

Annual Report 2022 - 2023



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Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land and waters that surround the Murray River.

We acknowledge and respect their history, culture and continuous connection to country.

We pay our respects to elders – past, present and emerging who have cared for this country for over 60,000 years.

This landscape, rich in story and opportunity, plays a pivotal part in our visitor economy and we thank Victoria and New South Wales First Peoples for sharing this with us all.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Introduction

It is with much pleasure that I present this year's 2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT for Murray Regional Tourism (MRT).

How wonderful it is to see you all face to face at this year's Annual General Meeting.

We almost got there last year, but as you are fully aware our mighty Murray River decided to thwart our attempts.

For our greater Murray River region, visitation has excitingly re-emerged. However the collective, once in a generation or beyond shocks, have impacted all parts of our region. Floods and storms created widespread issues across the region in the first half of the financial year.

Through this all, the Murray region still achieved sound performance metrics for the financial year ending 30 June 2023, 6.2 million visitors, staying 8.3 million nights and spending \$2.4 billion in the regional economy.

Little did we know in October 2022 what the impact of the Murray River in flood would have on our great region. This major flooding effectively washed away our peak summer visitation with the region's visitor economy, the most significant across inland Australia.

The past few years have taught us to expect the unexpected, and we all now hope for a more stable environment ahead that allows us to deliver greater stakeholder value.

With an ever more complex landscape staying relevant for our stakeholders means continually adapting and reassessing our strategy to evolve what we do and continue to deliver more value.

As the peak cross border tourism organisation that advocates and promotes the visitor economy across the Murray River region, our mission is to lead, grow, promote and sustain visitation, tourism development, advancement and tourism investment across the region.

Our vision importantly is to make the Murray River region Australia's iconic and vibrant cross border regional tourism destination.

Interim Chief Executive Officer

Following the departure of our Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Mark Francis, in September 2022, Will Flamsteed stepped into an initial three-month role of Interim CEO while the Board worked through a search process.

Will was to find himself in the middle of a 1 in 100-year flood event. The Board, our partners and industry were grateful to have someone professional and knowledgeable on both the visitor economy and crisis management at this time.

Then Karen Oliver was appointed by the Board as new interim CEO for the period January to May 2023 as we continued to work through the CEO recruitment process which was hampered by the flood event. Karen is no stranger to MRT, having run a range of strategic projects for the organisation and with significant tourism experience.

The Board thank both Will and Karen for their professional approach and support over this recovery and rebuild period.



CHAIR'S REPORT cont.

Floods and recovery program

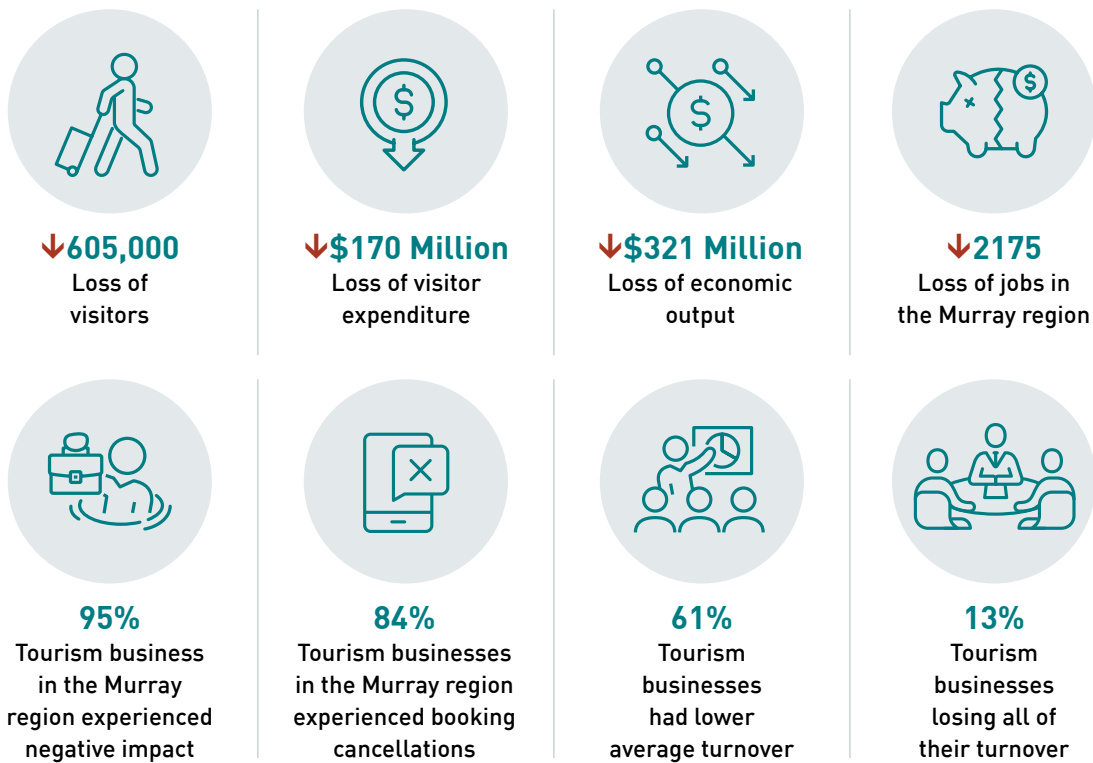
Murray Regional Tourism began strongly advocating to both Victorian and NSW State Governments for flood recovery assistance, not only to enhance our marketing efforts, but to encourage return visitation when appropriate. Our clear focus was to support our industry to assist recovery and rebuild. Businesses have been unwavering in their commitment and remained stoic as they continued to adapt and recover.

A flood impact assessment report was commissioned based on our three industry flood impact surveys and National Visitor Survey data for year ending December 2022.

The adverse results of the flood impact highlighted clearly that the Murray visitor economy had experienced another severe downturn during the 2022/2023 summer.



At a high level over the five months between October 2022 to February 2023 the Murray region experienced in comparative terms due to the major flood events:



(Reference – Urban Enterprise – Murray Region Flood Economic Impact Study May 2023)

CHAIR'S REPORT cont.

Visitation Projections Impact of Floods and COVID-19

(Ref Urban Enterprise June 2023)

The region's recovery has been slower than anticipated, highlighting the economic damage of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the floods that will be felt by our Murray River community for years to come.

The following figures forecast visitation and expenditure for the Murray region are based on Tourism Research Australia (TRA), National Visitor Survey (NVS) and International Visitor Survey (IVS) data.

The impacts of COVID-19 and flooding caused a total decline in visitation of 3.0 million visitors between 2020 and 2022 (compared to 2019 visitation levels).

Between 2022 and 2025, visitation is expected to recover at the following rates:

- 5.4% per annum for day trips
- 3.4% per annum for overnight and
- 46% per annum for international.

Importantly by 2028 visitation projection forecasts anticipate that 7.7 million visitors will be present in our region.

It should be noted that forecast growth does not consider macro-economic impacts such as a slower economy and cost of living pressures that impact on leisure travel.

MRT's direct approach to both the Victorian and NSW Governments, included seeking a variation to our core funding and on-the-ground support. We thank our agencies for the subsequent responses.

Victorian Government funds were reallocated to develop a significant marketing campaign to address public misconceptions of the Murray River post floods and invite visitors to return.

Visit Victoria invested heavily in recovery marketing with the 'Stay Close, Go Further' brand and an emphasis on the "Made in the Murray Campaign".

In March 2023 the NSW Government via former NSW Tourism Minister, Ben Franklin, announced that a total of \$700,000 would be committed from Destination New South Wales (DNSW) to assist our impacted region.

The announcement was warmly received and the "Beyond the Rivers" campaign was rolled out to encourage visitors back to our region.

Further, DNSW supported stakeholder visits and familiarisations that included Destination Riverina Murray (DRM) which we co-hosted. Headed by its CEO, Steve Cox, the DNSW executive team were accompanied by MRT for a familiarisation from Albury Wodonga, Deniliquin, Echuca Moama, Yarrawonga and Mulwala.

