

Visitor Economy Strategy

Taking the
South Gippsland Shire
visitor economy to
new heights.

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

2021 - 2031



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Acknowledgement of Country

Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of this land and their enduring relationship with Country. Council aspires to strengthen our partnerships and supports Aboriginal participation in management processes for land and natural resources. We recognise Australia's rich cultural heritage and aim to encourage integrated decision making now and in the future.

Acknowledgements

Council would like to acknowledge and thank the business, community and agency representatives involved in this report. We thank them for meeting the project team, attending consultation sessions, and providing feedback throughout its development.



Kerry Ellis
Chief Executive Officer
– South Gippsland
Shire Council

Foreword

South Gippsland is a beautiful place to live and a beautiful place to visit. Our location, landscape, climate and community create opportunities for the entire region to benefit from increased tourism.

Visitors are already important to the South Gippsland region. We estimate the economic benefits to be \$114 million per year and growing. Visitors are attracted to the pristine nature of the area, the abundant natural attractions and a rare authenticity. South Gippsland is not pretentious. We are home to real people who are passionate about our area and proud of what we produce. Our attractions and experiences can be understated and sometimes even a little rough around the edges, but we wouldn't have it any other way.

To the south of the region is the ocean, with frequent pockets of calm amongst an otherwise wild and rugged coastline. Water activities abound in this area. Swimming, surfing, windsurfing, kayaking and fishing are all popular. During summer visitors flock to our coastal hamlets with many featuring sweeping beaches with views all the way to Wilsons Promontory.

This Visitor Economy Strategy highlights what South Gippsland Shire Council aims to do to increase visitation and economic spend. It focuses on what Council can do to attract regional investment and infrastructure. The strategy details key themes for the future and is action specific. This is a functional working document we can use to make future tourism-related decisions. But we know we need to be flexible and adapt to change. COVID-19 taught us how important it is to be adaptable. We need to keep kicking goals even when the goalposts are moving.

We formed the Strategy under the guidance of the Visitor Economy Strategy Advisory Group (VESAG). Council established VESAG to bring together experts from different industry sectors to oversee the Strategy's development. We value the input from these members who shared their experience and knowledge of a broad cross section of industries.

We would also like to thank every member of the South Gippsland community who provided feedback. They shared ideas about how our region can develop and address the needs of our visitors now, and in the future.

I acknowledge Council Administrators Julie Eisenbise, Rick Brown and Christian Zahra who took the initiative to develop this strategy. Their strong commitment to the process will benefit the local community and visitor economy for years to come.

South Gippsland's best chance for success will come from partnerships and collaboration. We look forward to future prosperity in South Gippsland as we work with the community to implement this strategy.

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South Gippsland is home to a beautiful and diverse landscape from lush rolling hills, outstanding views, pristine ocean, to farming pastures and pockets of lush rainforests.

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Acronyms

TEVE

Tourism, Events and Visitor Economy

DJPR

Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions

DELWP

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

DGL

Destination Gippsland

Gippsland DMP

Towards 2030
Gippsland Destination Management Plan

GSRT

Great Southern Rail Trail

LLEN

Local Learning and Employment Network

RDV

Regional Development Victoria

RRV

Regional Roads Victoria

TRA

Tourism Research Australia

The Prom

Wilson's Promontory National Park

VESAG

Visitor Economy Advisory Group

VFR

Visiting Friends and Relatives

VTIC

Victorian Tourism Industry Council



Executive summary

The South Gippsland Visitor Economy Strategy 2021-2031 provides a guide for our Shire to face challenges and embrace new opportunities.

The strategy is designed to achieve South Gippsland Shire Council's vision that the Shire is a destination of choice for local and international visitors. With increased visitation, we can increase the contribution of the visitor economy across the region. Council wants to increase our current annual visitation of around 1.2 million people, which is currently worth around \$114 million to our local economy.

Despite the impact of COVID-19 and border closures in recent times, we are confident this strategy will allow us to grow visitation. This strategy will enable tourism operators, food and beverage businesses, retail and accommodation providers to seize the opportunities that come from Australians redirecting their travel dollars to domestic travel. Better marketing the range of attractions and encouraging visitors to stay longer will allow South Gippsland to gain a bigger slice of the \$32.5 billion tourism spend in the state.

Council focused the strategy on actions built around six strategic themes. This will maximise the positive impact of the strategy in the most practical way.

1. Increasing marketing and promotion
2. Supporting visitor economy infrastructure
3. Diversifying and expanding products and experiences
4. Enhancing visitor servicing
5. Building partnerships
6. Providing business development and support

Established to support the development of the strategy, the Visitor Economy Strategy Advisory Group (VESAG) will continue to provide expertise as we move to implementing the strategy. Annual Action Plans will include the delivery of specific projects, with clear and measurable outcomes. The following set of principles will guide the way Council implements these actions. This will increase our success and balance the economic, social and environmental outcomes.

- Enabling and solutions focussed
- People-centric
- Building community wealth
- Strengthening resilience
- Inclusive
- Triple bottom line
- Evidenced based decision making

We based the strategy on a knowledge of the strengths and opportunities of the South Gippsland Visitor Economy. A wide range of inputs from many contributors and an understanding of leading visitor and economic development practice added insight and depth to the Strategy.

Through its action oriented approach to implementing the strategy, Council seeks to deliver its vision for a thriving local economy through a strong and diverse visitor economy sector.



Developing the Visitor Economy Strategy

Local government plays a significant and diverse role in the visitor economy. The infrastructure and amenities enjoyed by visitors are largely thanks to local government. The work of local government directly affects the visitor's impressions and experiences in a destination. It also plays a critical role in engaging the community and creating positive social outcomes.

Supporting and developing the visitor economy requires a collaborative approach. As the saying goes "Tourism is everybody's business". Council, businesses and the community all play a role in providing an outstanding visitor experience. For this reason, Council was keen to involve a broad cross-section of stakeholders to develop this strategy.

Methodology

A comprehensive methodology was developed to oversee the strategy. It involved a number of components with a clear consultative approach. Key themes have been developed from a combination of community feedback, stakeholder engagement, expert knowledge, research and current industry trends.

Consultation

We engaged Gippsland-based consultancy firm Aerium to conduct community consultation. Business operators, visitors, local groups and community members provided feedback through surveys, one-on-one meetings, workshops and Social Pinpoint, an online engagement platform.

We received nearly 400 pieces of feedback between March and May 2021. The responses from the consultations, and additional feedback received during a two-week public exhibition period, were collated and used to inform the strategy development.

VESAG were key contributors, helping to inform and guide development of the consultation process and strategy development.

Research

Council undertook research including reviewing tourism strategies from similar sized regional destinations and key tourism stakeholders. It also examined current and emerging visitor trends and economic data from Tourism Research Australia, REMPLAN and Spendmapp.

The research process highlighted potential benefits and limitations. It also provided insights into where South Gippsland fits in the National and State tourism structure.

