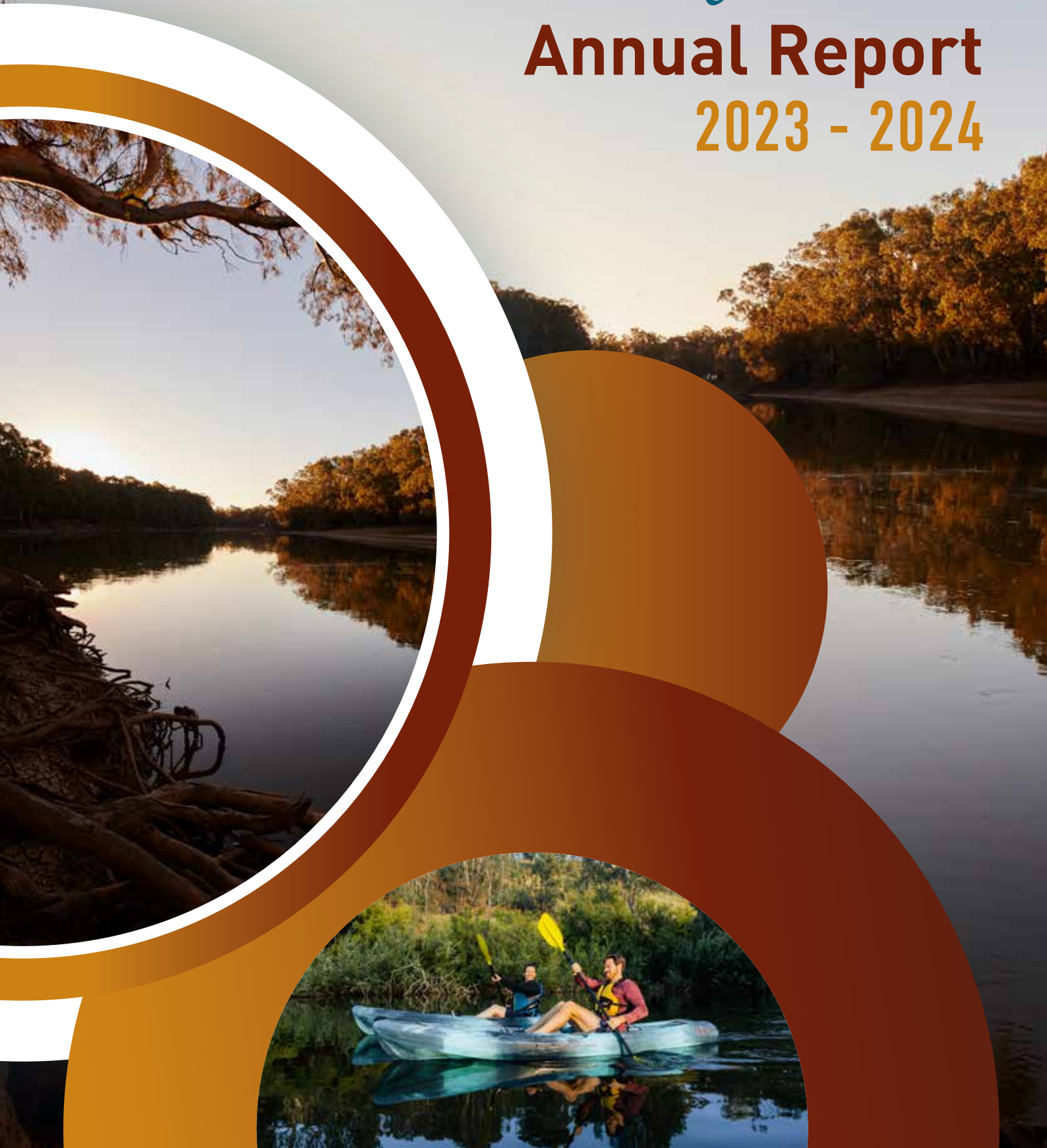




# Annual Report

## 2023 - 2024





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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.

Photography Credit: Murray Regional Tourism Photo Library.

# CHAIR'S REPORT

## Introduction

It is with great pleasure that I present the 2023-2024 Annual Report for Murray Regional Tourism (MRT).

The past year fortunately has seen a more stable physical environment, but the difficult economic conditions have impacted on our local industry and businesses. Australian consumers have continued to face challenges such as persistent inflation and cost of living pressures that are also felt across our region.

In the past 12 months our organisation remained determined to ensure the Murray region is the preferred place to visit in Australia as we continue to strengthen our local and vital visitor economy.

As the peak cross-border tourism organisation, we advocate for and promote the visitor economy across the Murray River region. Our mission is to lead, grow, promote, and sustain tourism development, enhancing visitation, and fostering tourism investment.

Importantly, our vision remains to position the Murray River region as Australia's iconic and vibrant cross-border regional tourism destination. Central to our vision is the recognition of the Murray as a singular destination that transcends New South Wales and Victoria blending the best of both states into one community of interest.

## Strategic Plan 2024-2027

The 2024-2027 strategic plan is a product of our collective aspiration for a future where the Murray region shines, as a paragon of its tourism excellence and sustainability. Our strategy is designed to propel the Murray region into the forefront of Australia's inland destinations.

The key targets over the next three years are to collectively attract 8.17 million visitors, to generate \$3 billion in visitor expenditure and, importantly, for tourism to support 6,920 jobs in our region.

