility of Gippsland's attractions, encourage longer stays, visitor dispersal and boost visitor spending.

Current Landscape

Gippsland Visitor Services Network

2024 Visitor Services Landscape

Gippsland is currently home to 7 Accredited and 8 Unaccredited Visitor Information Centres (VICs), offering varying levels and standards of visitor servicing.

Most LGAs also provide visitor services at events through stalls or by having staff or volunteers rove major events, while Bass Coast Shire Council extends their reach with a VIC Van, participating in events, cruise ship visits, and more, ensuring consistent branding across all touchpoints. Non-accredited or 'satellite' VICs are overseen by the Accredited VICs managed by LGAs.

#	Location	Council Funded	Details	Model
Central Gippsland > Latrobe City Council				
Traralgon	Fully funded & managed	- VIC is co-located in the Gippsland Performing Arts Centre foyer, with a café adjacent. 3.2 EFT paid staff, 4 volunteers	Accredited Level 1	
Central Gippsland > Wellington Shire Council				
Sale	Fully funded & managed	- VIC co-located in the redeveloped Port of Sale precinct includes a gallery, library and café 8 paid staff (mix of full time, part time and casual), 10 volunteers	Accredited Level 1	
Maffra	Fully funded & managed	- VIC housed in the late-Victorian designed Maffra Courthouse, showcases Maffra Gemstone Collection, a rare mineral and gemstone collection - Volunteer operated with support from WSC, 6 volunteers	Unaccredited	
Yarram	Not funded	- VIC operates on a social enterprise model with Mirridong Services Inc, located in the historic Yarram Courthouse building. Also hosts the Yarram Courthouse Gallery - Operated by 11 volunteers and 4 Mirridong staff	Unaccredited	
East Gippsland > East Gippsland Shire Council				
Lakes Entrance	Fully funded & managed	- VIC enjoys visitation in the hundreds per day in peak season 1 full time paid staff and 3 part time plus 11 casuals, 2 volunteers	Accredited Level 1	
Bairnsdale	Fully funded & managed	- VIC visitation much higher in peak than low season 2 part time and 11 casuals, 1 volunteer	Accredited Level 1	
Paynesville	Fully funded & managed	VIS co-located with a council facility, part of Customer Service Centre, with library & Council enquiries	Unaccredited	

		No dedicated VIS staff	
Omeo	Fully funded & managed	- VIS part of Customer Service Centre, with library, VicRoads office, Bendigo Bank and Council enquiries - No dedicated VIS staff	Unaccredited
Mallacoota	Fully funded & managed	- VIS part of Customer Service Centre, with Mallacoota Foreshore Caravan Park, Library and Council enquiries - No dedicated VIS staff	Unaccredited
Bruthen	Partly funded	- VIS located at gateway to Great Alpine Road - Open 2-3 times per week, dependent on volunteer availability, volunteer run with support from EGSC	Unaccredited
Orbost	Partly funded	- VIS slab hut originally a family dwelling built 1872 - Strong community sentiment to keep VIC in slab hut, MOU run by Orbost Chamber of Commerce 1 x paid part time Supervisor with 17 volunteers	Unaccredited
Cann River	Not funded	- VIS located in Cann River Outreach Centre, includes Opp Shop, Centrelink office, library and second bite food distribution point - Volunteer run with support from EGSC	Unaccredited
South Gippsland > South Gippsland Shire Council			
Foster	Fully funded & managed	- VIC is co-located with a volunteer managed Gallery 2 permanent part time staff and 3 x casual staff, 4 volunteers	Accredited Level 1
South Gippsland & Phillip Island > Bass Coast Shire Council			
Inverloch	Fully funded & managed	- VIC located at Inverloch Community Hub multi-purpose venue for hire including community hall, kitchen, meeting rooms, exhibition space and sports stadium 2 paid staff per day and 6 volunteers across a 7-day week	Accredited Level 1
Phillip Island	Fully funded & managed	- VIC located in a new dedicated building 1 km after the bridge on Phillip Island 15 paid staff across the 7-day week, 3 volunteers across 5-day week	Accredited Level 1
West Gippsland > Baw Baw Shire Council			
Yarragon & Neerim South	Fully funded & managed	While there is no physical VIC, the introduction of outdoor digital tourism kiosks in Yarragon and Neerim South (set to go live May 2024)	No VIC (Digital Kiosks from May 2024)



Accredited Visitor Information Centres **IN GIPPSLAND**



Summary of Destination Visitation and Visitor Services Engagement

For more detailed data insights per LGA, see 'Appendix A. 2019-23 Destination Visitation and VIC Visitor Engagement'.

Annual Average Visitation	Annual Average Visitor Services Engagement	Visitor Services Engagement
2016-19 Gippsland four-year average Source: Tourism Research Australia LGA Profiles	2019-23 annual average for all of Gippsland* Source: Gippsland LGAs - 2024.	Formula: Total Visitor Services Engagement / Overall Visitation
- Total Visitors: 8,046,000 - Total Nights: 9,086,000 - Average Length of Stay (ALOS): 3 - Average Domestic Visitor Spend Per Trip: \$279	- Visitors: 174,864 - Emails: 1,201 - Calls: 15,337 - Online Chat: 280 - Total average annual engagements: 191,682	- Overall Visitation to Gippsland (2016-2019 Annual Average): 8,046,000 visitors - Total Visitor Services Engagement across Gippsland (2019-2023 Annual Average Total): 191,682 - Therefore, the percentage of total visitors engaged with Visitor Services is approximately 2.38%.

*Not all LGAs consistently recorded data across all visitor servicing channels, and the period from 2019 to 2023 was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, only two LGAs currently provide visitor services via online chat, with one starting in 2020 and the other in 2021. Please note that Baw Baw Shire Council does not have a VIC and introduced digital kiosks in May 2024, so it is excluded from this data set.

Although the percentage of visitor services engagement is currently estimated at **2.38%**, there is significant potential value for the local economy in increasing this engagement. According to VTIC survey data, a good visitor services engagement experience can increase spending by **\$186** per visitor. Based on this data, we can estimate that the 191,682 visitors who engaged with Gippsland visitor services on average annually (2019-23) add approximately **\$35.5M** to the local visitor economy. This Strategy supports the position that enhancing visitor services engagement can amplify destination marketing efforts, leading to increased visitor dispersal and spending, which will further benefit the local economy.

According to VTIC survey data, a good visitor services engagement experience can **increase spending by \$186 per visitor.**

Visitor Information Centre Accreditation Guidelines

The Victorian Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) manages the Australian Tourism Accreditation Program Victoria (ATAP Victoria). Visitor Information Centres can be accredited through this program. Accreditation helps maintain service, operational, and information quality. Only accredited VICs can use the nationally recognised blue and yellow 'i' sign.