In April, MRT then hosted Visit Victoria CEO Brendan McClements and senior executives in Mildura. During the visit, we had the opportunity to welcome the inaugural Bonza flight from the Sunshine Coast and to visit the future site of the exciting Light/State which is two awe-inspiring light installations that reflect the unique environment and culture of this thriving border region created by internationally renowned artist Bruce Munro. An industry function was also well attended by operators in this area.



CHAIR'S REPORT cont.

Appointment of CEO

In April 2023, after an extensive search and recruitment process, the board appointed a new Chief Executive Officer, Cameron Sutton. His experience and knowledge of the region will be key to our growth of the visitor economy. Cameron is settling well into this exciting and challenging role.

For our Board, continuing the efficient but effective operation of our organisation has remained a focus, despite the external factors. We believe that MRT must continue to place emphasis on delivering value to our stakeholders, while also retaining strong governance parameters and sound financial measures.

Financial Sustainability

A constant focus for the organisation is on financial sustainability. Our structure relies on the critical cross border partnerships and funding to be able to deliver the extensive range of programs, activities and advocacy support throughout the region. The continued success in securing additional grant funding which leverages the investment made by our local governments and regional tourism organisations is paramount.

The past financial year has been a strong one with a surplus of \$153,252 as we continue to maintain our costs and deliver on our strategy.

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) Review

An independent Board Review of the organisation was required as part of our Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with our 13 local governments and two state agencies. The review was recently completed and I thank our stakeholders for their input. Our strong cross border relationships have been recognised and there are also some opportunities for placing more emphasis on delivering value to our stakeholders.

MRT has overwhelming positive support amongst the majority of our stakeholders who responded:

- They agreed that MRT provides a unified and effective voice on all issues relating to tourism as well as advocating on tourism and growing the local economy.
- MRT took a key role in crisis preparation and recovery of tourism and that our marketing campaigns and advocacy regarding flooding events were particularly beneficial to the region's recovery and visitor economy, and
- MRT's efforts to communicate with stakeholders was considered one of the organisation's top strengths.



CHAIR'S REPORT cont.

Visitor Economy Partnerships (VEPs)

The Victorian Government is transitioning from Regional Tourism Boards (RTBs) to Visitor Economy Partnerships (VEPs). For us there is very limited change required to our operating structure in this transition. Some minor adjustments to our Constitution will be put to our shareholders for adoption.

Importantly we require all six Victorian local governments to continue to work with us to ensure we receive maximum funding of \$590,000 per annum from Victoria which is significantly more than that previously provided.

Board

MRT continues to benefit from our energetic, dedicated, and highly skilled board, and I sincerely thank them all for the incredible work, commitment and passion which has guided us through the challenges and successes of the past year.

Members were Deputy Chair Greg Roberts, Natasha Callewaert, Natalie Ajay, John Dalton, Kerry l'Anson, Clare Keenan (Murray River Group of Councils MRGC resigned April 2023) and Karina Ewer (Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation RAMJO).

All provided a strong contribution to the organisation's strategic outcomes.

We are very fortunate to have a team of outstanding directors who worked steadfastly and professionally to ensure our region has emerged as a resilient, forward-looking organisation ready to build on a strong foundation.

Team

I would like to thank our small and hard-working team, headed by Cameron Sutton, who have achieved much over the past year. Other team members are Jake Morris (Marketing Coordinator) and Sally Knight (Executive Assistant). Together with our contractors Maureen Bennett (Projects), Rachel Robinson Minogue (Digital) and Media Mortar (Social Media) who all played a part in our success.



CHAIR'S REPORT cont.

Closing remarks

As always, sincere gratitude to our stakeholders without whom we could not deliver the outcomes for our special Murray River region. It has been pleasing to see the strength of the collaborative approach come to the fore and we are thankful for the long-term commitment made by our 13 local government partners along with DNSW via Destination Riverina Murray (DRM) and the Victorian government agency Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) and marketing support from Visit Victoria.

We are very grateful for the advocacy and support from Destination Riverina Murray (DRM) as collectively we can achieve so much.

I want to acknowledge the efforts of our two cross border commissioners, Luke Wilson (Victoria) and James McTavish (NSW) who work with us on a myriad of issues along the Murray region.

I recognise the incredible tenacity of everyone involved in the region's tourism industry and our river community and for your support and trust in us.

We continue to demonstrate that we are a strong and vibrant collection of individuals, businesses and special destinations. Let us ensure that we always continue to be, as we work together for the benefit of our fabulous Murray River region.

During this last year, MRT was involved in a range of issues beyond our usual core focus, to participate in solutions for our cross-border communities.

The strength of the region's visitor economy is a shared responsibility.

I feel extremely proud of all our recent achievements, realistic about the current challenges in our complex environment, and optimistic about our longer-term sustainable future together.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wendy Greiner".

Wendy Greiner
Chair



MRT PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

Visitor Economy 2022- 2023



6.2 million
Visitors



8.3 million
Nights



\$2.4 billion
Spend



MRT Campaigns and Flood Response Funding

Victorian Government Funding

Flood Recovery Marketing Campaign – The Victorian State Government agreed to a funding variation to develop and deliver a dedicated flood recovery marketing campaign. The campaign incorporates PR, digital and social media marketing, radio and a booking conversion partnership with Expedia and Wotif.

Visit Victoria Co-operative – "Stay Close, Go Further"

Murray Regional Tourism has continued to work closely with Visit Victoria as the 'Stay Close, Go Further' campaign reached audiences in Melbourne and regional Victoria. Predominantly targeting the regional drive market, the 'Stay Close, Go Further' campaign aims to challenge the perceptions of Melbournians aged under 35 by highlighting the nature and culinary experiences that inspire visitation.

NSW Government Funding – Co-operative with Destination NSW

"Go Beyond the River" Campaign - Developed under Destination NSW's "Feel New" brand in response to recent floods and border closures, the campaign targeted younger travellers from Melbourne, regional Victoria, the ACT and southern NSW.

Destination Riverina Murray Funding

Co-operative programs with Destination Riverina Murray flood recovery marketing initiatives included a co-funded PR campaign, regional radio campaign and event promotion.



MRT PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS cont.

MRT Operational Highlights

Despite the challenges, we still managed to complete an extensive range of key strategic projects.

These included:

- Destination Management Plan (DMP) 2023-2027. Our blueprint for continued sustainable growth of the Murray Region visitor economy
- Local Area Plans (LAPs). Ten LAP's were developed as 5-year plans. All are strategic documents that will guide these destinations and their respective stakeholders
- Workforce Development Plan
- Crisis Management Plan.

Murray River Adventure Trail funding success – Stage 2 & 3 detailed designed concepts

MRT were successful in receiving \$500,000 from the Victorian Government Investment Fast Track Fund, the funding was matched with a contribution of \$125,000 from MRT and Local Government partners. The project will deliver a design concept for Stage 2 & 3 of the Murray River adventure trail.

Stage 2 & 3 of the Murray River Adventure trail, spans over 770 kilometres of the planned trail and covers the geographical areas of Koondrook Barham to Mildura/Wentworth (Stage 2) and Barmah National Park to Albury Wodonga (Stage 3).

Murray Region Support

NSW Government's \$150 million Regional Tourism Activation Fund delivered support to Murray Region experiences. Each of these major projects will stimulate the visitor economy along the Murray River and significantly enhance the visitor experience.

