

SNOWY VALLEYS VISITOR SERVICES STRATEGY

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SNOWY VALLEYS COUNCIL

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Snowy Valleys Council appointed Urban Enterprise to undertake a review of current Visitor Services and prepare a Visitor Services Strategy to guide visitor servicing for the region into the future. This strategy has been prepared in conjunction with a Destination Management Plan for Snowy Valleys which considers more broadly how to grow the visitor economy.

VISITOR INFORMATION SERVICES CONTEXT

The current strategic and policy direction for visitor information delivery highlights the need to 'tailor' visitor information services to meet visitor needs, including consideration of the ways in which visitors prefer to consume information, and providing a flexible approach to improve information available to visitors.

The growth in access of digital information is a game changer in the way visitors consume information with recent studies suggesting that 83% of holiday leisure travellers planned their trip online.

The delivery of visitor information services in Snowy Valleys must consider the contemporary modes of information delivery and the changing preferences for information consumption.

Whilst many tourism destinations are transitioning to a digital approach to in-region visitor servicing, telecommunications remain a major issue for Snowy Valleys and hence delivery of physical visitor information services is critical until the gaps in telecommunications are improved.

VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRES

There are currently four centres providing visitor information services within the Snowy Valleys region, Tumut Visitor Information Centre, Tumbarumba Visitor Information Centre, Khancoban Visitor Centre and Yarrangobilly Visitor Centre.

Tumut VIC attracted 29,726 walk-in visitors in 2016/17 and cost Snowy Valleys Council \$149,807 in expenditure, with a further \$362,861 (less \$62,950 in revenue generated through retail sales) contributed towards the centres operation by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), through an ongoing MoU agreement.

Tumbarumba VIC attracted 17,965 walk in visitors in 2016/17, and had a total expenditure of \$197,084, almost all of which was dedicated towards salaries and wages. A further \$1,960 was contributed towards operating the Khancoban Visitor Centre.

In total Snowy Valleys contributed \$348,851 per annum toward delivering visitor information services within the region, with the expenditure dedicated to both Tumut and Tumbarumba VICs below the average (\$170,321) for VICs of their size.

When benchmarked against Visitor Information Centres in other Council's the cost of operating the VICs for Council is low. This is assisted in part by NPWS contributing to the cost of operating the Tumut VIC.

BRANDING AND MARKETING

Recognition and awareness of the 'Snowy Valleys' region is a key issue effecting visitation to the region. Online brand recognition of 'Snowy Valleys' is currently low, and achieving clear brand cut through with new regional level branding supported by township placemaking and destination branding initiatives will be key to increasing visitation to the region. A detailed review of the current branding and images is required, with a move towards content which highlights local experiences and activities on offer that truly engage visitors and focus on developing new experiences, such as the recently developed Snowy Valleys Up Close initiative.

Development of an official Visit Snowy Valleys tourism site to replace the existing Visit Tumut and Tumbarumba Region sites should be implemented, with Tumut Region and Tumbarumba Region developed and promoted as sub regional brands within the newly established Snowy Valleys brand. The Snowy Valleys Up Close

initiative would be cross promoted through this site, and positioned as a resident platform similar to Destination Melbourne's "Discover Your Own Backyard" campaign, which aims to "educate residents about things to see and do in their area... building community pride in residents and encouraging dispersal and yield", as well as providing a place for locals to share their own content, and subsequently a place where visitors can find the unique 'local experiences' of the region.

At a regional level, Snowy Valleys is to seek leadership from Destination Riverina Murray with regard to its digital presence and marketing of the Snowy Valleys 'sub region'. There may be opportunity to collaborate with Riverina Murray in relation to destination marketing and high quality web delivery.

Reinvigoration of the Snowy Valleys Way marketing, including digital and physical branding initiatives, should also be implemented.

WAYFINDING, SIGNAGE AND INTERPRETATION

The amalgamation of Tumbarumba Shire and Tumut Shire presents an opportunity to build on the Snowy Valleys brand through wayfinding and signage. As outlined in the Destination Management Plan, there is a need to develop a brand strategy and graphic work to be used across promotional material, digital media and signage.

Quality and branding of township signage is also inconsistent, with Snowy Valleys Council set to undertake a township signage project in the immediate future. This project should ensure signage has a clear and consistent branding link to the Snowy Valleys Council 'region' as well as promoting key township identities.

A review of signage at key attractions is also required to ensure they are easily identified as legible as visitor attractions.

STRATEGIC PLAN

The strategic plan for visitor servicing in the Snowy Valleys identified the following themes and associated directions:

Physical Visitor Information Services

- Refurbished, expand and upgrade the Tumut VIC to include collocation of an indigenous cultural experience
- Develop the Tumbarumba VIC into a bike hub VIC
- Maintain Satellite NSW Parks and Wildlife VICs in Yarrangobilly and Khancoban
- Implement unmanned information services in Adelong and Batlow

Digital Visitor Services

- Develop a visitsnowyvalleys tourism website which showcases the region and is integrated with the newly developed Snowy Valleys Up Close initiative
- Grow social media and digital capacity to complement formal information websites

Wayfinding, Signage and Interpretation

- Develop a detailed signage plan for the Snowy Valleys with consideration of 'Snowy Valleys Way' signage to be replaced with new branded signage
- Develop a wayfinding strategy for the region's visitor attractions which identifies hierarchical signage and interpretation provisions required

Industry Engagement and Development

- Develop ambassadors to promote and inform visitors

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

1.1. PROJECT BACKGROUND

Snowy Valleys Council appointed Urban Enterprise to undertake a review of current Visitor Services and prepare a Visitor Services Strategy to guide visitor servicing for the region into the future. This strategy has been prepared in conjunction with a Destination Management Plan for Snowy Valleys which considers more broadly how to grow the visitor economy.

1.1.1. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

The key aims and objectives for the Visitor Services Review and Strategy are:

- Adapt and maximise the opportunities in emerging visitor servicing technologies;
- Maximise efficiencies in visitor service delivery;
- Implement best practice standards; and
- Investigate new models for visitor servicing with a focus on the visitor and the best use of available resources.

1.2. REGIONAL OVERVIEW

Snowy Valleys Council (Figure 1) is located in the Riverina Murray region of Southern NSW, with the largest township in the region (Tumut) located just under 4.5 hours or 412 kilometres from Sydney, and 2.25 hours or 196 kilometres from Canberra. The township is 3.5 hours from the visitor market(s) of Wollongong and under 1.5 hours from Wagga Wagga.

The township of Tumbarumba in the southern part of the region is just under 5 hours or 461 kilometres from Melbourne, and 1.5 hours, or 136 kilometres from Albury Wodonga.

FIGURE 1 LOCATION CONTEXT



Source: Urban Enterprise, 2018

PART A. BACKGROUND

2. VISITOR INFORMATION SERVICES CONTEXT

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This section provides a review of key strategic documents which guide the future of visitor information centres and servicing in NSW and Victoria.

2.2. KEY FINDINGS

The current strategic and policy direction for visitor information delivery highlights the need to 'tailor' visitor information services to meet visitor needs, including consideration of the ways in which visitors prefer to consume information, and providing a flexible approach to provide information in the location where visitors are.

The cost per walk in visitor increases substantially for accredited VICs that attract less than 30,000 walk in visitors per annum due to the requirement for full time paid staff to be located within VICs and operating costs associated with a physical VIC building.

The growth in access of digital information is a game changer in the way visitors consume information with recent studies suggesting that 83% of holiday leisure travellers planned their trip online.

The delivery of visitor information services in Snowy Valleys must consider the contemporary modes of information delivery and the changing preferences for information consumption.

2.3. VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRES

NSW VIC SNAPSHOT YEAR ENDING MARCH 2016

This snapshot provides a profile of international and domestic overnight visitors, who visited Visitor Information Centres (VIC's) in New South Wales (NSW) in the year ended (YE) March 2016.

In the YE March 2016, over 3.1 million overnight visitors visited NSW VIC's.

- Sydney VIC's received over 1.5 million VIC users (49.1%) and
- Regional NSW VIC's received nearly 1.6 million VIC users (53.1%).

Approximately 2.1% of NSW VIC users visited both Sydney and Regional NSW VIC's. Domestic overnight visitors were the main source of NSW VIC users (82.9% of NSW VIC users), while 17.1% were visiting from overseas.

In Sydney VIC's, nearly a third (28.8%) of users were from overseas, while 71.2% were domestic overnight visitors. In Regional NSW VIC's, the majority (91.5%) of users were domestic overnight visitors and 8.5% were visiting from overseas.

NSW VIC's received the most international visitors during the December quarter (31.2%) and March quarter (30.4%). For domestic VIC users, the number of users for each quarter was distributed evenly.

VISITOR INFORMATION SERVICING IN NSW, TOURISM RESEARCH AUSTRALIA 2016

Tourism Research Australia (TRA) conducted research to examine how visitors access information for their trips, to review the current role of VIC's and their importance in delivering information services, and to identify visitor information servicing strategies. Research was undertaken through intercept interviews with visitors at selected VIC's across the zones of Greater Sydney, Sydney Surrounds, North Coast, South Coast and Inland. There were no interviews conducted at VIC's in the Riverina Murray area.

Key findings from the study include:

- VIC's continue to be the leading information source for visitors **during their visit** (42%).
- The top information sources used **pre-visit** were online travel sites (34%), direct with operator/provider (17%), recommendation from friends/relatives (17%), and internet search (14%).
- Top information items sourced pre-visit were accommodation (33%) and things to see and do (32%), and during the visit were things to see and do (55%), local maps (34%) and restaurants (32%).
- The top information used by visitors at the VIC were maps (53%), information on attractions (51%) and information on local events and activities in the area (24% and 23%, respectively).
- Only 18% reported spending money during their visit to the VIC, with the average spend being \$59 per person.
- The VIC's influenced travel plans and activities of users, with 27% visiting more attractions and events than they had intended, and 24% making a day trip to surrounding areas.
- Overall satisfaction with VIC's was very high (97% satisfaction rating) and almost 95% would recommend the VIC to their friends or relatives.
- Ease of access (57%), credibility (35%) and comprehensiveness (28%) were the main reasons for respondents to utilise the specific information source.

