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## 7 ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

### 7.1 TOURISM AND VISITOR ECONOMY PLAN 2020 - 2024

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**File No:** EC/05/021

**Attachments:**

1. *Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan 2020 - 2024*
2. *Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan Consultation Report*
3. *Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan 2020 - 2024 Summary*

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#### SUMMARY

The Tourism and Visitor Economy Plans provide a vision, strategic framework and action plan for enhancing the tourism experience and growing the visitor economy in Mitchell. The plan includes a detailed and holistic analysis of the visitor economy sector within Mitchell Shire and highlights the sector's existing strengths, while simultaneously identifying opportunities for development and growth. The detailed analysis and research completed for this plan also included a wide range of industry and community consultation.

The research, analysis and consultation that has been undertaken has informed, shaped and led to the development of a detailed action plan that is arranged within eight key focus areas. The Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan 2020-2024 lays the foundation and provides the overarching framework to guide development of the tourism and visitor economy within the shire over the next four years. It is intended that this plan will be implemented through partnerships and with the support of the shire's tourism and visitor economy industry, regional partners and relevant State Government agencies.

#### RECOMMENDATION

**THAT** Council endorse and adopt the Mitchell Shire Council Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan 2020 - 2024

#### BACKGROUND

Understanding the importance of tourism as an economic driver in the local economy Council undertook baseline research in 2017/18 on the visitor economy to inform the development of an updated Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan. The research showed that Mitchell Shire welcomes 550,000 visitors per year; a number which has continued to increase up until the end of the last full calendar year. At last count, the visitor economy in Mitchell Shire was estimated to generate approximately \$110 million in economic output and supports 638 jobs within the shire. This makes the visitor economy the seventh most significant sector by employment within Mitchell Shire. This demonstrates the importance of the industry to Mitchell Shire and that the visitor economy is well positioned for growth.

The Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan 2020 - 2024 will play a pivotal role in defining the scope of initiatives and projects at Mitchell Shire Council in relation to visitation,

TOURISM AND VISITOR ECONOMY PLAN 2020 - 2024 (CONT.)

and the businesses and industry sectors (e.g. accommodation, dining, retail, transport, construction, etc.) which visitors directly or indirectly support.

## ISSUES AND DISCUSSION

This Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan 2020 - 2024 (Attachment 1) has been developed by using a holistic destination management approach that ensures tourism adds value to the economy, social fabric and ecology of our community. Adopting this approach to tourism will ensure visitors' needs are planned and managed, with support from operators, local communities, visitors and Council.

The Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan 2020 - 2024 establishes a vision where:

*Mitchell Shire is an emerging and increasingly well-known destination of choice for visitors seeking the authentic regional Victorian experience. Mitchell Shire has a growing tourism industry with new and expanded operations and increased capabilities to positively service visitors to the shire.*

The Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan 2020 - 2024 provides a detailed analysis and research into the visitor economy of Mitchell Shire. This includes the strategic context of the plan and how it aligns to state and regional strategies. The plan also details the current value position of the visitor economy including the shire's tourism strengths and areas of opportunity. Further it provides an overarching strategic direction including identifying key branding attributes that distinguish the shire's tourism offering and identifying key target markets. The plan will be reviewed annually to support the changing dynamics of our tourism network and economy.

The research, consultation and analysis that has been undertaken to inform this plan has resulted in the identification of a series of actions to support and grow the visitor economy. These actions are arranged into eight key focus areas. These key focus areas are:

## TOURISM AND VISITOR ECONOMY PLAN 2020 - 2024 (CONT.)

1. Advocacy, structure and frameworks
2. Industry development
3. Visitor servicing
4. Product development
5. Destination development
6. Promotion and brand
7. Events
8. Investment attraction and major projects

**CONSULTATION**

Throughout the development of the Tourism and Mitchell Shire Visitor and Economy Plan there was extensive consultation of industry and community during 2018 and 2019. During the initial research stage an expert peer review panel was convened, this panel included local business operators, as well as state and regional tourism industry experts, who informed and later helped shape and affirm the direction of the plan.

The plan was also strongly informed by numerous interviews, workshops and online surveys with local businesses, community groups, and other visitor economy stakeholders including other agencies, Councillors, Council staff and volunteers.

The consultation process included direct consultation with the Taungurung Land and Waters Council, and this has informed the identification of opportunities to work together and further develop and appropriately showcase local indigenous cultural heritage and continuing indigenous cultures.

The plan also includes actions that will ensure Council continues to regularly engage and consult with tourism and visitor economy operators to best support the industry.

Full details of the research and consultation undertaken to inform and shape the plan can be found in the Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan Consultation Report (Attachment 2).

**FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

Council has allocated funds within the Economic Development budget to support tourism and promotional activities. The Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan 2020 – 2024 provides a detailed action plan, of which majority of the actions are achievable within current budget. Any additional costs will be further considered as part of the annual Council Budget process and as grant opportunities become available from State and Federal Government.

## TOURISM AND VISITOR ECONOMY PLAN 2020 - 2024 (CONT.)

It is important to note that outcomes of the Regional Tourism Review from State Government are yet to be delivered in full and are not clear for Council.

### POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATIONS

This matter is consistent with the *Council Plan 2017 – 2021*, Strategy 5.5: ‘Support the development and enhancement of local tourist attractions’, and Strategy 5.6 ‘Promote of region and towns as a destination for tourism and visitors. It is also supported by a range of actions within the adopted Economic Development Strategy 2016-2021.

### RISK IMPLICATIONS

It is also acknowledged that this document was finalised at a time of uncertainty during the COVID-19 pandemic. The effect of the pandemic on the visitor economy and wider economy is still being felt as this document was finalised. While we cannot yet fully quantify the extent of the damage to the visitor economy, it is clear that the sector is amongst those that have been most seriously impacted. Accordingly, this document has been fully reviewed to ensure that the identified first year actions respond proactively to the current situation and that it is a fluid document that can support both the visitor economy sector and Council in adapting to the changing environment and impacts of this time.

The following table identifies risks that have been considered in the process of preparing the Tourism & Visitor Economy Plan and this Council Report.

Table 3: Risk Ranking is determined using [ROHS201-G1- Corporate Risk Matrix](#). Risk is identified as Low, Medium, High or Very High.

Risk	Risk Ranking	Proposed Treatments	Within Existing Resources?
Without a clear vision and strategic framework and follow on actions, Council efforts to enhance tourism in the Shire will be sporadic, uncoordinated and piecemeal and will fail to properly support the comprehensive development of an ever strengthening and growing local tourism and visitor economy sector.	High	With an adopted plan in place, work collaboratively across Council units and departments to ensure a clear and unified understanding of the role that each department can play and take in supporting the visitor economy.	Yes
That the tourism plan is ambitious and Council officers will	Medium	Mitchell Shire Council is ambitious for success in its tourism and visitor economy sector and its	Yes

TOURISM AND VISITOR ECONOMY PLAN 2020 - 2024 (CONT.)

Risk	Risk Ranking	Proposed Treatments	Within Existing Resources?
struggle to deliver on its aims and actions.		potential to support jobs across the Shire. The Economic Development team will regularly review the action plan and identify resulting work plans and ways through which to best achieve business as usual, short term, medium term and long-term objectives. Mitchell Shire Council will also seek to identify opportunities to work with local industry and leverage support from other visitor economy stakeholders, including relevant regional and state tourism bodies, with a view to extracting maximum value for effort and investment.	
That the vision of the plan will not be achieved and the local visitor economy will not grow and support additional job creation in the way the plan intends.	Low	Communicate regularly and set up frameworks, both informal and more formal, to support regular and on-going dialogues with local visitor economy stakeholders, operators and businesses to build understanding and consensus around key actions, requirements and opportunities for mutually supportive endeavours.	Yes

**SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL)**

The Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan 2020 – 2024 supports the growth of the visitor economy within Mitchell, which will directly provide benefits to the shire’s economy. It focuses on a comprehensive range of actions to underpin and support an increase in

## TOURISM AND VISITOR ECONOMY PLAN 2020 - 2024 (CONT.)

visitor numbers and expenditure, which in turn will grow the sector and support increasing local employment opportunities. A strong local economy will support social, economic and environmental objectives.

By increasing the awareness of Mitchell Shire as a visitor destination it is also hoped residents continue to entice their visiting friends and family to explore the shire. This will create an increase in social outcomes including community connectiveness. The plan also recognises the importance of Mitchell Shire's natural beauty and hopes to raise the profile of our natural environment and in turn support the delivery of improved outcomes in this regard.

**CHARTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS**

The rights protected in the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* were considered in preparing this report and it's determined that the subject matter does not raise any human rights issues.

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS**

The Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan 2020 – 2024 provides a multi-faceted approach that could impact young people within Mitchell Shire in variety of ways. Specifically, the actions within the plan are aimed at growing the visitor economy that will create further local employment options for current and future generations of young people. Importantly, the visitor economy includes the hospitality sector as one of its major employers, this sector is traditionally one that looks to employ young people.

**OFFICER DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any direct or indirect interest in this matter.

**CONCLUSION**

The Mitchell Shire Council Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan 2020 – 2024 provides a vision, strategic framework and action plan for Mitchell Shire Council, together with its partners, local businesses and the community, to support, improve, strengthen and grow the shire's tourism and visitor economy. It sets out a multi-faceted framework, arranged within eight key focus areas, to support business growth in the sector, attract increased numbers of visitors, and to encourage quality investment and job creation. The Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan 2020 – 2024 will provide strategic guidance to the Economic Development Unit in delivering the best outcome for tourism with Mitchell Shire.

Mitchell Shire Council  
Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan 2020 - 2024



# Mitchell Shire Council

## Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan 2020 – 2024

*(Please note: Still to be desktop published & formatted)*

**Date:**

August 2020

**Prepared by:**

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**Acknowledgement of Country**

Mitchell Shire Council acknowledged the traditional custodians of the land, those of the Taungurung and Wurundjeri People. We pay our respects to their rich cultures and to Elders, past, present and future.

**Thank you**

Mitchell Shire Council would like to acknowledge and thank its businesses and residents, who generously gave of their time to help inform this plan by meeting with the project team, attending consultation sessions and by providing input and feedback into the Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan.

Mitchell Shire Council also acknowledges and thanks to local, regional and State Government body tourism experts and also to the three local business operators who participated over two Expert Peer Review Panel Workshops to help inform the parameters for the Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan and provided advice and feedback on the plan.

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## 1. Preface

### 1.1 Why focus on tourism and the visitor economy?

This Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan has been developed by using a 'Destination Management' approach. Destination management is a holistic process that ensures tourism adds value to the economy, social fabric and ecology of a community. Adopting this approach will ensure visitors' needs are planned and managed, while also meeting the needs and aspirations of the local communities and visitor economy operators and aligning with the context that is unique to each destination.

One of the key outcomes of holistic destination management is a strong and resilient tourism and visitor economy industry, complete with dynamic and adaptive product and experience offerings, that adapts to meet the needs of both the visitor and the community as the destination evolves. It is also critical to understand the visitor's complete journey in order to develop and implement a tourism plan that enhances the total visitor experience.

Growing the visitor economy is a great way to positively affect the economics of a region and for many parts of regional Australia, investment in the visitor economy is proving to be one of the most effective ways for local areas to be sustainable and flourish.<sup>1</sup> Bringing new dollars into the local economy helps to improve the profitability of local businesses, support new start-ups and attract new major investment to the area. This in turn supports jobs and overall economic growth.<sup>2</sup> While the economic benefits of tourism are well established, the social benefits of the sector are at times overlooked. This is of particular interest to Mitchell Shire, with tourism able to play a role in enhancing our community's vibrancy, prosperity and liveability.

Supporting tourism entails embarking on a collective effort to bring about a strong and prosperous visitor economy – and so cannot be effectively driven by any single person or organisation. Put simply, it's not just a Council or local government's role to deliver an outstanding destination and experience; rather as the saying goes, **tourism is everybody's business**. Businesses and residents are also a critical part of a bigger picture and to grow Mitchell Shire's visitor economy, there is a role for everyone to play in delivering the best visitor experience possible.

#### Mitchell Shire Visitor Economy - Key Numbers

The visitor economy in Mitchell Shire is estimated to have provided the following economic benefits in 2019 (i.e. pre-Covid-19)

- Approx. 550,000 visitors per year
- \$115 million in Total Economic Output
- 638 jobs
- \$33 million in wages and salaries
- Over 200 business regularly being partly or wholly supported by visitors

<sup>1</sup> VTIC: Why and how Local Government should engage with Victoria's visitor economy, April 2018

<sup>2</sup> VTIC: Why and how Local Government should engage with Victoria's visitor economy, April 2018

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## 2. Introduction

This *Mitchell Shire Council Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan (2020 – 2024)* provides a strategic overview for Mitchell Shire Council, together with its partners, local businesses and the community, to support, strengthen and grow the shire’s tourism and visitor economy. It sets out a multi-faceted framework, arranged within eight key focus areas, to support business growth in the sector, attract increased numbers of visitors, and to encourage quality investment and job creation.

### 2.1 Defining Tourism and the Visitor Economy

Traditional definitions of tourism tend to focus on the consumption activities of leisure tourists; people travelling for holidays and fun. More modern definitions have expanded the concept to include the ‘Visiting Friends and Relatives’ (VFR) market as well as people travelling for work, sports or study.

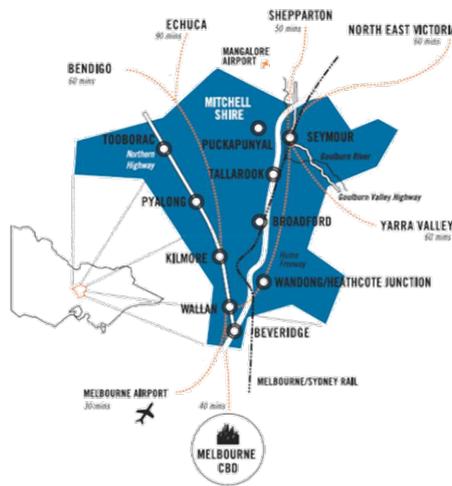
The term ‘visitor economy’ is a more accurate definition of the broader appeal and impact of the industry. It brings together the sectors offering direct visitor services like accommodation, transport, tour companies and attractions with intermediaries and indirectly benefiting sectors such as retail, food and beverage production, and construction. This recognises that visitor activity does not occur in isolation and that it contributes to investment and jobs across a range of industry sectors.