Development

From this, Council developed key themes and created an action plan to address tourism issues. The action plan delivers practical solutions that Council and strategic partners, can deliver over the next 10 years. The action plan is intended to be a live document to respond to challenges, opportunities and changes in policy direction.

Visitor Economy Strategy Advisory Group Members

Council established the Visitor Economy Strategy Advisory Group (VESAG) to develop this strategy. The group brings together experts from different areas of the visitor economy to advise and guide Council with the development of the Strategy. We appointed members based on their industry experience and unique backgrounds.

Renae Hanvin (Chair) – Renae has a strong marketing and strategic planning background. She has over 10 years of experience in disaster recovery focusing strongly on disaster resilience in small businesses and communities.

Dr. Gabby Walters – Gabby holds a PhD in tourist psychology and tourism marketing. She's an expert in tourist profiling, effective destination promotion and a specialist in disaster recovery. With 30 years of experience in the industry, she has a broad understanding of tourism.

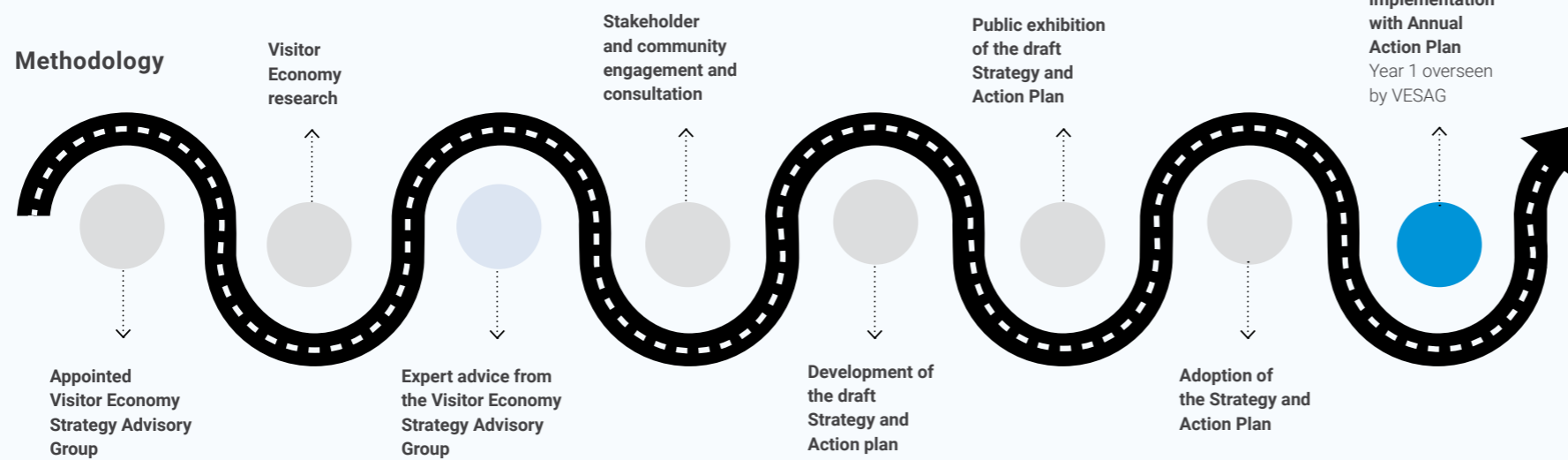
Angela Moseley – Angela operates Australian Cycling Holidays and her business builds navigation applications for cyclists and hikers. She has extensive knowledge of the broader international and domestic market, and understands the region's visitor profiles.

Andrew Davies – Andrew has over 30 years of experience in park management, regional tourism and commercial management. He has worked closely with Aboriginal traditional owners in Victoria and the Northern Territory

Rhett McLaren – Rhett has extensive experience in the music and events industry, and a thorough knowledge of the region. He operates South Gippsland's largest commercial event and has strong industry networks.

Greg Harrison – Greg has extensive experience in strategic and infrastructure planning, and economic development. He is currently working to assist the Department of Transport in the planning and procurement of COVID-19 response initiatives. Greg is a board member of Destination Phillip Island and has experience in investment attraction and industry development

Bridget Crowe – Bridget has strong connections with regional Arts networks and extensive experience in strategic and regional planning. She's owned and managed tourism businesses, including accommodation and food, and has a strong understanding of the visitor market and consumer expectations.



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Introduction

South Gippsland Shire is located 90 minutes south east of Melbourne on the edge of Melbourne's eastern growth corridor, one of the fastest growing areas in Victoria. It is best known for its rolling green hills, spectacular coastline, traditional country towns and villages, and the world-famous Wilsons Promontory National Park.

The Shire has a robust economy, closely linked to food production with both major agricultural and food manufacturing sectors. It is one of the most important dairy production areas in Australia with 10% of Victoria's dairy farms. Its major towns are Leongatha, Korumburra, Mirboo North and Foster. Other towns include Nyora, Poowong, Loch, Bena, Kongwak, Tarwin Lower, Venus Bay, Koonwarra, Meeniyan, Dumbalk, Fish Creek, Yanakie, Sandy Point, Port Franklin, Toora, Welshpool and Port Welshpool.

It is home to 30,000 people and supports over 11,000 jobs in 3,700 businesses. The vast majority small businesses employing less than 20 staff. The Shire has an annual economic output of \$3.8 billion and Gross Regional Product (GRP) of \$1.85 billion. It has low unemployment and high productivity, with a GRP per worker of over \$166,000.

The South Gippsland Visitor Economy Strategy (2021–2031) will help Council develop and grow the visitor economy. The visitor economy is a valued sector of South Gippsland's economy. We have developed this strategy alongside the Council's Economic Development Strategy (2021–2031).

The successful implementation of this strategy requires multi-stakeholder partnerships and collaborations. Only by working together can Council and the community create opportunities to benefit the whole region.

From exploring the walking trails of the Prom and the region to discovering our vibrant arts culture, boutique events and exciting markets, there's something for every visitor.



Great Southern Rail Trail (GSRT)

The popular 72km trail winds its way from Leongatha to Port Welshpool. Walkers, cyclists and horse riders take in spectacular vistas of rich farmland, historical bridges and water views across Corner Inlet and Wilsons Promontory. A planned extension from Leongatha to Nyora will increase tourism opportunities for towns along the new route.



Wilson's Promontory National Park

The 'Prom' as it is affectionately known, is the most popular attraction in South Gippsland. The Prom is over 50,000 hectares of wilderness and has some of Victoria's most spectacular natural scenery. It attracts over 500,000 visitors annually.



A nature lovers' paradise

The region has a diverse landscape, providing a range of walking trails and outdoor activities, including:

- The Grand Ridge Rail Trail – a 13km trail from Mirboo North to Boolarra
- Agnes Falls near the township of Toora
- The iconic 800m Port Welshpool Long Jetty
- Cape Liptrap Coastal Park that stretches from Point Smythe to Waratah Bay
- Pristine beaches for fishing, boating, swimming, surfing, wind and kite surfing.
- Bird hides and wetlands



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The South Gippsland visitor economy

South Gippsland is a nature lovers paradise and a popular tourism destination. Visitors enjoy the spectacular coastline and rolling hills, boutique food and drink experiences, rail trails, vibrant arts community and events calendar. Unique towns and villages scattered throughout the region add to the experience.