These included:

- Murray Regional Art Gallery, Bridge Art Project Inc – Murray River Council – \$4,950,000 (Stage 1).
- Light/State – Wentworth Fibre Optic Symphonic Orchestra – Wentworth Shire Council – \$4,993,951
- River Country Art Trail – Murray River Council – \$1,747,431



BOARD & TEAM

Murray Regional Tourism Board



WENDY GREINER
Chair /
Performance &
Remuneration



GREG ROBERTS
Deputy Chair /
Performance &
Remuneration



JOHN DALTON
Audit & Risk



NATASHA CALLEWAERT
Audit & Risk



NATALIE AJAY
Finance /
Company Secretary



KERRY I'ANSON
Appointed
October 2022



KARINA EWER
RAMJO



CLARE KEENAN
Murray River Group
of Councils
July 2022 - April 2023

Murray Regional Tourism Team

CAMERON SUTTON
Chief Executive Officer

WILL FLAMSTEED
Interim CEO
September - December 2022

KAREN OLIVER
Interim CEO
January - May 2023

JAKE MORRIS
Marketing Coordinator

SALLY KNIGHT
Executive Assistant
May 2023 onwards

TANYA HEALY
Executive Assistant
July 2022 - May 2023

JODI MANN
Industry Recovery Manager
July 2022 - January 2023

RACHEL MINOGUE
Digital Project Manager



MELISSA TOWNSEND
Social Media Manager




SHARI BUTCHER
Murray River Adventure Trail
Project Manager




MAUREEN BENNETT
Projects

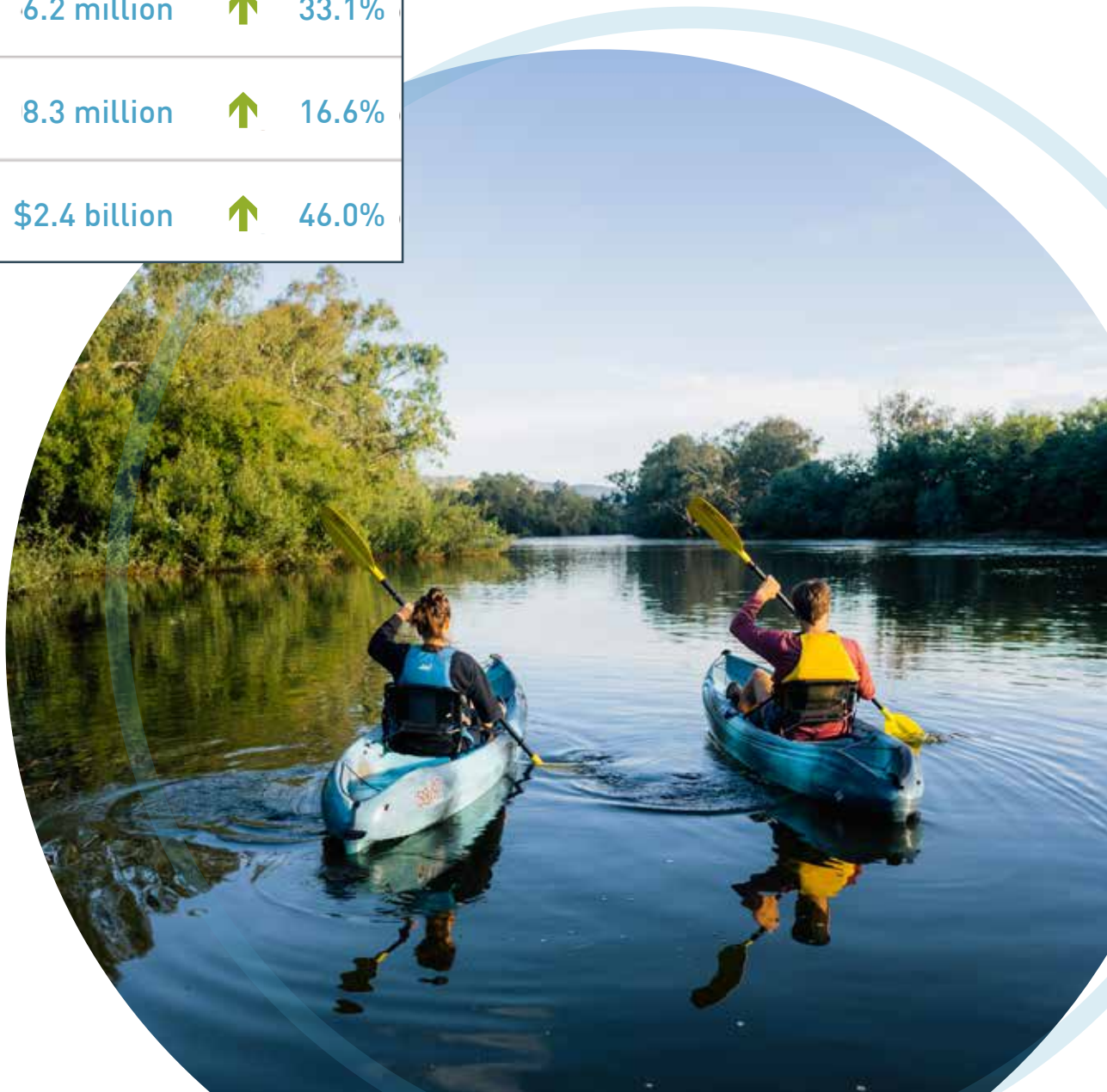
VISITOR ECONOMY SNAPSHOT

Domestic Travel to Murray Region - July 2022 to June 2023

Domestic Daytrip Travel YE June 2023			
	3.2 million	↑	36.6%
	\$526 million	↑	30.4%

Domestic Overnight Travel YE June 2023			
	3.0 million	↑	29.7%
	8.3 million	↑	16.6%
	\$1.8 billion	↑	51.2%

Total Domestic Travel YE June 2023			
	6.2 million	↑	33.1%
	8.3 million	↑	16.6%
	\$2.4 billion	↑	46.0%



ADVOCACY & LEADERSHIP

Highlights



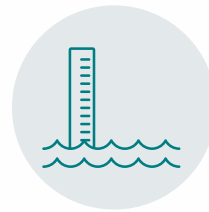
5
Research
Reports
delivered



61%
Open Rate on
Research Report
Correspondence



1
Tourism Manager
Flood Impact
Committee Enacted



14
High Water
Updates

Goal

To provide clear direction for growth and development in the Murray region through strong leadership, advocacy and industry engagement.

Strategic Priorities

- Continue to be the leading cross border entity for tourism industry advocacy, research and support. *(Alignment to Strategic Pillars of Regional Marketing, Leadership & Advocacy)*
- Continuously evolve and provide guidance and support in implementing the Region's crisis management plan in response to both COVID-19 recovery and 2022/2023 Flood event. *(Alignment to Strategic Pillars of Leadership & Advocacy, Industry Development and Governance & Sustainability)*
- Coordinate access to timely and relevant research with shared benefits that can be adopted widely by the community. *(Alignment to Strategic Pillars of Leadership & Advocacy and Industry Development)*
- Advocate for government funding assistance for the region. *(Alignment to Strategic Pillars of Product Development, Regional Marketing and Leadership & Advocacy)*

Key Outcomes

Strategic Research

Murray Regional Tourism conducted three Business Impact Surveys with Murray tourism businesses during and post the flood event. The responses from the initial rapid impact survey provided key insights that were used to inform MRT's advocacy efforts.

MRT commissioned a Flood Impact Assessment report post floods incorporating the business impact survey data and YE Dec National Visitor Survey data to provide evidence of the flood impact on the visitor economy in the Murray region. This was presented to government to support our advocacy for flood recovery support for the industry.

Over the course of the year, MRT delivered a range of research programs including:

- Murray region and sub region domestic visitation quarterly reports and profiles
- Flood economic impact assessments
- Partnered with Victorian Tourism Industry Council to co fund a flood recovery advocacy corporate communication program
- Partnered with LGA stakeholders advocating for key tourism projects to candidates for both the Victorian and NSW elections
- Flood visitation recovery projections.



ADVOCACY & LEADERSHIP cont.

Crisis Response

Following MRT's significant investment in the COVID-19 response and recovery program, the Murray tourism industry enjoyed a buoyant few months prior to the October 2022 flood event.