### 2.2 Local Context

Mitchell Shire is not typically considered a major regional Victoria tourist destination. However, awareness of the shire is growing and it is emerging as a visitor destination. It is also gaining accolades for its food, beverage and fresh local produce, diverse landscapes, and authentic country lifestyle, amongst other things. These attributes are beginning to put Mitchell Shire and its towns on the map.

The Melbourne urban growth boundary extends into the south of the shire and, as of 2019, Mitchell Shire is the fastest growing municipality in Victoria. As such, Mitchell now sits at the interface of metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria. Accordingly, the south of the shire increasingly relates

to and forms part of greater Melbourne. Meanwhile the north of the shire continues to relate strongly to surrounding regional areas including north central Victoria, north east Victoria, and the Goulburn River Valley.



From a visitor perspective, the shire is most commonly known for its scenic beauty; characterised by rolling hills, picturesque bushland, rural plains and the beautiful Goulburn River. Mitchell’s major towns and smaller unique settlements, lying mainly along the Hume Freeway and Northern Highway, are also well known to many visitors and have featured prominently over many years in the itineraries of road and rail travellers as they head north out of Melbourne. Significant product and offerings in military and early settlement history, country lifestyles, family friendly attractions, events, and food and wine complete the picture.

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Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan 2020 - 2024



### 3. Project Background

#### 3.1 Context

In 2017/18, acknowledging the importance of tourism as an economic driver in the local economy, Council undertook baseline research on the visitor economy to inform the development of an updated Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan. In addition to the baseline research, an expert peer review panel was established to provide further input and guide the development of the Plan. The panel comprised Mr John Pandazopoulos (Chair of State Government's Visitor Economy Ministerial Advisory Committee), as well representatives from Goulburn River Valley Tourism, the Victorian Tourism Industry Council, three local businesses – one from Seymour and two from Kilmore, and Mitchell Shire Council officers.

It is acknowledged that this document was finalised at a time of uncertainty during the Covid-19 pandemic. The effect of the pandemic on the economy and specifically the visitor economy is still being felt as this document goes to press, and the full extent of the damage to the visitor economy is yet to be fully understood. Consequently, this document has been reviewed to ensure that it is a fluid document that can support both the visitor economy sector and Council in adapting to the changing environment and impacts of this time.

#### 3.2 Aim and Objective

The aims of the Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan are to:

- Identify Mitchell Shire Council's strategic vision for tourism and the visitor economy
- Identify and analyse the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of/to the tourism and visitor economy in the shire
- Identify Mitchell Shire's advantages in the tourism and visitor economy space relative to other destinations, focusing on the physical, natural and heritage assets of the shire and related future visitor attraction development opportunities arising from growth and development
- Develop a set of strategies and actions to capitalise on the identified strengths and opportunities to grow the visitor economy and support existing and new businesses
- Define the key components of Mitchell Shire's tourism brand in the marketplace, and
- Identify and set out a four year strategically justified work plan comprised of projects and initiatives that will grow Mitchell Shire's tourism and visitor economy sector.
- The plan will be reviewed annually to support the changing dynamics of our tourism network and economy

Accordingly, the Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan provides a four-year plan for Mitchell Shire Council to strengthen the shire's tourism and visitor economy in conjunction with other public and private sector partners. It also provides stakeholders with an understanding of Mitchell Shire's positioning in the regional Victorian visitor economy and tourism market place, a focus for the collective efforts of all stakeholders on matters that are important to them, and a commitment from Mitchell Shire Council as to how the plan will be delivered.

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### 3.3 Strategic Context

The strength and potential future growth of the visitor economy is recognised in local, regional, state and national economic development strategies.

#### **State Context**

Visitors bring significant sums of money to Victoria and support jobs and investment. The visitor economy contributes around \$24.8 billion to Victoria's Gross State Product each year and generates employment for 215,500 people.<sup>3</sup> In July 2016, the State Government launched the Victorian Visitor Economy Strategy. The Strategy provides a clear direction across the whole of government to increase visitor spending to \$36.5 billion by 2025 and to reach 320,700 jobs. The Strategy sets the direction and framework for the state and can only be achieved through collaboration and engagement at all levels of government and industry.

As this Plan was being finalised, the State Government has responded to the current challenges of 2020 by developing a draft Visitor Economy Recovery and Reform Strategy. The Strategy seeks to support Victorian's regional visitor economy sector as it recovers from the 2019/20 bushfires and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The key focus areas within this plan align strongly with the focuses identified in the draft Visitor Economy Recovery and Reform Strategy.

#### **Regional Context**

From 2009 to 2019, Mitchell Shire Council together with three other Councils to its north and east, formed and participated in an unofficial regional tourism board known as Goulburn River Valley Tourism (GRVT). In 2019 the participating shires decided not to renew the Memorandum of Understanding and GRVT ceased operating.

Beginning in 2019, the State Government commenced a Regional Tourism Review. Mitchell Shire actively engaged with the Regional Tourism Review, advocating for the outcomes that most strongly support high quality growth and investment in the tourism and the visitor economy of Mitchell Shire. Whatever the result of the Review, this Plan has been designed to set up Mitchell Shire to have a clear understanding of our strengths, weaknesses and the opportunities that exist and to actively and constructively participate in whatever regional tourism structures emerge.

#### **Local Context**

Mitchell Shire Council recognises the importance of economic development and is committed to creating conditions for jobs and business growth now and into the future.

The *Mitchell Shire Council Plan 2017-2021* formalises the shire's commitment to economic development and tourism, specifically through Strategic Objective Five: Supporting Local Jobs and Quality Investment and two key sub-strategies: '5.5: Support the development and enhancement of local tourist attractions' and to '5.6: Promote our regions and towns as destination for tourists and visitors.'

Further to the Council Plan, the *Mitchell Shire Council Economic Development Strategy 2016-2021* identifies tourism and visitor related actions and opportunities, these outline the way in which the shire will support business growth, investment and jobs in the shire.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.business.vic.gov.au/tourism-industry-resources/research/economic-significance>

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3.4 Project Approach

Figure 1.1 sets out the steps that have been followed to research and inform this Plan.

Figure 1.1 - Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan Methodology



Figure 1.2 describes the different research and consultation steps that have ensured this Plan has been informed by a detailed understanding of local industry conditions, the perspectives of local business and public sector stakeholders, and the views and experiences of visitors.

Figure 1.2 - Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan Consultation



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## 4. Mitchell Shire's Visitor Economy

Mitchell Shire is in central Victoria and where the Traditional Custodians of the land are the Taungurung and Wurundjeri People. Most of the shire is less than an hour's travel time from Melbourne and is easily accessible via train or via the Hume Freeway and the linked network of highways and rural roads.

Seymour is considered one of the most recognisable visitor destinations within the shire. As a key regional centre Seymour provides a mix of military and railway history along with burgeoning local cellar doors and boutique cafes. Smaller towns such as Tallarook, Tooborac and Trawool in the northern end of the shire provide unique and authentic experiences. A further highlight of the north of the shire is the many natural wonders of the area such as the Goulburn River and the granite landscapes around Pyalong and Tooborac. One of the jewels in the region, The Great Victorian Rail Trail, begins at Tallarook and runs parallel to the Goulburn River and skirts the north of the Tallarook State Forest, taking in some of the most majestic scenery found anywhere in Victoria. The Great Victorian Rail Trail highlights emerging opportunities for nature-based products and experiences, with the surrounding ranges and rolling hills being ideal for activities such as camping, mountain biking and hiking.

The central and southern areas of the shire encompass historic towns such as Broadford, Kilmore, Beveridge and Wallan. Easily accessible from Melbourne and its growing northern suburbs, these towns appeal primarily to the day tripper market and provide alternatives to the hustle and bustle of city life. Their future growth will also provide significant potential to create new visitor economy attractions, such as sporting facilities and regional parks, family-friendly attractions, and additional food and beverage offerings. The heritage, history and authenticity of these towns, along with sports and event facilities particularly in Kilmore and Broadford and surrounds are the bones upon which future growth and development could occur in the visitor industry.

### 4.1 Economic Output and Jobs

The visitor economy in Mitchell Shire generates output of \$115 million and supports 638 jobs, providing employment for nearly 6% of those working in Mitchell Shire.<sup>4</sup> This is the seventh most significant sector in terms of employment within Mitchell. There are approximately 200 businesses within the shire servicing the visitor economy. Many of these are food and beverage businesses which predominantly service locally based customers but which also serve visitors.<sup>5</sup>

### 4.2 Visitor Numbers

At the time of research, Mitchell Shire was attracting around 550,000 visitors per year. Table 1.0 shows a comparison of visitor numbers with other Victorian regions. This demonstrates that, Mitchell Shire's visitation numbers is low in comparison to other regions.

However more recently available data for Mitchell Shire has shown significant growth in certain markets over the past few years, in particular the domestic day trip market – which in the 12 months ending June 2019, had risen to over 750,000 visitors.

<sup>4</sup> Remplan 2019

<sup>5</sup> Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan - Baseline Research

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Table 1.0 – Visitor Numbers by Region

Region	Visitor numbers – per annum
Mitchell Shire	550,000
Murrindindi	989,000
Shepparton	1.2M
Daylesford/Macedon Ranges	3.87M
Yarra Valley	5.3M
Moorabool	355,000
Casey and Cardinia	1.67M
Grampians	2.3M

4.3 Purpose of Visit

Figure 2.0 sets out the split between domestic day trippers, domestic overnight visitors and international visitors (0.6%) to Mitchell Shire; along with a breakdown of the purpose of their visit.

Figure 2.0 – Mitchell Shire Visitors Purpose of Visit



Figure 2.0 demonstrates that the key driver for the region is the Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) market. VFR markets have also been identified as the leading purpose of visit for visitors to key destination clusters such as Seymour and Surrounds and Kilmore/Wallan (42% and 52% respectively), reinforcing the strong VFR market already visiting the shire.<sup>6</sup> The VFR market should be seen as a significant opportunity by which operators can increase trip length, increase visitor spend; and thereby increase ‘yield’ (i.e. the value of a visitor’s spend per visit).

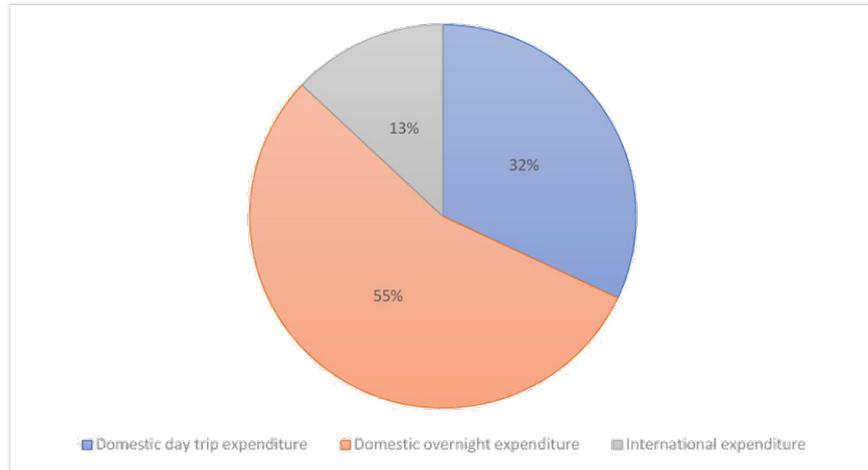
4.4 Visitor Expenditure

Visitor expenditure in the shire was approximately \$113.4 million annually comprising \$36.5 million in day trips, \$62.6 million domestic overnights and \$14.3 million international expenditure. Despite the smaller number of domestic overnight visitors compared to domestic day trip visitors, over 50% of visitor expenditure comes from the domestic overnight market.<sup>7</sup> This demonstrates the significant yield benefit and opportunity of attracting visitors to stay overnight.

<sup>6</sup> GRVT Destination Management Plan 2017  
<sup>7</sup> Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan - Baseline Research



Figure 3.0 - Visitor Expenditure by Trip Type



Petrol was the number one item expenditure item for day trippers to Mitchell Shire, followed by takeaways and restaurant meals. Converting a portion of day trippers into overnight visitors would result in an increasing spend on local accommodation and takeaway, café and restaurant meals, increasing the benefits to the local economy and supporting jobs.

4.5 Key Visitor Markets

The number one market for Mitchell Shire is the Melbourne market, with 99% of all-day trippers to Mitchell Shire coming from Melbourne. Most domestic overnight visitors are from Victoria (76%) and of those, a large proportion are from Melbourne (62% compared with 32% from Regional Victoria). When benchmarked against other regions including the High Country and Great Ocean Road, the Goulburn River Valley (GRV) region attracts a greater proportion of day trippers from Melbourne. Several visitor markets exist for the shire – a general summary of Mitchell’s current markets is provided in Table 2.0.

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**Table 2.0 – Key Visitor Market Segments for Mitchell Shire’s Visitor Economy**

Current Key Markets	Comments and Observations
Melbourne	Strongest market – in both domestic day trip and domestic overnight visitors.
Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR)	High number of VFR visitors already visiting the shire. Continued strong growth expected due to population and migration growth; and opportunities to increase yield from this market segment.
Locals/new residents	Locals exploring their own backyards and staying within the shire for leisure purposes. Significant future opportunities due to rapid population growth and new residents moving into the shire. People living at Puckapunyal (both semi-permanently and temporarily resident trainees) present a similar opportunity.
Surrounding towns/regions (within the hour)	Outlying towns and surroundings areas see region as a place to visit particularly for day trips.
Families	Future growth opportunity. Currently, a significantly lower proportion of visitors travelling as a family group – parents and children (15%) than both GRV (22%) and regional Victoria (23%).
Couples	Mostly from Melbourne, empty nesters or young professionals in particular visiting wineries, markets, and nature-based attractions.