Key items of information sourced for visitors during and pre-visit include:

- Things to see and do (44%);
- Local maps (26%);
- Accommodation (24%);
- Restaurants (21%);
- Local Events (14%);
- Transport (10%);
- Location of VIC (9%); and
- Guided Tours (5%).

Relevant qualitative findings for the study included:

- Social media marketing has the potential to build VIC engagement with consumers and industry stakeholders in a cost-effective manner.
- Increasing collaboration with other VIC's, industry partners and local government such as Regional Tourism Organisations and Local Tourism Organisations will improve the VIC network at the operational and strategic levels, and help promote and sustain the local tourism industry.
- Highly visible and centrally-located VIC's with proximity to local accommodation and tourist attractions or co-locating with complementary services are critical to increasing patronage and reducing VIC overhead costs.

AUSTRALIA'S ACCREDITED VIC'S: A STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS PAPER 2014

VIC's in regional areas are facing major challenges as the landscape of visitor information and visitor services evolves. Developments in digital technology and the ease of accessing information are transforming how visitors' access information.

Key challenges facing the future of VIC's include:

- VIC's providing paper-based information and limited opening hours have less appeal for visitors who want to access targeted information online 24 hours a day.
- The quality of visitor experiences and yield may decline because of inconsistency across the network in how visitors can access information and make bookings.
- Increasing funding pressure and scrutiny on the return on investment for local government and regional tourism organisations (RTOs) is challenging many VIC's to demonstrate their value to their owners.
- The notion that VIC's are a worthwhile part of the tourism distribution system is questioned by some tourism operators.
- There is some duplication of effort and inefficiencies across the network through a lack of leadership and support.

The Strategic Directions Paper identified the following key opportunities for VIC's

- The role of VIC's can adapt in line with the rapid increase in visitors' use of technology, particularly via mobile devices, to access information.
- They can leverage visitors' desire to experience what is unique and special about a destination.
- VIC accreditation can continue to drive VIC's to optimise the visitor experience and maximise value for the tourism industry and local community.
- VIC's can work towards delivering all visitors consistent front-of-house experiences regardless of the size and location of the VIC.
- Working together, VIC's can establish a modern, integrated network that allows visitors to have their information and travel booking needs met regardless of their location.
- VIC's can diversify the services they offer, such as actively servicing residents with community information and providing support to event management and marketing
- VIC's can make the experience of working in them more attractive for volunteers that are comfortable with technology.

Four priority areas for action have been identified:

1. Contemporary VIC's
2. Extraordinary visitor experiences
3. A partnership approach to visitor servicing
4. A recognised VIC network

ACCREDITATION GUIDELINES

There are currently 120 accredited VIC's throughout NSW and 73 in Victoria, with significant initial establishment and ongoing costs involved in this accreditation process with the VIC application involving nine (9) sections which relate to the following areas:

- Tenancy;

- Support from Local Government and Tourism Associations;
- Business Name Registration and Insurance;
- Opening Hours and After Hours Information;
- Collection and Collation of Visitor Records;
- Staffing Levels;
- Visitor Enquiries and Bookings;
- Information Display and Policies; and
- Facilities and Amenities.¹

General Expectations of an accredited VIC include that it will provide²:

- A free information service
- A comprehensive range of local, regional and state wide brochures
- Maps and directional information
- Information and booking services for accommodation and tours
- Information on attractions, events, retail outlets and local services
- Information on road conditions and transport options
- Unbiased local knowledge on the area
- 24-hour access to information, emergency contact numbers and accommodation options; and
- Public toilets onsite or nearby.

VIC FUTURES PROJECT, URBAN ENTERPRISE 2013

International research conducted in 2012³ showed that 83% of leisure travellers and 76% of business travellers planned their trip online, and the 2013 VIC Futures Project also identified that two thirds of VIC visitors said they were likely to explore, shop and book travel activities via their smart devices. Another key consumer trend identified within this report was Hyperactivity (i.e. Consumer/ Visitors as 'always on' and requiring Instant gratification), and that in line with this, the following technological

¹ VIC Futures Report 2011

² <http://trustthetickvic.com.au/vic/information/accredited-visitor-centre>

³ The Traveller's Road to Decision, Google and Ipsos MediaCT. July 2012, cited in Queensland Government, 2016.

trends would influence the future of VICs (some of which have already begun to emerge):

- Embedded technology for information transfer;
- Humanisation of technology;
- Extreme information management;
- Device convergence;
- Computer power;
- Mobile money; and
- The trade off – privacy for relevance.

The imbalance between available visitor centre resources (financial and people) and the need for greater focus and innovation in online and mobile engagement is considered to be a key issue that must be addressed regarding the future of VICs⁴. Analysis on trends in visitor servicing and technology to address this objective highlight that a visitor centre is only part of the visitor servicing picture and the following key technological and delivery innovations (and examples) are important considerations for the future of visitor centres:

- Mobile applications (e.g. Tourism WA’s Experience Extraordinary mobile app);
- Near field communications - (e.g. Museum of London, World Expo 2012 in Korea, and the Modern and Contemporary Art Museum of Nice);
- Immersive centre environments – (e.g. Busselton VIC in WA which is using iPads to provide visitor information);
- Mobile visitor centres – (e.g. St Kilda Visitor Info Kombi; St Paul, Minnesota; Arlington, Virginia; and Santa Monica, California);
- Ambassador programs – (e.g. City of Melbourne, Port Macquarie, Brisbane Airport and Christchurch); and

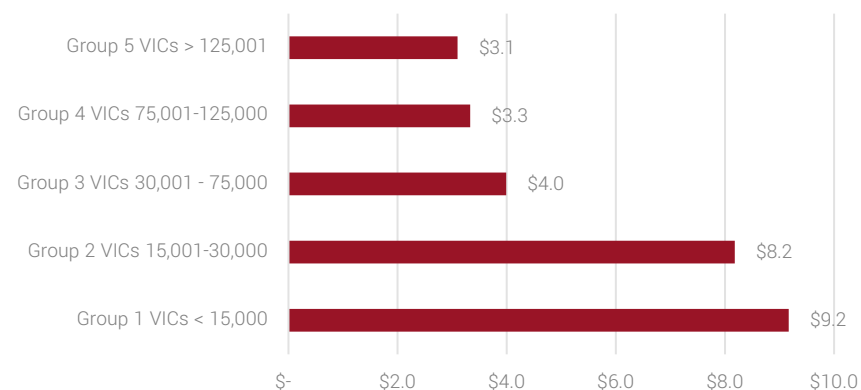
⁴ The Future of Visitor Centres in WA 2014, Haeberlin Consulting.

- Kiosks or “shops-within-shops” – (e.g. City of Melbourne, City of Perth and shop-within-shops in New York City).

COST PER WALK IN VISITOR

The VIC Futures Project highlighted the large cost per walk in visitor to VICs that attract less than 30,000 walk in visitors (Figure 2). The key driver for this is the large cost burden of existing accreditation guidelines place on VICs with a requirement for full time paid staff.

FIGURE 2 AVERAGE COST PER WALK IN VISITOR



VISION FOR FUTURE VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRES

The vision for visitor information centres, identified in the Visitor Information Centre Futures project includes the following:

- A VIC network that has strong leadership from all levels of Government and tourism organisations;

- Transition to a regional networked approach of gateway and satellite visitor information delivery;
- Resources for VICs and services will be tailored to meet visitor consumption and needs;
- The design of VICs will embrace emerging digital technology and focus on providing uncluttered, streamlined and visitor friendly spaces; and
- Digital information delivery is embraced by VICs.

2.3.1. ACCREDITED VIC CASE STUDIES

There are 120 accredited Visitor Information Centres in NSW, with a multitude of delivery approaches, the two main formats, however are:

- Standalone VIC; and
- Co-located VIC (with another attraction or service);

A brief review is provided below for the Alice Springs Visitor Information Centre and the Margaret River Busselton Tourism Association, WA which received gold and silver awards for Visitor Information Services in the 2016 Qantas Australian Tourism Awards.

ALICE SPRINGS VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE, NORTHERN TERRITORY

This Centre and its associated services are multi-award winning (2017 Australian Tourism Awards Silver Winner and 2015 Australian Tourism Awards Gold Winner for Visitor Information Services; and Broilga Northern Territory Tourism Awards winner for Visitor Information Services).

The Centre's service delivery has a strong online presence, with the Discover Central Australia Website providing an extensive range of supporting products to service potential visitors both before they travel to the region, and once they are in the region. Online information includes but is not limited to the following:

- Destination information based on key precincts;

⁵ <http://www.discovercentralaustralia.com/contact-us/alice-springs-visitor-information-centre>

- Accommodation and 'adventure' booking services promoting local tours, products and experiences;
- A diverse range of printable collateral including maps of popular areas; brochures covering different locations and product types (e.g. Discover Art Trails); and 'Guides' including 'what's on', Dining, and options targeted towards different traveller types (e.g. Caravan Park Guide; Backpacker Guide);
- 'Inspiration Itineraries' - including itineraries developed for key regions (e.g. Uluru) of varying lengths;
- Extensive themed 'things to do' pages, key information pages about the region, and information regarding upcoming events;
- Social media promotion and links including Facebook; YouTube; Instagram and Twitter; as well as promotion of #REDCENTRENT; and
- The ability to translate the site into over 100 languages.

This provision of pre and during trip info is supported by a centrally located physical VIC which offers free Wi-Fi, maps and brochures and a range of souvenirs including postcards, CDs, DVDs and books.⁵

MARGARET RIVER BUSSELTON TOURISM ASSOCIATION, WA

The Margaret River Busselton Tourism Association in Western Australia is described as having State-of-the-art technology at the heart of their new visitor servicing approach⁶; with a new visitor centre opening in 2017 in the heart of the redeveloped Busselton Foreshore, that is said to mark "*a fundamental transformation in the way visitors to the Margaret River region are serviced*".

The new Centre (Figure 3) is co-located with the historical Ballarat Engine and a new interpretive centre telling the story of Busselton's famous Jetty and its timber industry. Equipped with large interactive touchscreens and virtual reality content, the Centre's new technology simulates "*a realistic interpretation of experiences and attractions from Busselton to Augusta*", which aims to inform visitors about the

⁶ <https://corporate.margaretriver.com/2017/02/state-art-technology-heart-new-visitor-servicing-approach/>

diverse range of experiences on offer and will help disperse them right throughout the region.