As part of our flood recovery work, a flood recovery communications program was commissioned and delivered providing key messages for advocacy to both Victorian and NSW Governments.

Our core funding partner, DJSIR, granted a variation to our agreement to reallocate industry programs budget into marketing activity for flood recovery.

DNSW quickly announced an additional \$400,000 to their previously committed \$300,000 for a Murray Region Campaign.

Visit Victoria has featured the Murray heavily in their 'Stay Close, Go Further' campaign. MRT advocacy to support our operators with Visit Victoria allowed the Murray industry operators to receive an extension of free ATDW listings.

We worked with our local government partners through the region's Crisis Management Committee, Tourism Managers and formed industry sector working groups to address sector specific issues.

We engaged more broadly with the industry through surveys, and added flood updates along with engaging a wide range of government agencies to highlight the impacts and issues along the river.

A key focus for the year has been to provide leadership to address key challenges which emerged over the past year. We worked collectively with Federal, State and Local Governments as well as our Cross Border Commissioners and industry partners with a solutions based approach to articulate and elevate key issues and create positive outcomes for the sector.

During this period, MRT has maintained an unwavering commitment to the region and is proud of the solid partnerships which will assist us as we continue recovery program.

MRT's strategic focus included:

- Leadership and support of the whole of Murray with strategic initiatives to deliver region wide benefit for industry and the river communities
- Support both our local government partners and the private sector with a range of State and Federal grant applications to secure investment in key strategic infrastructure projects
- Secured a further 3-year funding commitment from Destination NSW via DRM
- Participated in Victorian and NSW Government and industry working groups in the development of future strategies and initiatives
- Advocated on key issues impacting the visitor economy including workforce development and planning, river management and telecommunication blackspots and service deficiencies, regional funding requirements and priorities.



REGIONAL MARKETING

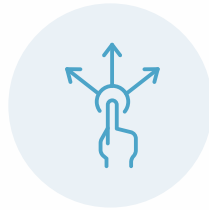
Highlights



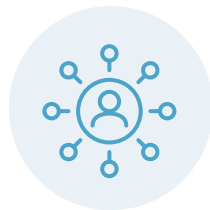
866,495
Views on
visitthemurray.com.au



6591 Images
28 Videos
Professional
Content &
Editorial Images
Created



1403
ATDW Listings
17,562
ATDW Page Views
17,498
ATDW Leads
to Industry



13
Journalist
& Influencer
Familiarisations



4
Content Shoots



Goal

To be a dynamic marketer of the Murray region in partnership with key stakeholders and the industry.

Strategic Priorities

- Facilitate access to timely consumer research to help industry make informed business decisions.
- Implement reactivation marketing campaigns to drive visitation.
- Develop and deliver to core target markets a region wide program to grow the region's visitor economy.
- Provide inspiration and information to connect visitors with the destinations and experiences they seek.



REGIONAL MARKETING cont.

Key Outcomes

Significant focus has been directed to driving visitation through building awareness of visitor experiences through inspiring, curated and informing content.

Consumer Website and Social Channels.

Key activities included:

- Seasonal content curation
- Developing dedicated campaign landing pages and associated content
- Implementation of road trip itineraries and functionality
- Creation of dedicated travel blogs
- Developing and updating content according to visitor search data and key experience pillars.

The approach and investment have achieved excellent results, some of which are highlighted below:



Highlights and Insights



402,880
↑26%
Users



492,881
↑25%
Sessions



866,495
↑8%
Page Views



178,348
↑22%
Organic Search



1min 33 secs
↑11.71%
Average Time On Page



17,508
↓8%
Leads to Operators



1min 55 secs
↑6%
Blog Average Time on Page



34,583
↑9600
Facebook Audience Growth



4,337,656
↑45%
Facebook Audience Reach



921
↑10.90%
Travel Planner Page Views



22,315
Murray Travel Planner & Maps Distributed



755
Murray Travel Planner E.Book Reads



595,895
Instagram Audience Reach

REGIONAL MARKETING cont.

Social Media Campaigns

Over 4.3 million people were reached with content pertaining to The Murray region through paid social media campaigns.

In this financial year there have been 28 paid media campaigns across Facebook and Instagram.

Campaign objectives included:

- 'Always On' campaigns to leverage consistent reach and follower growth
- Traffic campaigns to increase website views and event traffic
- Awareness campaigns to grow knowledge and appeal of the region
- Lead generation campaigns to increase consumer EDM subscribers
- Seasonal campaigns to encourage visitation to the region across the year
- E-commerce driven campaigns to support the industry while consumers were unable to travel



Instagram stories

In this financial year, MRT introduced a monthly 'What's On' story series to spotlight the upcoming regional events. Once per month, upcoming events are served organically on Instagram Stories and saved to the new 'What's On' highlight so consumers can revisit the information. Each frame is linked through to the correlating ATDW listing on the Visit The Murray website for further information.

The Murray – Perfectly Seasoned

The Murray – Perfectly Seasoned was the creative anchor for MRT's seasonal campaigns, boasting the benefits of the region through different periods of the year to encourage repeat visitation, extend shoulder seasons and boost visitation during cooler months.

Three strategic seasonal campaigns were created and delivered to drive tourism during the shoulder and off-peak travel seasons.

Winter Campaign

The winter campaign was launched to engage and influence visitors to experience the region this winter. While many people may be familiar with The Murray as a summer holiday experience the strategy sought to invite them back to see the region in a new season.

Highlights

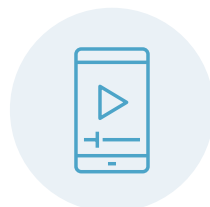


3

Seasonal Blogs
& Accompanying
IG Stories

800

Unique Views
Per Blog

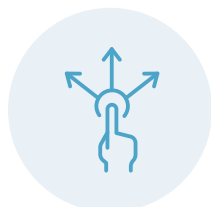


3

Reels Created

1,456

Views Per Reel



293,894

Impressions
Paid Social
Media Campaign

115,968

Total Reach



6

Live Story
Takeovers of
Key Winter
Experiences

REGIONAL MARKETING cont.

Spring Campaign

The Spring Campaign was launched to celebrate the season and elevate the awareness of activities based in The Murray.

The objective of the Spring Campaign was to extend the shoulder season and encourage visitation to the region earlier and position The Murray as a spring-destination, when it's traditionally been seen as a summer destination in the consumer's eyes.

Due to the region wide flood event, a number of the planned activities were diverted towards the reactivation of "Made in The Murray"



Highlights



3

Seasonal Blogs
& Accompanying
IG Stories

499

Unique Views
Per Blog



472,331

Impressions
Paid Social
Media Campaign

259,395

Total Reach



REGIONAL MARKETING cont.

Autumn Journeys Campaign

The Autumn Campaign was designed to complement and leverage the extensive activity in market from DNSW. In response to the considerable impact of border closures and flooding, DNSW committed to supporting the region with a dedicated 'Go Beyond the River' campaign delivered under the new 'Feel New' brand. The Autumn Journeys Campaign delivered on owned Visit The Murray channels elevated the awareness of The Murray brand.

The joint objective was to create resilience for the region during flooding and other crisis events by showcasing the appealing 'off-water' activities available in the region while also encouraging regional dispersal and attracting new higher-yield travellers.

In line with MRT's Murray River Road strategy, the creation of itineraries amplified with a paid media campaign positioned the region as the ultimate destination for drives and road trips during the cooler months.

The drives and road trips focus were further amplified with a strategic partnership with Australian Traveller through a targeted digital campaign during their 'Amazing Journeys' edition. Over a four-month period, the partnership yielded 215,052 display impressions, 2,116 leads to visitthemurray.com.au and 3,220 visits to new Murray themed native content on australiantraveller.com.