Statistical data suggests there are a small number of interstate and international visitors to the shire, over a third of which are visiting friends and relatives. This is further supported by anecdotal evidence provided at the coal face by local operators.

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## 5. Town Summaries

The following summaries provide an overview of each town, its current status within the visitor economy and the key opportunities that exist.

### 5.1 Beveridge

- The most southernly town of the shire and part of the Northern Growth Corridor.
- During the lifespan of this Plan, forecasted to overtake Broadford and Seymour in population.
- Along with growth in Wallan, population growth in Beveridge will provide a major opportunity for the VFR market.

Beveridge is known for the birthplace of Ned Kelly and the family home still stands in the township. While in its current format it has limited visitor appeal and marketability, works in 2020 by Heritage Victoria have safeguarded the house for future generations and now provide an opportunity to draw visitors to the area. The already established Ned Kelly Touring Route further north provides an opportunity to put Beveridge on the map. Further investigation into how to best leverage this heritage asset in partnership with Heritage Victoria to attract visitation to the town is required.

The historically significant Hunters Tryst, built 1845, still operates as a pub today and certainly provides an insight into the days gone by. By contrast, the more recently established Club Mandalay is popular with locals and has benefitted from extensive promotion in the Melbourne marketplace. The golf course and its restaurant are open to visitors and represent an opportunity that is heavily geared towards the Melbourne golf player and local VFR markets.

### 5.2 Broadford

- An easy 65-minute drive via the Hume Freeway or train trip from Melbourne CBD.
- Holds one of the key visitor attractions of Mitchell Shire, the Broadford State Motorcycle Sports Complex (SMSC). The SMSC currently holds several events every year and participant and spectator numbers have increased year-on-year for the past five years.
- Home to some nature-based assets such as Mt Piper.

There is an opportunity for Broadford to further leverage the SMSC. Council's adopted 2016 Economic Development Strategy identified the importance of leveraging economic benefits from the SMSC and Council has worked with Motorcycling Victoria, the SMSC's owner, to examine the feasibility of expanding its offering. It is important that opportunities to attract visitors to the SMSC into the town are fully exploited. Increasing awareness of, and visitation to, events held at the SMSC and engaging with both residents and businesses in Broadford would help better support future growth of this asset and bring increased economic benefits to Broadford.

In recent years there have been several new cafes open in the town such as Flavour Gourmet Foods and with the addition of a local brewery at the Broadford Hotel the town is attracting more people to stop and spend time and money locally. However, there is a need for broader and more diverse accommodation, dining and support services to encourage overnight stays, support larger events and to attract a diversified market.

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### 5.3 Kilmore

- Currently the second largest town in Mitchell Shire and planned to grow to some 25,000 residents.
- The town has strong history and heritage assets, although many are underutilised for tourist purposes.
- The main street, Sydney Street, is full of historical and architectural delights and the Kilmore Town Centre Plan, adopted by Council in 2016, sets out a plan to revitalise the town centre, including its streetscapes and the relationship with Kilmore Creek. Recently secured State and Federal Government funding will see over \$3.3 million invested in Sydney Street's streetscape.

Kilmore's proximity to Melbourne naturally lends itself to day trippers and the VFR market. There is an opportunity to attract a more diverse and younger demographic including those who may have never visited the region before and visitors from surrounding regions. Kilmore can also leverage off new residents moving into the shire, and especially Beveridge and Wallan, to make Kilmore their first destination beyond the edge of Melbourne.

The town would benefit from an improved and increased number of quality boutique food and dining options to cater for and attract day-trippers and weekend visitors. An increase and improvement in accommodation offerings to meet ever-demanding visitor needs and to cater for VFR and event visitation should be encouraged. Targeted investment to attract new operators and work with existing operators to provide improved service delivery would benefit the town and enhance its visitor appeal.

There is an opportunity for further enhancement of Kilmore Racecourse to improve the scale of events that the venue can support. Other local events should also be supported. Supplementary attractions, such as Kilmore East's 'The Meat Room', are present but currently lacking in number. More such attractions would help keep visitors here longer and increase their spend.

Capitalising and enhancing natural and historical assets, such as Monument Hill and the Hume and Hovel monument, also provide an opportunity to enhance the visitor experience in Kilmore. The Kilmore Art Walk tells the history of Kilmore through a series of interpretive panels and art installations along the Kilmore Creek. The potential to build on this and develop further materials to market this as a visitor attraction and a visitor trail through Kilmore will strengthen this historic town's visitor appeal.

### 5.4 Pyalong

- A small town located in the north west of the shire
- Despite its relatively small size, it is the largest settlement between Kilmore and Heathcote.

Pyalong has an inviting and welcoming sign to the town; however, the town is not currently a visitor destination for most and the alignment of the Northern Highway bypassing the village centre means that the town is too easily passed by most travellers. The local pub and the scenery and historic trestle bridges are notable for the town. Pyalong provides opportunities to be considered as part of a regional trail or scenic drive.

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### 5.5 Seymour

- One of the shire's major towns and a regional hub for the many outlying areas.
- Well serviced for residents and visitors providing good retail, food, wine and accommodation.
- Easily accessible via car or train and is often seen as a meeting point or stopping point for travellers through the region, particularly those going to and from the Spirit of Tasmania.
- Attracts a diverse range of visitors from grey nomads, military history buffs traditional leisure tourists.

Seymour is well positioned to build on its tourism foundation with key visitor attractions such as the Goulburn River and the Vietnam Veterans Commemorative Walk, as well as established food and beverage attractions such as Wine X Sam, Blue Tongue Berries, The Winery Kitchen and the Brewers Table. Food and beverage experiences such as these help to drive yield and are a key visitor attractor for the region and should continue to be nurtured to support further visitor and revenue growth.

In meeting visitor expectations, Seymour needs to enhance its sense of place; both in the town centre and along the highly attractive but underutilised Goulburn River. Place making activities and strategic development opportunities have the potential to transform perceptions of Seymour and attract new tourism, accommodation and dining offerings. A key focus should be on developing a critical mass of quality cafes and dining options, along with high quality self-contained accommodation that can cater for the VFR and business markets. Better utilisation of unique home stay options listed on platforms such as accommodation and sharing websites (e.g. Airbnb, Stayz) can also support and accommodate this growing VFR market.

A key visitor appeal and attraction opportunity for Seymour is the Goulburn River; for both activation (events and activities) and investment. Currently the river is a wonderful natural attraction with walking tracks, picnic areas and fishing jetties. Further activating the river would increase visitor numbers, encourage longer stays, increase spending in the immediate and surrounding areas, and increase marketability of Seymour and the region. The Seymour Structure Plan identifies a number of opportunities to enhance the town's visitor appeal, including the need to investigate opportunities to restore the Old Goulburn River Bridge and to connect it to a wider future trail network; which could also further enhance the river experience for visitors.

The Seymour Visitor Information Centre, located within the town's Old Court House, is located at a key entry gateway (by road) to the town, between the Goulburn River and Vietnam Veterans Commemorative Walk. Previous studies support enhancing or developing a new visitor information centre, and there could be an opportunity to do so in conjunction with strategic efforts to improve the connection between the town and the river.

Annual events such as Tastes of the Goulburn, the Seymour Cup at the Seymour Racing Club, and the successful Seymour Alternative Farming Expo (which brings in over 20,000 people and injects over \$6 million into the local economy) have the potential to support this product development. In addition, the Seymour Revitalisation Initiative is also likely to provide opportunities that can be leveraged to support tourism and the visitor economy.

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RV and grey nomad travellers frequently drive through and stop at Seymour, the town must be RV friendly and capitalise on the opportunities this market brings.

Seymour also has a strong affiliation with military history, and this should be further explored and developed to create new and interactive visitor experiences cementing a real point of difference for the town. Redevelopment of a new and more easily accessible Tank Museum at Puckapunyal is of critical importance to cementing Seymour's role as an overnight stay military history destination. Further to this, existing assets such as the Vietnam Veterans Commemorative Walk and the Australian Light Horse Memorial Park should be further supported by Council, where possible, to incorporate new experiences and broaden their appeal to a wider market. It must also leverage off Puckapunyal, including its residents and visitors to the site, which presents a further significant opportunity to increase visitor spending in the town and surrounding region.

The Seymour Railway Heritage Centre, run as a not-for-profit by volunteers as a railway preservation group heritage train tour operator, holds great potential to become a significant visitor drawcard for Seymour and the wider region. In its current format, the Heritage Centre does not have the capacity to receive visitors to its site or meet and service growing visitor expectations; however the opportunity exists to transition this attraction to a more visitor-facing and visitor-centric business model to capitalise on the growing tourism market.

Finally, as a main entry point to the town for rail day trippers, the railway station has the potential to provide a stronger welcome to the town with improved visitor services and the utilisation of the space for potential mixed-use or complementary services.

#### 5.6 Tallarook

- Tallarook is an idyllic town located on the Melbourne-Seymour rail line and at the start of the Great Victorian Rail Trail.
- Aesthetically pleasing, Tallarook presents as a strong opportunity to increase visitation and spend to the area – particularly high-yield visitors.
- Tallarook has been identified as a developing 'boutique village', with major potential to leverage off the Great Victorian Rail Trail, which connects it to Trawool and other destinations in Murrindindi and Mansfield Shires.

Approximately an hour from Melbourne just off the Hume Freeway, along with being en-route to the ski-fields and with a dedicated train station, Tallarook is easily accessible and ideally located to attract many visitors from a range of markets. The monthly Tallarook Farmers' Market attracts a strong loyal following and the Mechanics Institute Hall (rebuilt in 2020) houses the annual arts program. The town's only pub, the Tallarook Hotel, has been renovated and reopened with a more gastropub style that is proving attractive to both locals and the Melbourne visitor market.

Without doubt the biggest attractor for the town is the Great Victorian Rail Trail, and Council works closely with Murrindindi and Mansfield Shires to manage and promote the trail. Connecting the trail to Seymour and developing complementary support services along the trail such as accommodation and dining and health and wellbeing and are key opportunities to focus on. In addition, supporting and facilitating the opening of artisan boutique cafes, farm gates and/or provedores in the town that highlight local produce would further enhance the town's visitor appeal and enable it to better

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exploit opportunities to increase spend by both visitors to and travellers passing through the town and the surrounding area.

Consideration should also be given to the growing international and domestic markets seeking a farm stay/country experience; such as that on offer at the Seven Hills Country Retreat and Farmstay and other similar businesses in the area.

### 5.7 Tooborac

- Located at the start of Heathcote Wine Region, surrounded by majestic granite country scenery.
- A unique small town that has strong local food and beverage producers.
- Local wineries such as Merindoc and Mclvor Estate are complemented by local favourites the Tooborac General Store, Tooborac Hotel (Brewery and Pie Shop), Mclvor Fine Foods, as well as several boutique bed and breakfast accommodation providers.

Tooborac has significant opportunity to increase visitation from a range of markets, most notably the Melbourne market. It already has strong links and connections to the Heathcote Wine Growers Association and Bendigo Tourism so Mitchell Shire would benefit from investing and connecting with these existing linkages to capitalise on the brand strength and recognition that already exists in the marketplace. These links would be strengthened by completion of the Heathcote to Tooborac section of the Wallan to Heathcote Rail Trail.

Operators are already working collaboratively and would further benefit from targeted marketing and support to further develop visitor-based initiatives. Opportunities exist to run theme-based events, markets, pop-ups and to leverage off the quality farm gate style attractors in the area. It is important that the focus is on increasing length of stay and converting day trippers to overnight stays. To do this effectively, additional boutique or niche accommodation options will be required, along with stronger promotion of connected 'tours' and 'trails' such as winery, food and cycling both within and throughout the region.

### 5.8 Trawool

- A small picturesque locality just outside Seymour, Trawool is largely known for agriculture and unforgettable scenery.
- The Trawool Valley has a heritage listed Scenic Classification by the National Trust, recognising its importance as a scenic and geological site.
- Home to a great diversity of flora and fauna Trawool is largely an untapped visitor destination; the area is popular for outdoor activities such as bushwalking, fishing and sight-seeing.

Its picturesque location right on the Great Victorian Rail Trail provides yet another opportunity to create value adds such as food and accommodation along the trail attracting high-yielding markets. Opportunities exist to leverage off the recent renovation of the Trawool Estate, and supporting activities that take advantage of the location. The area would benefit from increased marketing and online promotion of the picturesque drives and scenic locations such as Horseshoe Lagoon.

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### 5.9 Wallan

- Wallan is situated at the tip of the metropolitan Northern Growth Corridor and a huge population growth is anticipated in the coming years, turning the once urban fringe town into an urban hub.
- Wallan will see an influx of new homeowners, diverse cultures and new immigrant population providing a significant opportunity to capture a VFR market.
- Wallan's recreational spaces and assets provide opportunities to enhance its visitor appeal

Wallan is geared towards providing facilities and infrastructure to support its new residents. It has a solid retail base, food offerings and recreational assets such as the Community Bank® Adventure Playground and Splash Park in Hadfield Park, Green Hill Reserve and Hidden Valley Estate and Golf Course. The golf course and its associated facilities including accommodation provides opportunity to attract the Melbourne golf market around the concept of stay and play packages.

Wallan is also home to the Wallan Olde Time Market, the largest monthly event in the shire and one which attracts many visitors to Wallan. Opportunities exist to further leverage and capture the Melbourne and VFR market to experience the events and recreational spaces provided in Wallan. In addition, there is a significant opportunity to encourage 'new residents' to discover their own backyard, stay local and explore the shire they live in.

Other than these assets, traditional tourism product and visitor services are limited but there are likely to be further opportunities to develop leisure and entertainment product. There is also an ongoing need to plan for the future development of the area's natural attractions, such as the area's hilltops and a future Wallan Regional Park and wetlands, along the Merri Creek and around the nationally significant Hernes Swamp, which has potential to become significant visitor attraction. A future Wallan Regional Park would also sit at the southern end of the proposed Wallan to Heathcote Rail Trail, and as such it would enable a connection between the Merri Creek cycling trails further south in Melbourne and the Wallan to Heathcote and Bendigo rail trails; thus creating a off-road walking and cycling link all the way from inner Melbourne to Bendigo; with obvious visitor appeal.