This document embodies our shared commitment to resilience, innovation, and excellence, core principles that underpin our unique cross-border collaboration. Our plan aligns seamlessly with the Victorian Government's Experience Victoria 2033 plan, the New South Wales Visitor Economy Strategy 2030, and our own Murray region Destination Management Plan. This ensures we collectively drive sustainable growth, elevate visitor experiences, and create lasting community benefits.

## Importance of the visitor economy to Murray Regional Tourism

In the 2023-2024 financial year the visitor economy contributed \$2.5 billion to our region, supporting 6,228 direct jobs and welcomed 6.2 million visitors, contributing over 11 million domestic and international overnight visits to the region.

Of the over 6 million annual visitors, domestically these included 3.4 million overnight visitors and 2.8 million day trip visitors.

The biggest increase for the year was the growth in international visitation to the Murray region, totalling 63,800 visits, a very strong increase of 41% on the previous year. These international visitors contributed 2.2 million overnight stays contributing \$85 million into the overall visitor economy.

These figures alone reinforce the essential and future facing role our visitor economy plays in sustaining our communities, offering employment pathways and enhancing the liveability of the towns along the Murray.





# CHAIR'S REPORT cont.

## Financial Sustainability

Financial sustainability remains a focal point for our organisation. Our cross-border partnerships and diverse funding sources are crucial to delivering our programs, activities, and advocacy efforts across the region. The continued success in securing additional grant funding which leverages the investments made by our local governments and state agencies is paramount.

In the past financial year we reported a healthy financial performance with a profit of \$280,416. However, it is important to note that \$300,000 for the Murray River Adventure Trail (Stages 2 & 3) will be carried over into the next financial year (FY25). These funds, originally classified as income in 2022-2023, were reclassified as income in advance for the current financial year to reflect the fact that the amount was not yet expended.

Our Finance Director Natalie Ajay has outlined in her report a full explanation on these funds and the wider financial operating environment.

The careful management of costs as a Not for Profit entity reflects our ongoing commitment at Murray Regional Tourism to maintaining financial stability while delivering within budget on our strategic objectives.

## Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

Following the 2022 independent Board Review, we successfully extended our Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with our 13 local governments in July 2023 for another three years. This MoU will guide our collaborative efforts to ensure clear deliverables for our partners and the wider tourism industry, further strengthening our cross-border partnerships.

With ongoing support from our Council partners, we have observed positive impacts, including increased success in securing funding to further invest in the region's visitor economy and to balance supply and demand activities.

## Visitor Economy Partnership (VEP - Victoria)

Our transition from a Regional Tourism Board (RTB) to a Visitor Economy Partnerships (VEPs), led by the Victorian State Government and the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) saw minimal structural changes as our organisation had already in place a rigorous governance and corporate framework.

Additional funding from DJSIR was of course welcomed but well overdue. This is because since tourism boards were introduced some 13 years ago there has been no increase to our base funding. The cost of doing business over this period has of course increased substantially.



# CHAIR'S REPORT cont.

## Major Strategic Projects

### Murray River Adventure Trail

We continue to support the Murray River Adventure Trail, which is poised to become a world-class nature-based experience and a priority project identified in our Destination Management Plan (DMP).

This multi-sport adventure trail, spanning over 1,040 kilometres, promises to elevate the Murray region as a premier destination for walkers, cyclists, and kayakers.

In Stage 1, from Koondrook via Echuca/Moama to the Barmah National Park in partnership with Parks Victoria (lead agency) and several local governments, we saw significant progress, with draft designs completed and shared with Traditional Owner groups. Community consultation, tendering processes, and initial construction are scheduled for 2024/2025.

Additionally, Stages 2 & 3 of the Project spans sections, East and West of Stage 1 covering the geographical areas of Koondrook/Barham to Mildura/Wentworth (Stage 2) and Barmah National Park to Albury/Wodonga (Stage 3). These are in the detailed design phase, with a final business case anticipated by February 2025.

### Sustainability and First Nations Tourism

Our organisation remains committed to embedding sustainability and cultural preservation into every aspect of our operations. Our Destination Management Plan prioritises sustainable tourism development, ensuring we protect the natural and cultural assets that make the Murray River region unique. Key initiatives include promoting eco-friendly tourism and encouraging the use of renewable energy within the tourism sector, while reducing the environmental footprint of tourism operations.

First Nations tourism is a central pillar in our strategy, as we work closely with Traditional Owners to develop authentic First Nations-led tourism experiences across the Murray region. This aligns with our goal to elevate First Nations tourism, providing visitors with enriching cultural experiences that connect them to the history, heritage, and stories of the Murray River and its people. We see this as a vital step in fostering deeper community engagement and delivering lasting benefits to both the tourism industry and our First Nations communities.

During this twelve month period we have continued to work with the Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation (YYNAC) to return two tourism operations, the Dharnya Cultural and Heritage Centre and Kingfisher Cruises which are scheduled to be operational from late 2024.

In partnership with Destination Riverina Murray (DRM), we undertook the First Nations Tourism Development Project. The project focused on identifying First Nation stakeholders and visitor experiences. 97 stakeholders and 113 visitor experiences were identified. To further increase the profile of aboriginal tourism experiences across the region, the content on [www.visitthemurray.com.au](http://www.visitthemurray.com.au) was updated and an experiential touring route was developed.



# CHAIR'S REPORT cont.

## Marketing

Our marketing efforts continue to raise the profile of the Murray region. This year's campaigns supported by Visit Victoria and our Local Government partners, including "Murray Moments," "Mates of the Murray," and "Murray Sunsets," successfully engaged new audiences and bolstered visitation from key markets.