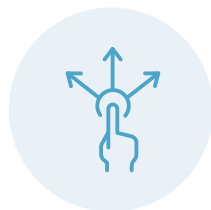
During Autumn, MRT also facilitated a region-wide familiarisation with the online publication "One Hour Out" to provide five new evergreen articles about the region, five organic social posts, five story mentions on Instagram, five inclusions in EDMs and 169 new photo assets. The total reach for the activity was 186,134 with a combined 2,974 pageviews of the new articles.

Highlights



6

New Itinerary Blogs on the Newly Designed Drives & Road Trips Landing Page which received
14,623
Page Views
1:09
Average Time on Page



Paid Social Media Acquisition Campaign
1,073,753
Impressions
703,760
Total Reach
2,785
New Followers



Paid Social Media Traffic Campaign
1,762,826
Impressions
465,843
Total Reach



REGIONAL MARKETING cont.

Made in The Murray

Due to evacuation and emergency warnings from State Emergency Services, visitation to the Murray region halted during the flood event. In the lead up to the Christmas gifting period and the third consecutive interrupted peak summer period, 'Made in The Murray' was relaunched to connect visitors to the region despite the inability to travel.

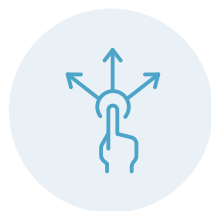
Redesigned landing pages with additional businesses featured and the addition of experience vouchers were promoted with a Public Relations and social media paid campaign.

'Made in The Murray' was also supported by the Visit Victoria through the 'Click for Vic' campaign.

Highlights



12,670
Page Views
2,402
Direct Leads
to Industry
E-Commerce
Websites



614,938
Impressions
Paid Social Media
Campaign
239,257
Total Reach
9,197
Total Clicks



TimeOut Melbourne
partnership
resulting in:
2,133 Pageviews
59,000 Reach
75,000 Impressions
4,500 Web
Display Highlight
Impressions
EDM inclusion



3 x
Social Giveaways
with Gastrology
44,000 Followers,
One Hour Out
20,100 Followers
& Coffee & Style
24,800 Followers



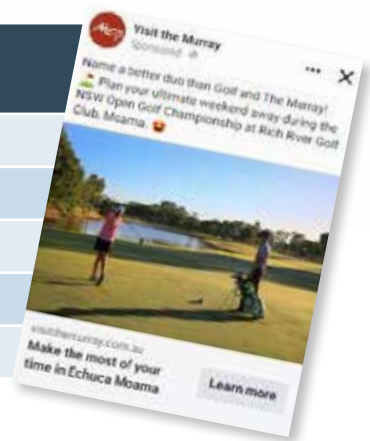
REGIONAL MARKETING cont.

Events in The Murray

In partnership with Destination Riverina Murray and to further promote attendance and ticket sales to large and small local events within the Murray region as well as leveraging events to encourage an increased length of stay and higher yield visitation, MRT created eight new blogs promoted with targeted social media paid campaigns.

Reaching over 2.5 million individuals and generating 71,502 link clicks the events included:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Kings of Leon | • Light Shows in The Murray |
| • Southern 80 | • Farmers Markets |
| • Riverboats | • Art Exhibitions |
| • NSW Golf Open | • Family events |
| • Winter Blues Festival | • Live music |



The Australian Fishing Network (AFN) Fishing Show

MRT partnered with central Murray destinations and The AFN Fishing Show with filming along the Murray River, Edward River and Lake Mulwala.

MRT marketing activity included:

- One episode of the Fishing Show
- Two to three minute promotional footage across social media platforms
- Full page advertisement in "Freshwater Fishing Magazine"
- Banner Ad across "Fisher" digital magazine.

MRT contracted AFN to produce one episode however the volume and quality of content captured enabled two shows to be produced.





REGIONAL MARKETING cont.

Tourism Australia National Experience Content Initiative (NECI)

In MRT's ongoing efforts to assist in post-COVID recovery, MRT worked alongside Tourism Australia (TA), Destination New South Wales and Visit Victoria to acquire assets from these shoots for TA, DNSW and VV in both domestic and international markets to showcase The Murray to broad audiences.

30 Murray operators were selected to be part of the content shoot. Each operator selected received the digital assets to help promote their business through their own channels whether that be through their digital channels, printed brochures, television commercials and other means. This included 40 edited still images, a 60 second video showcasing their experience, images and B-roll footage

This content has also added 1200 assets to our Digital Asset Image Gallery.



REGIONAL MARKETING cont.

Destination NSW Co-operative - "Feel New" in the Murray

Developed under Destination NSW's "Feel New" brand in response to recent floods and border closures, the campaign targeted younger travellers from Melbourne, regional Victoria, the ACT and southern NSW. It reached more than 31 million people via out-of-home advertising, social media, digital video and Spotify, with more than three million completed views on YouTube.

The Murray pages on VisitNSW.com received 65,000 visits and generated 11,000 leads to operators in The Murray during the campaign period. This is a 56 per cent increase in traffic during the campaign compared to the previous period.

Campaign tracking research conducted by Destination NSW's research agency FiftyFive5 showed the campaign was highly successful in meeting its core objectives, both with appeal (63 per cent) and consideration of a trip to the Murray (58 per cent) increasing significantly with people who saw the campaign, versus those who had not.

In addition, 63 per cent of those who saw the campaign went on to take action, including 17 per cent visiting a website for further information, 16 per cent speaking to family or friends about booking a trip, 13 per cent deciding to go on a holiday or short break to the Murray, 11 per cent expanding their itinerary to additional locations in the Murray and six per cent booking a trip to the Murray during the campaign period.



REGIONAL MARKETING cont.

Visit Victoria Co-operative – “STAY CLOSE, GO FURTHER”

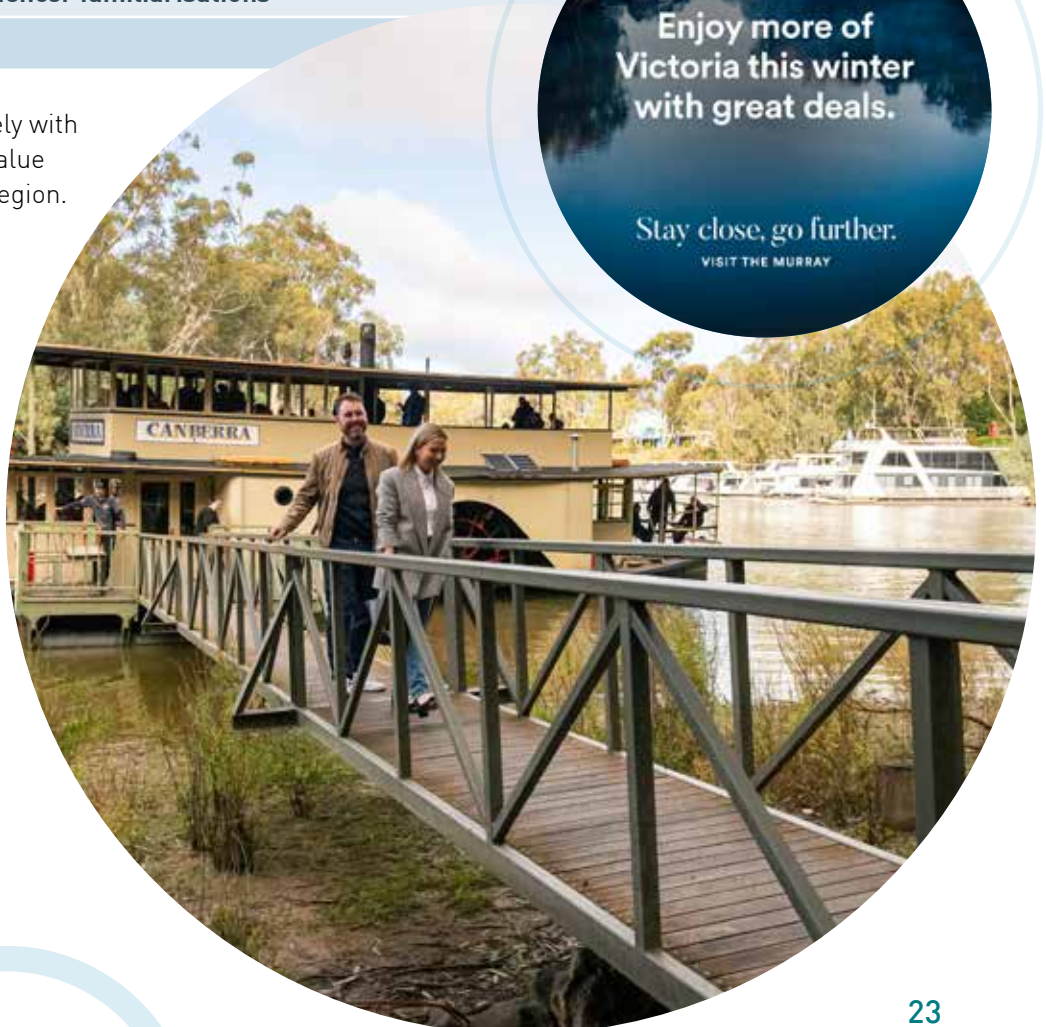
Murray Regional Tourism has continued to work closely with Visit Victoria as the 'Stay Close, Go Further' campaign reached audiences in Melbourne and regional Victoria.