Accommodation choices include motels, caravan and camping, self-catering, holiday homes, bed and breakfasts. The accommodation sector is mainly boutique style. But there is an opportunity for a branded motel, large style accommodation and conference facilities.

South Gippsland has become a competitive visitor destination with visitation increasing 100% between 2009 and 2019.

The region has seen an increase in tours. These include water-based and Prom focused activities, cycling, and specialised food and beverage experiences.

There has also been growth in the diversity of tourism-related businesses and increased product development in the last 10 years. This includes large-scale infrastructure projects such as the Port Welshpool Long Jetty and the extension of the Great Southern Rail Trail.

A strong and vibrant visitor economy to support South Gippsland

The visitor economy and tourism are linked. But it is so much broader. Our visitor economy refers to the money that any visitor spends in the region. That includes international, interstate and Victorians travelling in their own state. It covers people visiting on holidays, for business, education or visiting family and friends.

The visitor economy includes all spending, not just on tourism experiences.

For example, a visitor may buy local wine and food, use local transport or buy groceries. The money spent by tourists flows into industries such as beverages, tourism, agriculture, retail and transport.

This creates jobs in the tourism industry and complementary sectors.

1.2 million visitors (doubled from 2009 to 2019) contributes \$114 million to the local economy

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South Gippsland visitor snapshot

In 2019, the total tourism spend in Victoria was \$32.5 billion. Almost 45% of this came from Victorians travelling around their home state.

Over 1.2 million visitors travelled to South Gippsland in 2019. Most of these were domestic day visitors, followed by domestic overnight visitors. Encouraging visitors to stay longer and see more of the region provides an opportunity to grow the visitor economy.

Most visitors come to visit family or friends or for a holiday. While currently not a core focus, there is great opportunity for South Gippsland to increase business and industry-related visitors given the close proximity to Melbourne.

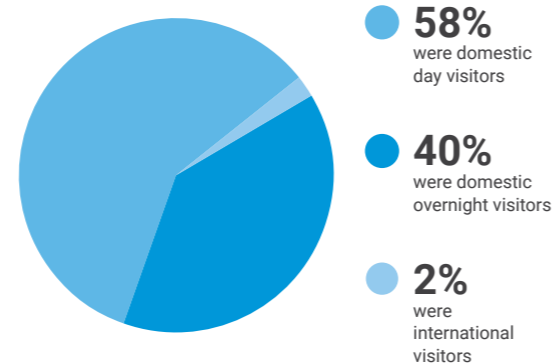
Australians spend more money per capita on travel than any other country. In the past, Australians have spent over 30 per cent on international travel. But with the current COVID-19 border restrictions likely to remain in place for some time, there are opportunities for this spend to be redirected to domestic travel.

The South Gippsland market has also been dominated by domestic visitors. In the current climate, there are

opportunities for the region to capture a greater share of this spend to grow the tourism sector.

The majority of visitors come for day trips, which could be in part due to the region's proximity to Melbourne. Providing more products and experiences to increase day visitor spend and encouraging visitors to stay longer will both bring increased economic benefits.

Tourism Visitation: In 2019 South Gippsland received approximately 1.2 million visitors of which:



Sectors of the visitor economy – direct tourism output



Accommodation & Food Services

\$45m



Retail Trade

\$12m



Arts & Recreation Services

\$7m

Visitors to South Gippsland make up only a small proportion of total visitation to Victoria. Given the proximity to Melbourne, there are opportunities to grow this market.

Promotion of the range of activities available for all age groups presents an opportunity to increase the length of stay. This suggests there could be investment opportunities in the accommodation sector to cater to these markets. Expanded accommodation options may also provide opportunities to grow the conference and business travel market.

Interstate and intrastate travellers will be key to this strategy in the short-term. This presents South Gippsland an opportunity to expand existing and attract new domestic visitors.

As restrictions on international travel ease, a focus on countries where we have a 'travel bubble' may present new opportunities.

The long-term focus includes a return of international travellers. South Gippsland has an exciting opportunity to ready itself to the re-opening of this important visitor group.

Average length of stay



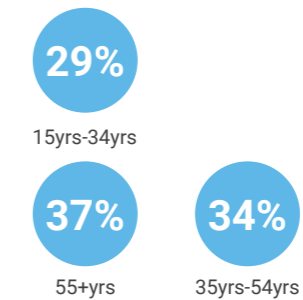
3 nights

Domestic visitors

4 nights

International visitors

Age group (%)