In partnership with Destination Riverina Murray (DRM) we further developed our internationally ready product focusing on Murray River Road and Golfing product. The international product was showcased at the 2024 Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE).

Our partnership with Visit Victoria remains vital. It also provided strategic opportunities such as participation in Tourism Australia's major international facing ATE event. ATE showcased our destination to thousands of international buyers and helped amplify the region's tourism potential on the global stage, which is also reflected in our continued overseas visitor growth.

The "Every Bit Different" campaign, launched in January 2024, marked a new chapter in Victorian tourism marketing. We are pleased to have contributed to this campaign, further integrating the Murray region into the state's latest tourism narrative.

The standout success of our cooperative program with Visit Victoria was the Solus email campaign, sent to all Visit Victoria's subscribers, which delivered the strongest performance of all the content pieces. The open success rate was a massive 55%.





# CHAIR'S REPORT cont.

## Our Board

Murray Regional Tourism continues to benefit from our energetic, hardworking, and highly skilled board, and I sincerely thank them all for the incredible work, commitment and passion to our region and its offerings.

Their guidance and support to our CEO in his first 12 months in the role has been outstanding.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to my fellow Board members: Deputy Chair Greg Roberts, Natalie Ajay, John Dalton, Natasha Callewaert, Kerry l'Anson, and Martin Hawson (Murray River Group of Councils).

I also wish to acknowledge the contributions of Phil Stone and Karina Ewer, who served as Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation (RAMJO) nominated Board members earlier in the year.

The board's dedication and valuable insights have been instrumental in ensuring that our organisation remains a resilient and forward-looking organisation.

## Team

Our team, led by CEO Cameron Sutton, have demonstrated a strong commitment to effectively delivering and reporting against our Strategic Plan in partnership with our many stakeholders.

The CEO has introduced wide ranging and valuable changes to our systems and processes and introduced a new team to better meet our current and future needs.

Special recognition goes to Georgia Homer-Osborne, Pamela Canavan, Sharon Morrell, and Sally Knight, together with our key contracted project partners, whose collective efforts have significantly contributed to our success.



# CHAIR'S REPORT cont.

## Closing Remarks

As always, sincere gratitude to our stakeholders without whom we could not deliver the outcomes for the Murray River region. 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 of Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) and marketing support from Visit Victoria.

As we look to the future, MRT is well-positioned to take advantage of emerging opportunities. New markets such as luxury tourism and eco-tourism are gaining traction as are visitors looking for experience-based tourism. We are working to further capitalise on these trends by enhancing our digital marketing capabilities and investing in cutting-edge tourism technology.

Additionally, we are planning significant infrastructure investments right across the region, ensuring our towns and attractions are well-prepared to meet the expectations of tomorrow's travellers.

The strength of the region's visitor economy is a shared responsibility but is also one accepted as such.

Our commitment to sustainable growth in the region's visitor economy, cultural enrichment, and delivering value to all our stakeholders will remain at the heart of our efforts as we enter the next phase of our journey.



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

**Wendy Greiner**  
Chair



# MRT PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

## Visitor Economy 2023 - 2024



**6.2 Million**  
Visitors to  
the Murray



**11.3 Million**  
Visitor  
Nights



**\$2.5 Billion**  
Visitor  
Spend

## Operational Highlights



Transition of  
MRT Operational  
Systems to  
Google Workspace



Murray  
First Nations  
Tourism Project



Murray River Road  
Golf International  
Ready Project



## Marketing Highlights



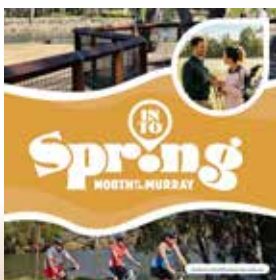
**4.46 Million**  
Murray Moments  
Impressions



**336,000**  
Murray Sunsets  
Impressions



**1.7 Million**  
Mates of the Murray  
Impressions



**1.2 Million**  
North of the Murray  
Impressions



**800,000**  
Greater Hume  
Impressions

















# VISITOR ECONOMY SNAPSHOT




Domestic & International Travel to Murray Region - July 2023 to June 2024

Domestic Daytrip Travel YE June 2024			
	2.7 Million	↓	13.3%
	\$602 Million	↑	13.8%

Domestic Overnight Travel YE June 2024			
	3.4 Million	↑	6.7%
	9.2 Million	↑	10.2%
	\$1.85 Billion	↑	0.35%

Total Domestic Travel YE June 2024			
	6.1 Million	↑	20.5%
	9.1 Million	↑	10.2%
	\$2.4 Billion	↑	9.4%

International Travel YE June 2024			
	64,000	↑	41.3%
	2.2 Million	↑	1166%
	\$85 Million	↑	82.6%

Average Spend YE June 2024		
	Domestic Day	\$166
	Domestic Overnight	\$495
	International	\$1,141



# ADVOCACY & LEADERSHIP

## Goal

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

## Key Priorities

- Continue to be the leading cross border entity for tourism industry advocacy, research and support.
- Coordinate access to timely and relevant research with shared benefits that can be adopted widely by the community.
- Advocate for government funding assistance for the region across all tiers.