### 5.10 Wandong and Heathcote Junction

- The neighbouring tranquil townships of Heathcote Junction and Wandong are just beyond Melbourne's extended urban growth boundary however as surrounded by small farms these townships are set to retain their country charm.
- Easily accessible via car or train from Melbourne; offering visitors nature and a quieter feel.
- The townships are a key gateway to Mt Disappointment and Kinglake National Park and often act as a meeting point for those pursuing nature-based activities in the area.

While predominantly servicing the hunting, shooting, motorcycling and 4WD market, opportunities exists to further develop and service these and other nature-based activities such as walking, cycling, hiking, horse riding and mountain biking – appealing to a broader demographic keen to explore the area. The Wallan to Heathcote Rail Trail, which is based on the original rail line reservation from Heathcote Junction, also presents a further opportunity to appeal to such activities and to link into other trail networks including the Say G'day Trail.

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## 6. Destination Analysis

A thorough and detailed destination analysis was undertaken of Mitchell Shire as a visitor destination. Key strengths, areas for improvement and opportunities emerged from the analysis and are summarised in the tables below.

**Table 3.0 Mitchell Shire Strengths and Areas for Improvement**

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES / AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Natural Assets</b> – scenery, river, mountains, fresh air, countryside, landscapes, waterways, racecourses, parks and reserves</li> <li>• <b>Accessibility</b> – easy to access, proximity to Melbourne, train and car access, freeway, close to airport</li> <li>• <b>Local Produce</b> – local producers, good food and beverages</li> <li>• <b>Heritage and History</b> – indigenous heritage and living culture, military, railway, Ned Kelly, and historic buildings</li> <li>• <b>Unique Small Towns</b> – country feel, country hospitality, authentic, unique, boutique, charm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Market Awareness</b> – little awareness of destination, improving brand awareness or presence in the marketplace</li> <li>• <b>Tourism and Visitor Product</b> – anchor attraction, critical mass of tourism products and experiences, accommodation, tourism infrastructure</li> <li>• <b>Visitor Experience</b> – inconsistent quality and service, delivery of complete visitor experience</li> <li>• <b>Structures and Frameworks</b> – industry fragmented, not strategic, not cohesive, collaborative, stronger support</li> </ul>

### 6.1 Competitive Advantages & Opportunities

From the research, several key competitive strategic strengths were identified for Mitchell Shire. These competitive strengths are listed in the table 4.0 below, together with a description of the key opportunities in respect of each competitive strength.

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**Table 4.0 Mitchell Shire Competitive Strengths and Related Opportunities**

COMPETITIVE STRENGTH	OPPORTUNITIES
LOCATION, PHYSICAL ASSETS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capitalise on the shire's proximity to               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ the Melbourne visitor market</li> <li>○ Melbourne Airport</li> <li>○ Great road and rail links</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Capitalise on the shire's growing population to further leverage the 'new residents' market and the VFR market</li> <li>• Capitalise on Tooborac's location as the start of the Heathcote Wine Region</li> <li>• Promote and highlight the location and accessibility of Mitchell Shire to increase market share and capitalise on Victoria's ongoing visitor growth</li> <li>• Build the events market by leveraging off key event-site assets (e.g. racecourses, golf clubs, Kings Park, etc.) and their location and accessibility</li> </ul>
SCENERY, ENVIRONMENT, COUNTRY, AUTHENTICITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the shire's natural and untouched beauty</li> <li>• Make the shire's natural beauty and its people's authenticity central to the shire's brand and improve promotion of these core attributes</li> <li>• Capitalise on the environmental and natural sites around the shire and support the ongoing enhancement of these sites into visitor attractions.</li> <li>• Use the characteristics of the shire to differentiate from other regions</li> <li>• Capitalise on the shire's authentic appeal to capitalise on recent research which indicates visitors are wanting a 'real' experience</li> <li>• Capitalise on the fresh air and country charm of the region by marketing to Melburnians wanting to escape the 'rat race' and get back to nature, farm stays or agri-tourism experiences</li> <li>• Capitalise on the growing caravan and camping market searching for an 'entry level' bush experience</li> </ul>
GOULBURN RIVER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Goulburn River is the greatest underutilised natural asset and tourism opportunity in the shire</li> <li>• Connect and collaborate with Nagambie and surrounding river towns to develop new river-centric and water-based tourism product, activities and destination events</li> <li>• Increase promotion of the Goulburn River and related natural attractions</li> <li>• Market and increase visitation to Trawool and the wider area by leveraging off its idyllic location on the banks of the Goulburn River</li> </ul>
UNIQUE SMALL TOWNS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Showcase the diverse range and authenticity of the small towns throughout the shire and highlight their respective unique characteristics to attract high yield markets</li> <li>• Capture attention of the Melbourne market through increased promotion and awareness raising of the 'T' towns: Tallarook, Trawool and Tooborac.</li> <li>• Support boutique accommodation to increase length of stay in the shire</li> <li>• Develop itineraries and packages to support visitor connectivity between towns</li> </ul>

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COMPETITIVE STRENGTH	OPPORTUNITIES
<b>FOOD AND PRODUCE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support growers and commercial operators to showcase local produce in local restaurants and cafes, within local markets, at long lunches, etc.</li> <li>• Promote local food producers and their stories, by developing marketing material and digital content highlighting businesses</li> <li>• Continue to support farmers' markets and food related events in the shire</li> <li>• Enhanced food offerings throughout the region by supporting high quality cafes and restaurants</li> <li>• Encourage investment in small towns creating new product offerings such as wineries, distilleries, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>TRAILS AND RECREATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capitalise on and activate the Great Victorian Rail Trail</li> <li>• Develop itineraries to encourage self-drive visitors off the main roads and to explore the picturesque back roads, and diversity of the shire's landscapes</li> <li>• Capitalise on the shire's two racecourses and associated equine attractions</li> <li>• Promote existing motorbike and 4WD trails</li> <li>• Support the further enhancement of recreational sites around the shire to become visitor-centric</li> <li>• Develop specific themed trails to leverage off key strengths of the region such as: food, rail, bike, walking, driving</li> <li>• Support and facilitate development of complementary visitor offerings and amenities along trails to increase length of stay and spend</li> <li>• Support development of the Wallan to Heathcote Rail Trail</li> <li>• Support development of new trails such as the 'Tallarook to Seymour' route to further strengthen visitor appeal to the region</li> <li>• Explore opportunities to partner with surrounding regions to further enhance existing and develop new trails (e.g. Indigenous or walking trails)</li> </ul>
<b>HERITAGE AND HISTORY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell the story of indigenous history of the shire with key sites and activities highlighted through a range of visitor experiences e.g.: tours, classes, interpretative materials</li> <li>• Tell and promote the story of the region by developing content for marketing</li> <li>• Interpret the heritage and history and integrate into a visitor experience</li> <li>• Support development/renovation of historical buildings and structures for commercial and/or tourism uses</li> <li>• Build on the strong military history in Seymour and support development of further tourism product offerings in this space</li> <li>• Support the transition of Seymour Railway Heritage Centre to allow for visitors to come to the site and further support SRHC's heritage rail tours</li> <li>• Capitalise on the heritage and history in towns such as Kilmore, Tooborac, Beveridge, Wallan, Seymour and Wandong.</li> <li>• Leverage interest in the Ned Kelly story and various associated places and buildings of interest to attract increase visitation from Melbourne and by travelers along the Hume Freeway</li> </ul>

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## 7. Visitor Brand

In relation to tourism and the visitor economy, a brand is a visitor's perception of the destination, experience and service.

To date Mitchell Shire has lacked a cohesive visitor brand and has had only a limited profile within the wider Victorian visitor economy. Employing a consistent narrative and approach to promotion that showcases its tourism strengths and personality will strengthen the awareness and attractiveness of the shire as a visitor destination. It will also build a distinctive visitor brand for the shire and its towns within the Victorian visitor economy. The challenge, but also opportunity for Mitchell Shire, is to create a brand proposition that differentiates the shire and its towns from the surrounding regions.

In articulating the visitor brand for Mitchell Shire, the DNA of the area has been considered; its history, people, culture, geography, climate, and economy. Consistent themes and attributes have emerged, such as fresh air and unspoilt countryside, heritage, military, railways, local produce, wineries, trail sports, equine, the river and the natural environment.

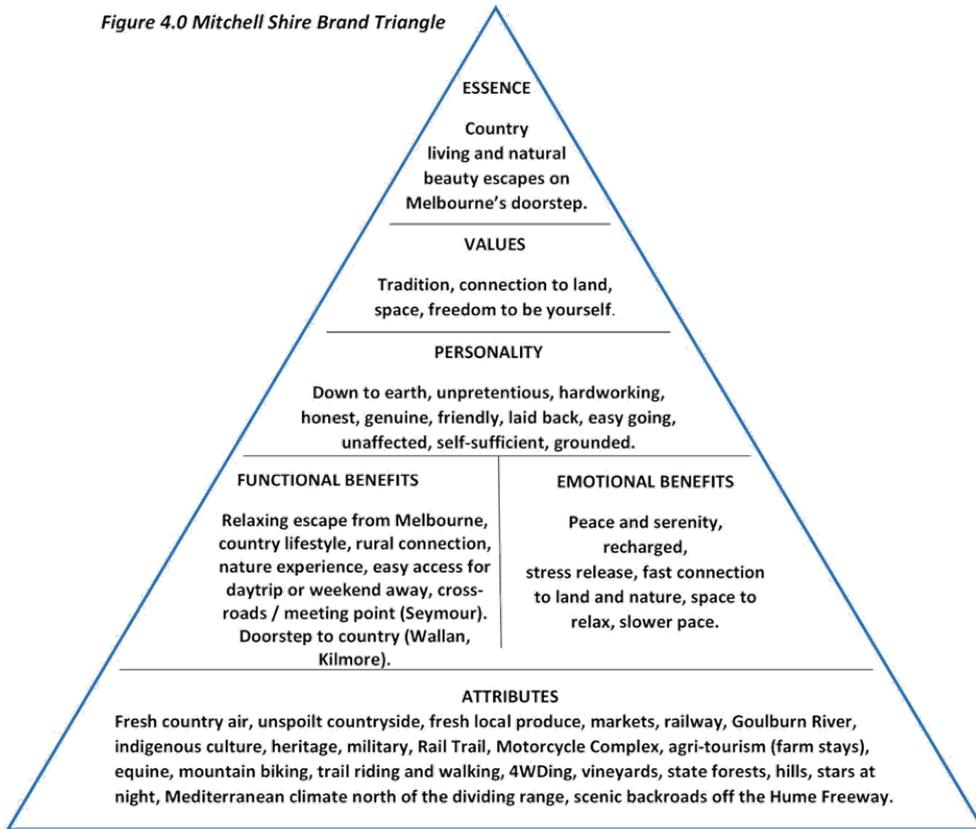
The brand or collection of sub-brands should resonate with visitors' experiences of the current visitor product and services on offer and must not limit the brand in the future as new tourism products and services are developed.

The below 'brand proposition pyramid' is the result of detailed research that has been carried out to inform this plan and resulting strengths and opportunities analysis. The pyramid identifies the attributes that best speak to the qualities that Mitchell Shire presents to visitors and which should be continually promoted, supported, reinforced and invested in. These qualities and attributes should also form the basis for consistent messaging in all promotion and marketing efforts and associated collateral.

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Figure 4.0 Mitchell Shire Brand Triangle



**Our core brand promise**  
A break from the city that will refresh the senses.

**Our brand distinction**  
A country setting and natural beauty ripe for discovery, on Melbourne's doorstep.

The brand and its components have been developed for the shire as a whole and they are intended to provide an overarching and consistent theme with which to promote the shire. However, it is recognised that Mitchell Shire is made up of different towns and communities, each with unique and differing strengths and attractions for the visitor market. Accordingly, it will be important throughout the life of this Plan to help individual towns further develop brands that can establish the unique values of each destination.



### 8. Target Markets

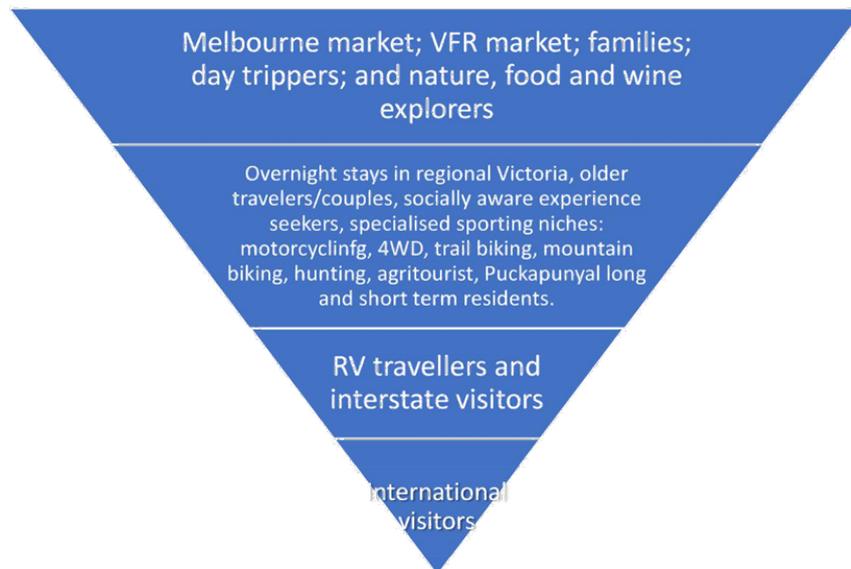
An opportunity exists for Mitchell Shire to capture the domestic, and primarily Melburnian market. With proximity to Melbourne, but an undiscovered feel, being strengths of the shire, the Melbourne market must be a core target market for Mitchell Shire, particularly to increase length of stay and yield.