Average visitor spend



\$72.00

Day visitors

\$102.00

Domestic overnight visitor

\$72.00

International overnight visitor

Top 3 International Markets

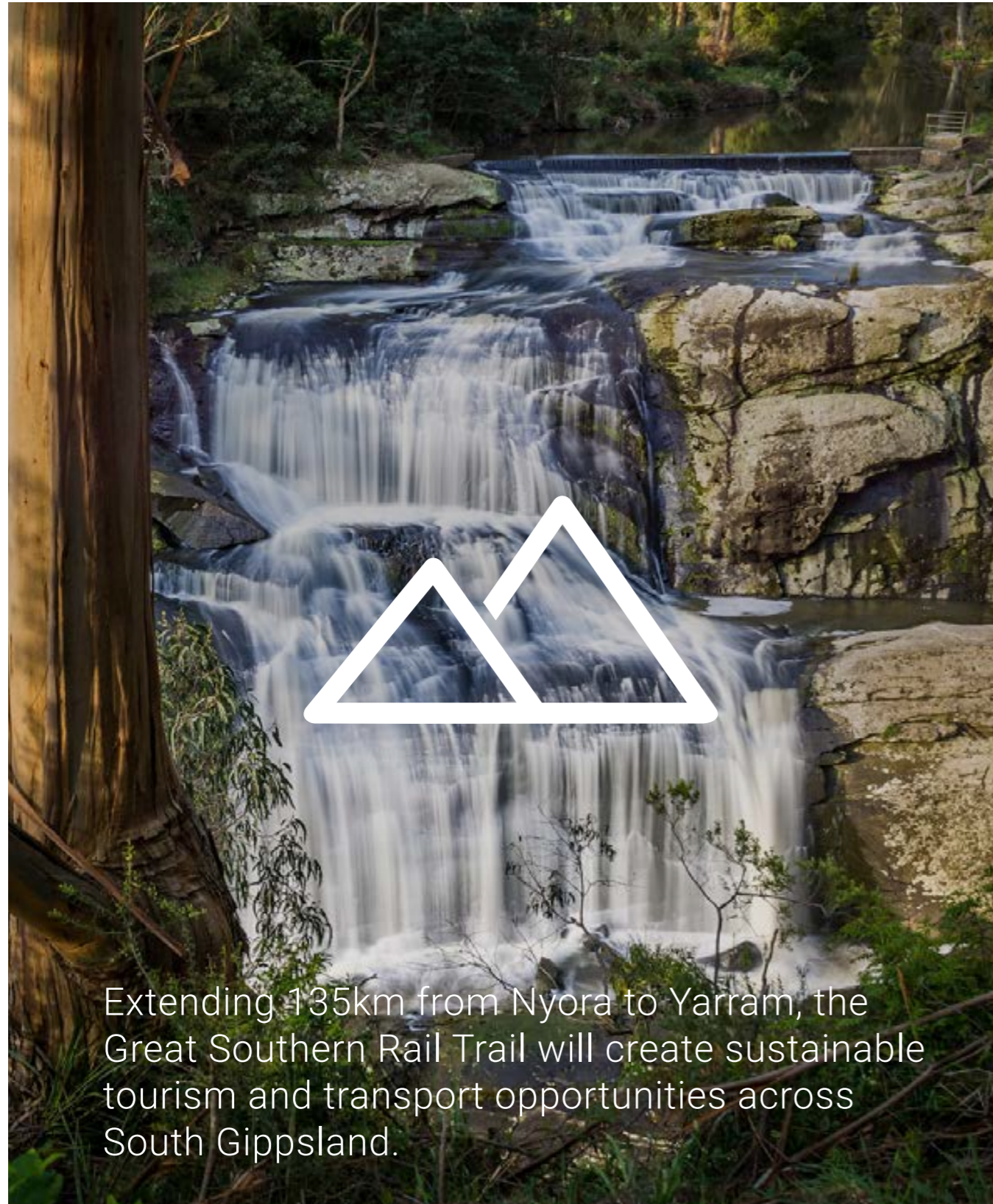


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The Prom comprises of over 50,000 hectares of wilderness and is host to some of Victoria's most spectacular natural scenery. It attracts over 500,000 visitors annually.

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Extending 135km from Nyora to Yarram, the Great Southern Rail Trail will create sustainable tourism and transport opportunities across South Gippsland.

Opportunities to grow the Visitor Economy



Wilson's Promontory National Park

Development of the Prom into a world-class, internationally-recognised experience by Parks Victoria is now possible due to funding from the Victorian State Budget. The Wilsons Prom Revitalisation Project (due to be completed by 2023) will protect and enhance the Prom and will be a key driver for the South Gippsland economy.

Strengthened partnerships and collaboration between Council and Parks Vic, and continued advocacy will be important to maintain and improve the Prom's facilities and visitor experiences.

New and complimentary visitor experiences will drive investment and support visitation across the region.

Key improvements include:

- A predator proof fence to create the Prom Sanctuary
- Additional eco-friendly roofed 'pod' accommodation
- New walking track and upgrades including a new all-accessible wildlife track
- New services and infrastructure to help reduce car park congestion
- New information and visitor hub, and education centre.



Great Southern Rail Trail

The Great Southern Rail Trail (GSRT) is currently 72km from Leongatha to Port Welshpool. Passing through many of the region's towns and villages, visitors can stop along the route and enjoy country hospitality. The towns benefit from increased tourism.

By early 2022, the GSRT will be extended to the north from Leongatha to Nyora. This will provide additional opportunities for the community to advocate for and embrace activation of the Shire's small villages with food, hospitality, and art along the trail.

This project was supported by the State Government through the Regional Infrastructure Fund (Leongatha to Korumburra) and Local Sport Infrastructure Fund (Korumburra to Nyora) and the South Gippsland Shire Council.

Recent State Government funding announcements will now allow for the GSRT to be extended from Welshpool to Alberton. Once complete the trail will be approximately 135km extending from Nyora to Yarram and potentially the longest rail trail in Victoria. It will also be an amazing connector to Melbourne and to other parts of Gippsland.

The trail will continue to be a key visitor attraction. It has the capacity to create ancillary experiences in station precincts to provide a space that stimulates and attracts social, cultural and tourist activity. The trail will also provide connections to town centres, pedestrian and cycling connections and new public spaces.

In future, the GSRT will support sustainable tourism, with opportunities for visitors to drive from Melbourne to Nyora, and ride from town to town. As well as the potential to increase investment in accommodation, there will also be opportunities to design trails that link from the main GSRT.



Coal Creek Community Park and Museum

Coal Creek is the largest cultural heritage site in South Gippsland. It is located on Crown Land, and is owned and managed by Council. The museum attracts tourists and provides an opportunity for the community and visitors to connect with the coal mining heritage of the Shire.

Set in the time of 1870-1920, and supported by the local community, Council recognises the potential for this local attraction to continue to make linkages, and grow the profile of local history and heritage in South Gippsland.



Unique Towns and Villages

South Gippsland has several unique villages and towns with their own distinct charm. Each town is different, offering visitors a diverse experience. Many have become popular visitor destinations and others are finding their place in the visitor market. In many of these towns, visitor spend represents a significant proportion of total retail spend.

The proximity to each other (and Melbourne) creates a variety of tourist routes. There are also opportunities to explore on foot, bike, and in some places, by horseback. Increased exposure through marketing activities, creation of touring routes and the extension of the GSRT into the north will create increased opportunities for towns and villages across the region.

Creating opportunities for unique towns, heritage locations and engaging events across South Gippsland



Delicious food, engaging events and experiences

The region's rainfall, fertile soils and pristine waters produce some of Australia's best food. A growing food and beverage sector has options to suit any taste and budget.

Opportunities for growth in the arts and culture sector, developing existing and acquiring new boutique events and markets and diversifying the range of tours will lead to future growth of the visitor economy in South Gippsland.

Improvement of some of the region's hero products (such as The Prom and GSRT) provide opportunities for investment in hospitality to encourage longer stays. Promotion of touring routes and cycling paths, existing and newfound packaged experiences will bring additional avenues for partnerships in the sector.

As we look to evolve our visitor attractions and experiences over the next decade, it is important we set our region up for success. This includes understanding both capabilities and gaps in the foundations of service delivery, such as accommodation availability for both tourist and business visitors. Recognised in our Economic Development Strategy, this brings opportunity for South Gippsland to attract and retain investment across the region.



Caravan and camping

The current closure of international borders due to COVID-19 has seen an increase of caravan and camping holidays within Victoria and Australia. This includes a shift in the market, expanding from grey nomads to families, couples, and young people.

South Gippsland has a number of commercially operated caravan parks, as well low-cost caravan and camping sites.

There are ways to support the caravan and camping sector, and Council recognises the opportunity to identify locations and increase availability of dump points and long vehicle parking. Council will continue to support commercial businesses and work with the community to ensure that local facilities meet consumer needs, and bring further economic benefit to the region.

Expanding our partnerships

As we deliver this strategy to strengthen our visitor economy, we will achieve greater success through collaborations with partners. Council is committed to ongoing engagement with state and regional partners including Destination Gippsland, Parks Vic, Visit Victoria and TEVE (Tourism, Events and Visitor Economy department).

