



Annual Report 2024 - 2025



CONTENTS

Chair's Report	1
MRT Performance Highlights	7
Advocacy & Leadership	10
Board & Team	12
Regional Marketing	13
Industry Development	25
Product Development	29
Governance & Sustainability	33

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 Image Library.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Introduction

It is with much pleasure that I present the 2024–2025 Annual Report for Murray Regional Tourism (MRT).

This year has reinforced both the strength of our organisation and the resilience of our region, as we continue to deliver on the Strategic Plan 2024–2027 and the Destination Management Plan, working alongside our 13 Local Government partners, Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR), Visit Victoria (VV) and Destination New South Wales (DNSW) via Destination Riverina Murray (DRM) as well as our operators.

As the peak cross-border tourism organisation, our vision endures and that is to position The Murray River region, as Australia's iconic regional tourism destination. At the heart of this vision is the Murray itself, as a singular destination that transcends New South Wales and Victoria in one seamless tourism experience.

Australians have continued to face cost of living pressures that are also felt across our region. Yet, despite these headwinds, MRT has remained steadfast in its mission to lead, grow, promote, and sustain visitation, tourism development, advancement, and tourism investment across the Murray River region.

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 greater value.

As the tourism industry continues to reshape itself, we have seen growing interest in regional experiences, and the Murray region has truly shone as a welcoming and authentic place for visitors.

We are committed to operating in a sustainable and accountable manner to ensure the long-term health of the Murray region and contributing in a practical way to our communities of interest.

Highlights & Achievements

This year MRT has:

- Earned the significant recognition by National Geographic with the Murray River being named among the Best of the World destinations for 2025.
- Strengthened the Murray brand, achieving record reach and engagement through Mates of the Murray – Season 2, which delivered exceptional digital results and showcased the people and places that define our region.
- Parks Victoria (lead agency) has advanced the Murray River Adventure Trail (MRAT) and we are working with them on Stage 1 from Koondrook via Echuca/Moama to the Barmah National Park, with further planning and approval works completed.
- In addition, the Concept Design Report for Stage 2 (Koondrook/Barham to Mildura/Wentworth) & Stage 3 (Barmah National Park to Albury/Wodonga) of MRAT have been completed, setting out the vision, business case, and anticipated costs for this transformational project. The organisation must now advocate to secure some additional funds for the progression of Stages 2 & 3.
- Supported First Nations tourism by delivering Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) compliant marketing assets for four operators in partnership with DRM, ensuring a framework of cultural integrity and authenticity at the core of our offering.
- Strengthened sustainability outcomes through industry training in resilience, digital capability, and yield management, equipping operators to adapt, compete, and grow.



CHAIR'S REPORT cont.

- Advocated effectively on aviation access, regional funding, and telecommunications, while continuing to represent the Murray at state and national forums.
- Remained committed to supporting and amplifying key destination events that contribute to the visitor economy. Through a combination of specific blogs, social media and Electronic Direct Mail (EDM) we supported a range of events including Swan Hill River Lights, Aurora Albury, Hattah Desert Race, Echuca Moama Winter Blues Festival, Deni Ute Muster and Riverboats Music Festival.
- Supported the delivery of several significant infrastructure development projects including Dharnya Centre, Barmah, Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre in Deniliquin, Wentworth Visitor Centre (including Visitor Information Centre, Library, Cafe and Conference Facilities), Monash Drive River Viewing Platform and Boardwalk in Swan Hill.
- Supported ongoing product development which is vital to sustaining and growing the Murray's visitor economy, ensuring fresh reasons for visitors to return and discover more. Over the past year we have seen an impressive wave of new experiences and attractions come to life, enriching the region's appeal. Highlights include Kinross Woolshed (Albury Wodonga), Tocumwal Brewery, Kingfisher Cruises and Cultural Tours at the Dharnya Centre (Barmah), the River Country Art Trail (Barham, Mathoura, Moulamein and Moama), Murraydale Distillery (Swan Hill), Trail of Lights (Mildura) and the Mildura Boathouse. These additions demonstrate the strength of innovation across the region and the benefits it brings to local communities and the broader economy.



CHAIR'S REPORT cont.