Predominantly targeting the regional drive market, the 'Stay Close, Go Further' campaign aims to challenge the perceptions of Melbournians aged under 35 by highlighting the nature and culinary experiences of our region.

Visit Victoria supported the Murray with a number of key marketing activities

- **Television Campaign** - 30 second advertisements featuring the Murray in Metro and Regional channels
- **Australian Grand Prix Channel 10 Broadcast Sponsorship** - featuring Murray television commercials
- **Herald Sun Space Magazine** - Autumn edition - included a full page wrap around
- **Live TV Broadcasts:** Nine News Weather crosses with Livinia Nixon in Echuca, Yarrawonga, Rutherglen – Stories shared with Livinia’s 55,000 Instagram followers
- **Large Format Out of Home (OOH) billboards** across Melbourne
- **“Stay Close, Go Further” creative** is being broadcast across LED signage and big screens at the MCG and Marvel Stadium
- **Metro and regional print**
- **Social Media**
- **PR and Social Media Influencer familiarisations**
- **Content Partnerships**

MRT continues working closely with Visit Victoria to deliver high value opportunities to the Murray region.



REGIONAL MARKETING cont.

Flood Recovery Marketing: "Murray Moments"

Due to the industry downturn impacts from flooding MRT progressed the development of a significant recovery campaign during the FY22/23 which is currently in market in FY23/24. The campaign is two fold:

1. Marketing Campaign to drive visitation
2. PR Campaign in partnership with Destination Riverina Murray.

The campaign cross border objectives were:

- Expedite the return of visitation to our region post floods.
- Rebuild consumer confidence following floods and COVID-19 border closures.
- Increase appeal of the region and the intent to travel outside of the campaign period, and
- Grow awareness and engagement of the Visit The Murray brand to ensure long-term benefit.

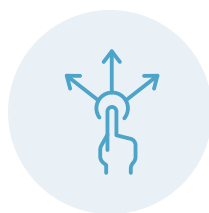
Early results from the PR campaign are included with further activity yet to be completed.



50
Total Articles
Published



\$475,619
Total Advertising
Equivalent



9,663,465
Total Reach



15
Total PRLs
& Listicles



135
Total Media
Pitches



6
Total Media
Famils



INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

Highlights



5

Industry Development Programs Delivered



4

Industry Training & Development Programs



176

Participation in Industry Training Workshops



8

Tourism Managers Forums Delivered



80%

Tourism Forum Attendance Level



1

Visitor Servicing Training Program



2

Destination Inspiration Workshops



60

Attendees Participated in Destination Inspiration Workshop

Goal

To improve the quality of tourism experiences in the Murray region through industry education and support.

Strategic Priorities

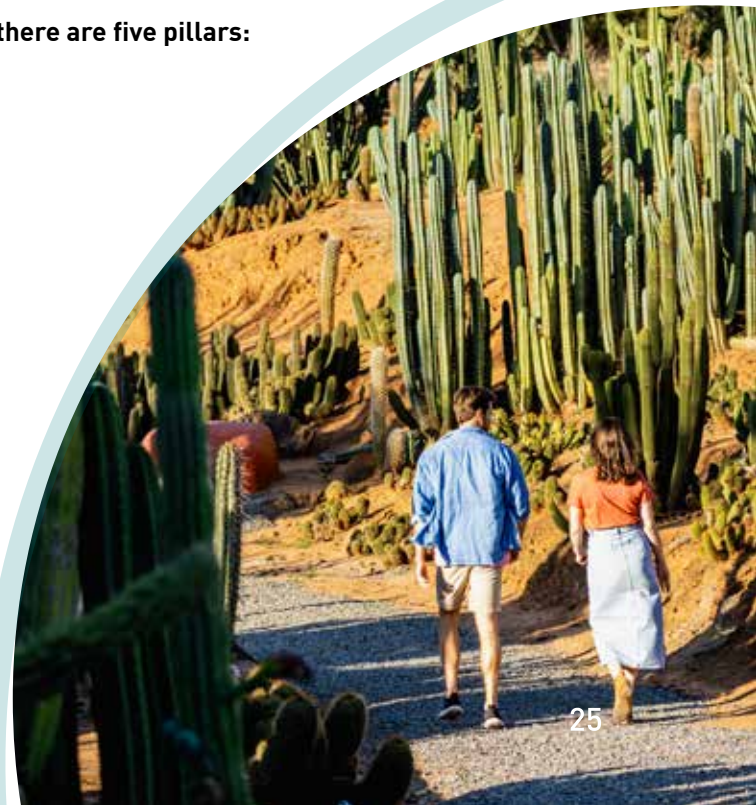
Under Murray Regional Tourism's (MRT) Strategic Plan, there are five pillars:

1. Regional marketing
2. Product development
3. Leadership and advocacy
4. Industry development
5. Governance and sustainability.

Under the 4th Strategic Pillar – Industry Development

MRT has undertaken activating a series of operational activities to align with the organisation's strategic intent:

- Facilitate a tourism education program to address identified gaps and develop the capability and competitiveness of our region's industry.
- Facilitate where appropriate implementation of the Murray Visitor Engagement Strategy recommendations phase one.



INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT cont.

Key Outcomes

A series of Key Outcomes were achieved across the last financial year.

Tourism Manager Forums

The 2022-2023 Tourism Manager Forums were delivered as a combination of online and face to face forums. This was an effective means of engaging with our local government tourism leaders across our region to share information, develop region wide responses and initiatives and build leadership capacity across the Murray region.

Over the past year eight forums, were delivered online or face to face, with a mixture of briefing sessions, strategic development and education content.

Industry Education and Training

In the pursuit of delivering the Murray Region Visitor Information Strategy, we delivered a range of initiatives and training programs.

Partnering with a number of key industry training professionals, MRT delivered fully subsidised programs to operators across the region to strengthen their business operations in areas of need.

Programs delivered included:

Digital Champions Program

Murray Regional Tourism fully funded a bespoke program to assist tourism operators in the Murray region to digitally transform their businesses. The program focused on individuals' digital knowledge and skills to build their business's online presence including:

- A personalised Digital Engagement Health Check™
- ATDW Health Check at the start of the program
- Four online workshops to further their digital knowledge and confidence
- 1 hour one-on-one mentoring and skills coaching with a digital expert to support them to build an action plan to grow and improve on their business's current digital activity.

INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT cont.

Lunch N Learn

Five, 1-hour lunchtime on-line training sessions presented by Tammie Matthews, "RevenYou"

The webinars sessions aimed to assist Murray River accommodation providers with all the tools to create, develop and mostly importantly book accommodation packages for higher yields and more profits.