The innovative layout of the centre is also said to remove the barriers of the traditional service counters and enable MRBTA's expert consultants to interact with visitors on the floor via the technology, increasing their ability to *inspire holidaymakers to explore far and wide*.

This new physical VIC format is also being supplemented by the launch of an update of the region's 'Your Margaret River Region' App, which will be available online and offline and features over 1,000 things to do, the location of service points through the region (relative to the user location), and an audio tour of the Busselton Jetty.

Alongside the 360 degree content, the MRBTA are also in the process of adding a full regional map to the touchscreens, which will feature all MRBTA member businesses, with members soon to have the opportunity to buy into content showcasing their respective businesses.

The state of the art Visitor Centre is also supported by an extensive Your Margaret River webpage run by the MRBTA.

FIGURE 3 MARGARET RIVER BUSSELTON VIC



2.4. BRANDING AND MARKETING

MURRAY VISITOR SERVICES AND COLLATERAL REVIEW

Murray Regional Tourism (MRT) embarked on a review of their current visitor services and marketing collateral in order to build a framework for its future direction. Within this study they defined the importance of 'experience focused' collateral, defined as:

Experience focused, effective collateral are items that are picked up from the shelves of the VIC and downloaded readily from tourism websites. Achieving in demand collateral requires a focus on experience leading the conversation. Attributes which should be strived for in collateral include:

- *The collateral sells the experience;*
- *It is distinctive;*

- *It markets to a target audience;*
- *It provides valuable information;*
- *It is easy to understand (font choice, language, use of white space, colour palette);*
- *It is visually appealing (uses inspiring images, sells the story of the region); and*
- *It enhances the brand.*

TUMUT REGION BRAND STRATEGY, 2015

The Tumut Region Brand Strategy developed by Destination Marketing Store in 2015 developed an image and brand strategy for the Tumut region, with the aim of creating a strategy which identified: clear direction for the Tumut Region brand, brand identity, suggested positioning, brand archetype and personality, brand values and the 'aspirational' visitor. Information was drawn from a number of existing sources as well as a consultation program involving a three hour in-region workshop and five key stakeholder interviews.

Identified 'emotive connections that make the Tumut region stand out' included:

- *Discover spectacular rivers and lakes;*
- *Adventure in a place of natural beauty;*
- *Sense of freedom – doing it for yourself;*
- *Heart of the community;*
- *Celebrate the Festival;*
- *Genuine and trustworthy community*
- *Immerse yourself in the Australian Alpine heritage, and*
- *The terms 'authentic', 'traditional', 'belonging', 'engaging', 'freedom', and 'respect'*

Tumut's key brand values were identified as authenticity, adventure, freedom and passion, with the region identified as the 'Explorer' brand archetype, personified as:

"Tumut Region is a place where people can escape to another world and be immersed in nature through outdoor activities";

"You encapsulate the spirit of a self discovery through immersion in the outdoor. Whether that is just to contemplate while fly fishing or finding activities to challenge your spirit" and

"As a community, you are part of the outdoors and influenced by nature. You seek to be part of nature and understand how nature and the outdoors is part of who you are and how it impacts every aspect of your lives"

2.5. WAYFINDING, SIGNAGE AND INTERPRETATION

WHAT IS WAYFINDING?

The Legible Sydney Wayfinding Strategy 2012 describes wayfinding in the following way:

"When visiting a strange new place, people need to be able to find their way to their destination. Wayfinding is how people navigate throughout a journey. When navigation decisions need to be made people use wayfinding information, and the surrounding environment to read, understand, experience a place and to help form decisions for travel. A good wayfinding system will allow people to reach their destination easily and quickly by providing the cues and information to: know where you are, where you are headed, and how best to get there; and recognize when you have reached your destination.

Urban planner Kevin A. Lynch borrowed the term for his 1960 book Image of the City, where he defined wayfinding as "a consistent use and organization of definite sensory cues from the external environment". In 1984 environmental psychologist Romedi Passini's Wayfinding in Architecture expanded the concept to include signage and other graphic communication, architecture, public space planning, audible communication, tactile elements, and provision for special-needs users."

3. VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRES

3.1. INTRODUCTION

This section provides a review and assessment of the current services provided by the Tumut Visitor Information Centre, Tumbarumba Visitor Information Centre, and the Khancoban Visit Centre (where available) including the following:

- Number of enquiries;
- Costs and staff allocations; and
- Cost of VIC delivery per enquiry;

Information on VIC services have been gathered primarily from Snowy Valleys Council and have been benchmarked against averages taken from the VIC Futures Report, prepared by Urban Enterprise.

3.2. KEY FINDINGS

There are currently four centres providing visitor information services within the Snowy Valleys region, Tumut Visitor Information Centre, Tumbarumba Visitor Information Centre, Khancoban Visitor Centre and Yarrangobilly Visitor Centre.

Tumut VIC attracted 29,726 walk-in visitors in 2016/17 and cost Snowy Valleys Council \$149,807 in expenditure, with a further \$362,861 (less \$62,950 in revenue generated through retail sales) contributed towards the centres operation by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), through an ongoing MoU agreement.

Tumbarumba VIC attracted 17,965 walk in visitors in 2016/17, and had a total expenditure of \$197,084, almost all of which was dedicated towards salaries and wages. A further \$1,960 was contributed towards operating the Khancoban Visitor Centre.

In total Snowy Valleys contributed \$348,851 per annum toward delivering visitor information services within the region, with the expenditure dedicated to both Tumut and Tumbarumba VICs below the average (\$170,321) for VICs of their size.

When benchmarked against Visitor Information Centres in other Council's the cost of operating the VICs for Council is low. This is assisted in part by NPWS contributing to the cost of operating the Tumut VIC.

FIGURE 4 TUMBARUMBA VIC



Source: <https://www.visitnsw.com/visitor-information-centres/tumbarumba-visitor-information-centre-and-museum>

3.3. VIC NETWORK

There are currently four centres providing visitor information services within the Snowy Valleys region: Tumut Visitor Information Centre, Tumbarumba Visitor Information Centre, Khancoban Visitor Centre and Yarrangobilly Visitor Centre.

TUMUT REGION VIC

The Tumut VIC is housed in the Old Butter Factory in Tumut, located at the intersection of Gocup Road and the Snowy Mountains Highway. The VIC is a Level 1 accredited VIC, open 7 days a week, with a 24-hour tourism touch screen. The VIC also includes a retail shop, accommodation booking, a corroboree frog display and a local exhibition space.

As outlined in the Tumut Region Visitor Information Centre Memorandum of Understanding there is currently an Advisory Committee for the Tumut Region Visitor Centre made up of appropriate community and business representatives. The role of the Tumut Region Visitor Centre Advisory Committee (TRVCAC) is to advise NPWS/ (former)TSC on the management of the TRVC. The committee meets three times per year and operates in accordance to terms of reference contained in the MOU.

TUMBARUMBA VIC

The Tumbarumba Visitor Information Centre is located in the centre of Tumbarumba township, and is a Level 2 accredited VIC, open seven days a week. The VIC provides information on accommodation, attractions, events, road and weather conditions and carries topographic maps, Hume and Hovell Walking Track map kits, books, and local produce.

The Tumbarumba VIC also has a local history museum with a comprehensive collection of information about Tumbarumba's history of goldmining, timber, and mountain cattlemen, as well as indigenous heritage including the unique Mundaroo Coolamon

KHANCOBAN VISITOR CENTRE

The Khancoban Visitor Centre is located at the western entry point to Kosciuszko National Park and is not an accredited visitor centre. It is open 9am-4pm (closed 12.30pm-1pm) Monday to Friday, and open daily during peak summer season and school holidays. It provides products such as maps, books and Kosciuszko park passes, information on weather conditions and road closures, as well as free displays and facilities. The development of the Khancoban Visitor Centre was an action identified from the Tumbarumba Shire Council Tourism Strategy 2011-2016.

Council completed the construction of a new office and information centre for NPWS in Khancoban which forms the Visitor Centre. This was an innovative arrangement whereby NPWS agreed to lease the building for 20 years after which ownership will transfer from Council to NPWS. The project is cost neutral to Council other than an annual contribution of \$10,000 for landscape maintenance.

YARRANGOBILLY VISITOR CENTRE

The Yarrangobilly Caves Visitor Centre is located within the Yarrangobilly Caves region of KNP and is open daily from 9am -5pm (excluding Christmas Day). It is operated by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and is not an accredited VIC, nor does it receive any funding support from Snowy Valleys Council. Information provided by this visitor centre is predominantly localised, including "*information on cave tours and tickets, and top tips on where to stay and what to do in the Yarrangobilly and northern areas of Kosciuszko National Park*".

3.4. CURRENT VIC NETWORK PERFORMANCE

3.4.1. OPERATING BUDGET

Total expenditure for the Tumbarumba VIC is \$197,084 which includes \$172,269 in salaries and wages, and VIC operating expenses (building maintenance) of \$24,815.

Through a MoU with NPWS endorsed in 2013, the operating costs of the Tumut VIC are split between the former Tumut Shire and NPWS. In 2017 the contribution rate for the former Tumut Shire was equal to \$149,807 (including GST), with the NPWS contributing approximately \$362,861 (less retail revenue of \$62,950), which equated to \$449,718 in total expenditure on the centre.

Just under \$2000 is dedicated in expenditure to Khancoban Visitor Centre for mowing and vegetation maintenance.