The Backbone of Our Visitor Economy

At the heart of these outcomes are the Murray's tourism operators - resilient, innovative, and deeply committed to their communities. They are the backbone of our visitor economy, delivering memorable experiences, supporting local jobs, and driving regional growth.

Equally vital are our 13 local government partners, whose generous investment in tourism enables MRT to deliver shared marketing, advocacy, and industry development. Their commitment to tourism is about more than visitation, it is about strengthening the liveability and prosperity of all communities across the Murray.

We also acknowledge the valued contributions of DJSIR, VV and Destination NSW via DRM. These partnerships ensure that the Murray continues to grow as a strong and sustainable cross-border visitor economy.

Visitation

The Murray's visitor economy continues to increase and is strengthened by collaboration across our region. For the year ending December 2024, 6.3 million visitors experienced the Murray, contributing \$2.5 billion in expenditure.

Source: Tourism Research Australia Data

These results reflect growth across domestic day, domestic overnight and international markets, reinforcing the region's appeal.

Financial Sustainability

A constant focus for our organisation is on financial sustainability. Our structure relies on the critical cross-border partnerships and diverse funding sources to be able to deliver the extensive range of programs, activities and advocacy support 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.

MRT maintains a healthy financial position, as shown by our balance sheet and retained equity. This is despite the recorded net deficit of \$249,370. This deficit is due to the timing of MRAT project funding where the income was received in the prior financial year, while the expenditure of these funds only occurred in the current year.

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

A Positive Future

The future for tourism on the Murray is bright and there are many reasons to feel optimistic as we stay focused on executing our strategy in collaboration with our stakeholders. Demand for authentic, experience-based travel continues to grow, with strong opportunities in eco-tourism, First Nations tourism, luxury, and cultural experiences. First Nations operators are increasingly central to the Murray's visitor offering, enriching our tourism identity and connecting travellers to the land, river, and stories of its Traditional Custodians.

With our Strategic Plan as a roadmap, and with strong partnerships across industry, government, and community, MRT is well placed to continue to deliver initiatives that benefit the entire Murray region and secure its future as one of Australia's most vibrant cross-border visitor economies.



CHAIR'S REPORT cont.

A Personal Reflection

As this is my final report before stepping down as Chair after our Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 23 October I wish to reflect briefly on the past 12 years.

I have been in the role of Chair of MRT since October 2013 and it has been a real privilege and honour to work with the board, team, local, state and federal governments and operators to grow the visitor economy across a significant area that encompasses the mighty Murray River. Everyone has worked tirelessly together to ensure the Murray shines!

The collaboration, passion, and commitment from all these groups has been the key to our success. We should all be proud of the enormous progress that we have made together and I have been thrilled to have led these collective efforts.

The journey has been exciting, rewarding, inspirational and challenging at times with COVID and natural disasters, including bushfires and floods, smashing our region. However, the resilience and passion of all those along the river has been truly inspiring.

It has been a great pleasure to serve in this role and to contribute to the growth and development of our region's visitor economy. I am proud of what we have achieved together - including driving visitation, strengthening regional collaboration, development of Destination Management Plans, transitioning from a Regional Tourism Board to a Visitor Economy Partnership, providing strategic guidance on key projects and infrastructure, launching new collaborative marketing campaigns, and advocating on critical issues - and I remain confident in the board's ongoing direction and leadership.

There are always demanding and challenging situations in a leadership role but I have enjoyed every moment and tried to lead with purpose, focus, tenacity and impact.

It has been a real team effort with every director throughout the past 12 years supporting me and the organisation extremely well. I sincerely appreciate the unwavering commitment, thoughtful counsel, spirit of collaboration and friendship that has defined our time together. Your dedication to good governance and strategic oversight has been essential to our shared success.

I particularly want to thank Greg Roberts who, as Deputy Chair, throughout my tenure has given so generously of his time and experience as a key operator in the region. His support to me, the board and team has been outstanding and for this I am extremely grateful.

Greg has been a steady and trusted confidant and always prepared to offer perspective, challenge thinking constructively, and share the load when needed.



CHAIR'S REPORT cont.

I also want to acknowledge the insightful contribution from fellow director Tash Callewaert who retires on 23 October. Tash commenced as an Associate Director in 2018 in a role that I proudly introduced to provide new and talented young people the chance to gain some insight into the roles and responsibilities of a company director.