Customer Profiles Apply

Delivered by Customer Frame three modules, each comprising a pre-recorded one to two hour webinar, worksheets, exercises and a weekly live online group support session. Providing a deeper understanding of the Murray Customer Profiles and how they apply to individual business.

Information to Inspiration (i2i program)

With a focus on new visitor staff and volunteers, the program is designed to build customer capability of the Murray region visitor information staff and volunteers.

In 2022-2023 this program was extended to industry operators providing them and their staff the opportunity to increase their knowledge, skills and expertise to assist visitor engagement and inspiration to see more of the region.

Corporate Website Training Hub

MRT has recently developed a secure web training hub. Any industry operator can apply to have full access to all training programs delivered by MRT and our partner organisations. Access to programs such as those mentioned above will be accessible at any time so that the industry can 'self pace learn' at a time that is convenient to them



DESTINATION INSPIRATION MENTORING PROGRAM

Under the 4th Strategic Pillar of Industry Development, Round 3 of the Destination Inspiration Program took place in this past financial year. MRT and DRM partnered to deliver this industry mentoring program.

The main goal of the program is to support the creation of new visitor experiences for the Murray and Riverina regions.

Program Objectives

- Stimulate tourism investment in the Murray and Riverina regions.
- Support development that addresses product gaps and aligns to priority experience themes in the Murray and Riverina Destination Management Plans.

In Round 3, a further 15 Businesses across the Murray and Riverina met the criteria selection and participated in the dedicated product Development Mentoring Program.

Combining the three rounds of Destination Inspiration there has been a total of 43 businesses who completed the mentoring program.

The program has:

- Delivered 9 x Destination Inspiration Events in different locations across the Riverina Murray region.
- Mentored 42 x tourism businesses, both new and established businesses.
- Supported 6 mentees to apply for tourism grants, securing more than \$700,000 in government investment for tourism development projects.
- Supported the development and/or launch of 8 new tourism businesses for the Riverina Murray.
- Created a promotional video of highlights from the 2021 program.



DESTINATION INSPIRATION MENTORING PROGRAM cont.

Combined Destination Inspiration Successes

- **Four new tourism businesses are operational:**
 - Tocumwal Aviation Museum
 - Murray Darling Scenic Flights
 - Ladbroken Distilling Co
 - North Bundy Station
- **Tocumwal Aviation Museum** exceeded all targets relating to visitation and café turnover. They secured additional funding to upgrade the car park and construct a garden and have launched adventure scenic flights. They recently hosted the Destination NSW CEO familiarisation in 2023.
- **Murray Darling Scenic Flights** is operating and recently featured in the Destination NSW 'Beyond the River' Murray marketing campaign
- **Harry Pepper Coffee** has relocated to the new shop in Deniliquin.
- **Riverina Winemakers Association** secured a \$450,000 NSW Regional Tourism Activation grant to develop a Regional Wine & Food Hub in Griffith. Construction commenced in April 2023.
- **Holbrook Paddock Eggs** purchased a property in the main street of Holbrook and has plans to develop an agritourism attraction.
- **Lake Mulwala Sportfishing** invested in a new fishing boat.
- **Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre** has secured \$715,000 to purchase and re-design its Cultural Centre in Deniliquin.
- **Trentham Waters** secured \$150,000 to contribute to their water park development.
- **One28 Doors** restaurant and function space in Swan Hill has opened.
- **Outback Almonds** has expanded their business to include on-farm cottage accommodation and launched their on-farm tours.
- **Stanton & Killeen Wines** joined Ultimate Winery Experiences. An agritourism attraction.
- **Eaglerise Farm** has secured a DA for their accommodation development.
- **Munday's Catering** is running a 'Snowy's High Tea' event.
- **Giilangyaldhaanygalang – Wiradjuri Storytellers – Website and Tour Bookings** activated.

Destination Inspiration has been a hugely successful program, during the three 6-month rounds of mentoring there have been a number of successful new businesses developed.



PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Highlights



6

Road Trip
Itineraries
Developed



29

Blog
Stories



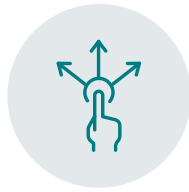
Murray River
Adventure
Trail
– Stage 1



Murray River
Adventure Trail
Stage 2 Concept
& Design
Successful
Funding
Application



Destination
Asset
Management
Portal
Operation



Implementation
underway of
3 Ports of
the Murray
Experiences



2023-2027
Destination
Management Plan
Published



10

Local Area
Plans

Goal

To facilitate investment in infrastructure, new products and experiences that revitalise the Murray region's tourism offering.

Strategic Priorities

Under Murray Regional Tourism's (MRT) Strategic Plan, there are five pillars:

1. Regional marketing
2. Product development
3. Leadership and advocacy
4. Industry development
5. Governance and sustainability

Under the 2nd Strategic Pillar – Product Development

MRT has undertaken activating a series of operational activities to align with the organisation's strategic intent:

- Facilitate development of driving / touring routes aligned to key experiences and visitor demand
- Maximise opportunities from new and emerging visitor markets through a focus on visitor experiences
- Continue to develop stage one of the Murray River Adventure Trail.



PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT cont.

Key Outcomes

Due to the flood event, and funding variation agreed to, product development activities were re focused on marketing. However we still delivered:

Experience Development

Over the period, a strong focus on engagement with our local government partners and the region's tourism businesses to support product development initiatives including assisting a range of destinations with strategic infrastructure projects and private sector investors with new and enhanced projects.

To further assist in advancing projects a dedicated mentoring program – Destination Inspiration, provided one on one dedicated support for businesses to further the development of existing or the creation of a new visitor experience.

Business Development



60

Letters of
Support Provided

60 Businesses registered for letters of support to develop funding applications – resulting in a number of successful applications.



The successful projects align with the priorities identified in our Destination Management Plan (DMP) and will address several strategic pillars we have identified being The River, Nature Based Tourism, Arts Heritage and Culture and Accommodation diversification

- **Light/State** – Wentworth Fibre Optic Symphonic Orchestra – Wentworth Shire Council – \$4.9million – NSW Government's Regional Tourism Activation Fund.
- **Murray Regional Art Gallery- Bridge Art Project** – \$4.9million – NSW Government's Regional Tourism Activation Fund.
- **Mildura / Lake Cullulleraine Trail of Lights** project received \$3million in Victorian Government funding. This will enhance the overall LightState project.
- **River Country Art Trail** – Murray River Council – \$1.7million – NSW Government's Regional Tourism Activation Fund.
- **All Seasons Houseboats** –\$500,000 grant – Victorian Government's Regional Tourism Investment Fund to develop an accessible houseboat, featuring wheelchair access, mobility support rails and a lift, as well as impressive luxury amenities.

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT cont.

Drive/Touring

The itinerary mapping software has provided a significantly improved visual user experience and has further enhanced our road trips and blog content.

Itinerary Maps and Road Trips	Page Views	Average Time On Page
Murray Farm Gate Trail	415	1:56
Murray Silo Art and Murals Trail	1669	2:45
Foodies Paradise Trail	283	2:13
Golfing along the Murray Trail	142	1:33
National Park Trail	173	2:56
Corowa History Trail	117	2:09
Swirl Sniff & Sip along the Murray	150	1:20
Galleries and Outdoor Art Trails	126	1:19
Heritage Trail	593	1:49
River Experience	409	2:04
Family Friendly	316	1:59
Caravan and Camping	2,335	2:26

Murray River Adventure Trail (Stage 1)

The Murray River Adventure Trail is a multi-sport adventure trail which extends along the Murray River from Albury Wodonga to Mildura Wentworth.

The trail development will create an iconic nature based experience and deliver a world first multi model long distance 1,040 kilometre walking / cycling and 1,390 kilometre kayak/canoe trail along the Murray River.