The accessibility and growth of the southern end of the shire will naturally encourage visitation growth and drive strong growth in both the VFR and day tripper markets. Opportunities also exist to leverage off the back of the influx of new residents who are a mix of immigrants and new Melburnians who should be encouraged to explore their own backyard. Increasing market share of VFR is also a key consideration and will drive visitation to the shire well into the future.

Mitchell Shire is best advised to focus on those key markets and choose one or two segments and do them well, as it is very challenging in tourism to be all things to all people. Research and consultation identified several key target markets, and these are displayed in Figure 5.0.

Figure 5.0 highlights the 'quick win' target markets and suggests that focusing on the Melbourne market, day trippers and the VFR market will provide the best opportunities and return on investment for the shire to increase visitation, yield and length of stay. Defining the region's key target audiences gives context and structure to product development and future marketing strategies.

Figure 5.0 Mitchell Shire Key Target Markets



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## 9. Vision for 2024

Mitchell Shire is an emerging and increasingly well-known destinations of choice for visitors seeking an authentic regional Victoria experience. Mitchell Shire has a growing tourism industry with new and expanded operations and increased capabilities to positively service visitors to the shire.

## 10. Summary

As a growing visitor destination Mitchell Shire has a genuine opportunity to position itself as a destination of choice and capitalise on tourism and the visitor economy as a key economic driver and job creator.

The development of a sustainable tourism industry in the shire is unlikely to happen without a strategic, collaborative and coordinated approach to destination management.

A destination management approach anchors this *Tourism and Visitor Plan* and will provide a platform for managing and implementing the plan's actions across the shire. Such an approach integrates Mitchell Shire Council with key stakeholders, the community and both public and private sector partner organisations.

The *Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan* will lay the foundation and provide the overarching framework to guide future tourism development within the shire over the next four years. It is envisioned that this Plan will be implemented through Council in collaboration and with the support of the shire's tourism and visitor economy industry.

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## 11. Action Plan

This plan supports the vision and development of the shire to be competitive with more well-established tourism region, however it also recognises that Mitchell Shire is still in its infancy as a major visitor destination and acknowledges that foundations must be established to reach that goal.

The research, consultation and analysis that has been undertaken to critically inform this plan has resulted in the identification of a series of actions to support and grow the visitor economy in Mitchell Shire. The actions and the objectives behind them align on a regional and state level and are all aimed at increasing visitation, spend and length of stay within the shire. These actions have been arranged under eight key focus areas or strategic themes which are set out below in Figure 6.0 below. Several projects identified within the plan feature in two or more focus areas; reflecting the interconnections between the focus areas that is required to establish a competitive and vibrant tourism region.

Figure 6.0 Tourism & Visitor Economy Plan – Key Focus Areas



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### 11.1 FOCUS AREA ONE – STRUCTURE, ADVOCACY AND FRAMEWORKS

**Strategic objective:** Advocate for a strong and valued tourism and visitor industry, through a strategically recognised framework.

**Rationale:** A strong united industry provides the foundation to grow, develop and influence at all levels.

FOCUS AREA ONE – STRUCTURE, ADVOCACY AND FRAMEWORKS								
NO.	ACTION	PARTNERS	Y	Y	Y	Y	PRIORITY	COST
			1	2	3	4		
<b>Strategy 1: Strengthen strategic tourism positioning of the shire within future regional tourism framework and structures</b>								
1.1	Investigate the option to develop and introduce a tourism policy position for Mitchell Shire Council.						High	N/A
1.2	Actively engage with the State Government Regional Tourism Review and advocate for outcomes that most strongly support growth and investment in the tourism and visitor economy of Mitchell Shire, and official recognition of the shire in the state tourism structure.	Visit Victoria					High	N/A
1.3	Following the Regional Tourism Review; actively participate as appropriate within the decided structure to deliver on the Vision for tourism & the visitor economy in Mitchell Shire and to enable stability and long-term planning.						High	Internal funds to be allocated
1.4	Review Council's tourism resourcing, and if warranted prepare business case for more tourism resources.						High	
<b>Strategy 2: Strengthen the local tourism industry through collaboration with relevant stakeholders and within the context of a clear and united regional tourism structure</b>								
2.1	Convene a shire wide tourism forum with shire-wide representation for the purposes of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Forming a united and representative group of local tourism and visitor economy businesses</li> <li>Sharing and collaboration of information, advice and knowledge, and</li> <li>Creating a dialogue to advocate for needs of the local industry.</li> </ul>	Local businesses, key tourism stakeholders					Medium	Within existing resource
2.2	Identify tourism ambassadors/champions and characters and develop associated content (images, video and copy) for promotion.	Local businesses					High	Within existing resource

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2.3	Develop and regularly distribute tourism industry news content to all businesses within the visitor economy sector via a newsletter or similar means.	Local businesses				Medium (BAU)	Within existing resource
2.4	Investigate digital platforms to encourage and facilitate collaboration, networking and information sharing between tourism businesses in Mitchell Shire.	Local businesses, tourism associations				Medium	Within existing resource
2.5	Engage with surrounding Council tourism departments and other key tourism and visitor economy stakeholders on a regular basis to identify industry support needs and opportunities for shared or cross-promotion.	Neighbouring Councils; Tourism Boards; Wine Regions; Town-based promotional agencies; Taungurung Land & Waters Council, etc.				Medium (BAU)	Within existing resource
<b>Strategy 3: Advocate on behalf of existing local tourism businesses and their needs and also in anticipation of future tourism opportunities and businesses</b>							
3.1	Advocate for tourism businesses internally and demonstrate their value and needs across all departments.					High (BAU)	Within existing resource
3.2	Develop formal processes to support and welcome new tourism business opportunities to complement the planning and event concierge services.	Internal departments				Medium	Within existing resource
3.3	Work across Council in an ongoing manner to plan for and advocate for public (and where relevant, private) investment into new tourism and visitor-enabling infrastructure and attractions within the shire; particularly around identified key strengths and opportunities.					High	Within existing resource
<b>Strategy 4: Strengthen strategic partnerships with regional stakeholders to grow the economic benefits of tourism</b>							
4.1	Further develop and strengthen the relationship with Taungurung Land & Waters Council to support growth of indigenous tourism opportunities.					High	N/A
4.2	Implement the Great Victorian Rail Trail Strategic Development Plan and its Action Plan.	Murrindindi, Mansfield				High	Internal funds to be allocated
4.3	Confirm an MOU agreement with the other participating Ned Kelly Touring Route local authorities – ensuring Beveridge and Kilmore are represented on and promoted as part of the route.	Ned Kelly Touring Route partner local authorities				Medium	Internal funds to be allocated

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4.4	Build partnerships with all neighbouring tourism boards and associated agencies (or their successors) to identify opportunities to work together to develop the visitor economy.	DMR, TNE, Heathcote Wine Region, Northern Melbourne Representatives					Medium (BAU)	N/A
4.5	Work collaboratively with Go Seymour and Go Nagambie to identify shared goals in the tourism and visitor economy market, and actively support initiatives which have potential to encourage visitation and increase length of stay across the region.	Go Seymour; Go Nagambie					Medium	Within existing resource

11.2 FOCUS AREA TWO – INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

**Strategic objective:** Equip Mitchell Shire’s tourism businesses with the tools, knowledge and capacity to deliver consistent, quality visitor experiences through a range of industry development activities.

**Rationale:** Ensure our businesses service delivery meet and exceed visitor expectations.

FOCUS AREA TWO – INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT								
NO.	ACTION	PARTNERS	Y	Y	Y	Y	PRIORITY	COST
			1	2	3	4		
<b>Strategy 5: Communicate and engage with our tourism industry to better understand their professional development needs</b>								
5.1	Survey tourism and visitor economy businesses to identify training gaps and skill needs.	Local businesses,					Medium	Low
5.2	Undertake a biannual industry survey to understand tourism and visitor economy industry needs and gaps.						Low	Within existing resource
<b>Strategy 6: Research, review and analyse our tourism and visitor economy industry to inform decision making and understand the needs of Mitchell’s key markets</b>								
6.1	Benchmark accommodation provision within the shire by undertaking an annual audit of number of providers, occupancy levels, markets, etc.	Local accommodation providers					Medium	Within existing resource
6.2	Undertake research into the visitor experience of Mitchell as a visitor destination using customer experience audits across the shire to identify visitor experience gaps and development needs and communicate findings to local operators.	External providers					Medium	Funds to be allocated

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6.3	Encourage and support tourism businesses to analyse and benchmark customer satisfaction through a range of research methods – online, survey, in person, etc.						Medium	Within existing resource
<b>Strategy 7: Upskill the Mitchell Shire tourism industry to meet and exceed visitor expectations</b>								
7.1	Implement a tourism excellence professional development program for local operators – including potential for mentoring and education of tourism industry operators.						High	Funds to be allocated
7.2	Provide ongoing ‘tourism excellence’ training (e.g. industry development workshops and activities) for existing and new businesses with a focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Venue presentation</li> <li>- Customer service</li> <li>- Marketing and promotion</li> <li>- Social media and online presence</li> <li>- Value and role of visitor economy</li> <li>- Inclusion and accessibility</li> <li>- Business planning, and</li> <li>- Start-up skill building.</li> </ul>	External providers, State and Federal Government agencies					High	Funds to be allocated
7.3	Encourage local tourism businesses to gain official tourism accreditation and/ or build skills for business to enter awards.	VTIC, ATAP, Visit Victoria,					Medium	N/A
<b>Strategy 8: Equip our industry with the information it needs to grow and develop at a macro level</b>								
8.1	Support tourism businesses to access grant and future funding programs including local, State and Federal Government grants, and industry-based funding, as appropriate.	State and Federal Government agencies					Medium (BAU)	Within existing resource

11.3 FOCUS AREA THREE – VISITOR SERVICING

**Strategic objective:** Deliver an exceptional visitor information service when and where the visitor wants it.

**Rationale:** Ensuring visitor information needs are met at all stages of the customer journey provides an opportunity to influence visitor behaviour and ultimately increase visitor dispersal, spend, yield, and length of stay.

FOCUS AREA THREE – VISITOR INFORMATION SERVICING								
NO.	ACTION	PARTNERS	Y 1	Y 2	Y 3	Y 4	PRIORITY	COST
<b>Strategy 10: Review and develop a contemporary and strategic approach for visitor information servicing</b>								
10.1	Develop a clear, strategic and targeted approach to visitor information servicing (VIS) for the shire.						Medium	Within existing resource

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	<p>The VIS strategy should focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Holistic visitor journey</li> <li>- Future form and locations of VIS</li> <li>- Provision of information and dispersal of information throughout the shire</li> <li>- Use of technology and digital applications</li> <li>- Integration and agility of VIS, and</li> <li>- Resourcing/structure of VIS operations.</li> </ul>						
<b>Strategy 11: Improve the provision of visitor information to match with the evolving needs of visitors, and extend the reach and dispersal of relevant information around the shire</b>							
11.1	Further investigate options to enhance or relocate the SVIC, including potentially in partnership with other stakeholders to deliver contemporary best practice visitor services whilst driving increased visitation to the shire and meeting evolving visitor needs.	Potential partners: GoSeymour, Taungurung Land & Waters Council, RSL, SRHC, etc.				Medium	Funds to be allocated
11.2	Investigate best use of digital technology to engage and provide information to visitors.					Low	Funds to be allocated
11.3	Investigate, and where appropriate deliver visitor information in a more agile manner by investigating and developing additional new VIS satellite locations (as per new Victorian VIS Guidelines) such as within libraries, service centres, shopping centres, petrol stations, etc.	Local businesses				Medium	Funds to be allocated
11.4	Continue to upskill and train VIS volunteers to better meet the changing needs of the visitor market.	VIS volunteers				High (BAU)	Within existing resource
11.5	Facilitate ongoing engagement between local operators and VIS staff/volunteers to ensure VIS is delivering quality, accurate and up-to-date information to visitors.	VIS volunteers				High (BAU)	Within existing resource
11.6	Explore opportunities to partner with Seymour Heritage Railway Centre to provide VIS offerings in new and innovative ways to heritage rail tour customers.	SRHC				Medium	
11.6	Increase VIS digital presence across all online related material (e.g.; council website, ATDW, Visit Victoria website, Instagram, Facebook, and shire tourism video(s)).					Medium (BAU)	Within existing resource



11.8	Incorporate a VIS offering at one to two additional events per annum (in addition to existing provision at Seymour Expo and Tastes of the Goulburn).	Event operators					Medium (BAU)	Within existing resource
11.9	Investigate potential to further enhance Council's ability to deploy a 'pop-up' or mobile (transportable) VIS at major events.						Medium	Funds to be allocated
11.10	Undertake annual recruitment drives for VIS volunteers to assist with delivering more agile VIS offerings.	Local community					Medium (BAU)	Within existing resource
<b>Strategy 12: Continue to support local and regional VIS activities aimed at improving the visitor experience</b>								
12.1	Continue to be part of the regional visitor information centre network and link in with neighbouring VICs.	Regional VICs					High (BAU)	Within existing resource
12.2	Continue to stock and support local producers and makers through the provision of goods and souvenirs at the Seymour Visitor Information Centre and other VIS locations (e.g. libraries).	Local businesses					High (BAU)	N/A
12.3	Develop online Visitor Communications Guidelines to focus communications on interactive two-way consumer engagement through mobile and social media and to monitor visitor conversation for feedback throughout the entire visitor journey.						Medium	Extra funds may be needed

11.4 FOCUS AREA FOUR – PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

**Strategic objective:** Support and facilitate new product and experience development in the shire, unlocking its tourism potential.

**Rationale:** Tourism product and signature experiences are crucial to a destination's visitor appeal. As such, it is crucial to invest in product development to increase visitation, dispersal, spend, yield, and length of stay.