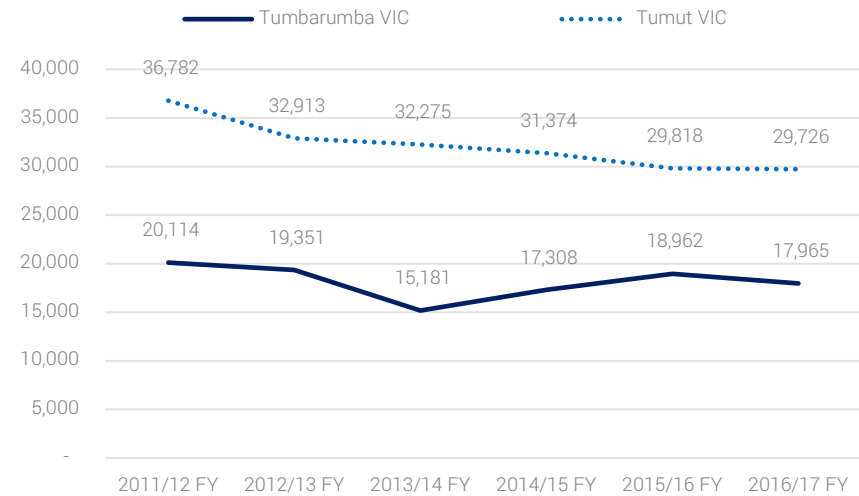
3.4.2. VISITATION

Tumut VIC had the highest number of walk in visitors in 2016/17, attracting 29,726 visitors, compared to 17,965 walk in visitors to Tumbarumba VIC (Figure 5).

Walk in visitation to both the Tumut and Tumbarumba VICs has declined over the past six years, although Tumbarumba VIC visitation has been increasing since it's 2013/14 low point (with the exception of 2016/17).

Visitation numbers were not available for Khancoban or Yarrangobilly VICs.

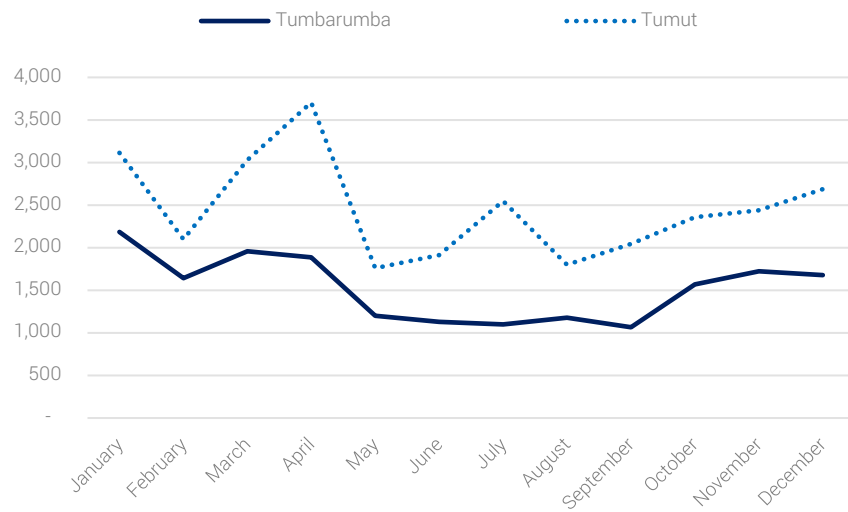
FIGURE 5 WALK IN VISITATION TREND 2011/12 TO 2016/17



Source: Snowy Valleys Council 2017

Visitation seasonality is largely the same for both VICs, with a larger Easter visitation spike for Tumut (Figure 6).

FIGURE 6 WALK IN SEASONALITY 2016



Source: Snowy Valleys Council 2017

Data gathered for other VIC enquiries was limited, however it showed that:

- In 2016/17 financial year the Tumut VIC received 16,123 web and email enquiries, and 6,051 phone enquiries; and
- Between January and August 2017, the Tumbarumba VIC received 106 web and email enquiries, and 888 phone enquiries (not including January where results were unavailable).

CAPTURE RATE

The capture rate of the Tumut and Tumbarumba VIC’s in Snowy Valleys is a way of understanding the proportion of visitors to each of these subregions who visit the corresponding VICs (Table 1). Based on 2016/17 figures, the existing VICs capture 11% (Tumut) and 12% (Tumbarumba) of visitors to their respective sub region.

TABLE 1 CAPTURE RATE BY TOWNSHIPS 2016/17

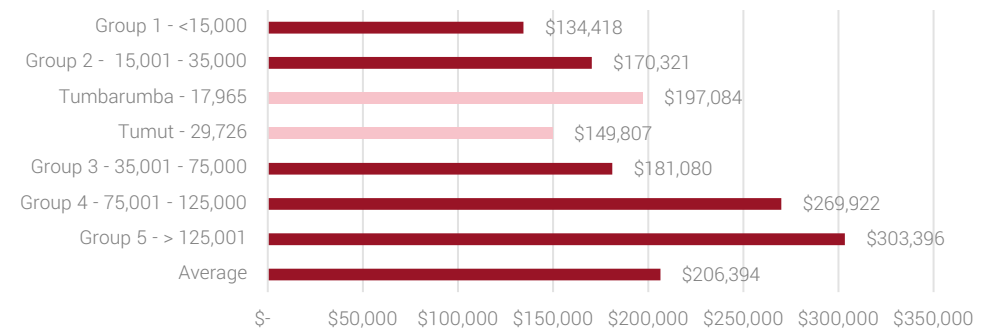
TOWNSHIP	WALK IN VISITORS TO VIC/S	NUMBER OF VISITORS	VISITOR CAPTURE BY VICS (%)
Tumut	29,726	273,203	11%
Tumbarumba	17,965	150,342	12%

3.4.3. BENCHMARKING OF RESOURCES

EXTERNAL FUNDING TO OPERATE VICS

Snowy Valleys Council currently contributes \$348,851 per annum toward delivering visitor information services within the region. The expenditure dedicated to Tumut was below the average, whilst Tumbarumba was slightly higher than (\$170,321) for VICs of their size (Figure 7). The benchmarking data shows that the expenditure for each of the VICs is lower than the average for VICs operated by Local Government (\$206,394).

FIGURE 7 VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE EXPENDITURE BY SIZE OF VIC – COMPARISON WITH TUMUT & TUMBARUMBA



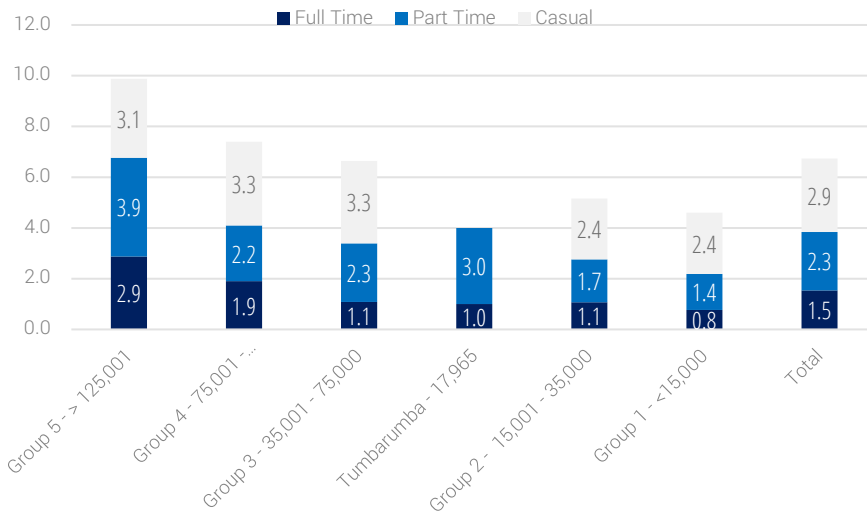
Source: Vic Futures Report

STAFF RESOURCES

Only Tumbarumba VIC utilises Council staff resources, with one full time Tourism and Promotions Officer who manages the VIC and also supports events, and three part-time VIC assistants who share one full time role (Figure 8). This is in line with VICs of a similar size, with the exception of casual employees, however volunteers are utilised on the weekends.

All staff at Tumut VIC are employees of NPWS, with the centre also utilising volunteer resources during peak periods.

FIGURE 8 AVERAGE STAFF ALLOCATION PER VIC



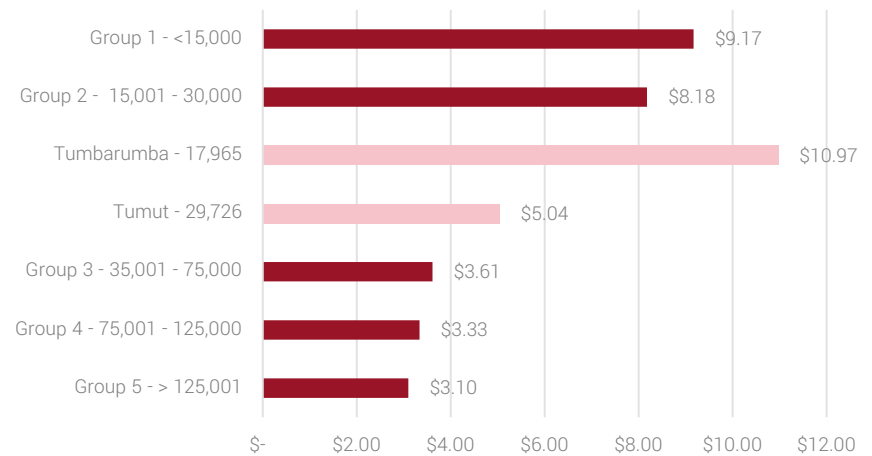
Source: Vic Futures Report

3.4.4. COST OF VIC DELIVERY PER ENQUIRY

Figure 9 shows that the cost to Snowy Valleys Council to deliver visitor services to walk in visitors to Tumut VIC (\$4.81) was below the average for those of similar size

(\$8.18). Tumbarumba (\$10.97) was slightly above the average, reflective of its role delivering other tourism services.

FIGURE 9 AVERAGE COST OF VIC PER WALK IN ENQUIRY



Source: Vic Futures Report

3.5. VISITOR INFORMATION SERVICES DEMAND

This section provides a theoretical demand assessment for walk in visitors to VICs in Snowy Valleys Council. The purpose of this assessment is to understand the likely market size of walk in visitors to VICs in order to assist with future VIC planning and provision.

3.5.1. ASSESSMENT OF VIC NEED

The Mornington Peninsula Visitor Journey Report prepared by Urban Enterprise in 2014 identified that approximately 62% of visitors preferred to access information on their smart phone or tablets, whilst only 14% preferred to access information at a VIC. A smaller research project conducted in 2016 for Wodonga specifically identified approximately 60% of visitors preferred to access information on their smart phone or tablets, whilst 20% preferred to access information at a VIC. Only 27% of visitors surveyed in Wodonga identified that they had used a source of information during their trip.