Please note: Accreditation is currently under review; however, at the time of developing this Strategy, the 2018 VIC accreditation requirements are still in effect.

VIC accreditation requires a minimum of 42 hours of operation weekly, one full-time employee, and a range of information provision requirements. This type of VIC has significant operational costs. Satellite, seasonal, and ancillary VIC models are alternative service models that require alignment with a Hub VIC.



ATAP VIC Accreditation Model

Type	Description	Opening Hours	Cost FY23	Staff Required
Level 1	- Primary VIC accreditation model - Highest level of standards	7 days - Minimum 42 hours per week, 6 hours per day - Core: 10am to 4pm	\$1,200	1 FTE paid team member
Satellite	Same requirements as Hub VIC, less staff	As above	N/A	0.5 FTE paid team member
Seasonal	Only open during set timeframe (e.g. 4-6 months) during peak periods	As above	N/A	0.5 FTE paid team member
Ancillary	Offers regular/ongoing operations, unable to meet (or not necessary to operate with) core opening hour requirements of Level 1	Consistent hours, pre-determined as part of accreditation application	N/A	0.5 FTE paid team member, prorated against 42 hours per week

Strategic Alignment

Visitor Servicing Framework & Experience Victoria 2033

Overview

This Strategy is closely aligned with the principles outlined in Victoria's Visitor Servicing Framework and the strategic directions set by Experience Victoria 2033. This alignment emphasises a comprehensive approach to visitor servicing that integrates both digital and in-person interactions to enhance the visitor experience throughout their journey.

By focusing on integrated, customer-centric service delivery and stakeholder collaboration, this Strategy aims to enhance the visitor experience, boosting Gippsland's reputation as a premier destination and contributing to the sustainable growth of Victoria's visitor economy.

Key Alignments

- **Comprehensive Visitor Servicing:** Gippsland LGA's incorporate a mix of online and offline resources to guide visitors, including booking platforms, social media, and local information centres. This approach ensures that visitors receive timely, high-quality information and support, reflecting the framework's emphasis on curating services that prioritise customer needs.
- **Stakeholder Integration:** In line with the Visitor Servicing Framework, the Strategy involves various stakeholders—government bodies, local businesses, cultural and community groups—in planning and delivering visitor services. This integrated approach helps create a cohesive experience for visitors and fosters community involvement.
- **Brand and Marketing:** The Strategy leverages the iBrand and other marketing initiatives to maintain a strong, recognisable visitor servicing identity for Gippsland. This branding effort aligns with the framework's principles to evolve and support modern visitor services.
- **Strategic Focus Areas and Product Priorities:** Destination Gippsland's services enhance the visibility and accessibility of key product priorities such as nature, arts, and local culture, directly supporting the strategic goals of Experience Victoria 2033. The focus on delivering exceptional and connected experiences is designed to drive demand and encourage longer stays and increased spending.
- **Visitor Economy Growth:** The Strategy supports the overarching goals of Experience Victoria 2033 by fostering an innovative, sustainable, and inclusive visitor economy in Gippsland. It emphasises training for the visitor economy workforce to ensure high-quality service and positive visitor experiences.

Our goal is to deliver high quality, connected and personalised visitor servicing when and where visitors need it.

– Goal 8, Experience Victoria 2033.

THRIVE 2030

This Strategy aligns with Austrade's THRIVE 2030 regional development goals by focusing on sustainable growth, community engagement, and enhancing the visitor experience.

It promotes sustainable tourism by transitioning VICs to contemporary visitor service hubs, which highlight local attractions and reduce environmental impact through sustainable practices and digital integration. We aim to boost the local economy and create tourism-related jobs by increasing visitor nights and expenditure. Industry, and cultural and community group, engagement will be enhanced through local content development, ambassador programs, and partnerships with existing education programs, ensuring diverse representation in tourism initiatives.

Furthermore, we aim to improve the quality and accessibility of visitor information, both physically and virtually, to deliver exceptional visitor services and encourage longer stays and repeat visits. Digital innovations such as digital maps, alignment with the AVIC app and AI powered engagement initiatives will further cater to contemporary travellers' needs. By partnering with educational programs to upskill our Visitor Services Network, we support THRIVE 2030's goal of building a skilled workforce for economic resilience.



Gippsland's Visitor Services Strategic Framework

Synced. Seamless. Spirited.

Gippsland weaves a rich fabric of visitor experiences, blending traditional visitor services, such as information centres, with digital innovation, and extending our reach through industry, cultural, and community group ambassadorship. Personalised services leverage local knowledge and warmth, transforming visitor interactions into memorable encounters. These interactions provide a deep dive into Gippsland's unique landscape, culture, and communities. Visitor services act as an extension of destination marketing efforts, embracing the destination brand to enhance consumer awareness, traction, and trust, ultimately driving visitor dispersal and spending to benefit the local economy.

Our Mission

To ignite a passion for discovery in everyone, guiding them to explore Gippsland's hidden gems and diverse landscapes through sustainable and enriching visitor services.

Our Vision

To make Gippsland the gold standard in sustainable and inclusive visitor services, offering unforgettable journeys that showcase our vibrant culture, landscapes, and community spirit to the world.



Gippsland Visitor Services Network Ecosystem

To drive the delivery of this Strategy and Action Plan, it is proposed to form a 'Gippsland Visitor Services Network Group'. This group should consist of visitor services decision-makers from each LGA, Destination Gippsland, and Parks Victoria.

Gippsland Visitor Services Network Group (GVSNG)	
- Oversee implementation of the Visitor Services Strategy & Action Plan. - Facilitate stakeholder collaboration and communication.	- Monitor and evaluate regional visitor service effectiveness. - Address challenges and opportunities in the visitor services ecosystem.
LGA Visitor Services Teams (LGA & VIC) Non-accredited or 'satellite' VICs are overseen by the local Accredited VIC.	
- Implement Strategy and Action Plan within resources and funding constraints, adapting to local needs. - Provide high-quality, multi-channel and personalised visitor services.	- Collect and report data on visitor engagement and satisfaction. - Collaborate with local tourism businesses, cultural and community groups to enhance visitor services and deliver ambassador programs.
Destination Gippsland (DG)	
- Coordinate regional marketing and promotional activities, building a narrative to raise awareness of the enhanced Visitor Services Network. - Use the Visitor Services Network to extend destination marketing, increasing awareness, engagement, and conversion.	- Facilitate the sharing of best practices and tourism resources across LGAs. - Drive initiatives to enhance the overall visitor services experience in Gippsland.
Parks Victoria (PV)	
- Provide visitor information online & via our Customer Service Centres - Provide nature-based tourism experiences, and facilitate 450+ Licensed Tour Operators	- Manage parks that cover a large percentage of the region - Collaborate with LGAs/DG on promotional activities for visitor services.
Tourism Industry	
- Offer high-quality services and experiences to visitors. - Partner with LGA visitor services teams to share relevant information and support.	- Participate in training, development, ambassador programs to elevate and expand visitor services engagement. - Provide feedback on visitor services and suggest improvements.
Local Cultural and Community Groups	
Act as ambassadors for the region, providing local knowledge and a warm welcome through informal and formal programs led by LGA visitor services teams.	