FOCUS AREA FOUR – PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT								
NO.	ACTION	PARTNERS	Y	Y	Y	Y	PRIORITY	COST
			1	2	3	4		
<b>Strategy 13: Support strategic actions highlighted in the Mitchell EDS and GRVT DMP</b>								
13.1	Support key strategic opportunities as identified in the EDS and GRVT DMP. Key product development opportunities for Mitchell Shire detailed in Table 4.0	Businesses and operators, State Government					High (Ongoing BAU)	N/A

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Strategy 14: Develop niche products and experiences aligned to brand						
14.1	Support and encourage operators to offer pet friendly accommodation, where appropriate, to meet increasing demand from visitors.	Businesses			Low	N/A
14.2	Explore opportunities to develop and highlight authentic indigenous tourism products/experiences within the shire. Opportunities could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A Welcome to Country visitor service centre</li> <li>- Guided tours</li> <li>- Trails</li> <li>- Interpretative information and installations at various sites, including along trails and at other sites and visitor attractions</li> <li>- Education/school groups</li> <li>- Unique/one off experiences</li> <li>- Complementary products and experiences</li> <li>- Events/shows, and</li> <li>- Art and artistic installations.</li> </ul>	Taungurung Land & Waters Council; Businesses.			Medium (BAU)	Within existing resource
14.3	Link and package more visitor activities with the Vietnam Veterans Commemorative Walk and other military attractions to improve experiences and increase length of stay and spend in town.				Medium	Within existing resource
14.4	Investigate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the potential of equine facilities and businesses to act as visitor attractions</li> <li>- further opportunities to work with the shire's racecourse and equine sector and develop the equine visitor market.</li> </ul>	Equine industry & racecourses			Medium	Within existing resource
14.5	Investigate the need and seek funding for potential establishment of a mountain bike track/park within the shire (e.g. like that at Derby/Forrest).	RDV			Medium	Funds to be allocated
14.6	Undertake investigations into development of a Tallarook to Seymour extension to the Great Victorian Rail Trail.				High	N/A
Strategy 15: Strengthen and leverage off existing product opportunities						
15.1	Assist the SMSC to expand and diversify its operations to help boost visitor numbers and direct and indirect job opportunities.				High	N/A
15.2	Support the Seymour Railway Heritage Centre (SRHC) by:				High	Within existing resource

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Providing advice and assistance to help SRHC seek state or federal grant funding (or private investment) for their plan to transition to a true visitor attraction.</li> <li>- Facilitating education, professional development and marketability of the Centre to become visitor ready.</li> </ul>						
15.3	Implement the Great Victorian Rail Trail Strategic Plan, and support development of complementary services along the trail including accommodation, dining, bike hire, and other opportunities.	Murrindindi and Mansfield Shires				High (BAU)	Within existing resource
15.4	Continue to invest in and leverage off natural environment assets within the shire (incl. Goulburn River, Monument Hill, the Australian Light Horse Memorial Park, Seymour Bushland Park, Mt Piper, Tallarook State Forest, Mt Disappointment, etc.) by improving visitor facilities and infrastructure (e.g. seating, signage, etc.) to attract increased visitors, including the growing international markets (including cross-over into the VFR market) looking for an introduction to the great outdoors/outback of Australia.	Local and State Government land managers and other responsible organisations.				Medium	Within existing resource
15.5	Investigate the potential to further enhance existing walks and hilltop climbs and look out experiences within the shire and add additional sites to progressively enhance and start developing a Hilltops of Mitchell touring route – i.e. a series of lookouts across the shire that take advantage of the many significant hilltops and other key vantage points. Such hilltops and lookouts could include (but not limited to) Bald Hill, Mt Fraser, Greenhill, Old Sydney Road, Monument Hill, Mt Piper, Murchison Gap Lookout, Anzac Hill, etc.	State Government agencies, landowners and managers, Taungurung Land and Waters Council, other responsible organisations.					
15.6	Capitalise on the local produce in the region by encouraging operators to use local produce and highlight any native/indigenous ingredients.	Local operators, Taungurung Land & Water Council				Medium	Within existing resource
15.7	Support development of the outdoor dining scene and parklets. Encourage food operators to offer outdoor dining in the warmer months and investigate the	Local operators, Local Laws, Planning				Medium	Within existing resource

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	potential to support with complementary activities such as music/buskers.						
15.8	Work with Heritage Victoria as they restore Ned Kelly's home (Beveridge) and investigate opportunities to develop corresponding visitor experience / interpretation attraction, as part of the Ned Kelly Touring Route, including exploring opportunities associated with the various heritage buildings in the shire associated with the Kelly story.	Heritage Victoria; Relevant historical building owners (and businesses, where relevant)				Medium	External funding required
<b>Strategy 16: Product packaging</b>							
16.1	Develop visitor packages or series of suggested itineraries – supporting collaboration between operators to increase length of stay and spend in region – to be available through various media.	Local operators				High	Funds to be allocated
16.2	Better promote and facilitate product packaging of existing tracks, trails and driving routes to increase dispersal and length of stay and spend, including using specialist publications that will appeal to key target markets.					High	Internal funding to be allocated
16.3	Explore opportunities to develop educational product packages/strategic partnerships with Old Melbourne Gaol - utilising the Kelly house and history in the shire.	Old Melbourne Gaol, National Trust				Medium	Within existing resource
<b>Strategy 17: Leverage off surrounding regions</b>							
17.1	Investigate and implement ways to leverage off Tooborac's position within the Heathcote wine region.					Medium	Within existing resource
17.2	Investigate and implement ways to leverage off and support collaboration between Go Nagambie and Go Seymour as a visitor destination.	Strathbogie Shire, Go Nagambie				Medium (BAU)	Within existing resource
17.3	Work collaboratively with neighbouring Councils in Melbourne's North to identify and promote tourism and visitor economy destinations in southern Mitchell which also form part of Melbourne's northern growth corridor.	Northern Melbourne Councils especially Cities of Hume and Whittlesea, NorthLink				Low (BAU)	Within existing resource

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### 11.5 FOCUS AREA FIVE – DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

**Strategic objective:** Deliver a holistic visitor experience that exceeds expectations at all touchpoints and stages of the visitor journey.

**Rationale:** The visitor experience is more than a product or service in our shire. We must ensure the fundamentals of our destinations support and enhance the visitor experience at all stage of their journey.

FOCUS AREA FIVE – DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT								
NO.	ACTION	PARTNERS	Y	Y	Y	Y	PRIORITY	COST
			1	2	3	4		
<b>Strategy 18: Facilitate and support strategic destination development opportunities</b>								
18.1	Advocate for and seek to enable capital work projects across the shire that improve the visitor appeal and functionality of visitor destinations						High (BAU)	N/A
18.2	Prepare destination specific local tourism action plans for the shire's key visitor attracting towns (aim to develop 1-2 p.a.).	Visit Vic, RTB, Local community						
<b>Strategy 19: Implement visitor support services to complement existing tourism product</b>								
19.1	Undertake a full way finding signage review across the shire based on the new guidelines – including investigating opportunities to work within the emerging 'Way Found' state-wide guidelines.	Melbourne Visitor Signage Committee					Medium	Funds to be allocated
19.2	Investigate and undertake process for Seymour to become an RV friendly accredited town.	CRVA					High	Within existing resource
19.3	Review signage to and along the Great Victorian Rail Trail to ensure a clear and strong visual navigational presence to and for users of this iconic trail.	VicRoads, Great Victorian Rail Trail Marketing Committee					Medium	N/A
19.4	Continually advocate for digital connectivity and connectedness throughout the region to address black spots and improve visitor experience.	Goulburn Regional Partnership					High (BAU)	N/A
19.5	Continue to install and upgrade tourism signage (e.g. brown signs, walking trail signage, visitor wayfinding, etc) across the shire.	VicRoads, Local Businesses					High (BAU)	Within existing resource / extra funds may be needed
19.6	Identify key tracks and trails within the shire and progressively improve existing	Internal teams					High	Extra funds

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	signage on these trails to allow for a visitor centric experience.						may be needed
<b>Strategy 20: Support place making and town revitalisation projects to enhance visitor appeal and perception, and improve civic pride within the shire</b>							
20.1	Support the development and implementation of the Seymour Structure Plan to enable further development of the town as a visitor destination; including in relation to the riverfront and Emily Street precinct and associated opportunities to enhance and develop attractions and other visitor infrastructure that can capitalise on the town’s location on the picturesque Goulburn River.					High (BAU)	Within existing resource
20.2	Support implementation of actions within the Kilmore Structure Plan and the Kilmore Town Centre Plan with a focus on identifying, planning and seeking funding to undertake capital works projects to rejuvenate the town and improve its public realm including within the town centre and along the Kilmore Creek corridor throughout the town.					High (BAU)	N/A
20.3	Continue to advocate for the construction of the Kilmore/Wallan bypass to enhance visitor access to the shire and reduce disruption from through-traffic in Wallan and Kilmore.					High (BAU)	N/A
<b>Strategy 21: Improve the visitor experience by educating locals that Mitchell Shire is a visitor destination</b>							
21.1	Develop a communication plan to promote the value of the visitor economy through schools and to the community – and their role in the visitor journey.	Local schools and residents, local media				Medium	Within existing resource
<b>Strategy 22: Ensure Mitchell’s venues, facilities and amenities are well kept, invested in and grow to meet visitor demand</b>							
22.1	Continue to foster relationships with other Council departments such as Local Laws, Sport and Recreation, Parks, Facilities Management, as well as Committees of Management where applicable, to ensure a visitor centric focus.	Committees of Management				High (BAU)	Within existing resource
22.2	Develop a ‘Welcome to Mitchell’ new residents information or kit to encourage them to explore the shire.	Local operators				Medium	Funds to be allocated
22.3	Build relationships and liaise with national and state park operators to investigate opportunities to improve visitor services, infrastructure and facilities and to improve marketing and promotion.	Parks Vic; Taungurung Land & Waters Council				Medium (BAU)	Within existing resource

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#### 11.6 FOCUS AREA SIX – PROMOTION/BRAND

**Strategic objective:** Establish and manage the Mitchell Shire visitor destination brand to position the shire as Victoria’s leading destination for fresh air and country life on Melbourne’s doorstep.

**Rationale:** Visitors’ awareness of Mitchell Shire’s tourism attractions and the benefits of visiting will be raised through the cohesive and consistent representation of the shire’s visitor brand in all visitor communications and interactions.

FOCUS AREA SIX – PROMOTION/BRAND								
NO.	ACTION	PARTNERS	Y	Y	Y	Y	PRIORITY	COST
			1	2	3	4		
<b>Strategy 23: Brand development</b>								
23.1	<p>Develop and outline a strategic approach marketing content anchored on the shire’s and towns’ strengths and core brand attributes outlining the themes, journeys and stories of interest to visitors and the channels, specialised publications and partners through which they will be engaged. Develop content stories about each of the shire’s key themes and attributes. Consider areas of interest such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Indigenous history and heritage</li> <li>- Post settlement history and heritage</li> <li>- Military</li> <li>- Railway</li> <li>- Backroads and countryside</li> <li>- Local produce</li> <li>- Wineries/breweries</li> <li>- Tracks and trails</li> <li>- Recreational activities, including bicycle, mountain biking, BMX, motorbike, 4WD</li> <li>- Golfing and stay and play packages</li> <li>- Sports</li> <li>- Equine</li> <li>- Waterways &amp; Goulburn River</li> <li>- Natural forests</li> <li>- Fishing</li> <li>- Art</li> <li>- Cycling, etc.</li> </ul>						High	Funds to be allocated
23.2	Commission the production of rich visual and textural content aligned to brand positioning, for distribution via industry stakeholders and partners such as regional tourism organisations, Visit Victoria and Tourism Australia.	Local operators, neighbouring LGAs					High	Funds to be allocated

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23.3	Build and manage a digital asset library to house visual content such as images and video – make it easily available for industry and partners to access content.					High	Within existing resource
23.4	Develop brand style visual identities/graphics/guidelines.					High	Funds to be allocated
<b>Strategy 24: Raise the profile of Mitchell Shire’s visitor offer by facilitating and undertaking a range of destination marketing activities targeting key markets</b>							
24.1	Develop a Welcome Back to Mitchell post-Covid recovery marketing promotion aligned to the key target markets identified in plan prioritising the largest and highest yielding target markets.	Local operators				High	Within already allocated resource
24.2	Build advocacy, storytelling and word of mouth referrals by encouraging and enabling residents, visitors, influencers and media to share and broadcast their unique experiences.	Local operators				High	Within existing resource
24.3	Define customer personas and their customer journeys, informed by consumer research, for targeted marketing efforts.	Local operators				High	Within existing resource
24.4	Increase industry participation in shire strategic marketing initiatives through stronger industry engagement. Encourage and facilitate stronger collaborative marketing efforts with local operators by utilising key brand attributes to build destination awareness.	Local operators				Medium	Within existing resource
24.5	Participate in regional expos and shows (aligned with brand proposition and key markets) to further promote the shire.	Surrounding LGA’s				Medium	Internal funds to be allocated
24.6	Develop a calendar that provides content on what produce is in season and identify where it can be purchased or consumed.	Local producers and				Medium	Within existing resource
24.7	Explore the potential with local businesses for them to participate in the Melbourne Food & Wine Festival (MFWF) Regional weekend to promote Mitchell as a foodie destination.	Local operators, MFWF				Medium	N/A
<b>Strategy 25: Increase Mitchell’s digital footprint on social media to raise awareness of Mitchell as a destination option</b>							
25.1	Develop and outline a strategic approach to tourism promotion via social media, with an emphasis on smart phone-accessed media.					High	Funds to be allocated