An average of these results has been used to calculate the potential visitor demand across the subregions of Snowy Valleys Council for physical VICs, digital information and published collateral (Table 2). This demand modelling also utilised information from TRA's IVS and NVS; Urban Enterprise's 2014 Mornington Peninsula Visitor Journey Report; Urban Enterprise's 2016 Wodonga Visitor Information Centre Service Review; and information collected from Snowy Valleys Council.

Table 2 shows that currently both Tumut and Tumbarumba VICs are slightly outperforming the level of visitation they should be attracting based on wider VIC trends.

TABLE 2 POTENTIAL DEMAND BASED ON PREFERRED INFORMATION SOURCE

SUBREGION	VIC	DIGITAL	PUBLISHED COLLATERAL
Tumut	29,492	105,825	21,685
Tumbarumba	16,229	58,235	11,933

Based on previous accreditation guidelines, sustainable VICs were identified as those which can attract more than 35,000 visitors. This reduces the cost per visitor substantially, due to the high cost to operate VICs within the accreditation guidelines. Based on this theoretical demand analysis, overall the LGA can currently support approximately 1.3 accredited VICs.

Physical Visitor Information Services remain a contentious topic across the tourism industry with many destinations grappling with the best approach to service visitors in region with the rapid rise of digital media and declining visitor numbers through Visitor Information Centres.

Although the current cost to deliver visitor information centre services in Snowy Valleys Council is below the average for VICs of the same size, overall the LGA can only support approximately 1.3 accredited VICs based on theoretical demand modelling, indicating there are improvements that should be considered with the delivery of visitor information services.

In particular, each of the existing accredited VICs presents a unique co-location opportunity that will decrease the resources required to operate the accredited VIC, whilst also improving the visitor experience in the region.

4. PRODUCT LOCATION AND DISPERSAL

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This section explores the current dispersal of visitor attractions and product throughout Snowy Valleys Council. The aim of this is to guide the delivery of visitor information services targeted to the key visitor destinations to inform and disperse visitors.

4.2. KEY FINDINGS

The delivery of physical visitor information services needs to respond to the product mix throughout the Council area. It highlights that there are a number of tourism product clusters including:

- Adelong;
- Tumut area;
- Talbingo;
- Yarrangobilly;
- Batlow;
- Laurel Hill;
- Tumbarumba; and
- Khancoban.

The provision of visitor information services needs to consider these clusters of tourism product.

4.3. VISITOR ECONOMY ATTRACTIONS

Natural assets are the key drawcard to the Snowy Valleys, and a number of visitor experiences are dispersed across the region which are frequented by both local

residents and visitors to the area however these currently include no or minimal interpretive or visitor information to engage with either market. Existing key visitor attractions include:

- **Kosciuszko National Park** - The Kosciuszko National Park is the key attraction in the Snowy Valleys, which spans a wide area of the region. The three main gateways to the National Park include:
 - Khancoban area - The western gateway to the Kosciuszko National Park, jumping off points to Geehi and Tom Groggin's camp spots, fishing, hiking and huts in the Jagungal Wilderness;
 - Tumut area - the launch pad into the northern Kosciuszko National Park, with water sports and wildlife at Blowering Dam and camping and walks in the foothills of the Snowy Mountains; and
 - Yarrangobilly area - a highlight of the northern Kosciuszko National Park, visitors can explore the caves, go on guided tours and swim in a thermal pool.
- **Other Nature Based Product** - A number of other nature-based attractions are widely spread across the Snowy Valleys including waterways, state forests and nature reserves which offer a plethora of camping, hiking, fishing and water sports opportunities.
- **Adelong Falls Gold Mill Ruins** - The historic township of Adelong is classified by the National Heritage Trust of Australia, with buildings dating back to the gold rush. The historic gold mining works at the Adelong Falls Gold Mining Ruins has interpretive signage and pools for swimming.
- **Tumbarumba To Rosewood Rail Trail** - Cycling in particular, is an emerging trend in the region, including identified strengths in road cycling, emerging MTB, and the region is now home to the first Rail Trail development in NSW (Tumbarumba to Rosewood).
- **Tumbarumba Wine Region** - The Tumbarumba Wine region is home to award-winning Courabyra Wines and well-established Tumbarumba Wines Escape.

Other wineries in the region include Johansen Wines, Obsession Wines, Mount Tumbarumba Wines, and Excelsior Peak, who offer complementary cellar door, tastings and/or food offerings, varying in sophistication.

- **Festivals and Events** - Events draw a number of visitors to Snowy Valleys. Table 3 shows the key events held on an annual basis in the Council. The provision of visitor information targeted to visitors at events is a key consideration for future delivery of visitor information services.

Figure 10 overleaf provides the location of key visitor attractions in relation to VICs within the Snowy Valleys Council region.

TABLE 3 CURRENT MAJOR EVENTS

Event	Type	Date	Location
Tumbarumba Rodeo	Sport and Recreation	1 st January	Tumbarumba Showgrounds
Tumut Cycle Classic	Sport and Recreation	21 st January	Tumut
Tumut Cup Day	Sport and Recreation	11 th February	Tumut Racecourse
Tumbafest	Music	25 th – 26 th February	Tumbarumba
Rock the Turf	Music	10 th March	Tumut
Festival of the Falling Leaf	Family and Lifestyle	28 th April	Bila Park, Tumut
Batlow Cider Fest	Food and Wine	19 th May	Batlow
Hume and Hovell Ultra	Sport and Recreation	13 th – 14 th October	Henry Angel Trackhead
Batlow Apple Blossom Festival	Family and Lifestyle	20 th October	Memorial Park, Batlow
Tumbarumba Tastebuds	Food and Wine	28 th – 29 th October	Tumbarumba
Alpine Classic Car Rally	Sport and Recreation	4 th – 5 th November	Tumut

Source: Snowy Valleys Council, 2017

FIGURE 10 LOCATION OF KEY VISITOR ATTRACTIONS AND VICS WITHIN SNOWY VALLEYS COUNCIL

Nature Based and Heritage

- 1 Bago State Forest- Hume and Hovell Walking Track, Blowering Dam, Pilot Hill Arboretum, Paddy's River Dam, the Paling Yards and Sugarpine Walk
- 2 Kosciuszko National Park
- 3 Adelong Creek
- 4 Talbingo Reservoir and Landers Falls
- 5 Khancoban Pondage
- 6 Tumut Pondage Reservoir
- 7 Tumut Two Pondage
- 8 Tooma Reservoir
- 9 Geehi Reservoir and River
- 10 Riverglade Wetlands
- 11 Mannus Lake
- 12 Yarrangobilly Caves
- 13 Clarkes Hill Nature Reserve
- 14 Bogandyera Nature Reserve
- 15 Jingelic Nature Reserve
- 16 Brungle Creek
- 17 Round Mountain Hut, Clews Hut an Paton Hut
- 18 Snowy Hydro Electric Scheme
- 19 Adelong Creek Falls Gold Ruins
- 20 Wiradjuri Wonders Aboriginal Discovery Tours

Food and Agritourism

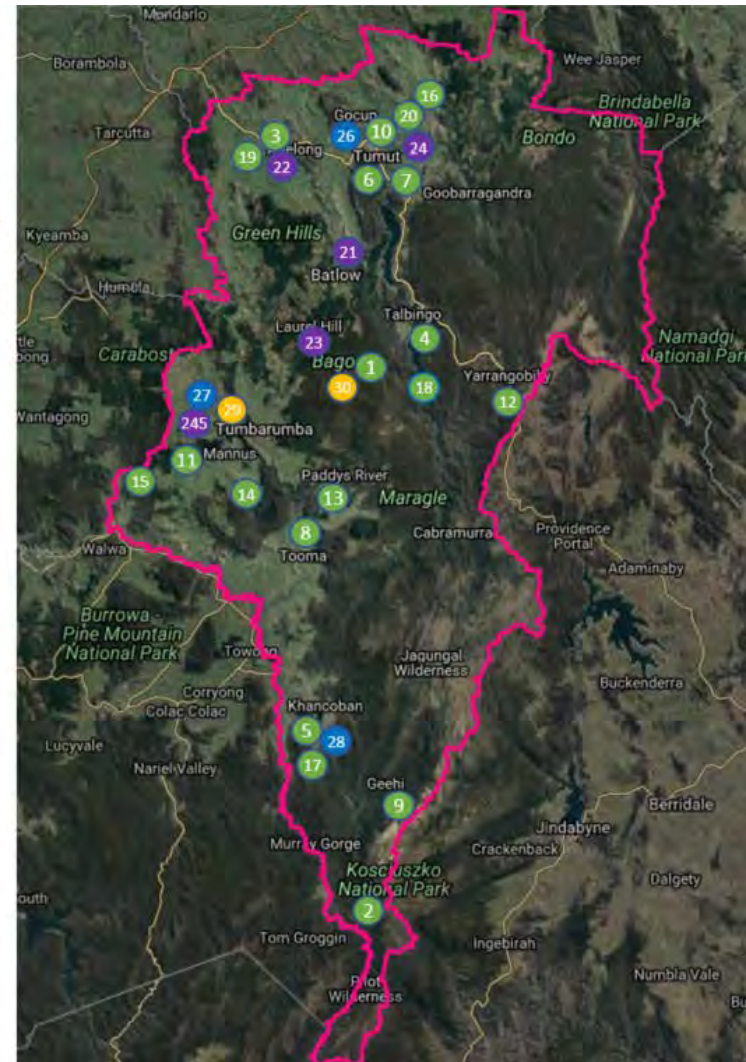
- 21 Batlow Bees and Berries, Batlow Fruit and Veg, Wilgro Orchard, Mouat's Farm, Batlow Organic, Happy Wombat Hazelnuts, Sweetie Pie, Batlow Grand Oak Trufferies and Yarra Farm
- 22 Highfield Farm and Woodland, Stella Rosa Bread
- 23 Laurel Hill Berry Farm and Asgard Nursery
- 24 Tumut River Market Garden and The Apple Shed
- 25 Tumbarumba wine region

Existing Visitor Information Centers

- 26 Tumut VIC
- 27 Tumbarumba VIC
- 28 Khancoban VIC

Cycling

- 29 Tumbarumba to Rosewood Rail Trail
- 30 Hume and Hovell Mountain Bike Trail



5. ONLINE BRANDING AND MARKETING

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This section provides a situational analysis of existing branding and marketing for the Snowy Valleys region, and subregions within it. It focuses primarily on digital presence.