The Visitor Journey

Destination Marketing and Visitor Services are essential for enhancing the overall visitor journey. It's important for Gippsland to ensure a seamless and enjoyable experience for all visitors, from initial contact to post-visit follow-up. By clearly defining responsibilities, we aim to enhance collaboration, ensuring every aspect of the visitor journey is managed with care. This approach elevates visitor satisfaction and fosters a positive reputation for Gippsland.

Stage	Visitor Point of View	Pre-Visit	During Visit	Post Visit
Dreaming	Inspired by captivating content and imagery that showcase Gippsland's experiences and attractions.	Destination Marketing (DG, LGA, PV) Inspire travel through social media, advertising, and content marketing. Promote the unique experiences and attractions of Gippsland.		
Planning	Finds detailed and helpful information to plan their trip online.	Information Provision (DG, LGA, PV) Provide detailed information on destination website/s. Offer travel guides, itineraries, event information.		
Booking	Completes bookings online or receives local assistance.	Conversion Point (VIC, PV & Industry) Facilitate online booking of accommodations, events, tours, and activities. Provide booking assistance via call, email, online chat, in-person.		
Experiencing	Enjoys a seamless and enriching experience with the support of knowledgeable locals and digital innovation.		Enjoyment Support (VS, PV, Industry) Ensure a positive and engaging visitor experience. Offer personalised recommendations and local insights. Facilitate ticketing and bookings for local events and activities. Provide on-the-ground support and information.	
Sharing	Reflects on their positive experiences and shares them with others, aided by local encouragement and engagement efforts.			Encourage Sharing (VIC, PV & Industry) Collect visitor feedback and testimonials. Encourage visitors to share their experiences on social media. Use visitor testimonials and new subscribers to promote future visits in partnership with Destination Gippsland.

Our Values

We Value	Behaviour
Unity	Forge a strong, collaborative Visitor Services Network across Gippsland, ensuring a unified approach.
Inclusivity	Ensure accessible, welcoming experiences for all visitors, recognising the diversity of needs and expectations.
Sustainability	Lead with eco-friendly practices and provide information that supports sustainable tourism, ensuring the long-term preservation of our natural and cultural assets.
Resilience	Implement adaptable information services that can respond to and recover from environmental, economic, and social challenges, ensuring continuity and reliability.
Compelling Innovation	Offer engaging and attractive information that highlights the distinct attractions and experiences of Gippsland, driving visitor interest, dispersal, and economic growth. Embrace and integrate the latest and most relevant digital technologies to enhance and simplify the visitor journey.
Excellence	Commit to delivering the highest standards of service, where quality, accuracy, and responsiveness define every visitor interaction.
Engagement	Foster strong cultural and community connections and collaborations to enhance the visitor experience, promoting the importance of tourism and encouraging regional pride and participation.
Local legacy	We are deeply committed to celebrating and sharing the true essence and unique provenance of Gippsland - its land, its people, its stories, and its produce through every visitor service touchpoint. By highlighting the origins and stories behind our local products, attractions, and culture, we aim to deepen visitors' appreciation of the region and foster a connection that transcends the ordinary travel experience.

Visitor Services Performance & Investment Validation

This Strategy aims to elevate the **Gippsland Visitor Services Network**, maximising return on investment and aligning with the broader goals of the destination.

Visitor servicing is not just a support function; it's an integral extension of destination marketing. By seamlessly blending these two elements, Gippsland can create a cohesive and compelling visitor experience that begins pre-visit and extends well beyond their departure. This synergy enhances brand loyalty, drives repeat visitation, and amplifies word-of-mouth recommendations, ultimately strengthening the destination's reputation and economic impact.

While the value of an information centre cannot be measured in monetary terms alone, it holds significant emotional value by creating in-person connections with travellers, as evidenced by [Consumer Insights](#) gathered to guide this Strategy. A well-designed and destination-brand-aligned visitor network can connect the region through authentic destination stories that inspire visitors to stay longer and spend more.

Visitor servicing across Gippsland contributes significantly to the regional tourism experience, as evidenced by several research outcomes developed for this Strategy and supported by the [A National Perspective on Visitor Information Servicing](#) paper. Instances where visitor servicing initiatives have led to significant improvements in visitor experiences and spending are particularly noteworthy. This data is vital for understanding the impact of visitor servicing and advocating for their sustained support and enhanced prioritisation.

Detailed in the [Current Landscape](#) section of this Strategy, the collaborative efforts among various local government stakeholders demonstrate a foundational commitment to visitor servicing. Moreover, the initiatives undertaken by Destination Gippsland underscore the significant emphasis on enhancing and promoting contemporary visitor servicing across the region. This strategic importance is echoed through the enthusiastic and prideful sentiments expressed by participants during this Strategy's development—stakeholder SWOTA Analysis Workshops and surveys, detailed further in [Industry Insights](#). The [Victorian Government's Tourism Health Check](#) also reinforces this perspective, indicating 61% of participants believe councils should play a significant role in visitor servicing, yet 67% perceive there is a lack of prioritisation in this area by their councils.

The importance of inclusive, sustainable and thoughtful visitor servicing is compellingly justified through [Consumer Insights](#) gathered to guide this Strategy. An overwhelming 88% of respondents affirm that physical information centres are crucial for enhancing their travel experience. Moreover, 92% of respondents indicate a preference for tangible resources such as maps, brochures, and guidebooks for obtaining visitor information. Additionally, 85% of visitors value in-person advice from locals, underscoring the importance of information centres staffed by knowledgeable local teams and volunteers. Informal and formal local ambassador programs involving industry, cultural and community groups, and residents further enhance this valuable service. These insights not only highlight the essential nature of visitor servicing but also guides Gippsland's strategic focus towards maintaining and enhancing these critical services.