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	Key considerations should include: - Use of bloggers and influencers - Partnerships with key online partners such as OneHourOut, Urbanlist, Time Out, Broadsheet, etc. - Paid Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) - Online campaigns targeted to key markets.						
25.2	Encourage visitors to post their experiences on digital sites such as Instagram, Facebook, Trip Advisor, etc.					Medium (BAU)	Within existing resource
25.3	Build online visitor interaction and destination awareness through online competitions.	Local operators				Medium	Within existing resource
25.4	Investigate and facilitate development of a shire wide tourism website and/or align with regional tourism website(s) where relevant.	Future regional tourism body				High	Funds to be allocated
<b>Strategy 26: Establish clear and consistent branding and marketing materials which appeal to target markets, is motivational, and encourages the exploration of all the attributes across the region through linkages to collateral</b>							
26.1	Update the Mitchell Shire Official Visitor Guide (OVG) everyone to two years.					High	Funds to be allocated
26.2	Produce town-specific mini visitor guides to capitalise on the existing name recognition of the shire’s townships and provide visitors with comprehensive information and operator listings.					High	Internal funds to be allocated
26.3	Continue to produce and distribute key visitor collateral such as visitor maps, events calendar and seasonal promotional material, ensuring all material is digitally compatible.					High (BAU)	Within existing resource
26.4	Leverage off inclusion on the official Ned Kelly Tourism Route. Promote the local area’s role and associated heritage buildings in this historic story aligning with the shire’s brand proposition.					High (BAU)	Within existing resource
26.5	Highlight niche/boutique towns – which are attracting the Melbourne market and are high yielding. Develop marketing materials for towns such as Tooborac, Tallarook, and Trawool – capitalise on their key attributes.					High	Within existing resource



Strategy 27: Encourage the further development of 'locals as visitors' and the visiting friends and relatives segment by creating locally-targeted campaigns							
27.1	Develop and implement a range of strategic marketing activities aimed at the local community, to discover their own backyard. Further ensure locals are encouraged to take their visiting friends and relatives out into our region.	Local operators, local community				High	Within existing resource, extra funds may be needed
27.2	Develop a 'locals' card/passport to encourage locals to explore their own backyard and keep VFR in backyard and increase spend in Mitchell Shire, and promote through the shire including new growth areas and targeting short term residents in Puckapunyal.	Local operators, local community				Medium	Funds to be allocated
Strategy 28: Develop strategic marketing partnerships							
28.1	Explore and develop marketing partnerships with key bodies, such as: Visit Victoria, Melbourne Airport, Spirit of Tasmania, Melbourne hotels, V Line and neighbouring LGA's.	Appropriate partners				Medium (BAU)	N/A
28.2	Work with neighbouring regions/LGA's to market existing and potential new trails and touring routes.	Surrounding LGA's				High (BAU)	Funds to be allocated

11.7 FOCUS AREA SEVEN – EVENTS

**Strategic objective:** Support delivery of a range of coordinated, engaging and well-run visitor and community-based events throughout the year.

**Rationale:** By increasing the diversity of events of on offer it will attract new visitors and raise Mitchell's profile as an event region that delivers successful events with potential to host major events in the future.

FOCUS AREA SEVEN – EVENTS								
NO.	ACTION	PARTNERS	Y	Y	Y	Y	PRIORITY	COST
			1	2	3	4		
Strategy 29: Provide a clear strategic framework to grow and develop events								
29.1	Investigate the need for a dedicated events concierge resource.						High	Within existing resource
Strategy 30: Support new and existing events through the event concierge system								
30.1	Review and streamline the event concierge and application process to ensure that running an event in the shire is as easy as possible.						High	Within existing resource

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30.2	Continue to offer a welcoming and helpful events concierge service.	Event organisers					High	N/A
30.3	Work with towns to support locational themed events – based on small town ideas, niche markets, leverage of uniqueness and key strengths of towns.	Local towns					Medium	Within existing resource
30.4	Continue to promote a shire wide events calendar.						High (BAU)	Within existing resource
30.5	Encourage local businesses to ensure they support events and leverage off the increased visitation to the region.	Chambers of Commerce and local operators					High (BAU)	Within existing resource
30.6	Work with facilities management/ Committees of Management to ensure venue providers are encouraged to run and attract events to the shire e.g.: Seymour Alternative Farming Expo.	Event providers, Open Space & Recreation					High	N/A
30.7	Measure the success of events – attendance numbers, return on investment, economic benefit to region. Develop a standardised reporting method to allow for benchmarking/trend analysis.						Medium (BAU)	Within existing resource
<b>Strategy 31: Attract new events and opportunities</b>								
31.1	Investigate the potential for a dedicated events attraction resource.						High	Within existing resource
31.2	Develop an Events Prospectus (including a facilities guide covering both public and private event venues) to use as a promotional tool as to attract and secure new event operators to the region that align with visitor brand and regional strengths.	Facility owners and operators, local businesses					Medium	Funds to be allocated
31.3	Facilitate access to State Government or philanthropic grant funding opportunities and assistance to transition new event ideas into reality.	RDV					High	Within existing resource
31.4	Review existing Mitchell Shire Film Policy and supporting guidelines.	Film Victoria					Medium	Within existing resource
31.5	Support and encourage filming enquiries and opportunities within the shire, including by building on and strengthening existing partnership with Film Victoria.	Film Victoria					Medium	Within existing resource

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### 11.8 FOCUS AREA EIGHT – INVESTMENT ATTRACTION & MAJOR PROJECTS

**Strategic objective:** Create, facilitate and support tourism investment.

**Rationale:** Successful visitor destinations require continual investment and development to open up potential tourism opportunities, which in turn attract and increase visitor numbers, spend and yield, and length of stay.

FOCUS AREA EIGHT – INVESTMENT ATTRACTION & MAJOR PROJECTS								
NO.	ACTION	PARTNERS	Y 1	Y 2	Y 3	Y 4	PRIORITY	COST
<b>Strategy 32: A strategic approach to tourism investment</b>								
32.1	Include a focus on tourism within Council's advocacy work and produce and maintain an advocacy list specific to required visitor economy supporting infrastructure, which can be used to regularly and consistently advocate in concert with Council's overall advocacy efforts. Include a focus on infrastructure that will also be required or enabled by the forecast population growth within the shire.	VPA, RDV, VV, Invest VIC, NorthLink, State and Federal Governments					High	Within existing resource
32.2	Include a focus on tourism within Council's investment attraction work that highlights development opportunities for the shire's towns. With the potential to produce an investment attraction document that highlights accommodation investment opportunities.	RDV, VV, Invest VIC, NorthLink, State and Federal Governments					High	Within existing resource / extra funds may be needed
32.3	Actively seek out investors for the region – to develop additional accommodation and to develop destination attractions.	RDV, VV, Invest VIC, NorthLink					Medium	With existing resource
<b>Strategy 33: Make it easy to invest, to enable a vibrant tourism industry</b>								
33.1	Utilise and continue the existing business concierge service to support tourism business investment. Embrace an 'open for business' policy within Council to ensure investors and developers are encouraged and welcomed to the shire.						High	Within existing resource
33.2	Identify new operators through the investment facilitation system to offer a personalised new tourism operator orientation service to integrate them into the shire's visitor economy.	Private operators					High	Within existing resource



33.3	Utilise available State Government business grant programs for attracting new small business start-ups which demonstrate the delivery of quality food, dining, activities, and farm gate attractions in towns and in the rural area. This could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quality bars and restaurants</li> <li>- Microbrewery/distillery</li> <li>- Farm gate cafes/experiences</li> <li>- Produce stores/artisan.</li> </ul>	State Government					Medium	Within existing resource
<b>Strategy 34: Work to secure and enable major projects that will help to develop the visitor economy</b>								
34.1	Continue to lobby and advocate ensuring that the Federal Government delivers on investment in a new, high profile, visitor friendly, and accessible Tank and Artillery Museum at Puckapunyal.	Australian Army, Federal Government					High	N/A
34.2	Facilitate and support investment in major tourism assets such as recreational and environmental space, visitor-oriented food and beverage providers, accommodation providers, and stand-out visitor attractions.	Private investors					Medium	Within existing resource
34.3	Identify priorities (informed by a return on investment approach), seek State/Federal/other funding where appropriate, and support investment and/or further development of major projects, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Welcome to Country visitor centre</li> <li>- Seymour Railway Heritage Centre</li> <li>- Broadford SMSC</li> <li>- Bylands Tramway Heritage Centre</li> <li>- Kelly Family Home and other Kelly-associated buildings in the shire</li> <li>- Tank and Artillery Museum</li> <li>- Australian Light Horse Memorial Park</li> <li>- Vietnam Veterans Commemorative Walk</li> <li>- Walking and cycling trails – including rail trails (e.g. Wallan to Heathcote Rail Trail and potential extensions to Great Victorian Rail Trail)</li> <li>- Development of reserves and recreational areas (e.g. Monument Hill) to support walking, climbing, mountain biking, BMX cycling, etc.</li> <li>- Kilmore miniature railway.</li> </ul>	Numerous partners including RDV, Go Seymour (SB&T), Taungurung Land & Waters Council, etc.					High	Within existing resource
34.4	Investigate opportunities for a potential 'Anchor attraction' for the region. <i>Note: further research, resources and feasibility work would be required for realisation.</i>						Low	Extra funds may be needed

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## Mitchell Shire Council

# Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan 2020 – 2024

# Consultation Summary Report

**Date:**

August 2020

**Prepared by:**

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## 1. Introduction/Background

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the methodology and to highlight the research and consultation undertaken as part of the research to inform and guide the overall strategy/plan.

In 2017, acknowledging the importance of tourism as an economic driver in the local economy, Council undertook baseline research on the visitor economy to inform the development of an updated Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan.

In addition to the baseline research, an expert peer review panel was established to provide further input and guide the development of the plan. The peer review panel comprised Mr John Pandazopoulos (Chair of State Government's Visitor Economy Ministerial Advisory Committee), as well as two officers from Goulburn River Valley Tourism, a representative of the Victorian Tourism Industry Council; three local business operators – one from Seymour and two from Kilmore, and Mitchell Shire Council officers.

The work to prepare the plan was commenced in mid-2018 and was largely concluded during 2019, with some items of research to confirm and clarify key findings continuing into early 2020.

The Mitchell Shire Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan will play a pivotal role in defining the scoping and development of initiatives and projects at Mitchell Shire Council in relation to visitation to the region.

### Aims/Objectives of project

The aim of the Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan project is to identify:

- Mitchell Shire Council's strategic vision for tourism and the visitor economy
- Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of the tourism and visitor economy in Mitchell Shire
- Mitchell's competitive advantage
- Strategies that address the SWOT analysis
- A Tourism and Visitor Economy Brand(s) for Mitchell Shire and its towns
- Projects and initiatives that will lead to economic benefit to the region
- A four (4) year strategic direction that will grow Mitchell's tourism and visitor economy.

The primary objectives of the Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan are:

- To define a tourism vision and brand(s) for Mitchell Shire.
- To define a marketing strategy.
- To use the already completed baseline research to complete a SWOT analysis of the T&VE sector in Mitchell Shire including product provisions, business offerings and marketing.
- To complete comprehensive consultation with community and key T&VE stakeholders.
- To scope and outline key strategies that emerge from the SWOT analysis in relation to baseline research findings.
- To identify and provide a strategic direction for the next four (4) years that will include specific goals, strategies and actions for Council and regional tourism bodies.

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## 2. Methodology

The research process involved a variety of participation methods and approaches to ensure it was an inclusive and encompassing consultation process.

An extensive consultation process was undertaken with a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods used to gather data from all sectors of the community and industry. The step by step process is summarised in the below diagram.



### Stage 1: Baseline Research & Survey

Baseline research, complemented by an online survey sent tourism and visitor economy related businesses, was undertaken by Urban Enterprise in 2016 to develop foundational data and statistics to inform the project. The baseline research is a key document for this project in addition to community consultation.

### Stage 2: Peer Review (initial meeting)

An initial Peer Review meeting was convened and held to review the findings of the baseline study and to confirm the

The meeting included representatives of the Victorian Tourism Industry Council; the then regional tourism board for Mitchell Shire – Goulburn River Valley Tourism; two local visitor economy business operators and Mr John Pandazopoulos – former Victorian Minister for Tourism and the Chair of the Visitor Economy Ministerial Advisory Committee (est. 2016).

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Stage 3: Research

- The Research stage commenced in mid-2018 and research was primarily undertaken through 2018, with some follow up research occurring in 2019 and early 2020.
- A desktop and literature review were undertaken of all plans, policies and strategies relevant to the project including the baseline research, existing economic development, visitor, tourism and destination management plans for the Shire and broader region.
- An analysis of all relevant statistical data was undertaken including data commissioned and released by:
  - Tourism Research Australia (TRA)
  - Visit Victoria (VV)
  - Tourism, Events and Visitor Economy branch (TEVE)
  - Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)
  - Baseline data (UE).
- A one-day familiarisation tour of Mitchell Shire was undertaken under the guidance and direction of the Tourism Promotions Officer. Key attractions and sites were visited.
- Town Audits – 12 audits of selected towns within Mitchell Shire were undertaken to deep dive into their visitor appeal and tourism viability prosperity. A number of towns were audited twice to capture certain days and audiences (weekends or market days). A list of the towns audited are below:
  - Seymour (2)
  - Wallan (2)
  - Broadford
  - Kilmore (2)
  - Tooborac
  - Pyalong
  - Beveridge
  - Tallarook
  - Wandong/Heathcote Junction.