Council will also foster connections with local Chambers of Commerce and business groups. There are opportunities to find new ways to connect with tourism businesses through local business associations as well as regular forums.

Council will also partner with neighbouring local councils such as Bass Coast and Phillip Island.



Increasing skilled workers

Growth of the South Gippsland visitor economy brings opportunities for locals to build job-ready skills. As we put focus on evolving and widening our tourism and business attractions over the coming decade, it is important we build the local workforce in parallel.

Working alongside local and regional educational providers, business and industry associations we can understand skill requirements and plan effectively for future skill-based needs.



New domestic opportunities

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the South Gippsland tourism sector. Businesses will continue to be affected by ongoing disruptions and restrictions. Consumer expectations now include a safe and hygienic environment, booking flexibility and an increase in contactless practices.

Businesses are now catering for the increasing local and interstate market that demands shorter, more frequent, and affordable trips.

Regional visitation is increasing because of consumer preferences for low-density areas and open spaces. This is clear in the increase in visitation and external spend for the region since December 2020. South Gippsland can continue to capitalise on this growth due to its proximity to Melbourne and the growing interest and demand of the south-eastern Melbourne market.

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Strengthening our South Gippsland brand

Destination branding is an important component of tourism marketing, and resident and business attraction.

It is driven by three factors; reputation, identity and perception.



Reputation: sum of the beliefs or opinions about the destination. It needs to be built, protected, maintained and changed, if needed.

Identity: driven by authenticity, unique selling points of the destination, consistency and strong personality.

Perception: mostly immaterial experiences, but material experiences can matter. Subjective in the mind of the consumers.

For nearly 20 years, we have promoted South Gippsland using the brand 'Prom Country'. Research in more recent years has identified key brand virtues of the region:

- Natural beauty
- Authentic
- Welcoming
- Relaxing.

These attributes align with the brand framework of the Gippsland wide Destination Management Plan and are used to support the region through our towns and villages, fresh produce and beverage, outdoor activities, and arts and culture.

The Gippsland Brand

Research identified that a brand shift from "wilderness/big nature" to a holistic view of "nature as a provider" can change the perception of Gippsland.

The new brand "GIPPS All Kinds of Wonder LAND" allows the positioning of the region to move from 'nature only' to nature "plus" other aspects such as food, culture, and events.

The brand development undertaken by Destination Gippsland (DGL) highlighted that the South Gippsland brand resonates with the overall Gippsland brand personality.

The region is warm and welcoming, laid back and unpretentious. Free spirited and adventurous travellers can immerse themselves in the South Gippsland experience.

The new brand platform "GIPPS All Kinds of Wonder LAND", allows for the region to speak to all experiences in Gippsland, including nature. The platform is flexible to include experiences, products and hubs/places. The brand development by DGL highlights how the brand resonates with South Gippsland visitor experiences, destinations, and individual products.



GIPPS *all kinds of wonder* LAND

Benefits from the Gippsland brand

There are many benefits to the visitor economy across South Gippsland from inclusion in the Gippsland brand campaign. These include participating in all types of marketing and promotional initiatives.

Council actively engages with the DGL brand development and delivery team to favourably position the region. Strategic consideration has been conducted by Council as to the positive value inclusion brings to the region.

As we deliver this strategy, we'll continue to advocate for South Gippsland visitor attractions to be promoted in brand campaigns at the wider regional level.

Owning our regional identity

Alongside the many positive benefits from South Gippsland participating in the regional brand campaigns, it is important we embrace, celebrate and promote our own identity.

The strategy consultation process conducted by Council demonstrated a clear desire for South Gippsland to have its own brand and identity. A key focus for Council will be balancing local-focused, state and regional brand opportunities.

As we leverage inclusion in the regional Gippsland brand, we must embrace and promote our own South Gippsland identity.

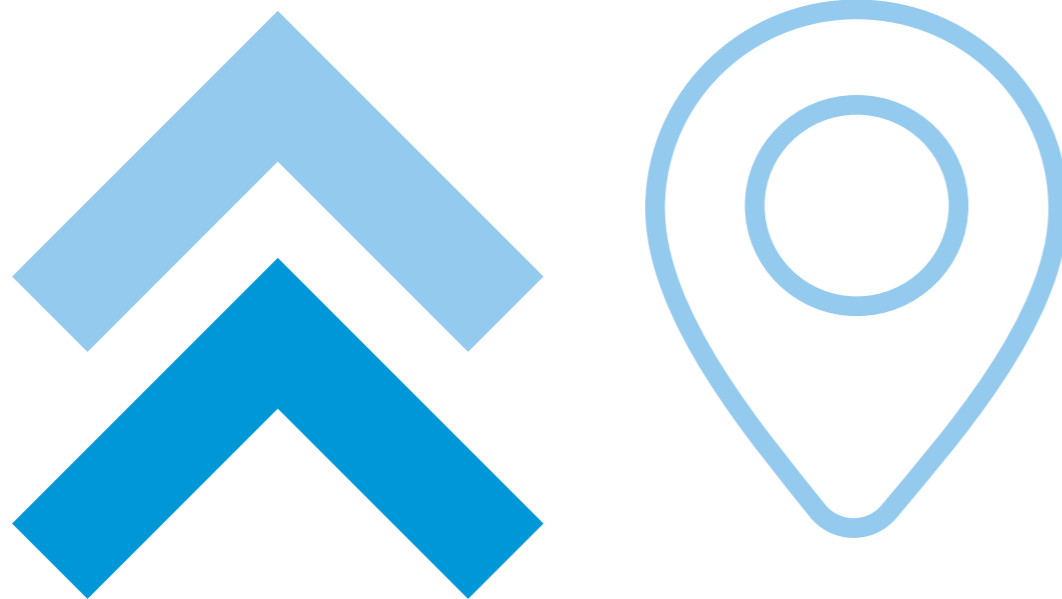
As we leverage inclusion in the regional Gippsland brand, we must embrace and promote our own South Gippsland identity.

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Vision


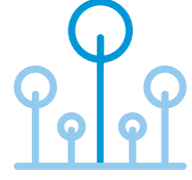


The rapid pace of change and the uncertainty from COVID-19 make predicting the future of the visitor economy a complex issue. Based on the history and environment of South Gippsland, it's easy to see a bright future.

Our vision is to make South Gippsland a visitor destination of choice for local and international visitors. We want to increase the contribution of the visitor economy across the region.