Tash later applied for a role as a director and she was successful. Tash has been a strong contributor providing strategic focus and regional experience as an operator as well as a member on the Audit and Risk committee. We have all appreciated your time and notable input and enjoyed working with you, and I am very thankful for the personal support to me as well over the past seven years.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to my fellow board members that include John Dalton, Natalie Ajay, Kerry l'Anson, Martin Hawson and Pauline Gordon. All have worked tirelessly to contribute to the Murray region and have supported me on this journey.

To our CEO, Cameron Sutton, a sincere thanks for your support and efforts as you have navigated the organisation over the past 2.5 years through both challenges and opportunities with courage and vision. I know you have worked passionately to move the organisation forward and delivered on a range of projects and activities to enhance our region. Thank you also for the assistance given to me and it has been an honour to support you in your role and witness the impact of your work firsthand.

I am also grateful to our small and committed team under Cameron's leadership – Georgia Homer-Osborne, Pamela Canavan, and Kaylee Whitfield – who have worked so diligently and enthusiastically with our CEO, our 13 local governments, state agencies, and industry stakeholders. During the year we farewelled Sharon Morrell, whose role was ably taken up by Kaylee, and more recently, Sally Knight. We now warmly welcome Nicole Murphy as Executive Assistant and look forward to working with her as part of the team.

Serving as Chair has been a true privilege. I leave confident in the strength of the board and team and the direction of MRT. I wish you all continued success in championing the visitor economy and delivering lasting value to our region.

I will always cherish my time here and continue to watch with interest the growth of the region as I continue to enjoy my time as a visitor and friend to the Murray.



CHAIR'S REPORT cont.

Closing

The Murray's visitor economy is a shared responsibility and one of its greatest strengths is the unity of its people. With resilient operators, supportive councils, strong partnerships with state agencies, and a clear strategic roadmap, I am confident the region will continue to flourish.

I am pleased to advise following a rigorous recruitment process that the board will be nominating Paul Geyer as the incoming Chair and John Dalton and Craig Burgess as directors for ratification at the Annual General Meeting.

Paul brings a strong background in governance and as a non-executive director, John extensive experience in tourism and policy and Craig is a highly successful business owner and principal of Australian Paddlesteamers.

I know you will give them the same support and loyalty that you have provided to me over the past 12 years.

Serving as Chair has been a real honour. We have much to be proud of, and even more opportunities to look forward to. Thank you again for your trust and collaboration and best of luck for the future.



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

Wendy Greiner
Chair



MRT PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

Visitor Economy YE Dec 2024

**6.3
Million**

↑3.4%

Total Visitor Numbers

**\$2.5
Billion**

↑1.5%

Total Visitor Spend

Source" TRA Data Murray - Dec 2024.

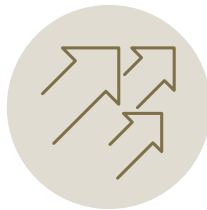
From January 2025, a new Domestic Tourism Statistics (DoTS) collection replaced the National Visitor Survey (NVS).

Data for the period ending June 2025 was not available at the time of compiling this report.

Operational Highlights



Murray River
Adventure Trail
Stages 2 & 3 Concept
Design Report
Completed



Murray Tourism
PR Accelerator
Delivered



Murray First Nations
Tourism Project
Delivered



Regional Tourism
Industry Strengthening
Program
Delivered

Marketing Highlights - Mates of the Murray campaign



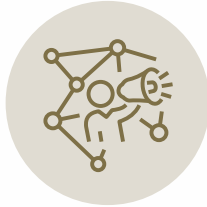
A storytelling-led tourism campaign shining a light on the people and places they call home, capturing the true spirit of the region. The campaign resulted in strong digital results across our social media platforms as reported on Page 17 of this report.



MRT PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS cont.