VIC Return on Investment

Recommendations emphasise enhancing visitor services throughout the destination from a Return on Investment (ROI) perspective, actively promoting services to increase footfall at VICs, and engagement with their remote and digital platforms.

This section highlights the importance of VIC ROI and lays the groundwork for more robust recommendations later in the document. Through the [Performance Metrics](#) section of this Strategy, we illustrate the impact and include recommendations that each LGA records Visitor Services metrics along with an overarching VIC ROI formula.

Visitor Information Centre ROI Formula

Total VIC Revenue (retail sales, industry memberships, booking commissions) + Total Visitor Services Engagement (footfall, emails, calls, online chat) x \$186 (VTIC research – local economic value boost)

Total VIC Expenses.

For example:

\$100,000 (Total VIC Income) + \$12,090,000 (65,000 Visitor Services Engagements x \$186) = \$12,190,000

Total VIC Expenses \$1,000,000.

= 12.19 ROI.

Additionally, we recommend VICs include two other key ROI metrics:

Spend per Visitor	Cost per Visitor
Total VIC Income / Total VIC Visitor Engagements	Total VIC Expenses / Total VIC Visitor Engagements

By considering these metrics, we aim to demonstrate the economic value of enhancing visitor services and provide a clear framework for measuring and improving the ROI of VICs across Gippsland.

Championing Responsible Tourism

It is essential for Gippsland to embrace the multifaceted aspects of responsible tourism. Focusing on four foundational pillars will guide the development of initiatives and policies that not only enrich visitor experiences but also uphold the sustainability and ethical integrity of tourism practices throughout the region. By prioritising these key areas, Gippsland can establish itself as a leader in responsible visitor services, generating sustainable benefits for both the community and visitors, therefore establishing greater rationale for future investment.

1. **Supporting Indigenous Tourism's Authentic Growth:** Foster genuine partnerships and facilitate the sharing of Indigenous culture in a way that respects traditions and supports local communities.
2. **Advocating Sustainable Practices:** Implement eco-friendly strategies and operations across all visitor services to minimise environmental impact and promote sustainability.
3. **Promoting Inclusivity:** Ensure that tourism and visitor services are accessible to everyone, embracing diversity and providing equal opportunities for all visitors to experience the richness of Gippsland.
4. **Cultural and Community Group Engagement:** Involve local communities in tourism initiatives, support community-led projects, and showcase local culture. Promote collaboration between tourism operators and local businesses to strengthen the local economy.

Gippsland's Visitor Services Network is already making some significant strides in responsible tourism, with several successful initiatives underway, showcasing a commitment to sustainable and ethical tourism practices. These efforts not only enhance the visitor experience but also ensure the long-term sustainability of visitor servicing.

Here are some notable examples of how Gippsland is currently championing responsible tourism. By highlighting these successful initiatives, this Strategy sets a foundation for implementing and expanding responsible tourism practices across the entire Visitor Services Network.

Responsible Tourism	Gippsland Examples
Indigenous Tourism	Collaborative approaches with Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation, Kurnai Nations and Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation demonstrate a commitment to inclusive and culturally respectful tourism.

	The respectful acknowledgment of First Nations lands and collaboration with local Aboriginal corporations underscores a commitment to culturally respectful and inclusive tourism. This enhances the visitor experience, educating and involving visitors in our rich local heritage.
Sustainable Practices	Eco-accredited regions like East Gippsland promote sustainable tourism on a broad scale. The use of solar panels and initiatives aimed at reducing single-use plastic highlight the commitment to sustainability across many of the VICs.
	Gippsland boasts several eco-certified attractions and accommodations that prioritise sustainable practices. These establishments focus on minimising their environmental impact through energy-efficient designs, waste reduction programs, and sustainable sourcing of materials.
	The accreditation of sites like Inverloch and Phillip Island, along with well-equipped facilities (including those co-located with cultural sites like galleries), ensure high standards of service and accessibility. The introduction of features like EV charging stations further enhances visitor convenience.
Inclusivity	An existing and outstanding example is of Bass Coast VICs including sensory inclusive bag kits, beach wheelchair hires, mobility maps, Changing Places facilities and a partnership with National Relay Service for people with communication difficulties. Website listing of Accessible experiences for the Bass Coast.
	Paw Stop Program implemented by Sale VIC team to encourage visitors to stop at a safe and welcoming place with their pets.
	At Sale they actively engage visitors with scavenger hunts and kids' packs, including in the visitor guide, ensuring families have a rewarding experience, also used for schools. Includes kid's stickers and jellybeans.
Cultural and Community Group Engagement	Cultural and community group engagements through programs such as the 'My South Gippsland Ambassador Program' uplift local knowledge and service quality for local businesses, schools and community members.
	Many tourism initiatives in Gippsland are driven by the local community, ensuring that the benefits of tourism are felt at the grassroots level. Projects such as community markets, local festivals, and cultural tours not only provide unique visitor experiences but also support local artisans and entrepreneurs.
	Most VICs' success is bolstered by robust volunteer support programs. Volunteers are not only enthusiastic about sharing comprehensive local information but are also pivotal in events and community interactions, which significantly enhance the visitor experience.
	Strong relationships with local businesses and industry operators facilitate a comprehensive and cohesive visitor servicing strategy. These partnerships ensure that visitor centres can provide up-to-date information, varied accommodations, and diverse activities that cater to all interests and needs.

Strategic Direction & Recommendations

To elevate Gippsland's Visitor Services Network to a new level of excellence and innovation, nine Strategic Directions have been designed to enhance coordination across the destination, efficient resource allocation, and improvements to the overall visitor experience.