### During the course of the year, MRT has continued to:-

- Provide 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.
- MRT presented to the 2024 Cross Border Tourism Forum in partnership with DRM. The forum consisted of Cross Border Commissioners, Department Leaders from both the Victorian and NSW Governments.
- Participated in both 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.
- Attended the 2023 Regional Tourism Organisation Forum.
- Continued to advocate with the Victorian State Government and Visit Victoria in regard to the 2026 Commonwealth Games cancellation funding changes to achieve a financial outcome that will benefit the Murray region.













# BOARD & TEAM

## Murray Regional Tourism Board



**WENDY GREINER**

Chair /  
Performance &  
Remuneration



**GREG ROBERTS**

Deputy Chair /  
Performance &  
Remuneration



**NATALIE AJAY**

Finance /  
Company Secretary



**JOHN DALTON**

Audit & Risk



**NATASHA CALLEWAERT**

Audit & Risk



**KERRY I'ANSON**

Finance



**MARTIN HAWSON**

Murray River Group  
of Councils



**PHILLIP STONE**

Riverina and Murray Joint  
Organisation (RAMJO)  
Sept 2023 - March 2024



**KARINA EWER**

Riverina and Murray Joint  
Organisation (RAMJO)  
July - August 2023

## Murray Regional Tourism Team

**CAMERON SUTTON**

Chief Executive Officer

Based - Echuca

**SALLY KNIGHT**

Executive Assistant

Based - Echuca

**GEORGIA  
HOMER-OSBORNE**

Digital Marketing  
& Campaigns Lead

Based - Wodonga

**PAMELA CANAVAN**

Digital Marketing Coordinator

Based - Mildura

**SHARON MORRELL**

Industry & Local  
Government Lead

Based - Wentworth

# REGIONAL MARKETING

## Annual Performance Highlights



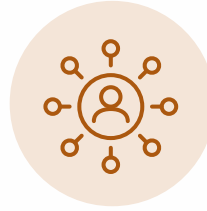
**648,514**

Views on  
Consumer  
Website



**1,286**

Active Australian  
Tourism Data  
Warehouse Listings  
on Visit the Murray



**14**

Journalist  
& Influencer  
Familiarisations



**6**

Content Shoots

## Annual Organic Highlights



**2 Million**

Facebook Reach

**236.6k**

Instagram Reach



**43.2k**

Facebook Link Clicks

**3.4k**

Instagram Link Clicks



**1.1k**

Facebook Follower Growth

**2.4k**

Instagram Follower Growth

## 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.

## Key Outcomes

Significant focus directed to driving visitation across our target market segments through building awareness of visitor experiences through inspiring, curated and informing content.





# REGIONAL MARKETING cont.

## Social Media Campaigns

### Murray Moments

The Murray Moments campaign for Winter 2023 was strategically designed to align with our goals, employing a comprehensive full-funnel approach.

We began by building destination awareness through targeted audience prospecting across digital channels, leveraging influencer collaborations, media familiarisations, and PR efforts to effectively reach our target audience.

During the consideration phase, we focused on providing consumers with engaging and informative content to inspire interest in visiting the Murray, using competitions to boost awareness and intent, and building a foundation for future marketing efforts.

During the planning phase, we generated interest through compelling content creation, guiding audiences further down the funnel with digital remarketing, social media content, and strategic media partnerships.

To drive bookings, we offered special deals and partnered with booking platforms like Expedia to encourage immediate winter bookings or advance planning for spring.

Finally, to foster advocacy and extend our campaign's reach, we encouraged consumers to share their Murray Moments on social media. This user-generated content not only highlighted their experiences but also amplified our campaign's visibility and impact.



## Digital Results



**4.46 Million**  
Total  
Impressions



**8,100**  
Total Room  
Nights Booked



**909**  
Total Follower  
Growth



**6**  
Journalist  
Famill Visits

## PR Results



**50**  
Published  
Articles



**10 Million**  
Total Reach



**\$500,000**  
Total Value  
Equivalent

# REGIONAL MARKETING cont.

## Highlights of the PR Activity

### Australian Traveller - Ten things you must Experience on Murray River Road

<https://www.australiantraveller.com/vic/things-to-do-along-the-murray-river/>

### Traveller Magazine - Best Winter escapes

<https://www.watoday.com.au/traveller/inspiration/best-winter-holiday-escapes-country-20230630-p5dkub.html?collection=p5dld8>

### RoyalAuto - 10 Benefits of Travelling in the OffPeak season

<https://www.racv.com.au/royalauto/travel/travel-advice/top-10-benefits-of-off-peak-travel.html>

### Escape Magazine - Cactus Country

<https://www.escape.com.au/destinations/australia/victoria/i-found-a-slice-of-mexico-in-country-victoria/news-story/ddea0762aee60c8136f7a5bd8b82578d>

### Australian Golf Digest - Regional Getaways

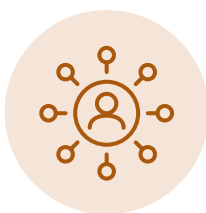
<https://www.australiangolfdigest.com.au/travel-regional-getaways/>

## Murray Sunsets

Murray Sunsets was a peak summer Instagram-only campaign designed to raise awareness of the Murray region among the local community, Murray tourism operators, and the Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) market.

The campaign focused on leveraging user-generated content (UGC) both in visitors and industry to drive engagement, using boosted posts to target towns and regional cities within our area. The campaign also aimed to promote regional dispersal across the Murray during the summer months.

Murray Sunsets was supported with a modest budget to boost regional dispersal and grow our Instagram audience. This strategic approach maximised our resources, effectively promoting the region and inspiring a broader audience to explore and share their Murray experiences.