5.2. KEY FINDINGS

Recognition and awareness of the 'Snowy Valleys' region is a key issue effecting visitation to the region. Online brand recognition of 'Snowy Valleys' is currently low, and achieving clear brand cut through with new regional level branding supported by township placemaking and destination branding initiatives will be key to increasing visitation to the region. A detailed review of the current branding and images is required, with a move towards content which highlights local experiences and activities on offer that truly engage visitors and focus on developing new experiences, such as the recently developed Snowy Valleys Up Close initiative.

Development of an official Visit Snowy Valleys tourism site to replace the existing Visit Tumut and Tumbarumba Region sites should be implemented, with Tumut Region and Tumbarumba Region developed and promoted as sub regional brands within the newly established Snowy Valleys brand. The Snowy Valleys Up Close initiative would be cross promoted through this site, and positioned as a resident platform similar to Destination Melbourne's "Discover Your Own Backyard" campaign, which aims to *"educate residents about things to see and do in their area...building community pride in residents and encouraging dispersal and yield"*⁷, as well as providing a place for locals to share their own content, and subsequently a place where visitors can find the unique 'local experiences' of the region.

At a regional level, Snowy Valleys is to seek leadership from Riverina Murray with regard to its digital presence and marketing of the Snowy Valleys 'sub region' and identify collaboration opportunities in relation to destination marketing and high quality web delivery.

Reinvigoration of the Snowy Valleys Way marketing, including digital and physical branding initiatives, should also be implemented.

⁷ Destination Melbourne, 2018, <https://www.dyob.com.au/about-us>



5.3. DIGITAL PRESENCE

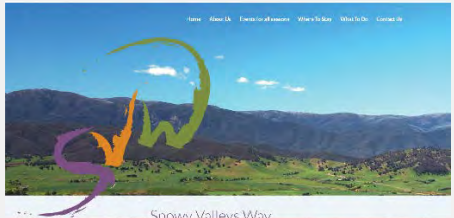


With the recent amalgamation of Tumut and Tumbarumba Shires, and transition from Tourism Snowy Mountains regional alliance to Riverina Murray Destination Network, branding and marketing for the Snowy Valleys region exists across a number of (largely outdated) digital platforms.

5.3.1. WEBSITES

A summary of the key websites and their features which currently provide online information for destinations within the Snowy Valleys is presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4 REVIEW OF DIGITAL PRESENCE OF SNOWY VALLEYS TOURISM PRODUCT

WEBSITE	KEY FEATURES
 <p>www.visitnsw.com/snowy-mountains</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tumut area (destinations, things to do, accommodation, events, deals) • Tumbarumba area (destinations, things to do, accommodation, events, deals)
 <p>www.snowymountains.com.au</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Things to see and do, • Key destinations (Tumut, Adelong, Batlow, Khancoban, Kosciuszko National Park, Tumbarumba, Talbingo, Selwyn Snow Resort); • Accommodation bookings; • Events; and • Trip planning.

 <p>www.snowyvalleysway.com.au</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home; • About; • Events for all seasons; • Where to stay; • What to do; and • Contact us.
 <p>www.visittumut.com.au</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adventuring, Exploring, Wandering; • Events; • Accommodation; • Towns and Villages (Adelong, Batlow, Brungle, Cabramurra, Talbingo, Tumut); • VIC information; • Directions; and • Itineraries.
 <p>www.tumbarumbaregion.com.au</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About (Tumbarumba, Khancoban, Rosewood, Jingellic, Laurel Hill, Kosciuszko National Park, The Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Scheme, A brief history); • What to do; • Events; • Living here; • Local Businesses; • Where to stay; and • Maps.

Source: www.visitnsw.com/snowy-mountains; www.snowymountains.com.au; www.snowyvalleysway.com.au; www.visittumut.com.au; and www.tumbarumbaregion.com.au

There are also a number of other event and product focused websites which provide a range of destination information including those for: NPWS, Tumbafest, Batlow Cider Fest, Hume and Hovell Ultra, and The Alpine Classic. The former Shire tourism websites also link to social media platforms (see section 5.3.2).

Website analytics collected for Tumbarumba Shire showed a steady growth in visitation to the official tourism website for the region (www.visittumbashire.com.au prior to the launch of www.tumbarumbaregion.com.au in 2016), growing from 12,781 unique visitors/users in 2011 to 39,902 in 2016.

SNOWY VALLEYS UP CLOSE



Welcome to Snowy Valleys Up Close

Snowy Valleys Up Close is a new initiative launched by Snowy Valleys Council in 2017. The site includes the following features:

- Discover our experiences
- Get involved
- Follow us
- Competitions; and
- Mailing list

The website also links to Facebook, Instagram and Youtube social media platforms, with varying levels of engagement (see Table 7 overleaf).

5.3.2. SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

FORMER TUMUT AND TUMBARUMBA SHIRES


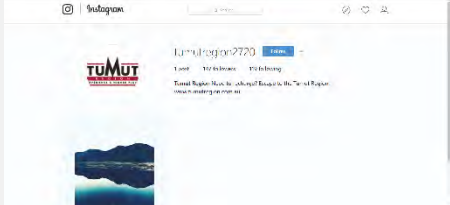
Table 5 and 6 show that community and Council engagement with the former Tumut and Tumbarumba Facebook and Instagram social media channels was limited. Tumut in particular, had a very limited use of Instagram.

TABLE 5 TUMBARUMBA FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM PRESENCE

CHANNEL	ENGAGEMENT
<p>Facebook</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,449 likes • 1,440 followers
<p>Instagram</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 215 posts • 632 followers • 474 following • 1000 likes • 31 comments

Source: Tumbarumba Region Facebook page; Tumbarumba Region Instagram account; Picbear, 2018.

TABLE 6 TUMUT FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM PRESENCE


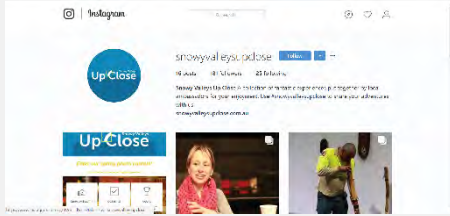
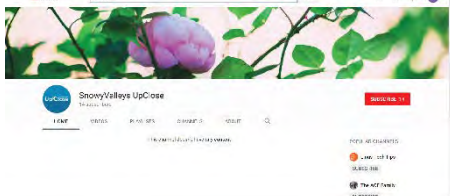
CHANNEL	ENGAGEMENT
<p>Facebook</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,815 likes; • 2,764 followers
<p>Instagram</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 post • 147 followers • 119 followings • 27 likes • 3 comments

Source: Tumut Region Facebook page; Tumut Region 2720 Instagram account; Picbear, 2018.

SNOWY VALLEYS

Due to its recent launch, engagement with the Snowy Valleys Up Close social media channels is still limited (Table 7).

TABLE 7 SNOWY VALLEYS UP CLOSE SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS AND ENGAGEMENT

CHANNEL	ENGAGEMENT
<p>Facebook</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 665 likes • 678 people following
<p>Instagram</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 posts • 181 followers • 25 following • 182 likes • 11 comments • 34 posts have also used #snowyvalleysupclose to have their content featured on the Snowy Valleys Up Close account.
<p>Youtube</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14 subscribers • 39 videos (although no content is provided on the home page)

Source: Snowy Valleys Up Close website, Youtube, Facebook and Instagram pages; and Picbear, 2018.

INSTAGRAM

Table 8 provides a review of the main Snowy Valleys townships presence on Instagram, and reveals that currently ‘Batlow’ has the highest recognition, with 15 hashtags that have been used in over 20 posts, however many of these are related to the Batlow Cider product and linked to other regions. Blowering has the hashtag featured in the highest number of posts (#bloweringdam).

TABLE 8 TOWNSHIP INSTAGRAM PRESENCE AND RECOGNITION

TOWNSHIP	# OF TAGS (20+ POSTS)	TAG WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF POSTS*	# OF USERS
Tumut	11	#tumutriver (1,046)	5
Tumbarumba	7	#tumbarumbaregion (880)	11
Batlow	15	#batlowcider (1,034)	8
Khancoban	4	#khancobandam (42)	7
Adelong	7	#adelongfalls (875)	3
Yarrangobilly	4	#yarrangobillycaves (1,246)	0
Talbingo	3	#talbingodam (280)	2
Courabyra	1	#courabyrawines (135)	1
Cabramurra	1	-	0
Blowering	3	#bloweringdam (2,673)	0

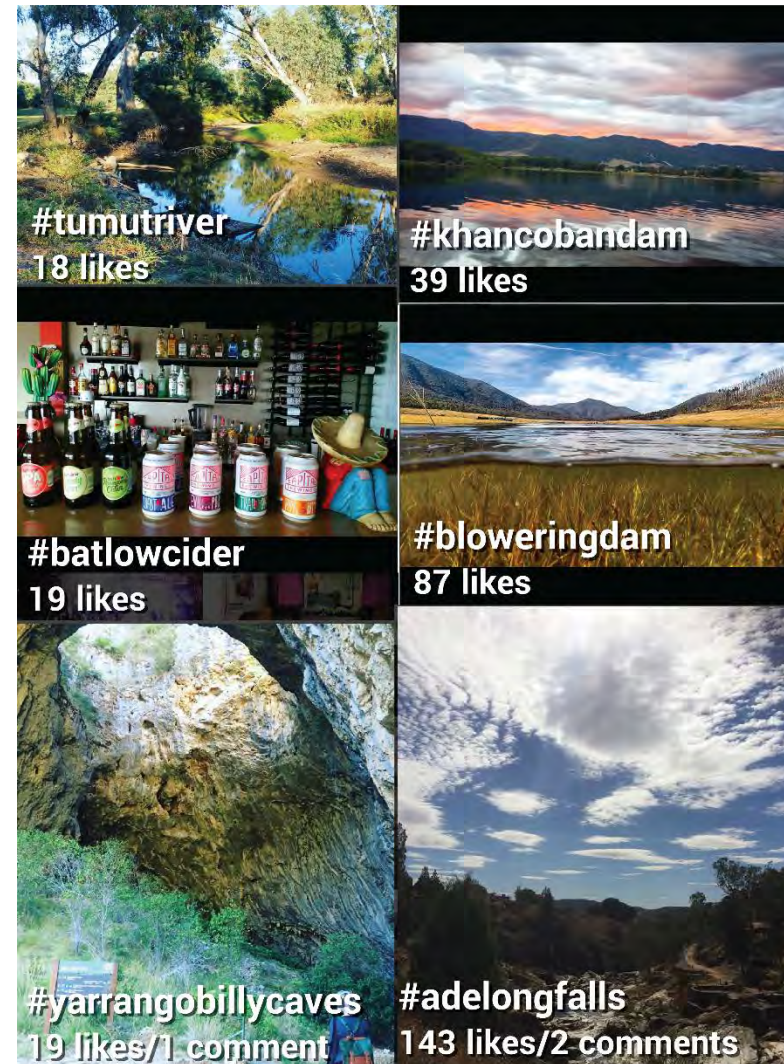
*Excluding township name

Source: Picbear, 2018.