Embody

Destination Brand

Engage

& Collaborate

Visitor First

Approach

Harness

Community Connections

Innovation

& Connectivity

Sustainable

Tourism Development

Education

& Skills Development

Job Creation

& Economic Growth

Track

& Adapt

#	Strategic Direction	Description & Strategic Recommendations
1	Embody Destination Brand	Focuses on integrating the Visitor Services Network into overall destination branding, ensuring they are pivotal in enhancing the visitor experience. Emphasising passionate brand ambassadorship, leveraging defined visitor markets, and delivering authentic local storytelling. ▪ Elevate VICs to deliver contemporary services, maintaining i-brand accreditation and awareness. ▪ Train staff and volunteers as passionate brand ambassadors. ▪ Develop destination branded marketing materials for VICs that highlight authentic local stories. ▪ Link and enhance destination marketing to promote the benefits of engaging with a connected Visitor Services Network. ▪ Maintain on-brand and up-to-date directional and in-VIC signage. ▪ Highlight personalised services and tailored recommendations from VIC staff and volunteers and digital services. ▪ Highlight local provenance with a VIC 95%+ local retail philosophy. ▪ Develop strategies to accommodate servicing the increasing number of events and anticipated visitor growth across the destination. ▪ Create a centralised events calendar to coordinate event promotion and resource allocation across the Visitor Services Network. ▪ Implement a campaign to raise awareness about the network's responsible tourism initiatives. ▪ Pre-arrival engagement: enhance digital content on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube to engage travellers to engage with the Visitor Services Network by promoting the value proposition.
2	Engage & Collaborate	Aims to build robust partnerships across the Visitor Services Network. It emphasises the importance of collective efforts to enhance visitor experiences and achieve shared goals. ▪ Deliver formal and informal ambassador programs for industry, cultural and community groups to engage with, extending reach and engagement. ▪ Form a Gippsland Visitor Services Network Group and establish regular meetings and collaborative projects. ▪ Create a well-planned program of VIC open days, familiarisation tours, and activities. ▪ Support the adoption of Gippsland as a curriculum-based excursion destination. ▪ Develop partnerships with local First Nations groups to enhance visitor services with cultural elements, including the potential for traditional language content and Welcome to Country signage and art. ▪ Develop a shared resource pool across the network for staffing, training, and destination branded marketing materials. ▪ Implement data sharing initiatives between the Visitor Services Network and Destination Gippsland. ▪ Foster partnerships with event organisers to integrate visitor services and enhance the visitor experience.

3	Visitor-First Approach	Ensures that visitor services are tailored to meet the diverse needs of visitors, focusing on inclusivity, accessibility, tailored itineraries, and amplified experiences. It promotes the importance of provenance-focused retail culture and knowledgeable teams versed in First Nations cultural awareness. ▪ Elevate visitor services to meet the needs of contemporary travellers, aligned with consumer insights. ▪ Tactile engagement: continue to provide print materials like brochures, maps, and guides to cater to a wider range of visitor preferences and needs. ▪ Implement a visitor-first approach accessible to all. ▪ Reference the WELCOME Framework to enhance accessibility and inclusivity. ▪ Promote local products in retail spaces. ▪ Educate staff and volunteers on First Nations culture. ▪ Create and distribute tailored itineraries for different visitor segments and preferences. ▪ Develop itinerary builders on destination websites. ▪ Develop virtual visitor service experiences with VR and AI technologies. ▪ Deploy multilingual digital assistants and accessibility tech solutions. ▪ Maintain the number of nationally recognised 'i' accredited VICs across the network. ▪ Develop destination brand aligned mobile VICs to provide information and support at high-traffic events.
4	Harness Community Connections	Emphasises the benefits of tourism to local communities, fostering community pride, and establishing trust and respect. It includes industry, cultural and community engagement with feedback loops. ▪ Establish an industry, cultural and community group communications plan, enhancing local VFR host engagement. ▪ Create local jobs and volunteer opportunities. ▪ Promote VICs to the community as a local hub for purchasing local produce. ▪ Engage community influencers as destination ambassadors. ▪ Develop and implement consultation practices. ▪ Develop cultural sensitivity training for all staff and volunteers. ▪ Collaborate with multicultural communities for events and programs. ▪ Support community-led projects/events to showcase local culture.
5	Innovation & Connectivity	Integrates digital technology with traditional visitor services to provide a comprehensive, multichannel approach to visitor services. It ensures a seamless, connected, and engaging visitor experience across all touchpoints. ▪ Enhance the visitgippsland website with more Visitor Services Network insights (the enhanced visitor experience) and promote the unified and contemporary approach across the region.

		▪ Promote visitor services through a multichannel approach, partner with industry to extend reach and impact. ▪ Develop e-commerce site for local retail products. ▪ Feature VIC visitor testimonials across channels. ▪ Invest in AI-powered digital assistants for multilingual services. ▪ Enhance digital platforms, across the network, to provide real-time event information and updates. ▪ Flexible information delivery: utilise pop-ups and mobile centres to meet visitors where they are with innovative, convenient information solutions. ▪ Provide free Wi-Fi at VICs to attract visitors and support their connectivity needs, enhancing their overall experience. ▪ Trial the use of virtual hubs to replace underperforming/unaccredited VICs.
6	Sustainable Tourism Development	Aims to encourage sustainable and regenerative practices within the Visitor Services Network across Gippsland. ▪ Promote local attractions and reduce environmental impact through digital options. ▪ Adopt eco-friendly practices in daily VIC operations. ▪ Educate visitors on sustainable tourism efforts. ▪ Develop next-generation VICs with sustainable design principles. ▪ Encourage VICs to achieve sustainability certification through the Quality Tourism Framework program. ▪ Tap into local, state and national awards programs to recognise, promote and celebrate achievements across the network. ▪ Create and distribute sustainability guidelines for event organisers and tourism operators.
7	Education & Skills Development	Focuses on elevating customer service delivery by enhancing skills across the network. Builds a skilled workforce that can support the future needs of the tourism industry. ▪ Coordinate the delivery of a standardised training program for the network to upskill staff and volunteers. ▪ Provide workshops on emerging trends and industry best practices. ▪ Create internship and traineeship programs in visitor services.
8	Job Creation & Economic Growth	Builds economic stability by promoting visitor services as a viable career path and helps create local jobs and volunteer pathways in regional areas. Strategically align with the Visitor Economy Workforce Development Action Plan 2023-25. ▪ Explore funding opportunities to enhance visitor services and additional revenue-generating activities within VICs. ▪ Collaborate with local educational institutions to promote visitor servicing careers. ▪ Enhance volunteer programs to provide pathways to employment. ▪ Implement flexible staffing models to manage peak periods during major events.

9 Track & Adapt

Focuses on continuously improving visitor services through rigorous and consistent data collection, performance measurement, and adapting to emerging trends. It aims to ensure that services remain relevant and effective.

- Implement standardised performance metrics across the network.
- Implement a robust data collection and analysis system.
- Regularly review and update service offerings based on data insights.
- Conduct frequent trend analysis for future success.
- Implement a comprehensive system for tracking performance metrics across the network.
- Introduce a continuous improvement program for the network.
- Promote best practice VIC accreditation through the Quality Tourism Framework.

By implementing these recommendations, Gippsland can significantly enhance its Visitor Services Network, ensuring it not only meets but exceeds the expectations of today's and tomorrow's visitors. This strategic approach will position Gippsland as a leader in sustainable, inclusive, and innovative tourism servicing on a national scale.