**832** Followers  
↑ **9%** Growth  
Total Instagram  
Follower Growth



**123**  
Total Number  
of Tagged  
Instagram Stories



**335,940**  
Total Number  
of Impressions



**24.3k** Reach  
**48.2k** Impressions  
**75** Followers  
Top Performing Post  
Date: 31/12/23



# REGIONAL MARKETING cont.

## Mates of the Murray

'Mates of The Murray' aimed to showcase the essence of the Murray region by sharing the authentic stories of its locals. Our goal was to highlight the diverse characters and charm of the destination, inviting the audience to become part of the experience.

Over a six week period (June to August) we introduced a "new mate" by publishing a short interview-style video, an EDM and a long form blog.

### Our Mates of the Murray included:

**Gary and Isabel Chasney** of Chasney Estate, Tresco. Chasney Estate is a successful farm and agri-tourism venture, they produce olives, sunflowers, lavender and soap.

**Alison Percy** of Albury. After a long creative career including graphic and interior design, Alison is now a full-time artist — "I love to draw with paint". Her works are about abstracting the landscape.

**Adam Fitton** of Echuca. Lost trade keeper, Murray adventurer and Paddlesteamer Captain. A love for the Murray River runs in Adam's blood.

**Cindy Heley** of Monak Wine Co. at Monak. A family owned and operated winery with a focus on handmade, sustainable, small batch wines working closely with the best local growers in the area.

**Ruth Davys** of Albury. Storyteller, artist and tour guide — When you first meet Ruth Davys, she'll greet you in Wiradjuri: "Yiradhu marang, Yuwindhi Ruth Davys". Her face lights up when she talks about the region and shares her culture and memories.

**Andrew Whitehead** of Urana. After 20 years in the army and travelling the world, the call of the Murray was too much to resist for Andrew. He brings rural history to life through his scrap metal art sculptures.



**Gary and Isabel Chasney**



**Alison Percy**



**Adam Fitton**



**Cindy Heley**



**Ruth Davys**



**Andrew Whitehead**

# REGIONAL MARKETING cont.

## Mates of the Murray - Campaign Results



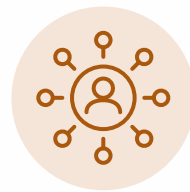
**8,115**  
Website  
Views



**2.4 Million**  
Social Media  
Impressions



**1.3 Million**  
Social Media  
Reach



**141,929**  
Engagement



**53% Female**  
**47% Male**  
Gender Split

## Events in The Murray

Events are a significant demand driver for visitation to the Murray region. 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 supported events through leveraging our various social media channels and highlighting the events key information on our monthly EDMs.

Events in The Murray	
• Moama Lights	• North East Food & Drink Festival Wodonga
• Swan Hill Food & Wine Festival	• Bullanginya Dreaming
• The Big Balloon Bash	

## Event Promotion

Events are promoted consistently through EDMs, consumer blogs and the Murray Regional Tourism events calendar.

All blogs sit on the consumer website and are promoted to the wider market through social media platforms allowing the consumer easy access.

**Lighting up the Murray Blog** promoting Aurora Albury, Riverlights Swan Hill, Bullanginya Dreaming in Barooga, Moama Lights.

**Warm Your Soul on the Murray This Winter Blog** highlighted The Big Balloon Bash in Mildura and their balloon packages, Smoke on the Water in Mourquong, Whisky on the Murray in Corowa, Winter Blues Festival in Echuca - Moama and the Country Stampede Festival in Barham.

**Easter on the Murray blog** promoted family friendly events coming up across the region at Easter time including Fireworks and free entertainment at Echuca Wharf, Mathoura Easter Fair, Annual Duck Race in Cobram, Easter Market in Swan Hill, Colour Frenzy Run in Albury Wodonga.

**Global Ballooning Australia** collaboration on an Instagram reel to promote the Big Balloon Bash in Mildura.

**Dinos at the Zoo** at Kyabram Fauna Park promoted on social media and EDM.





# COLLABORATIVE MARKETING

During this financial year, Murray Regional Tourism collaborated with three Local Government partners to further promote the destination.

## North of The Murray - Federation Council

North of The Murray and Murray Regional Tourism collaboratively ran a campaign which focused on highlighting the different parts of Federation Council's region. The aim of the campaign was to target a younger audience.

Influencer, Nathan Sawaya was invited to the region to film social media content, which was promoted on his instagram site "Nathsway" with over 190,000 followers, our messaging was well received.

The influencer campaign, which attracted 102,000 reels views was supported by a Meta campaign which resulted in a further 1.2 million impressions and 12,250 link clicks.

## Campaign Results



**1.2 Million**  
Impressions



**12,250**  
Link Clicks



**102,000**  
Reels Views



# COLLABORATIVE MARKETING cont.

## Greater Hume Shire Council

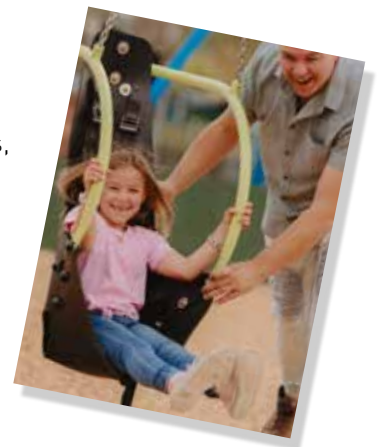
Greater Hume and Murray Regional Tourism collaborated with an aim to increase awareness of the regions products, including accommodation, cafes and scenery.