Goals

Working with local business, community and stakeholders, we want to build a sustainable and growing visitor economy that:

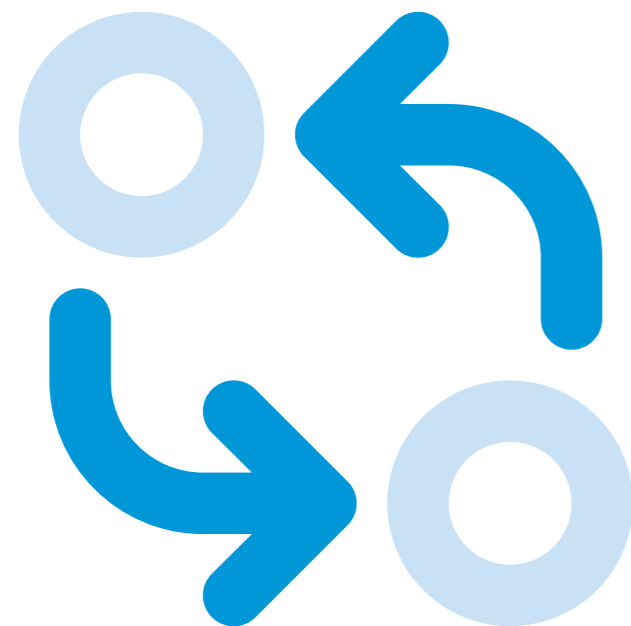
 Increases destination awareness	 Grows investment in tourism products	 Leverages natural and physical tourism assets
 Diversifies the visitor experience	 Increases spend per visitor	 Makes South Gippsland a year-round destination

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Guiding Principles

This strategy focuses on the economic outcomes from visitors. But it also recognises there are other broader social and environmental objectives.

To achieve these objectives, our strategy is guided by a set of principles.



Enabling and solutions focussed

Focussing on enabling beneficial economic activities.

Building our reputation as a Council that facilitates business growth and solves challenges.



People-centric

Building a positive culture in our dealing with business, investors, operators, customers and visitors.



Inclusive

Supporting the diversity of our residents and visitors and reducing activities that exclude people from the benefits of a strong economy.



Building community wealth

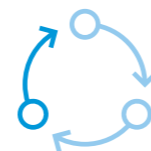
Fostering activities that build our collective social, intellectual, cultural and financial assets.

Directing wealth into the local economy and giving local people greater control and benefits.



Triple bottom line

Balancing our economic objectives with social and environmental objectives. Sometimes referred to as People, Profit and Planet.



Strengthening resilience

Creating systems and networks to help us prepare for, withstand, or adapt to major structural changes, economic and natural disasters.



Evidenced-based decision making

Using data, research and feedback from government, business and the community to implement realistic and viable initiatives.

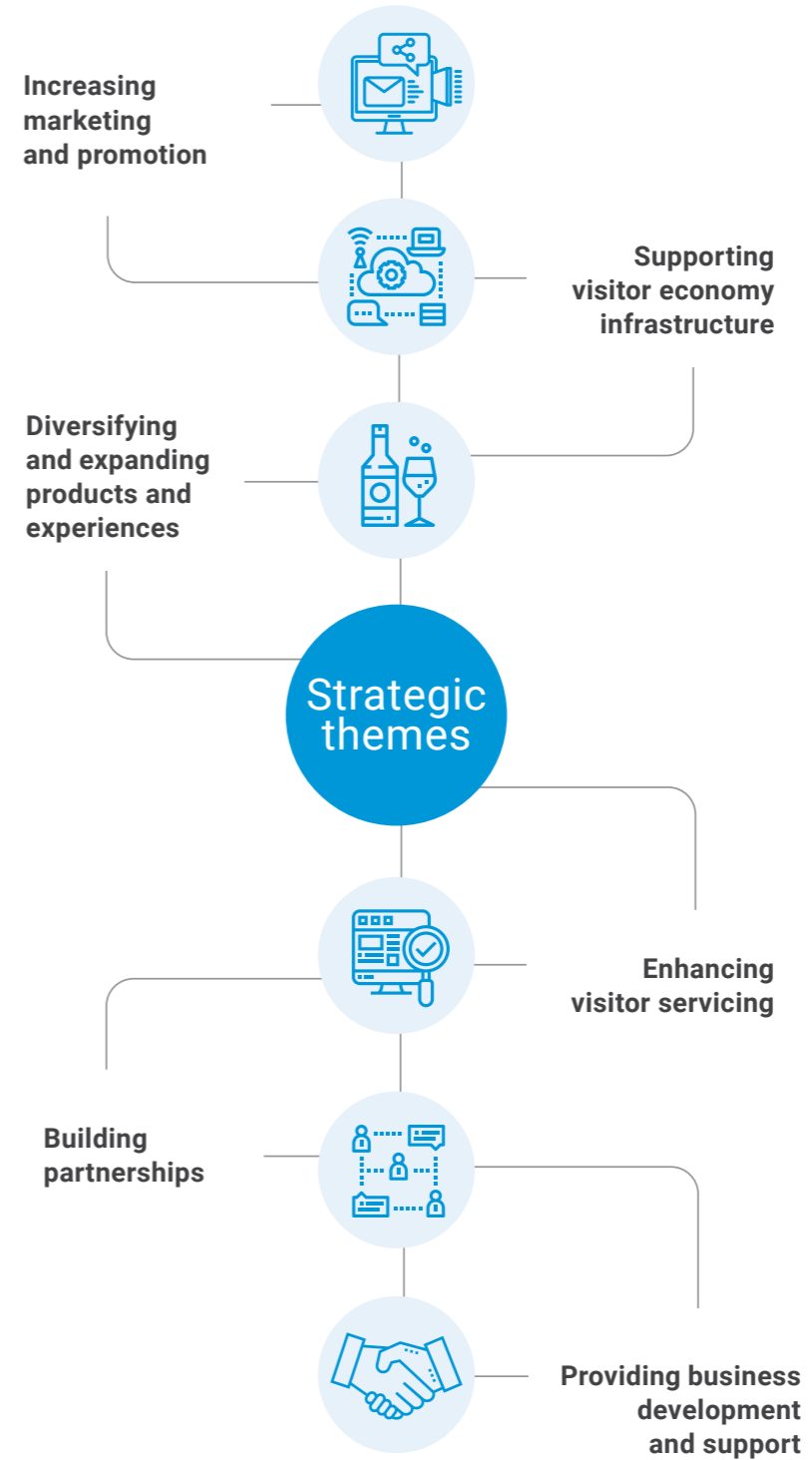
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Strategic Themes

We identified six key themes during the strategy development process.

To ensure the best result, the themes are clear, practical and focused on action. They have been designed to deliver the best results for the South Gippsland visitor economy.

By focusing on these themes, and designing clear actions, we can achieve our goals to grow our visitor economy.



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Strategic themes in more detail



Increasing marketing and promotion

This is a key focus for Council. Success relies on developing our region's brand characteristics and ensuring our marketing activities focus on key visitor experiences.

Collaborating with key stakeholders and industry is vital to drive the growth and sustainability of the visitor economy. We need tools to support to support industry to align with our brand, tell their story and help promote the region.

Strategic actions:

- Strengthen South Gippsland's appeal as a visitor destination through increased brand awareness.
- Highlight regional brand characteristics.
- Raise the profile of South Gippsland's visitor offerings with a range of destination marketing activities to increase visitation.
- Develop innovative ways to promote the region.



Enhancing visitor servicing

There has been a significant shift in the way visitors plan and book travel using modern digital platforms. There is an expectation that regions will evolve to meet the changing needs of the consumer. We need to service visitors at all touch points during their journey.