The Action Plan details the implementation of recommendations for each Strategic Direction, enhancing the visitor experience in Gippsland and ensuring the region remains a vibrant and appealing destination for diverse visitor segments.



Key Visitor Segments

Drawing insights from Tourism Research Australia's (TRA) **Visitor Servicing Program Helix Personas Profiling Tool** data, supported by DJSIR funding and Roy Morgan Research, the Helix Personas profiling segmentation has been integrated into the National Visitor Survey (NVS) dataset. This enables a deeper understanding of key segments, their travel behaviour, and requirements. The following outlines the visitor servicing needs of Helix Persona segments and their use of Visitor Information Centres (VICs) during overnight trips to Gippsland compared to Victorian travellers overall, as well as their use of information sources compared to Australian domestic overnight travellers overall.

Roy Morgan Helix Personas is a psychographic consumer segmentation and data integration tool to classify the Australian population into 54 unique personas, grouped into 6 communities.



Visitor Servicing Program: Helix Community Profiling Tool Insights

For more detailed data insights per LGA, see 'Appendix B. Visitor Servicing Program Profiling Tool Insights'.

Gippsland Visitor Data		Victorian Domestic Overnight Visitor VIC Engagement	
Daytrip Visitors	Domestic Overnight Visitors	Rate of Visiting a VIC	Share of VIC Users
- Hearth and Home (37.7%) - Fair Go (19.2%) - Leading Lifestyles (14.4%)	- Hearth and Home (26.3%) - Leading Lifestyles (23.1%) - Metrotechs (18.4%).	- Leading Lifestyles (6.8%) - Metrotechs (6.6%) - Aspirationals (6.3%) - Hearth and Home (5.9%)	- Leading Lifestyles (26.2%) - Hearth and Home (22.7%) - Metrotechs (20.8%)

Given that Gippsland’s top three visitor Helix Communities of domestic overnight visitors—**Hearth and Home**, **Leading Lifestyles**, and **Metrotechs**—also have the highest propensity to visit a VIC when travelling to or within Victoria (as supported by this Strategy’s **Consumer Insights** survey responses), there is a strong rationale for enhancing the Gippsland Visitor Services Network.

By engaging more of these communities, Gippsland can increase regional dispersal and visitor spending. The below descriptions and preferences aim to enhance the visitor experience for each key Helix Community in Gippsland by aligning visitor services with their specific needs and expectations.

Helix Community	Description	Experience Preferences for Gippsland	Visitor Servicing Preferences
Hearth and Home	Traditional families and mature couples who value stability, comfort, and a sense of community.	Enjoy relaxing and family-friendly activities, nature experiences, and local events.	Prefer face-to-face interactions at VICs, personal recommendations, printed maps, and brochures. Appreciate knowledgeable staff who can offer detailed advice and local insights.
Leading Lifestyles	Affluent and well-educated individuals who enjoy the finer things in life and seek quality experiences.	Interested in luxury accommodations, fine dining, cultural events, and wellness activities.	Use online resources and concierge services for detailed information. Prefer high-quality, well-designed brochures and personalised service at VICs, including booking assistance and curated itineraries.
Metrotechs	Young, urban professionals and tech-savvy individuals who thrive on innovation and convenience.	Prefer adventure sports, trendy eateries, nightlife, and tech-driven attractions.	Favour digital information sources, social media, and mobile apps. Expect fast, efficient service at VICs with free Wi-Fi, and quick access to information. Appreciate real-time updates and interactive displays.

Performance Metrics

The implementation of performance metrics offers a detailed overview of the effectiveness of visitor services and justifies continued investment. These metrics highlight the direct economic contributions of visitor servicing to the regions and set benchmarks for evaluating improvements. To measure the success of Gippsland's Visitor Services Network in achieving its vision and values, a suite of centralised performance metrics should be consistently measured across all Local Government Areas (LGAs). A central database should be developed to house monthly data, providing the network with access to a daily dashboard for comparing results across the region. However, not everyone's KPI values will be the same – the network will need to decide how metrics will be scaled across all LGAs and VICs as some are smaller than others. Metrics should align with each Strategic Direction to ensure consistency and purpose. Recommendations below.

Embody Destination Brand

Visitor Survey - Net Promoter Score (NPS)

Measure of visitors' likelihood to recommend Gippsland to others.

Visitor Engagement

Monthly/annual counts of visitor engagement (VIC footfall, emails, calls, online chat).

Visitor Demographics

Collect and record data on VIC visitor age, origin (postcode data capture), and purpose of visit.

Engage & Collaborate

Volunteer Participation

Number of volunteers and hours contributed to visitor services.

Local Business Engagement

Number and types of local businesses engaged with visitor services.

Local Supplier Commitment

95%+ local suppliers engaged for VIC retail areas.

Visitor-First Approach

Visitor Survey & Action

Regular collection of visitor feedback through digital surveys to gauge overall satisfaction with response program in place.

Service Availability

Hours of operation and accessibility of visitor services (in person or digital).

Online Consumer Sentiment

Online sentiment management tool, e.g. ReviewPro, to identify/respond to online ratings/reviews—Global Review Index (GRI) metric.

Harness Community Connections

Local Engagement

Degree of local community involvement in visitor services (postcode data).

Local Business Sentiment

Annually survey local businesses, gather insights on what has worked well and what could be improved or advanced.

Cultural and Community Group Sentiment

Annually survey local cultural and community groups, gather insights on what has worked well and what could be improved or advanced.

Innovation & Connectivity		
Website Traffic Number of visits to Gippsland visitor websites and individual VIC pages.	Social Media/App Metrics Engagement rates, follower growth, and content reach on social media platforms promoting the value and offerings at VICs.	Service Efficiencies Average time taken to respond to visitor enquiries.
Sustainable Tourism Development		
Sustainable Practices Implementation and promotion of sustainable tourism practices across network.	Accreditation Sustainability certification through the Quality Tourism Framework program.	Cost per Visitor Using the formula below, track cost per VIC visitor. Total VIC Expenses / Total VIC Visitor Engagements.
Education & Skills Development		
Staff Training Hours Total hours of training provided to staff and volunteers.	Certification Achievements Number of staff and volunteers achieving relevant certifications or qualifications.	Familiarisation Hours Total hours of famils undertaken by staff and volunteers.
Job Creation & Economic Growth		
Spend Per Visitor Using this formula, track spend per VIC visitor: Total VIC Income / Total VIC Visitor Engagements.	Local Business Engagement Number and types of local businesses engaged with VICs.	VIC Retail Revenue Measure retail revenue growth, enhanced by sales training for VIC staff to share the stories of local retail suppliers/artisans to engage destination awareness and retail sales conversion.
Track & Adapt		
KPI Dashboard Centralised dashboard for monitoring and reviewing performance metrics, updated monthly by each LGA – accessible to all across the Gippsland Visitor Services Network.	Performance Review Meetings Regular meetings to review and discuss performance metrics and improvements within each LGA and across VIC network.	ROI Using this formula, track VIC return on investment: Total VIC Revenue + Total Visitor Engagement x \$186 / Total VIC Expenses.