### Phase 1: Influencer Engagement and 'Girls Weekend Away' Experience

To kickstart our campaign, we invited a select group of influencers for an immersive 'girls weekend away' experience in Table Top, a charming destination known for its scenic beauty and local attractions. The influencers were encouraged to explore the region and share their authentic experiences with their substantial followings on social media.

### Phase 2: Professional Photoshoot Highlighting Local Attractions

To capture the essence of Greater Hume, a professional photoshoot with Chloe Smith Photography, set in the picturesque towns of Jindera and Holbrook was undertaken. The focus of this shoot was on showcasing local cafes, playgrounds, and accommodation options, which are key attractions for both residents and visitors. The visuals produced were high-quality and deeply connected to the local culture, adding authenticity to our campaign.





# COLLABORATIVE MARKETING cont.

## Phase 3: Targeted Meta Campaign Utilising Curated Content

With engaging content from the influencer experiences and the professional photoshoot, we launched a highly targeted Meta campaign. This phase was designed to amplify the reach of our content, targeting specific demographics that would be most interested in what Greater Hume has to offer. By leveraging the power of social media advertising, we ensured that our visuals and narratives reached a wider audience, driving both interest and engagement. The strategic use of content ensured that the campaign was both visually appealing and contextually relevant, resulting in increased visibility for the region.



## Phase 4: Social Media Mentoring and Strategy Development

Recognizing the importance of a sustained digital presence, we provided social media mentoring to the Greater Hume team. Our marketing lead, Georgia, worked closely with the Greater Hume team to develop a consistent and long-term social media strategy aimed at building and maintaining a strong online presence. The mentoring focused on equipping the team with the tools and knowledge needed to increase followers, enhance engagement, and raise awareness of the region over time.



## Campaign Results



**10,500**  
Reels Views



**7**  
Photoshoot  
Locations



**800,000**  
Impressions



# COLLABORATIVE MARKETING cont.

## Campaspe Shire Council

Our third collaborative partnership was with Campaspe Shire Council, where we successfully launched a co-operative campaign aimed at reaching a wide array of audiences through multiple marketing touchpoints.

This campaign was meticulously designed to engage diverse demographics, from families and young travellers to retirees and adventure seekers, ensuring that the rich experiences offered by the Campaspe region were showcased to their full potential.

The campaign consisted of a robust PR strategy that leveraged the power of traditional and digital media. We secured features and articles in respected media outlets, both in print and online, ensuring that our messages reached a broad and diverse audience. These articles were crafted to highlight the charm and appeal of the Campaspe region, with a particular focus on its smaller townships, such as Rochester and Kyabram. Additionally, we complemented our print and digital efforts with targeted regional radio promotions, which helped us reach a local audience and enhance community engagement.

To further bolster the campaign's impact, we incorporated influencer marketing, utilising the authentic voices of key influencers to reach their dedicated followings. By combining influencer appeal with our PR efforts, we were able to create a dynamic and multi-faceted approach which boosted the digital visibility of this region.

The ultimate goal of our campaign was not just to attract one-time visitors but to cultivate a loyal base of continual visitors who would return to the Campaspe region time and again. By emphasising the unique attractions, cultural experiences, and natural beauty of the area, we aimed to create a compelling narrative that resonated with diverse audiences, our campaign was designed to position Campaspe as a must-visit destination.





# COLLABORATIVE MARKETING cont.

## Industry

### LinkedIn - Murray Regional Tourism

In the past 12 months, we have significantly increased our posting, tagging, and engagement efforts, resulting in impressive growth. When comparing our growth to our competitors, we achieved higher metrics over the last year.

Our strategic focus on increased and considered posting has been essential for boosting our industry presence. Success is evident in our platform through the parallel growth, engagement and recognition we've experienced at industry events.

The performance of this platform highlights the importance of active engagement and frequent updates in strengthening our brand's visibility and influence through a communications channel which industry is increasingly comfortable to use.

### Campaign Results



**486** Followers  
↑ **70%** Growth  
Total Number  
of Followers



**45,785**  
Total  
Impressions

### MRT Industry Community

#### Facebook Group

As part of our Industry communication strategy it was agreed that we would commence an Industry Facebook Group. The group was created In February 2024 and currently has a small, yet engaged 52 members.



# COLLABORATIVE MARKETING cont.

## Visit Victoria Co-operative

Murray Regional Tourism has continued to work closely with Visit Victoria this year. In January 2024 Visit Victoria moved away from the 'Stay Close, Go Further' campaign, introducing a campaign for the future 'Every Bit Different'

'Every Bit Different' builds on the heritage of the 'Jigsaw' or 'You'll love every piece of Victoria', the new brand platform recognises and celebrates:

- The breadth of experiences available to visitors within close proximity; from the quirky to the cultured.
- The feelings that these experiences evoke; a feeling that is uniquely Victorian.

## Campaign Objectives

- Increase visitation and expenditure to Victoria.
- Drive continued growth of the visitor economy by strengthening consumer awareness and preference for Melbourne and Victoria.
- Support Victorian tourism operators and drive conversion with a unifying, consistent and coordinated approach

Visit Victoria supported the Murray with a number of key activities. The FY24 Cooperative Marketing Program for the Murray included several marketing activities that aligned with Visit Victoria's drive marketing campaigns. From @elisestraveldiary creating engaging content for Swan Hill and surrounds, to Safari Global capturing the beauty of Lake Mulwala; the aim of this year's Cooperative Marketing Program was to dial up the region's distinctiveness and highlight its strengths by developing content that celebrates the brand promise of the Murray.