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Stage 4: Consultation

The following was undertaken to consult with the community, residents, key stakeholders, industry and visitors:

- Online resident/community survey – an online survey was created for the all resident and community members to have a say and provide feedback on tourism in the Shire. A series of qualitative and quantitative questions were posed as to provide a balanced and confidential space to provide feedback and input into the plan.
- Face to face industry stakeholder interviews – a number of one on one face to face stakeholder interviews were completed with key tourism and economic development stakeholders across the Shire. To ensure a balanced and good representation of the needs of the industry a mix of industry sector and geographical locations were used to choose stakeholders. These in-depth interviews helped form the guide industry feedback and input into the plan.
- Phone industry stakeholder interviews – a number of one on one stakeholder interviews were completed over the phone. This was due to time location restraints; however, the same series of questions were asked as the one on one face to face interviews.
- Phone interviews – a number of phone interviews were conducted with relevant industry staff outside Mitchell Shire, including surrounding LGA's, tourism bodies, VTIC and Visit Victoria to gauge broader regional and state-wide feedback into the plan.
- Face to face visitor surveys (intercept surveys) – over four days researchers were on the ground at certain locations throughout Mitchell Shire 'intercepting' visitors and asking them a series of qualitative and quantitative questions related to the visitor experience in Mitchell Shire.
- Industry Workshops – three workshops were offered (3 July in Seymour, 4 July in Broadford and 5<sup>th</sup> July in Kilmore) for industry and residents to come along to and provide feedback and input into the project. Two workshops ran, the third was cancelled due to low numbers (those people were interviewed individually).
- Councillor Workshop – a workshop was held in Council Chambers on 9 July. Topics included an overview of the early findings of research conducted; the relative strengths and weaknesses of the tourism and visitor economy in Mitchell Shire, as well as the key features that define and distinguish the shire's tourism character or 'personality'.
- Council staff workshop – one workshop was held in Broadford where relevant internal Mitchell Shire staff were invited to attend to provide feedback and input into the project.
- Visitor Information Centre (VIC) Volunteers Workshop – one workshop was held At the Seymour VIC where VIC volunteers were invited to attend to provide feedback and input into the project.
- Council staff interviews – Council officers who were pertinent to the project were interviewed.
- Council Presentation – a presentation was delivered to Councillors and senior Council staff provided an updated on the project, outlining key strategic themes, assessing strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for the region and providing future direction of the project.
- Peer Review – a workshop was held after initial research, consultation and analysis was completed to present preliminary findings of the project. Key strategic themes were developed and endorsed by the peer review group, led by former state Tourism Minister, The Honourable John Pandazopoulos.

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### 3. Summary of Participation

Event	Approach	Outcome
<b>Online Resident/ community survey</b>	Survey link was distributed through online and digital Council and community channels to ensure it reached as many people as possible.	119 surveys completed (survey was open for approx. one month)
<b>Face to face industry stakeholder interviews</b>	Carefully selected (based on sector and location within Mitchell Shire) key industry stakeholders were chosen for face to face interviews.	15 Interviews undertaken
<b>Phone industry stakeholder interviews</b>	Spoke with Mitchell Shire tourism industry operator to give them a say and provide input into the project.	14 interviews conducted
<b>Phone interviews</b>	Spoke with a number of relevant regional and state-wide industry stakeholders.	15 phone calls/interviews
<b>Face to face visitor surveys (intercept surveys)</b>	Spoke with visitors at the coalface, in destination to provide valuable feedback on their visitor experience.	56 surveys completed
<b>Industry Workshops</b>	Workshop events held with the industry – open to anyone in the industry to attend and offered across three locations to capture everyone in the Shire.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 3 July in Seymour (approx. 5 businesses/stakeholders attended)</li> <li>○ 4 July in Broadford (approx. 5 businesses/stakeholders attended)</li> <li>○ 5 July in Kilmore – event cancelled due to low numbers (at least 4 people fell ill, however all were followed up with phone calls and discussion)</li> </ul>
<b>Councillor Workshop</b>	Workshop with Councillors held to discuss approach to plan; and workshop tourism and visitor economy strengths and weaknesses, and to explore the shire’s key tourism character and brand traits.	Workshop with Councillors and input provided into plan development process.

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<b>Council staff workshop</b>	Workshop with relevant council staff to provide opportunity to provide feedback on this project.	Attended by approx. 15 Council staff members.
<b>VIC Volunteers workshop</b>	Provide VIC volunteers the opportunity to provide feedback and input into this project.	Workshop held on 27 June 2018 @ Seymour VIC, approx. 17 volunteers in attendance.
<b>Council staff interviews</b>	Selected approach to interviewing relevant Council staff members.	A number of key council tourism and economic development staff were interviewed over the life of the project to ensure their valuable knowledge and expertise was captured for the project.
<b>Peer Review Panel</b>	Engaged peer review panel for development and endorsement of key strategic themes of plan.	Workshop held Sept 2019 with project Peer Review Panel at Kilmore Library.
<b>Council Presentation</b>	Engagement with senior Council staff and Councillors – update on status and key findings.	Presentation to Council, December 2019, Council Chambers, Broadford.



## A FRAMEWORK AND PLAN FOR GROWTH.

Mitchell Shire is positioning itself as a destination of choice to capitalise on tourism and the visitor economy as a key economic driver and job creator.

Council has prepared the Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan 2020 - 2024. The plan provides a strategic overview for Mitchell Shire Council, together with local businesses and operators, strategic partners and the community, to support, strengthen and grow the shire's visitor economy. It sets out a multi-faceted framework, to support business growth, attract increased numbers of visitors, and to encourage quality investment and job creation.

### OUR VISITOR ECONOMY.

Tourism and the visitor economy is a key job generator for Mitchell Shire. Mitchell Shire attracts more than 550,000 visitors per year and it is estimated that last year the industry generated over \$115 million in economic output and supported supported 638 jobs.

Growing the visitor economy is a great way to positively affect the economy of a region and to support the growth of job opportunities for local residents.



550,000  
Visitors per  
annum



638  
Local  
Jobs



\$115 Million  
Economic  
Output



200 Visitor-related  
and supported  
businesses

### KEY STRENGTHS AND IMPROVING THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE.

A thorough and detailed destination analysis was undertaken of Mitchell Shire as a visitor destination. Key strengths, areas for improvement and opportunities emerged from the analysis and are summarised below.

KEY STRENGTHS	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; <b>Natural and Physical Assets</b> – scenery, river, mountains, fresh air, countryside, landscapes, waterways, racecourses, parks and reserves</li> <li>&gt; <b>Accessibility</b> – easy to access, proximity to Melbourne, train and car access, freeway, close to airport</li> <li>&gt; <b>Local Produce</b> – local producers, good food</li> <li>&gt; <b>Heritage/History</b> – indigenous heritage and living culture, military, railway, Ned Kelly</li> <li>&gt; <b>Unique Small Towns</b> – country feel, country hospitality, authentic, unique, boutique, charm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; <b>Awareness</b> – little awareness of destination, improving brand awareness or presence in the marketplace</li> <li>&gt; <b>Product</b> – anchor attraction, critical mass of tourism products and experiences, accommodation, tourism infrastructure</li> <li>&gt; <b>Visitor Experience</b> – inconsistent quality and service, delivery of complete visitor experience</li> <li>&gt; <b>Structure</b> – industry fragmented, not strategic, not cohesive, collaborative, stronger support</li> </ul>

**VISION FOR 2024.**

Mitchell Shire is an emerging and increasingly well-known destination of choice for visitors seeking an authentic regional Victoria experience. Mitchell Shire has a growing tourism industry with new and expanded operations and increased capabilities to positively service visitors to the Shire.

**ACTION PLAN**

The research, consultation and analysis undertaken to underpin the plan has resulted in the identification of a series of actions to support and grow the visitor economy in Mitchell Shire.

The actions and the objectives behind them align on a regional and state level and are all aimed at increasing visitation, spend and length of stay within the shire. These actions have been arranged under eight key focus areas or strategic themes which are detailed below.

**FOCUS AREA ONE – ADVOCACY, STRUCTURE AND FRAMEWORKS.**

**Objective:** Advocate for a strong and valued tourism and visitor industry, through a strategically recognised framework.

**Rationale:** A strong united industry provides the foundation to grow, develop and influence at all levels.

**Key focus area outcomes:**

- > Mitchell Shire will be part of and actively participate within the State Government's new regional tourism frameworks
- > Regular tourism and visitor economy discussion, forums and collaboration between and among Council and local tourism and visitor economy operators
- > Strengthening of strategic and regional partnerships to grow the economic benefits of tourism

**FOCUS AREA TWO – INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT.**

**Objective:** Equip Mitchell Shire's tourism businesses with the tools, knowledge and capacity to deliver consistent, quality visitor experiences through a range of industry development activities.

**Rationale:** Ensure our businesses service delivery meet and exceed visitor expectations.

**Key focus area outcomes:**

- > Understand the skills and development needs of Mitchell Shire's visitor economy businesses and help businesses to address those needs through opportunities such as shared training and learning
- > Council, local operators and potential investors are equipped with research findings that can help inform industry development initiatives, product development and new investment decisions
- > Mitchell Shire's tourism and visitor economy operators regularly meet and exceed visitor expectations, encouraging repeat visitation and positive word of mouth recommendations to friends and family

**FOCUS AREA THREE – VISITOR SERVICING.**

**Objective:** Deliver an exceptional visitor information service when and where the visitor wants it.

**Rationale:** Ensuring visitor information needs are met at all stages of the customer journey provides an opportunity to influence visitor behaviour and ultimately increase visitor dispersal, spend, yield and length of stay.

**Key focus area outcomes:**

- > Visitors are placed at the centre of our thinking and visitor servicing is delivered at all stages of the 'visitor journey' from the initial thinking and decision to make a visit, through to the journey itself and even post-visit to ensure that they are encouraged to come back again or become advocates to others
- > Visitor information is provided through a range of different channels, innovative technologies and locations that meets the changing and ever evolving needs of visitors
- > Mitchell Shire actively links with other visitor information centres across the region to share resources and to further promote Mitchell Shire and its towns

**FOCUS AREA FOUR – PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT.**

**Objective:** Support and facilitate new product and experience development in the shire, unlocking its tourism potential.

**Rationale:** Tourism product and signature experiences are crucial to a destination's visitor appeal. As such, it is crucial to invest in product development to increase visitation, dispersal, spend, yield and length of stay.

**Key focus area outcomes:**

- > Mitchell Shire's visitor economy operators are encouraged to improve/enhance their tourism product offer in a way that develops high quality and niche products and experiences across a range of categories that reflect and help reinforce Mitchell Shire's tourism strengths and brand
- > Increased opportunities for local indigenous groups and people to showcase authentic indigenous tourism products and experiences to visitors
- > Council and local operators across the shire work together, and with other partners across the wider region, to package up products, experiences and tours and leverage from one another

**FOCUS AREA FIVE – DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT.**

**Objective:** Deliver a holistic visitor experience that exceeds expectations at all touchpoints and stages of the visitor journey.

**Rationale:** The visitor experience is more than a product or service in our shire. We must ensure the fundamentals of our destinations support and enhance the visitor experience at all stages of their journey.

**Key focus area outcomes:**

- > A pipeline of funded and range of completed capital works projects that result in improved visitor facilities at key destinations, and a substantially more appealing and inviting public realm at visitor attractions and town centres across the shire
- > Signage, including brown (tourism information) signs, and other signage is steadily and continually upgraded over the life of the plan – particularly where it has the most potential to increase visitation and result in increased spend and yield
- > Mitchell Shire's public and private venues, facilities and amenities are well kept, invested in and grow over the lifetime of the plan to meet visitor demand

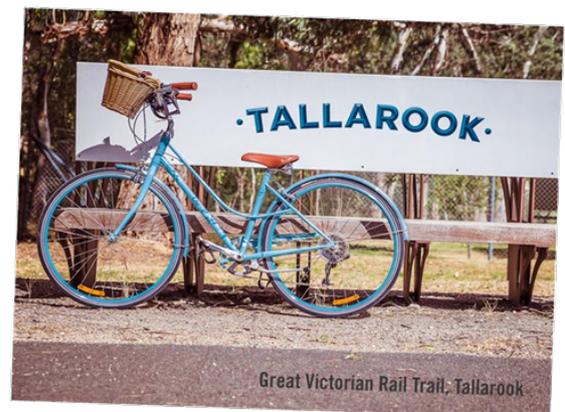
**FOCUS AREA SIX – PROMOTION AND BRAND.**

**Objective:** Establish and manage the Mitchell Shire and townships visitor destination brand to position the shire as Victoria's leading destination for fresh air and country life on Melbourne's doorstep.

**Rationale:** Visitors' awareness of Mitchell Shire's tourism attractions and the benefits of visiting will be raised through the cohesive and consistent representation of the shire's visitor brand in all visitor communications and interactions.

**Key focus area outcomes:**

- > Mitchell Shire and its towns become increasingly well known in line with a distinctive brand that captures the essence of what Mitchell Shire offers to visitors and which is reflected in the marketing of the shire and the experiences that visitors encounter while here
- > The profile of Mitchell Shire, its towns and tourism experiences and operators are raised as a result of a range of destination marketing activities over the lifetime of the plan
- > Mitchell Shire and its towns are regularly and consistently promoted across social media to raise awareness of the tourism products and experiences that are on offer



**FOCUS AREA SEVEN – EVENTS.**


**Objective:** Support delivery of a range of coordinated, engaging and well-run visitor and community-based events throughout the year.

**Rationale:** By increasing the diversity of events on offer it will attract new visitors and raise Mitchell's profile as an event region that delivers successful events with potential to host major events in the future.

**Key focus area outcomes:**

- > Mitchell Shire Council provides an events concierge service to help event organisers navigate and easily progress through the event permitting process
- > Existing events are supported to develop and grow, and new events are encouraged and supported
- > The shire attracts an increasing number of events, resulting in an increased number of visitors, visitor spend and yield

**FOCUS AREA EIGHT – INVESTMENT ATTRACTION AND MAJOR PROJECTS.**


**Objective:** Create, facilitate and support tourism investment.

**Rationale:** Successful visitor destinations require continual investment and development to open up potential tourism opportunities, which in turn attract and increase visitor numbers, spend and yield and length of stay.

**Key focus area outcomes:**

- > Mitchell Shire develops a tourism and visitor economy sector-specific investment attraction materials, including with respect to accommodation and other visitor economy-related business opportunities
- > Existing businesses and new investors are enabled, and the shire sees an increase in visitor-orientated investment across its attractions and communities, eg. accommodation, food and beverage and visitor attractions
- > New major investments and attractions are secured through a mixture of advocacy, investment attraction and investment facilitation

**Let us help you**

If you would like to know more about the Tourism and Visitor Economy Plan 2020 – 2024 or would like to speak to a member of the team about how to grow your business and help enrich Mitchell Shire's visitor economy – contact us today:

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