↑147.5%
Content
Interaction



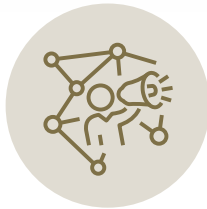
↑363.1%
Social Media
Reach



↑271.1%
Link Clicks



↑100%
Content
Interaction



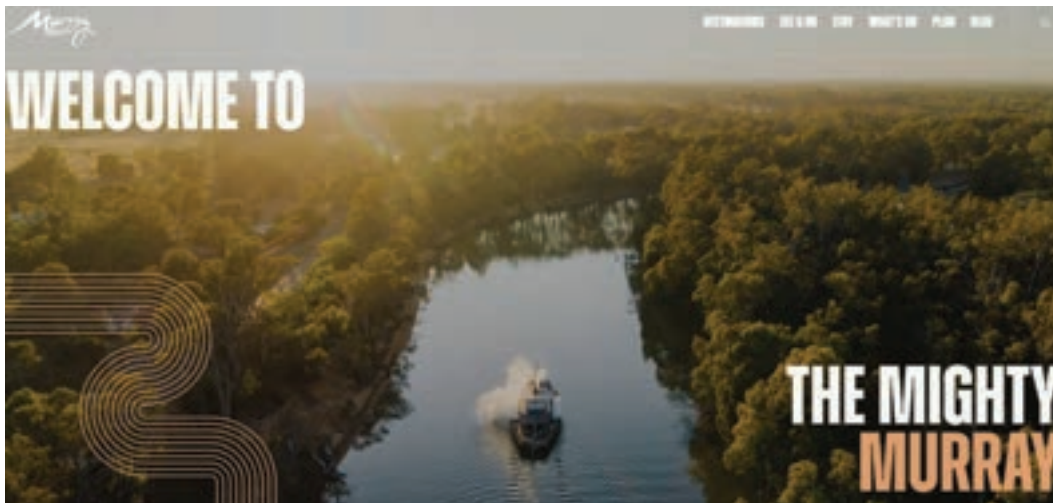
↑640%
Social Media
Reach



↑749.8%
Link Clicks



A fresh look for Visit the Murray website - visitthemurray.com.au





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.

During the course of the year, MRT:

- Provided leadership and support of the whole of Murray with strategic initiatives to deliver region-wide benefit for industry and the river communities.
- Supported 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.
- 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.
- Attended the 2025 Regional Tourism Organisation Forum.



ADVOCACY & LEADERSHIP cont.

Aviation Advocacy – Qantas Engagement

Murray Regional Tourism continues to engage with Qantas regarding key ports servicing the Murray region, including Mildura, Albury, and Bendigo. It remains critical that aviation access is kept top of mind. Ensuring the long-term viability and competitiveness of these routes is essential to supporting visitor growth, regional dispersal, and the overall health of the Murray's visitor economy.

Collective Advocacy – Regional Tourism Boards

Regional Tourism Board CEOs across Victoria are working together to ensure tourism remains a budget priority. In a constrained fiscal environment, collaboration is essential to highlight tourism's vital role as a major employer and economic driver in regional areas. By aligning our efforts, we can strengthen advocacy, maximise efficiency, and ensure regional destinations remain visible and supported.

Visit Victoria / Regional Tourism Network Round Table

Murray Regional Tourism attended the Visit Victoria / Regional Tourism Network Round Table in January. The session focused on Visit Victoria's 2024–25 plans including marketing, digital platforms, funding programs and regional event support.

A key concern raised was the impact of ongoing budget constraints, which are affecting regional brand visibility, evident in the absence of campaigns like Every Bit Different. MRT continues to advocate for stronger collaboration and investment to ensure the Murray region remains prominent within Victoria's tourism marketing landscape.

Tourism Research Australia Data

From January 2025, Tourism Research Australia (TRA) introduced a new methodology, Domestic Tourism Statistics (DoTS), combining survey and mobility data for greater accuracy.

While this will ultimately improve accuracy, it means the latest datasets can't be used for year-on-year comparisons until at least 12 months of consistent data is available. In the meantime, we streamlined our own data suite to help councils make evidence-based decisions with free access to Localis.