## Results



**13,739**  
EDMs Delivered



**55.33%**  
Unique Opens



**6.8%**  
Unique Clicks



**394**  
Clicks  
Top Performing Content  
- Paddlesteamers



# COLLABORATIVE MARKETING cont.

## 7 Spots in Wodonga Video

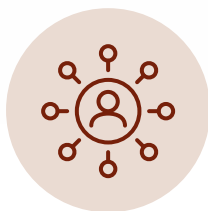
This was both an organic and paid digital market activity focusing on highlighting both Albury and Wodonga's key assets including food, art and activities. The video was posted to both Visit The Murray and Visit Melbourne accounts and on Instagram, Facebook and TikTok.

## Results



**323,705**

Reach



**4,842**

Engagement

## PR Activity with Visit Victoria

- Morning Cross with Channel 9 from Swan Hill to promote the local area.
- 3AW Radio Morning Show, hosted onboard the PS Pevensey in Echuca to highlight regional events. It also included an interview with Visit Victoria's CEO, Brendan McClements.
- Visit Victoria had continual 3AW radio reads for upcoming events both in regional and metro.



# INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

## Highlights



4

Training  
Workshops



4

Tourism  
Manager Forums



4

Tourism  
Manager Meetings



3

Visitor Information  
Centre Manager  
Meetings



31

Letters of  
Support

## Goal

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

## Strategic Priorities

- 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.

During this financial year MRT facilitated the delivery of the following Industry Skills Development Workshops

## Crisis Media Training

This workshop held in partnership with the Victorian Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions was to deliver crisis media training for tourism industry spokespeople.

This program, delivered by Allan Briggs - Crisis Shield, introduced 15 selected participants to the skills and techniques needed to effectively work with all media in crisis situations.

The techniques were tested in a supportive environment using various forms of media (radio, TV, digital) through realistic simulations, allowing participants to gain extensive experience and interview practice.

Participants gained a deeper understanding of the media environment and how to manage media interviews. They learned how to work with the media to deliver key messages to their audience during a crisis, turning negative interviews into positive tourism messages.

## Mindset Mastery with Darren Fleming

Eighty Eight (88) industry operators from across all 13 Local Government areas participated in The Mindset Mastery for Tourism webinar series. The program was delivered over a 4 week period in June 2024.

The *Mindset Mastery* program is designed to teach you how to silence the incessant inner chatter, enhance your focus and reduce distractions to drive productivity.





# INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT cont.

## Tourism Managers & Visitor Information Centre Meetings

The 2023-2024 Tourism Manager Forums were delivered as a combination of online and face to face forums. Four (4) Tourism Manager forums were delivered online or face to face, with a mixture of briefing sessions, strategic development and education content.

Three (3) online Visitor Information Centre (VIC) Manager meetings took place, providing the opportunity to ensure that the VIC Managers are aware of any marketing and industry development opportunities. The online meetings provide the network to ensure that they are connected not only to MRT but to each other along the length of the Murray.

Forums such as these are 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 to discuss current visitor servicing challenges.

### Guest speakers at the Tourism Manager Forums included:-

**RevenYou** - A leading expert in revenue management, sales and marketing within the accommodation industry.

**Tourism Australia** - Industry Relations Manager - Recognised for cultivating key relationships, driving growth, and providing strategic leadership.

**Tract Consultants** - Providing an overview of Murray River Adventure Trail Stage 2 & 3 Design Concept Plan.

MRT presented to the 2024 Cross Border Tourism Forum in partnership with DRM. The forum consisted of Cross Border Commissioners, Department Leaders from both the Victorian and NSW Governments.



# PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

## Goal

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

## Strategic Priorities

- 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 the Murray River Adventure Trail.

MRT continue to deliver programs with our NSW funding partner, Destination Riverina Murray (DRM). Our partnership agreement for 2023-2024 was to deliver two distinct product development programs within the tourism industry, providing clear outcomes to further enhance their products and thereby grow the industry sector.

The two DRM partnership product development projects allowed us to maximise opportunities from new and emerging visitor markets through a focus on visitor experiences and facilitate development of driving / touring routes aligned to key experiences and visitor demand. These were the First Nations Project and Murray River Road Internationally Ready Tourism Development Project.

## First Nations Project

In partnership with Destination Riverina Murray (DRM), the First Nations Tourism Development Project aligns with our strategic priority of product development and aims to enhance the profile of First Nations experiences along the Murray River. This initiative addresses the growing emphasis on First Nations tourism by State Governments (New South Wales and Victoria) and serves as a cornerstone of our MRT Destination Management Plan.

Murray Regional Tourism's goal is to support Traditional Owners in building their capacity to develop products and experiences that connect visitors to their culture. This involves gaining a comprehensive understanding of key Indigenous stakeholders and mapping existing and emerging First Nations tourism experiences.





# PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT cont.

## Murray River Road Internationally Ready Tourism Development Project

Murray Regional Tourism (MRT) and Destination Riverina Murray (DRM) collaborated to deliver the Murray River Road Internationally Ready Tourism Development Project for the region.

The Murray River Road brand has been under development for several years but has not focused on industry operator development to support the brand promise. The availability of internationally ready products across the Murray Region is limited, making this industry development project essential for several reasons.