Overall, the level of social media engagement on Instagram recorded for Snowy Valleys key townships is low, with only a small number of tags related to each township which had been featured in over 100 posts. For example, only two tags for Tumbarumba (#tumbarumba and #tumbarumbaregion) are tagged in more than 100 posts, however there are a number of other lesser utilised tags which specifically link to visitor products in the region including, #tumbarumbawinesescape, #tumbarumbatastebuds and #tumbarumbawedding.

Figure 11 shows six examples of recent Instagram photos for key hashtags listed in Table 8, and the low user engagement levels for each post (likes and comments).

FIGURE 11 INSTAGRAM PHOTO ENGAGEMENT EXAMPLES



Source: anitavo_gel, saltwedgeangler, santafe merimbula, asqueezeoflemon, spidermandarin, and blissfulgrader Instagram accounts, 2018.

6. SIGNAGE, WAYFINDING AND INTERPRETATION

6.1. INTRODUCTION

This section provides an overview and assessment of existing and proposed wayfinding, signage and interpretation for Snowy Valleys Council, including for the Council boundary, townships, touring routes, and major visitor attractions.

6.2. KEY FINDINGS

The amalgamation of Tumbarumba Shire and Tumut Shire presents an opportunity to build on the Snowy Valleys brand through wayfinding and signage. As outlined in the Destination Management Plan, there is a need to develop a brand strategy and graphic work to be used across promotional material, digital media and signage.

Quality and branding of township signage is also inconsistent, with Snowy Valleys Council set to undertake a township signage project in the immediate future. This project should ensure signage has a clear and consistent branding link to the Snowy Valleys Council 'region' as well as promoting key township identities.

A review of signage at key attractions is also required to ensure they are easily identified as legible as visitor attractions.



Source: TripAdvisor, 2018

6.3. SNOWY VALLEYS COUNCIL

As a recently amalgamated Council, wayfinding, signage and interpretation in Snowy Valleys Council now requires updating to reflect both the new Council branding, and the future visitor role of the region.

FIGURE 12 FORMER SHIRE(S) SIGNAGE



Source: <http://www.danthonia.com.au/local-government-signs/city-and-town-entry-signs/tumut-local-government-sign.html>; <https://www.visitnsw.com/destinations/snowy-mountains/tumbarumba-area/tumbarumba/events/hume-hovell-ultra>

New boundary signs (Figure 13), have recently been erected on the eight main road entrances into the Snowy Valleys LGA, which were '*designed to reflect a unified representation of the new Council community and acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the many Aboriginal lands that the Snowy Valleys Council traverses*'.

FIGURE 13 NEW SNOWY VALLEYS COUNCIL BOUNDARY SIGNAGE



Source: <http://www.snowyvalleys.nsw.gov.au/News-Media/SHIRE-BOUNDARY-SIGNS-UNVEILED>

6.4. TOWNSHIPS

Previous and existing township signs across the region have been varied in quality and branding effectiveness (Figure 14).

Work on the consultation, design and rollout of new town and village signs was slated by Snowy Valleys Council to begin in 2018, with Council identifying that *“it is important that the communities of our council are involved in the design of their new town entry signs and branding.”*

FIGURE 14 EXISTING TOWNSHIP SIGN EXAMPLES



Source: <https://i.ytimg.com/vi/cqIXh0GDdKA/maxresdefault.jpg>; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Batlow,_New_South_Wales; http://res.cloudinary.com/hrscyww4p/image/upload/c_limit,h_900,w_1200/xe2souggka3xwg8spkrc.jpg; http://www.expressway.online/gallery/roads/nsw/numbered/decommissioned/nationalroutes/nr18/01_mundariototalbingo/eastbound/images/201011_13_talbingo_murrayjacksondr_robtilley.jpg

6.5. TOURING ROUTES

6.5.1. SNOWY VALLEYS WAY

In conjunction with the reinvigoration of the Snowy Valleys Way Touring Route, updated signage is required which promotes clear and consistent branding in a high quality format that appeals to a contemporary audience.

FIGURE 15 EXISTING SNOWY VALLEYS WAY SIGNAGE



Source: <http://mw2.google.com/mw-panoramio/photos/medium/9611438.jpg>

6.6. MAJOR VISITOR ATTRACTIONS

In addition to improved township and touring signs, better signage is also required for key tourist attractions throughout the region, such as Sugar Pine Walk⁸ (Figure 16). FCNSW is currently undertaking a branding and signage upgrade including recreational sites and forest entrances.

FIGURE 16 SUGAR PINE WALK EXISTING SIGNAGE



Source: https://patchono.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/dsc_1068-3sm.jpg

7. ALTERNATIVE VISITOR INFORMATION DELIVERY FORMATS

7.1. INTRODUCTION

This section provides an overview of alternative visitor information delivery formats and key examples of successful initiatives for consideration.

7.1.1. PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Contemporary approaches to visitor information centre delivery include consideration of the following:

- Movement away from stand-alone VICs to co-located VICs which will reduce operational costs but also leverage from other attractions and community facilities for example collocation with museums, libraries, service centres or art galleries are now common;
- Movement away from 'gateway' VICs to centrally located VICs to leverage from incidental visitation and also promote visitor yield in town centres; and
- Consolidation and reducing the number of physical VIC's, however providing a flexible approach to delivery including temporary kiosks and VIC vans (such as the St Kilda Kombi).

STANDALONE ARTIST AND ARCHITECTURALLY DESIGNED TOURIST INFORMATION KIOSK

The Sydney Chinatown is an example of a site-specific artist and architect designed visitor kiosk. The kiosk has a brochure rack and is staffed (see Figure 17). Bourke Street in Melbourne has operated a kiosk for many years, and whilst not architecturally designed, attracts a large number of visitors for a very low investment. Standalone information kiosks can be manned by casual staff seasonally and provide a high benefit to cost ratio due to the low investment costs and location in high traffic areas.

It is also possible in some cases to combine the VIC function with itinerant traders in the location creating a multi-purpose kiosk (Figure 18 overleaf).

FIGURE 17 HAYMARKET CHINATOWN TOURISM KIOSK



FIGURE 18 COMBINED VIC WITH ITINERANT TRADERS



ROVING VIC

A roving VIC that operates during peak periods is a targeted way of reaching visitors, responding to peaks and troughs. Roving VIC's can contain hardcopy brochure racks as well as digital information (such as i-pads). The St Kilda VIC Kombi (Figure 19) is an example of how this can also provide additional marketing and attention to local beach culture. Other examples of a Roving VIC could be a vintage caravan.

FIGURE 19 ST KILDA VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE KOMBI



SWAP CARDS

The Mornington Peninsula 'swap card' program began as a cost-effective method to internally market the attractions of the Mornington Peninsula and has developed into an important way of strengthening local networks and cross-promotion of attractions and tourism businesses across the region.

BROCHURE RACKS AND GUIDES [COLLATERAL]

Traditional brochures remain an important way to provide physical information to visitors and encourage them to do one more thing or return for more experiences in the future.

Brochure racks are often used within VICs, accommodation providers and attractions, however their current use by Snowy Valleys businesses is minimal.

Council could consider a roll-out of tiered brochure racks and displays to support local businesses participating in this important referral process. One of the issues with brochure racks is the need to maintain up to date collateral as well as restocking the racks. Managing the collateral within racks is important so as not to offer 'information' overload through cluttered brochure displays and this would need to be supported by Council initially.

TOURISM MAPS [COLLATERAL]

Tourism maps are growing in popularity, can be available both online and in hard copy and can be tailored to highlight themes (local arts and craft maps, historic maps, foodie maps for example).

Past research undertaken by Urban Enterprise and in consultation with VIC staff and volunteers in the state highlights the strong demand for tourism maps by visitors to VICs. These are often used for navigation as well as exploring visitor experiences and attractions on offer and could be included in the collateral provided to local businesses with brochure racks.

STATIC DISPLAY BOARDS

Static display boards with local attractions and visitor information are a simple way to educate the local community as well as providing basic information for visitors. Maps with local attractions highlighted with blown up images of local attractions can be very effective.

Static display boards require ongoing upgrade and are often vandalised if located in areas that have limited passive surveillance. The design and location of these displays would need to be considered in light of current and predicted usage.

7.2. DIGITAL INFORMATION

The overwhelming preference for information consumption is through online digital media. Australia-wide data shows that 83% of visitors use online information to plan their trip (day, overnight or long-lead). This is supported by primary research conducted in the Mornington Peninsula tourism region, which showed that 75% of

visitors prefer to use online information both prior to arrival and in-region: much higher than any other information source.

This trend is unlikely to decline and as such it is recommended that resources are more efficiently directed to digital media.

7.3. WEBSITE AND ONLINE CONTENT

An easy to use and content rich website is overwhelming the key critical piece of digital infrastructure required. A high quality digital platform and content management system can be used across the various delivery infrastructure outlined above such as touchscreens, digital screens, computer terminals, smart phones and tablets.

PERSONAL SMART PHONES/ LAPTOPS/ TABLETS/ WIFI ACCESS

The delivery of smart phone friendly visitor information is critical, as is the ability for visitors to access data on their smart phones while preplanning and staying in the region.

The key to this service provision is the quality of the online content including websites that are smart phone friendly and prioritise information in a strategic way.