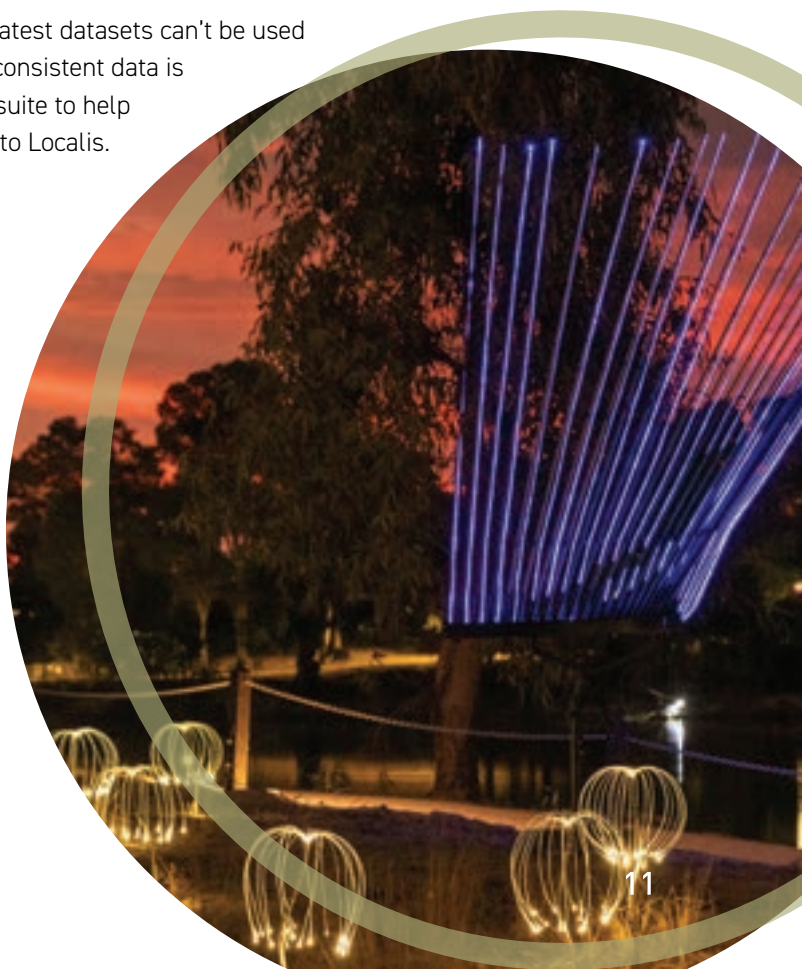
Localis Data

MRT partnered with Localis to give our local government partners free access to new data reports via the Localis dashboard.

These include:

- Spend snapshot and comparison
- Category analysis
- Daily spend trends and more

A tailored review of visitor trends is distributed monthly to each Local Government stakeholder.



BOARD & TEAM

Murray Regional Tourism Board



WENDY GREINER

Chair /
Performance &
Remuneration



GREG ROBERTS

Deputy Chair /
Performance &
Remuneration



NATALIE AJAY

Chair Finance &
Compliance Committee /
Company Secretary



JOHN DALTON

Skills Based Director /
Chair Audit & Risk



NATASHA CALLEWAERT

Skills Based Director /
Audit & Risk



KERRY I'ANSON

Skills Based Director /
Finance & Compliance
Committee



MARTIN HAWSON

Murray River Group
of Councils



PAULINE GORDON

Murray River Group
of Councils

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 - Albury

PAMELA CANAVAN

Digital Marketing Coordinator
Based - Mildura

KAYLEE WHITFIELD

Industry & Local Government
Lead Based - Swan Hill

REGIONAL MARKETING

Annual Performance Highlights

Consumer Website - www.visitthemurray.com.au



712,000
Page Views



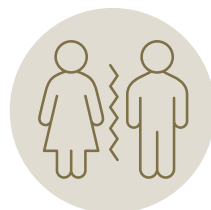
360,600
Total Users



432,720
Sessions



507
New Subscribers
to Consumer
Newsletter



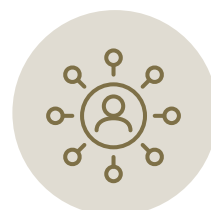
57% Female
43% Male
Users by Gender



25 - 34: 18.7%
45 - 54: 18.5%
55 - 64: 20.9%
Users by Age



1,104
Active Australian
Tourism Data
Warehouse Listings on
Visit the Murray



5
Journalist
& Influencer
Familiarisations



15
Content Shoots



REGIONAL MARKETING cont.