The project aimed to deliver opportunities for internationally ready golf product to unite and produce an itinerary that increased length of stay across the Murray from a growing number of international visitors.

The Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE), by Tourism Australia which MRT personnel attended in May 2024 in Melbourne, allowed us to showcase The Murray to international buyers, providing a diversification from traditional visitor markets and increasing off-peak visitation to support year-round tourism.

Additionally, this project will deliver a drive touring route featuring internationally ready golf courses and other attractions across the Murray. The aim is to enhance visitor experience quality and increase the length of stay, targeting international buyers seeking itineraries with commissionable products that meet their requirements and their guests' expectations.

## The Murray River Adventure Trail

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 long distance 1,040 kilometre walking / cycling and 1,390 kilometre kayak/canoe trail along the Murray River.

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 in value prior to 2040.



# PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT cont.

## Murray River Adventure Trail - Stage 1

Parks Victoria, Murray Regional Tourism, Victorian Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions, and other partners including Traditional Owners, Victorian Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, and local governments including Moira Shire Council, Campaspe Shire Council and Gannawarra Shire Council have partnered to deliver stage 1 of the Murray River Adventure Trail.

Stage 1 of the Murray River Adventure Trail will include new canoe and kayak launches, new facilities at several campgrounds, and a limited number of pedestrian links at key locations from Barmah National Park to Koondrook. Visitor facilities proposed include picnic tables, car parking, bookable tent campsites, fire pits and toilets at key locations.

While this project will plan, design and seek approvals for the entire length of Trail between Barmah National Park and Koondrook, construction of some aspects of the trail may be completed in future stages of the project, depending on funding availability.

There are 9 timeline steps for Stage 1 of the project, being managed by Parks Victoria. This financial year saw steps 3 and 4 finalised, the draft design concept completed and the draft concepts communicated with regional staff and Traditional Owner Groups.

Stage 1 Community consultation, the competitive tendering process and start of construction on priority parts of the Murray River Adventure Trail are scheduled for 2024/2025.





# PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT cont.

## Murray River Adventure Trail - Stage 2 & 3

Stages 2 & 3 of the Murray River Adventure Trail are being undertaken by Murray Regional Tourism, supported by a funding partnership with the Victorian State Government and our Victorian Local Government partners. This phase of the project aims to extend the trail eastward from Albury/Wodonga and Lake Hume and westward from Mildura/Wentworth, spanning the entire length of the Murray River.

The alignment and design of these stages are strategically driven by the opportunity to capitalise on existing infrastructure and opportunities along both the Victorian and New South Wales sides of the Murray River. This approach ensures that the project maximises return on investment while opening up broader opportunities for the entire Murray region.

The Murray region is known for its diversity, offering a vast array of terrains and experiences. Where possible, the project has integrated existing infrastructure to maximise efficiency and enhance visitor experiences, aligning with the broader objectives of the Murray River Adventure Trail. However, it is acknowledged that numerous other opportunities exist in the surrounding areas, which, while not part of the Adventure Trail itself, remain vital components of the region's separate tourism offerings.

A key objective of the Murray River Adventure Trail is to drive greater investment and increase visitation to the region. By doing so, the project encourages visitors to explore the myriad of attractions and products available, extending their stay and enriching their experience in the Murray region.

In areas where existing opportunities and infrastructure are insufficient or non-existent, new infrastructure will be developed. The alignment of these new sections will be determined through ongoing discussions with Local Government project partners, ensuring that construction and maintenance are both feasible and sustainable.

The Concept Design is a critical element of this process, providing a foundation that will support future stages beyond the scope of this phase, including the detailed design and further development of the trail. Stage 2 & 3 Concept and Design will be delivered in February 2025.



# GOVERNANCE & SUSTAINABILITY

## Goal

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

## Strategic Priorities

- Oversee on behalf of the greater Murray region, the Strategic Plan and the Destination Management 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.

Murray Regional Tourism is committed to cross border collaboration and working with our funding partners and industry stakeholders to support long-term investment in the Murray visitor economy.

Murray Regional Tourism adheres to a collaborative model of governance via a representative and skills-based board, ensuring effective decision making and sound financial management.

## Highlights



**12**  
Murray Regional  
Tourism Board  
Meetings



**13**  
Partnerships with  
Local Government  
Agencies Secured



**2022/2023**  
Annual General  
Meeting Completed



Audit & Risk  
Committee



Board Review  
Completed



Visitor Economy  
Partnership  
in Place



**2024/2027**  
Strategic  
Plan



Strategic  
Marketing Review  
Undertaken



Strengthened  
Relationships  
With Key Partners  
and External  
Stakeholders



Unanimous Member  
Support Allowing  
Constitutional  
Changes to Support  
the Organisations  
Transition from an  
Regional Tourism  
Board (RTB) to a  
Visitor Economy  
Partnership (VEP)

A key goal of Murray Regional Tourism is to be a sustainable, transparent and effective organisation focused on making a difference. Achieving this goal provides leadership and gives MRT confidence moving forward.

### Under our strategic pillar of Leadership and Advocacy -

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

- Employment of full and part time staff, ensuring continuity and cohesiveness of the organisations business.
- Introduction of cloud based system across the entire organisation.









[www.visitthemurray.com.au](http://www.visitthemurray.com.au)

[www.murrayregionaltourism.com.au](http://www.murrayregionaltourism.com.au)

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