TOUCH SCREEN KIOSKS

Touchscreens have been utilised by a number of tourism sites across Australia and offer a physical interface for people to access online information about local maps, attractions, accommodation, restaurants and events. There are a range of different products available which would be suitable as Touch Screen Kiosks. Costs vary depending on the level of tailored design, size and indoor or outdoor capabilities. It should be noted that where hardware is purchased and owned by Council, there are also additional costs associated with software programming and maintenance, which are not carried out by the touchscreen providers. However, a whole system approach is not recommended as outsourcing content significantly reduces ability to ensure visitors are provided with up to date relevant information.

Figure 20 provides a pyramid diagram of the touchscreen hierarchy options for the delivery of visitor services, including the indoor mountable touchscreens, large format branded 42" digital screens (non-touch) and portable touchscreens (ipads). It should be noted that generally digital technology requires ongoing programming to stay up to date and software and hardware require replacing approximately every 3 years if not damaged. Figure 21 shows examples of indoor and outdoor digital touchscreens.

FIGURE 20 HIERARCHY OF DIGITAL TOUCH SCREEN OPTIONS

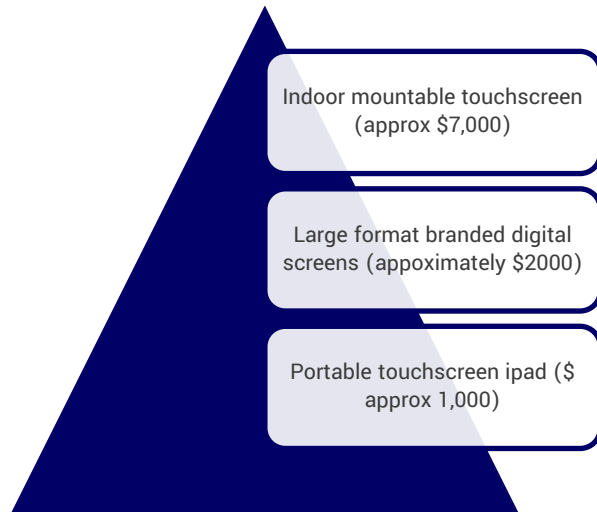
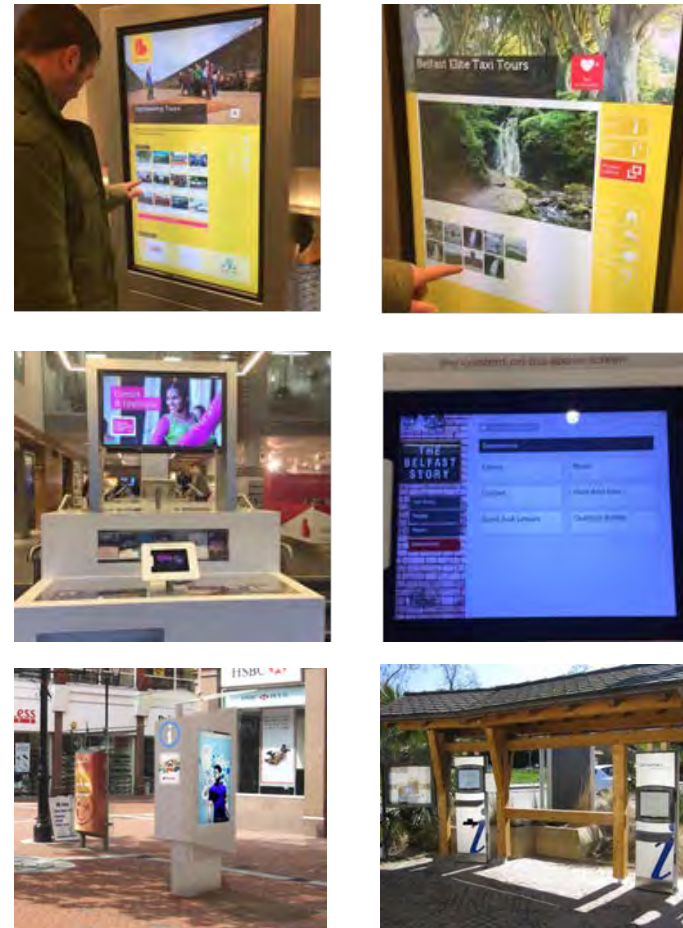


FIGURE 21 EXAMPLES OF INDOOR AND OUTDOOR DIGITAL TOUCHSCREENS



COMPUTER TERMINALS

Computer terminals in designated areas (such as Council Customer Service Centres) can support the delivery of digital information such as those utilised in Ballarat VIC. Local libraries generally provide computer terminals that can be hired for short timeframes.

HOTSPOTS

Free Wi-Fi points should be considered at specific destinations to improve online accessibility. Free Wi-Fi not only enables visitors to search for visitor information online, but also encourages visitor generated marketing through social media sharing of photographs and video's. These can be incorporated into any physical infrastructure created for a site. WIFI hotspots are important in locations that are remote and also to provide access to data for international visitors who would otherwise need to pay for 'roaming'.

DIGITAL TOURS AND LOCATION BASED APPS

Location based apps are a digital approach to sharing local knowledge and enhancing the visitor experience and engagement with places. For example, the Connecting Memories App has been developed in Geelong for visitors and local residents to tap into (and contribute to) a rich collection of digital stories through film, spoken word, song, images and text⁹.

Online content for Snowy Valleys Council needs to be amalgamated and repositioned into a strong visitor brand, complete with local stories and information provided to visitors which would add to the visitor experience of the destination.

7.4. LOCAL EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The education of operators and permanent residents will go a long way to assist in sharing information both online and by word of mouth, building local community

support and awareness of tourism product. Local residents and business owners are important ambassadors for tourism in towns and can create personal connections and positive relationships with places, which encourage return visitation. The human interface visitors encounter whilst visiting places play an important role in overall visitor experiences and educating the public on major events and lesser known local attractions such as Sugar Pine Walk and Pilot Hill Arboretum.

AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

The Melbourne Ambassador program in their red uniforms are a distinctive way that the local community are encouraged to support tourism. Volunteers are trained with up to date information and are approachable, friendly and equipped with extensive local knowledge on directions, public transport, events and other services.

⁹ See website for more details: <http://www.mountaintomouth.com.au/news/2016/4/20/connecting-memories-app-update>

PART B. STRATEGIC PLAN

8. STRATEGIC PLAN

8.1. PHYSICAL VISITOR INFORMATION SERVICES

- STRATEGY 1** Refurbished, expand and upgrade the Tumut VIC to include co-location of an indigenous cultural experience
- ACTION 1.1** Undertake discussions with NSW Parks and Wildlife with regard to the Tumut VIC becoming a stronger hub and information outlet for Indigenous Tourism.
- ACTION 1.2** Undertake a feasibility study and concept plan for the Tumut VIC with regard to external and internal site presence, visitor services and indigenous interpretation.
- ACTION 1.3** Seek funding support to implement the plan
- STRATEGY 2** Develop the Tumbarumba VIC into a bike hub VIC
- ACTION 2.1** Undertake a study which investigates the establishment of a bike hub concept with the Tumbarumba VIC including:
- **Bike hire;**
 - **Cycling maps;**
 - **Bike lockers; and**
 - **Tour operator.**
- STRATEGY 3** Maintain Satellite NSW Parks and Wildlife VICs in Yarrangobilly and Khancoban
- STRATEGY 4** Implement unmanned information services in Adelong and Batlow
- ACTION 4.1** Seek a private operator with space to accommodate the following within their business as an informal unmanned provision of visitor information services:

- **Indoor touchscreen;**
- **Wireless hotspot; and**
- **Tourism brochure rack for official branded material only.**

TABLE 9 TIERED DELIVERY OF VISITOR INFORMATION SERVICES

Tier	Information Delivery Service	Proposed Locations
Tier 1	Key Regional Visitor Information Centre Hubs	Physical VIC in Tumut Physical VIC in Tumbarumba
Tier 2	Satellite NSW Parks VICs	Satellite NSW Parks VIC Yarrangobilly Satellite NSW Parks VIC Khancoban
Tier 3	Unmanned information delivery, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indoor touchscreen • Wireless hotspot • Tourism brochure rack for official branded material only 	Private business in Tumut, Adelong, Jingellic and Batlow

8.2. DIGITAL VISITOR SERVICES

- STRATEGY 5** Develop a “*visitsnowyvalleys*” tourism website which showcases the region and is integrated with the newly developed Snowy Valleys Up Close initiative.
- ACTION 5.1** Snowy Valleys Council to tender out delivery of a new motivational website for the entire Snowy Valleys area.
- STRATEGY 6** Grow social media and digital capacity to complement formal information websites
- ACTION 6.1** Provide resources to social media sites to ensure a constant flow of information and media is posted. This will keep visitors up to date and motivate them to see various attractions in the region.
- ACTION 6.2** Review travel websites to ensure information accurately portrays the destination where required and where possible update information with new comment.
- ACTION 6.3** Develop a digital training program for operators. Educate operators on the need to keep online information up to date and provide strategies and resources to assist. This should include the need to respond to online comments on travel and review sites.
- ACTION 6.4** Develop cross promotion guidelines for Council and industry body (e.g. FCNSW and NPWS) social media sites to increase media exposure across the region.

8.3. WAYFINDING, SIGNAGE AND INTERPRETATION

- STRATEGY 7** Develop a detailed signage plan for the Snowy Valleys with consideration of ‘Snowy Valleys Way’ signage to be replaced with new branded signage.
- ACTION 7.1** Audit and identify signage improvements across the region and seek funding to implement the signage roll out.
- STRATEGY 8** Develop a wayfinding strategy for the region’s visitor attractions which identifies hierarchical signage and interpretation provisions required.
- ACTION 8.1** Implement signage guidelines for attractions that are not under the jurisdiction of NSW Parks and Wildlife, and work in collaboration for those managed by other industry bodies such as FCNSW (e.g. Sugar Pine Walk) to ensure visitor information cohesiveness across the region.

8.4. INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

- STRATEGY 9** Develop ambassadors to promote and inform visitors
- ACTION 9.1** Educate operators to ensure that they have a strong understanding of tourism product and experiences in the region. This may be through workshop or famils. This should include promotion of Tumut product to Tumberumba and visa versa.

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