To date \$10.8 million has been secured from the Victorian Government to design and implement sections of stage 1 of the Murray River Adventure Trail, which includes \$500,000 for the initial Business Case.

Murray Regional Tourism have completed the following work to progress the Murray River Adventure Trail to date:

- Secured \$10.3 million towards implementing Stage 1 (270km) with Parks Victoria appointed as lead delivery agency with construction to conclude in the financial year 2024-2025
- Completed feasibility study – entire trail
- Completed Business Case – entire trail
- Completed detailed design, constraints assessment and costing for Stage 1
- Completed revised Business Case for Stage 1
- Secured funding to progress Stage 2 & 3 of the project, with detailed design to be completed in 2024.



PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT cont.



Murray River Adventure Trail (Stage 2 & 3)

Successful Funding Application - Murray River Adventure Trail Stage 2 & 3 Concept and Design.

MRT were successful in receiving \$500,000 from the Victorian Government Investment Fast Track Fund, the funding was matched with a contribution of \$125,000 from MRT and some Local Government partners.

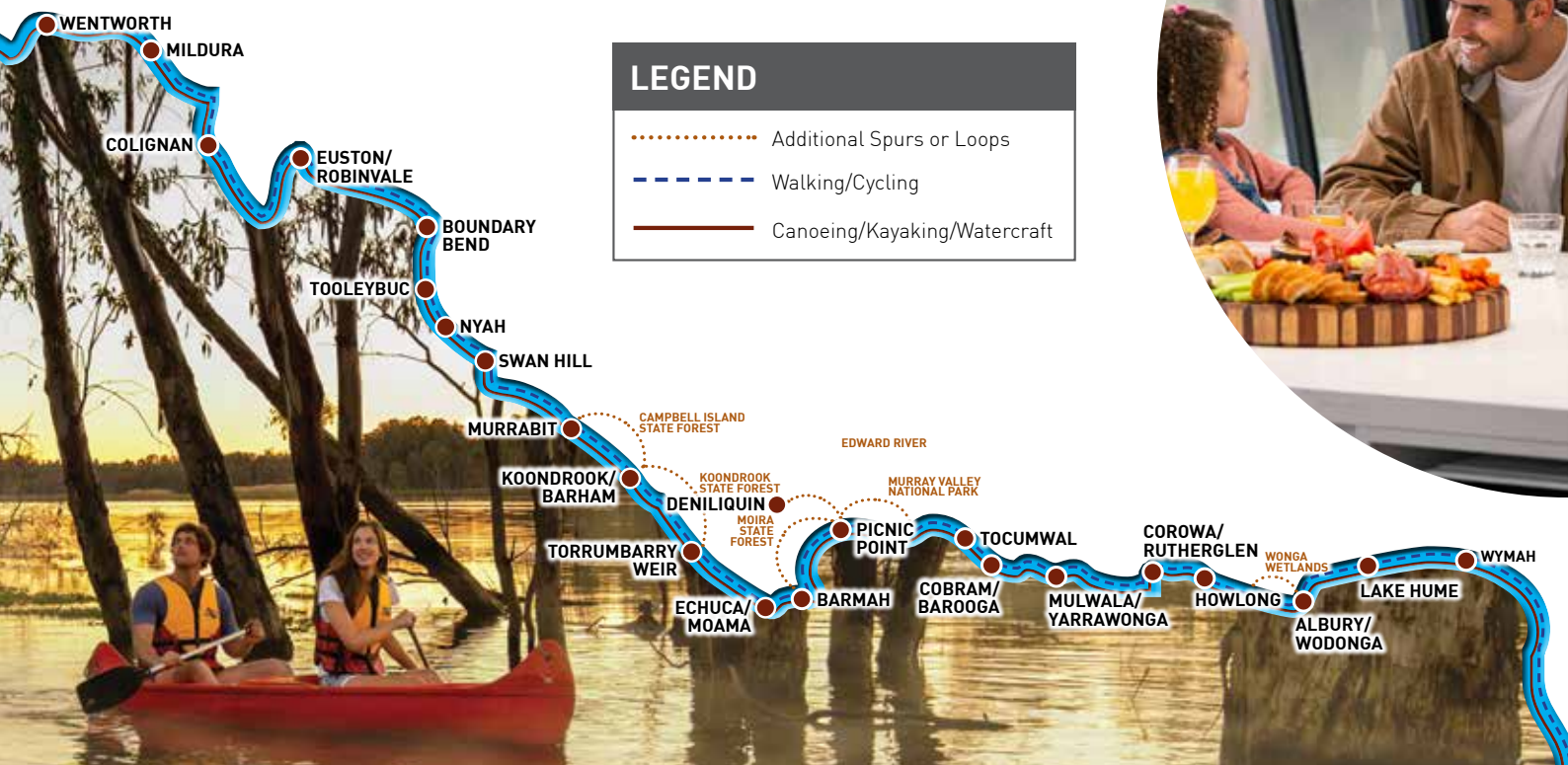
The project will create design and concept details for stage 2 and 3 of MRAT due to be completed in 2024.

Stage 2 & 3 of the Murray River Adventure trail, spans over 770 kilometres of the planned trail and covers the geographical areas of Koondrook Barham to Mildura/Wentworth (Stage 2) and Barmah National Park to Albury Wodonga (Stage 3).

The outcomes from this work will provide the case to secure funding for the construction of the trail unlocking an expected 5,000 jobs and \$6 billion by 2040.



Figure 3: Overview of the Murray River Adventure Trail



Murray River Road and Ports of the Murray, are ongoing strategic projects that were significantly impacted by flooding and funding variation.

Visitor Engagement Strategy Implementation

In the pursuit of implementing the Murray region Visitor Engagement Strategy, we developed a range of initiatives which were both whole of region and pilot opportunities for particular destinations.

Key projects advanced in implementing the Visitor Engagement Strategy included:

- Visitor Information to Inspiration (i2i) training program delivered to visitor information centre staff and volunteers in the first iteration. In the second iteration it was offered to all of the tourism industry in order for their customer service staff to participate in the program.



GOVERNANCE & SUSTAINABILITY

Highlights



Secured Long Term Victorian Government Investment



Delivered the COVID-19 Strategic Plan



Partnership with 13 Local Government Agencies secured



Continued to respond to COVID-19 impacts in partnership with Cross Border Commissions, Visit Victoria, DNSW and 13 Local Governments strategic priorities



Implemented the 2021-2024 Murray Region Strategic Plan



Commissioned a variety of Research to ensure regional recovery

Goal

To be a sustainable, transparent and effective organisation focused on making a difference.

Under Murray Regional Tourism's (MRT) Strategic Plan, it exists of five pillars:

1. Regional marketing
2. Product development
3. Leadership and advocacy
4. Industry development
5. Governance and sustainability.



GOVERNANCE & SUSTAINABILITY cont.

Under the 3rd Strategic Pillar – Leadership and Advocacy - MRT has undertaken activating a series of operational activities to align with the organisation's strategic intent:

Strategic Priorities

- Oversee on behalf of the greater Murray region, the COVID-19 reactivation (strategy) plan response in an agile and adaptive manner
- Establish industry advisory committees or focus groups as necessary to inform planning and coordination and respond to the evolving operating ecosystem.

Key Outcomes

- Implemented the MRT COVID-19 Strategy and associated reactivation plan to assist our local government partners and industry manage the pandemic and prepare for recovery
- Constantly reviewed and adapted with our partners and industry through the continuously evolving operating environment
- Embedded key strategies into the organisation to align with our State tourism partners' of NSW and Victoria recovery plans
- Strengthened relationships with key partners and external stakeholders.







www.visitthemurray.com.au

www.murrayregionaltourism.com.au

 [murrayregionaltourism](https://www.linkedin.com/company/murrayregionaltourism)

Murray River Region Tourism Ltd. ABN 12 150 739 647

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 [#visitthemurray](https://www.instagram.com/visitthemurray)