To improve visitor servicing, the region needs to understand its customer's needs, expectations and travel patterns. Implementing a visitor centric approach to all levels of visitor servicing will enhance the visitor experience.

Strategic actions:

- Enhance the visitor experience by providing high quality engagement assets to create a positive experience in our region.
- Invest in research to understand the market and identify gaps in the visitor journey.



Supporting visitor economy infrastructure

We must continue to advocate for new infrastructure projects to support improved visitor offerings.

We should also advocate for accommodation to meet changing consumer needs. Council needs to identify existing infrastructure that needs upgrading to meet consumer expectations.

Strategic actions:

- Advocate for and support the development of South Gippsland infrastructure to encourage new and existing visitors.
- Encourage greater investment in the accommodation sector to encourage longer visitor stays and greater spend in the region.



Building partnerships

Successful outcomes rely on strong partnerships between government, business, stakeholders and the community. Key strategic partnerships will support and grow the visitor economy.

Strategic actions:

- Build partnerships with stakeholders to develop the visitor economy in South Gippsland.
- Increased community education on the value of the visitor economy to the local economy.



Diversifying and expanding products and experiences

Over the next decade South Gippsland can improve its visitor offering by developing cultural tourism, niche products and events.

We need to attract public and private investment to support the development of the region.

Strategic actions:

- Develop South Gippsland's visitor products and experiences to encourage new and existing markets to visit, stay and spend.



Providing business development and support

This will build skills and increase entrepreneurship. It will also strengthen business resilience and our capacity to create and retain community wealth.

Strategic actions:

- Support the continued growth and development of the tourism sector to deliver high quality visitor experiences.
- Build the skills, training and knowledge of the business community.

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Action Plan 2021 – 2031

We have developed an Action Plan with priorities based on Strategy Themes.

From this, we'll develop Annual Action Plans that reflect funding, current priorities, and objectives.

The Action Plan will be a live document subject to ongoing review and adjusted in line with budgetary considerations.

Monitoring, measurement and public reporting will be part of implementing the Action Plan.

The Visitor Economy Strategy Advisory Group (VESAG) will guide the implementation of the Strategy in the first year. This will be undertaken with the support of an implementation committee.

As we implement this plan, we're committed to listening, learning and improving the way we do business.

We'll use our professional skills and knowledge to seek the best outcomes for our community.

And we'll strengthen the elements that make South Gippsland a great place to visit.

Action Plan 2021 – 2031

THEME 1

Increasing marketing and promotion

Strengthen South Gippsland's appeal as a visitor destination through increased brand awareness, whilst highlighting the regional brand characteristics.

Raise the profile of South Gippsland's visitor offering by facilitating and undertaking a range of destination marketing activities to increase visitation.

STRATEGY	#	ACTION	TIMEFRAME (Short, Medium, Long Term)	PARTNERS
1.1 Develop and promote the South Gippsland tourism brand.	1.1.1	Develop the South Gippsland brand identity.	Short	
	1.1.2	Undertake research to identify market segments.	Short	Partners DGL, Visit Victoria
	1.1.3	Develop and implement localised South Gippsland branding consistent with the Gippsland brand developed by Destination Gippsland (DGL).	Short	DGL
	1.1.4	Increase South Gippsland's digital promotional assets (photography, video, drone footage).	Ongoing	DGL Visit Victoria
1.2 Develop and strengthen South Gippsland's appeal as a visitor destination through a range of coordinated marketing initiatives.	1.2.1	Develop a promotional website to attract visitors to South Gippsland.	Short	
	1.2.2	Encourage visitors to use the new website via an online and print advertising campaign.	Short	Business Associations Parks Vic, DGL
	1.2.3	Develop an annual marketing campaign for the South Gippsland region drawing on support from government partners where needed.	Ongoing	Parks Vic, DGL
	1.2.4	Review existing marketing publications on an annual basis to determine if they are still required and if reprints are necessary.	Ongoing	
1.3 Encourage new residents to South Gippsland via promotion of its people and places.	1.3.1	Implement a series of podcasts featuring local residents to promote the value of living in South Gippsland.	Short	
1.4 Raise the awareness of the region, to encourage visitation and increase length of stay.	1.4.1	Partner and collaborate with Gippsland councils to develop cross-regional marketing ideas.	Ongoing	Gippsland Councils
	1.4.2	Develop marketing initiatives to promote Gippsland drives.	Short	Gippsland Councils DGL
	1.4.3	Develop a Grand Ridge Road map and promote it as a key Gippsland touring route.	Short	Council Wellington Shire Latrobe City Baw Baw Shire
1.5 Increase awareness of and visitation to the Great Southern Rail Trail.	1.5.1	Develop and deliver a strategic and marketing plan for the Great Southern Rail Trail.	Medium	DGL Visit Victoria Specialised interest groups
1.6 Increase awareness of and visitation to South Gippsland's villages and eateries.	1.6.1	Coordinate a marketing campaign with a focus on villages and local eateries.	Short	DGL
1.7 Support local business growth through a range of marketing initiatives.	1.7.1	Develop a Shop South Gippsland campaign to encourage support for local retail businesses.	Short	

Action Plan 2021 – 2031

THEME 2

Supporting visitor economy infrastructure

Advocate for and support development of South Gippsland infrastructure that encourages new and existing visitors.

STRATEGY	#	ACTION	TIMEFRAME (Short, Medium, Long Term)	PARTNERS
2.1 Support the development of key tourism assets and infrastructure.	2.1.1	Advocate to Federal and State Government for key tourism projects supported by Council.	Ongoing	Stakeholders
	2.1.2	Partner with Destination Gippsland to undertake a strategic product review aimed at delivering improvements to products and experiences.	Medium	Destination Gippsland Gippsland Councils
2.2 Identify and support the development of complementary products and experiences to capitalise on and enhance the Great Southern Rail Trail (GSRT).	2.2.1	Develop public art along the Great Southern Rail Trail	Medium	Creative Gippsland Regional Arts Victoria Creative Victoria
	2.2.2	Identify additional supporting rail trail infrastructure requirements (such as additional trail connections, horse mounting yards, repair stations, shelters, toilets, car parks, interpretive signage, seat and bike racks etc). Support implementation if required.	Medium	
	2.2.3	Investigate the viability of improvement works on the rail trail that would enhance the visitor experience (e.g. removal of dangerous road crossings or unsightly cattle crossings).	Long	RRV Land owners
	2.2.4	Install wayfinding signage for the GSRT from key locations off the South Gippsland Highway and main arterial roads.	Short	RRV
2.3 Investigate sustainable infrastructure for South Gippsland to enhance the visitor experience.	2.3.1	Identify and then seek funding opportunities to implement actions from the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Study.	Medium	Sustainability Victoria
2.4 Support upgrades to existing tourism infrastructure to enhance the visitor experience	2.4.1	Complete a tourism infrastructure audit to identify redundant signage and opportunities for potential infrastructure upgrades (lookouts, tourism signage etc).	Medium	Parks Vic DELWP Gippsland Ports Committees of Management

Action Plan 2021 – 2031

THEME 3

Diversifying and expanding products and experiences

Further develop South Gippsland's visitor products and experiences to encourage new and existing markets to visit, stay and spend.