Stakeholder Insights

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder Engagement Process

Project Control Group	LGA Workshops	Industry Survey	Consumer Survey
- Virtual Workshop: 1.5 hours - SWOTA analysis - Participants: 8	- 6 Virtual Workshops – 1.5 hours each; Latrobe City Council, South Gippsland Shire Council, East Gippsland Shire Council, Wellington Shire Council, Bass Coast Shire Council, Baw Baw Shire Council - SWOTA analysis - Participants: 20	- Online survey via TypeForm: 15 Mar to 5 Apr 2024 - Distribution via Destination Gippsland Trade EDMs and social media channels - Respondents: 10	- Online survey via TypeForm - Distribution via Destination Gippsland Industry EDM and consumer social media channels - Prize offer: \$600 Metung Hot Springs Voucher - Respondents: 471



Industry Insights

N=38. For more insights, see 'Appendix C. Detailed Industry Workshops and Survey Insights'.

Strengths

Gippsland's Visitor Services Network excels in delivering warm, personalised face-to-face services, greatly enhancing the visitor experience through staff and volunteers who are not only passionate and knowledgeable about the region's culture and offerings but are also deeply committed to making each visitor feel at home. VICs are pivotal community hubs where cultural integration, strategic collaborations, and innovative services converge to support and uplift Gippsland's tourism through a unified, dynamic approach that promotes local engagement, leverages modern technology, and fosters significant community and volunteer involvement.

Weaknesses

Resource limitations, staffing challenges, and system inefficiencies significantly hinder Gippsland's ability to optimise visitor interactions and engagement. Operational constraints, inconsistent branding, outdated infrastructure, and a lack of strategic integration across digital platforms and community resources collectively impede the region's capacity to enhance visitor experiences and fully capitalise on its tourism potential.

Opportunities

Gippsland's Visitor Services Strategy aspires to transform visitor interactions through comprehensive data analysis and digital integration, enhancing the region's appeal and accessibility via innovative visitor services that are technologically advanced and visitor centric. This strategy aims to capitalise on digital trends and community engagement, increasing the visibility of local gems and integrating non-traditional accommodations to boost visitor numbers, visitor dispersal and satisfaction year-round. Through these initiatives, Gippsland can offer enriched cultural experiences, superior service, and sustainable tourism practices that align with global tourism trends.

Threats

Gippsland faces critical challenges including heavy financial dependency on government funding, seasonality, capacity/overtourism during peak times or in hot spots (e.g. Wilson's Prom), vulnerability to technological disruptions, and operational inefficiencies that threaten its visitor services sector's sustainability and effectiveness. These challenges are compounded by workforce limitations, regulatory changes, and intensified competition, all of which necessitate strategic innovations and enhanced community engagement to safeguard and enhance the region's visitor services and overall market positioning.

Aspirations

Gippsland aims to redefine visitor servicing with strategic innovations that integrate contemporary technology, sustainable practices, industry and community engagement, enhancing every touchpoint of the visitor experience. By developing interconnected service systems, modernising visitor services, and leveraging data-driven marketing, Gippsland aspires to transform its Visitor Services Network into a dynamic landscape with cultural hubs that not only attract but profoundly satisfy visitors, fostering longer stays and increased economic impact.



Consumer Insights

N=471. For more insights, see 'Appendix D. Detailed Consumer Survey Insights'.

15 key insights from the 2024 GIPPSLAND VISITOR SERVICES CONSUMER SURVEY

1 92% Said maps, brochures, and guidebooks are a must have service	2 88% Believe physical VICs are very important	3 85% Ranked in-person advice from locals as very important	4 79% Rely on Google search as the primary method of travel research	5 77% Rated Gippsland's Visitor Services as highly inclusive
6 75% Favour local crafts and souvenirs for purchase at VICs	7 73% Rated sustainability principles within Visitor Services as highly important or crucial	8 70% Advocated for VICs in central locations, in easily accessible and high traffic areas	9 70% Look for and value local artisan produce, wine, and gourmet items at VICs	10 63% Prefer a cultural or historical exhibition to be co-located at a VIC
11 62% Like a coffee shop or casual dining experience co-located at a VIC	12 59% Visit a VIC in person while travelling	13 50% Utilise visitgippsland.com.au as source of travel information	14 44% Highly prioritise accredited VICs	15 3% Use digital kiosks

Supporting Insights & Case Studies

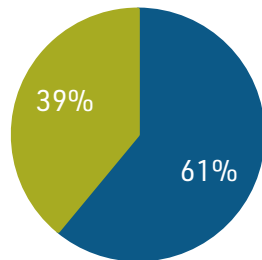
Victorian Government Tourism Health Check

For more detailed insights, see 'Appendix F. Supporting Insights and Case Studies'.

Every three years, VTIC conducts the Tourism Health Check to assess the capacity of regional and metropolitan local governments to manage tourism sustainably. According to the 2022 Local Government Tourism Health Check Research Report by the Victoria Tourism Industry Council, 97% of councils responded, revealing the following key insights:

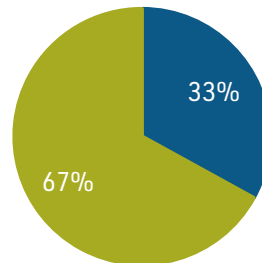
- Tourism budgets ranged from \$0 to \$5.7 million, with a mean of \$889,570.
- Smaller councils spend more on visitor services, while larger councils spend more on marketing.
- A significant portion of tourism budgets is allocated to event management.
- During COVID, 73% of regional Victorian councils ranked tourism as highly important, although overall tourism coordination has declined.
- Only 46% of councils had clear tourism objectives.
- Visitor services comprise about 40% of tourism development spend, with co-located VICs in galleries, museums, and libraries absorbing main costs.
- The average number of paid council staff with tourism-related responsibilities decreased, but volunteers remain significant.