STRATEGY	#	ACTION	TIMEFRAME (Short, Medium, Long Term)	PARTNERS
3.1 Attract and grow investment to the Shire through the implementation of a targeted Investment Attraction Program	3.1.1	Include tourism investment attraction as a key component of the South Gippsland Investment Attraction Strategy	Short	Invest Gippsland RDV AusIndustry DGL TEVE
	3.2	Identify opportunities to support events in South Gippsland	Short	Event organisers DGL
3.2 Identify opportunities to support events in South Gippsland	3.2.1	Determine a policy position on events and develop an event framework.	Short	Event organisers DGL
	3.2.2	Leverage from DGL's Gippsland Regional Events Strategy and Events Gippsland.	Ongoing	DGL Events Gippsland
3.3 Leverage South Gippsland's cultural assets for tourism purposes	3.3.1	Develop a South Gippsland Cultural Tourism Plan.	Medium	Cultural Victoria
	3.3.2	Position Coal Creek as a key Cultural Tourism asset for South Gippsland.	Medium	DGL Cultural Victoria
3.4 Identify South Gippsland's accessible tourism products and experiences	3.4.1	Undertake a stocktake of accessible tourism assets in South Gippsland.	Medium	Gippsland Accessible Tourism Partnership Group
3.5 Identify opportunities to support cycling in South Gippsland	3.5.1	Support the Bicycle Network 'Riding for Recovery Hub and Spoke' weekend event	Short	Bass Coast Bicycle Network
	3.5.2	Investigate opportunities for safe cycling paths and routes	Medium	Bicycle Network Cycle operators Local cycle groups
3.6 Continue to support Art, Culture and Creative Industries in South Gippsland	3.6.1	Update the South Gippsland Art, Culture and Creative Industry Strategy	Short	Creative Gippsland Creative Victoria Regional Arts Victoria
3.7 Develop niche products aligned to brand	3.7.1	Develop touring routes that promote the visitor experiences	Short	Business Associations DGL

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Action Plan 2021 – 2031

THEME 4

Enhancing visitor servicing

Enhance the visitor experience by providing high quality engagement assets, which create a positive image of our region.

Invest in research to understand the market and identify the gaps.

STRATEGY	#	ACTION	TIMEFRAME (Short, Medium, Long Term)	PARTNERS
4.1 Improve the visitor experience	4.1.1	Broaden the tourism knowledge of local businesses and create tourism ambassadors via an online training program.	Short	Business Associations
	4.1.2	Investigate the feasibility and cost of digital technology in key locations.	Medium	
	4.1.3	Investigate programs that help better understand the travel patterns of visitors.	Medium	
	4.1.4	Continue the operation of the Visitor Information Centre in Foster.	Ongoing	
	4.1.5	Develop plans to transition the Visitor Information Centres to an experience centre.	Long	
	4.1.6	Undertake updated visitor research to better understand customer needs and expectations	Short-Medium	DGL Gippsland Councils Parks Vic

Action Plan 2021 – 2031

THEME 5

Building partnerships

To develop partnerships with stakeholders to support the development of the visitor economy in South Gippsland.

STRATEGY	#	ACTION	TIMEFRAME (Short, Medium, Long Term)	PARTNERS
5.1 Maintain collaborative partnerships with stakeholders to further progress the visitor economy in South Gippsland	5.1.1	Maintain and nurture partnerships with key agencies at Shire, regional and state level.	Ongoing	Gippsland Councils, DGL Visit Victoria, TEVE (DJPR), Parks Vic, VTIC, DELWP RDV, One Gippsland Invest Gippsland
	5.1.2	Actively participate in industry specific groups, forums and expos as appropriate.	Ongoing	Gippsland Councils, DGL Visit Victoria, TEVE (DJPR) Parks Vic, VTIC, RDV One Gippsland, Invest Gippsland
	5.1.3	Work collaboratively with Destination Gippsland under the terms of the partnership contract to ensure the best outcomes for South Gippsland.	Medium	DGL
	5.1.4	Work with local business and community groups to promote opportunities for local operators.	Ongoing	Business Groups
	5.1.5	Engage with local artists via Council's Arts Development Officer.	Ongoing	
	5.1.6	Collaborate with Parks Victoria on South Gippsland projects and marketing where opportunities exist or a need is identified.	Ongoing	Parks Vic
	5.1.7	Support the Visitor Economy Strategy Advisory Group to be a key adviser to Council on Visitor Economy issues.	Short	VESAG
	5.1.8	Support the development of the State Government's Local Tourism Action Plans.	Medium	DGL
	5.1.9	Provide community groups interested in establishing free or low-cost camping with information and advice.	Ongoing	
	5.1.10	Support local communities to work with relevant authorities to establish dump points if appropriate.	Ongoing	South Gippsland Water CMCA

Action Plan 2021 – 2031

THEME 6

Providing business development and support

Support the continued growth and development of the tourism sector that delivers high quality visitor experiences.

Building the skills, training and knowledge of the business community.

STRATEGY	#	ACTION	TIMEFRAME (Short, Medium, Long Term)	PARTNERS
6.1 Facilitate the establishment of new tourism businesses in South Gippsland	6.1.1	Continue the Better Business Approvals process to assist small/medium businesses to establish in South Gippsland.	Short	
	6.1.2	Provide strategic input into the review of Council's Municipal Statement to ensure the Visitor Economy and its importance to South Gippsland is recognised.	Medium	
	6.1.3	Continue to provide the Business Concierge service within Council.	Medium	
6.2 Provide opportunities for local businesses to increase their knowledge and skills	6.2.1	Promote targeted training and skills programs to local businesses.	All	Small Business Victoria, SBMS Education providers Independent trainers
	6.2.2	Deliver tourism information to local businesses via communication tools such as the Business e-newsletter and associated business web pages.	Ongoing	
	6.2.3	Support Destination Gippsland Ltd to deliver the Gippsland Digital Maze Program to South Gippsland businesses.	Short	
	6.2.4	Establish a business auditing program with a focus on customer service.	Long	Independent training providers
6.3 Encourage local businesses to invest and implement sustainable activities and technologies	6.3.1	Provide information to local business on sustainable technologies (for example electric vehicle charging).	Medium	
6.4 Developing Business Resilience and Recovery	6.4.1	Continue and enhance Council's Business Resilience and Recovery Programs		Business Associations, MEMPC, DGL
6.5 Enabling/supporting industry to access a skilled and job ready workforces.	6.5.1	Work with educational and training institutions to increase opportunities for locals to be job ready and assist retention of young people.	Short	Local/regional educational provider LLEN DGL
	6.5.2	Work with businesses to understand skills requirements and plan appropriately	Short	Business and industry associations.