Agree that Council has a strong role to play in visitor servicing



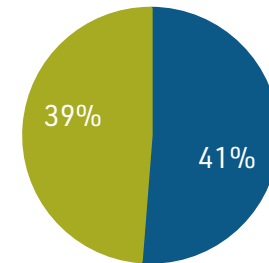
■ Y ■ N

Agree that Council prioritises visitor servicing



■ Y ■ N

Agree that Council embraces digital visitor servicing



■ Y ■ N

A National Perspective

For more detailed insights, see 'Appendix F. Supporting Insights and Case Studies'.

Top Five Features of VICs

The top five features that visitors look for in a VIC are:

Welcoming experience.	Knowledgeable, professional staff, skilled in customer service.	Unbiased, authoritative, and tailored information (multi-channel).	Validation of research found before and during the trip.	Local stories and insights.
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Economic Impacts

VICs drive economic contribution by influencing travel and spending behaviour, promoting local businesses, events, and community services. They enhance visitor experiences, leading to increased expenditure and longer stays. VICs can directly facilitate purchases and indirectly promote services, contributing significantly to local economies. Visitors spend \$186 more on average after visiting a VIC.

Social Impacts

VIC networks provide substantial social benefits by:

- Acting as the region's welcoming front, offering peace of mind with comprehensive information.
- Being the go-to source for up-to-date information during natural disasters.
- Promoting community pride and supporting local producers.
- Serving as a central hub for residents and businesses, encouraging economic growth.
- Enhancing community amenities through conservation and preservation efforts.
- Offering local services like book exchanges, walking tours, and vehicle charging points.

These economic and social impacts highlight the importance of VICs in providing a return on investment and building a strong case for continued support and funding.

Case Studies

For more detailed insights, see 'Appendix F. Supporting Insights and Case Studies'.

Canberra & Region, ACT

Located on Ngunnawal Country, Canberra is a dynamic region within the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), home to over 472,000 residents. It draws visitors for holidays, family visits, business, and educational pursuits, fostering a resilient tourism sector.

Objective

VisitCanberra aims to enhance visitor services, inspire return visits, and create memorable experiences. Goals include boosting Canberra's international profile, promoting its strengths, positively impacting the community, and exceeding visitor expectations.

Challenges

Managing and enhancing the visitor experience across Canberra's vast area and diverse offerings was challenging. There was a need for personalised and seamless visitor services, integrating technology for real-time, tailored information.

Strategic Developments

- Innovative Technology: Utilised tools like Teleportivity, Bookeasy, QR codes, and online surveys to improve visitor interactions.
- Visitor Centre Upgrade: Transformed the Visitor Centre into a premier precinct that encapsulates Canberra's spirit and encourages visitor dispersal.
- Local Engagement: Engaged local tourism stakeholders as ambassadors, enhancing community-driven tourism.

Outcomes

- Increased Visitor Numbers: 224,000 VIC visitors in 2022/23, a 151% increase from the previous year.
- Economic Impact: Significant increases in retail sales and online bookings.
- Recognition: Won GOLD at the ACT and Qantas Australian Tourism Awards in 2023.
- Local Engagement: Improved community involvement, with ACT residents making up 42% of visitors.
- Tourism Growth: Achieved record visitation, visitor nights, and expenditure.

VisitCanberra's strategic initiatives, including technological integration and community engagement, have significantly boosted the tourism landscape, elevating visitor experiences and economic outcomes.

Mudgee Region, NSW

Mudgee Region, located on Wiradjuri land in NSW, is known for its cultural heritage and picturesque landscapes. The region set out to redefine itself as a destination with contemporary country charm and a vibrant community atmosphere.

Objective

Transform visitor services to enhance Mudgee Region's brand presence and support sustainable tourism growth, increasing consumer awareness, visitor dispersal, spend and encouraging longer stays.

Challenges

The traditional visitor servicing model needed an overhaul to better promote local experiences and align with the region's cultural offerings.

Strategic Developments

- Visitor Servicing Strategy: Utilised digital and physical channels to enhance visitor engagement.
- VIC Relocation: Moved the VIC to the new contemporary Mudgee Arts Precinct, improving visibility and accessibility.
- Partnerships: Developed strong ties with local, regional, and national partners.

Outcomes

- Enhanced Visitor Experience: New VIC integrated with the arts precinct, featuring an e-commerce site and interactive maps.
- Recognition: Won GOLD at the NSW and Qantas Australian Tourism Awards in 2022.
- Increased Engagement: Higher local engagement and improved visitor satisfaction.
- Tourism Growth: Reported a 10% increase in overnight visitation for the destination.

Mudgee Region's strategic focus on integrating arts and community with visitor services significantly enhanced the visitor experience and contributed to the region's economic and cultural vitality.



Global Perspective: Insights from SKIFT

Scotland's Digital Transition

Scotland is shifting to a digital-first approach, using social media to engage travellers before they arrive, and encouraging local communities to convert former visitor centres into community hubs.

Pop-Up Marketing & Mobile Centres

Flexible information delivery through pop-up and mobile visitor centres meets modern travellers' needs, featuring interactive displays and virtual reality setups.

Wi-Fi Accessibility & Visitor Services

Free Wi-Fi is highly valued by travellers, supporting both digital and traditional visitor experiences. Examples like Stonehenge demonstrate successful integration of connectivity with classic visitor services.

Enduring Value of Print Materials

Despite digital trends, print materials like brochures and maps remain significant for tangible, easy-to-reference information, enhancing visitor experiences.

Instagram-Based City Guides

Stockholm Arlanda Airport's "The Locals' Guide" uses Instagram content to create personalised travel guides, offering real-time updates and tailored recommendations.

These insights highlight the importance of integrating technology, community engagement, and flexible service models to enhance visitor experiences and drive economic growth.



Appendices & Glossary

Appendices

- Appendix A. 2019-23 Destination Visitation and VIC Visitor Engagement
- Appendix B. Visitor Servicing Program Profiling Tool Insights
- Appendix C. Detailed Industry Workshops and Survey Insights
- Appendix D. Detailed Consumer Survey Insights
- Appendix E. A National Perspective on Visitor Information Servicing
- Appendix F. Supporting Insights and Case Studies

Glossary Of Abbreviations

Acronym	Description
ATAP	Australian Tourism Accreditation Program
DG	Destination Gippsland
DJSIR	Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions
DMP	Destination Gippsland's Towards 2030 Destination Management Plan
GVSNG	Gippsland Visitor Services Network Group
LGA	Local Government Area
Network	Gippsland Visitor Services Network
NVS	National Visitor Survey
PV	Parks Victoria
SWOTA	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats and Aspirations Analysis
TRA	Tourism Research Australia
QTF	Quality Tourism Framework
VIC	Visitor Information Centre
VTIC	Victorian Tourism Industry Council