Annual Social Media Highlights



2,883,903
Reach



80,104
Link Clicks



1,857
Follower Growth



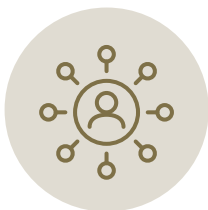
1,102,008
Reach



24,581
Link Clicks



2,316
Follower Growth



1,192
Number of
Followers



↑145.27%
Growth
(previous year was
486 Followers)



72,236
Impressions

Consumers EDM



12
EDM Delivered



30.90%
Open Rate



REGIONAL MARKETING cont.

Regional Marketing

Goal

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

Strategic Priorities

- 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.

Destination Marketing Campaign

Mates of the Murray – Season 2

Campaign Aim

Following the success of the inaugural campaign, which reached over 1.7 million social media impressions, Season 2 set out to capture more of the Murray's essence by sharing the real stories of its locals. The aim was to showcase the region's unique characters, charm, and warm hospitality, giving audiences a genuine taste of the experiences on offer.

Approach

MRT delivers region-wide campaigns that unify the Murray brand while celebrating the individuality of its towns and communities. The approach focused on authentic storytelling to share the region's diverse landscapes, stories and, most importantly, its people. This year, the campaign highlighted passionate local tourism operators whose voices reflect the spirit of the Murray region and showcase its rich character and range of experiences.

Key Elements

Authenticity – Real people sharing their stories, shining a light on locals, their businesses, and the places they call home.

Diversity – Showcasing the varied voices, cultures, and perspectives that shape the Murray identity.

Unity – Bringing the region together, encouraging visitor dispersal, and sharing the Murray's character with a wider audience.



REGIONAL MARKETING cont.

Season 2 of Mates of the Murray brought the region's stories and characters to life, inspiring audiences to explore the Murray.



20,239
Social Media
Content
Interactions



1.99 Million
Social Media
Reach



6.85 Million
Social Media
Views



55,430
Social Media
Link Clicks



1,507
Social Media
Follower Growth



35 - 40 Women
Social Media
Top Performing
Age Group



30.8%
Email
Open Rate



2.12%
Email
CTR



84,100
Website
Total Views



23,820
Website
Mates Landing Page



13,128
Website
Total Blog Views



REGIONAL MARKETING cont.

Our Mates of the Murray were:



**Norm Carl, Gerogery Hotel -
Greater Hume**



**Katrina Myers, Lost & Found
Retreat + Barham Avocados -
Murray River**



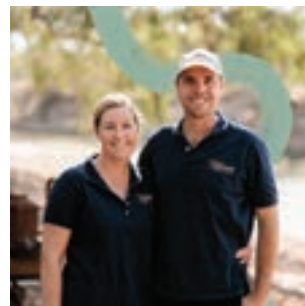
**Uncle Dozer Atkinson, ACHE
+ Bullanginya Dreaming -
Berrigan Shire**



**Gaby Hogg, Charm Lodge -
Gannawarra Shire**



**The Baron, Storyteller: The
Baron's Tasting House -
Edward River**



**Tegan and Tom Douglas,
Outback Almonds -
Wentworth Shire**

Featured Mates reported increased exposure, new enquiries and a strong sense of local pride. The stories were widely shared by local audiences, with many comments celebrating familiar faces and authentic regional stories.

Big4 Co-Operative Collaboration

MRT collaborated with BIG4 to capture new video and imagery along the Murray. BIG4 selected parks and surrounding regions including Red Cliffs, Swan Hill, Kerang and Deniliquin.

This collaboration between MRT, BIG4 and the selected partners resulted in:

- A library of stills from BIG4 parks (as mentioned above)
- A library of stills from key points of interest across the Murray region
- Video footage from BIG4 parks
- Video footage from points of interest across the Murray region
- An updated blog article promoting the region on big4.com.au
- Article promotion via a BIG4 EDM distributed to 150,000 subscribers
- Collaborative social media posts supporting the region (Instagram and Facebook)
- Four social posts/reels highlighting each park and local things to do in the area
- A commercial EDM promoting the Murray region and BIG4 parks to drive bookings

All assets obtained during the photography and video shoot have been provided to relevant councils and are also available through our destination asset management platform.



REGIONAL MARKETING cont.

Visit Victoria Co-operative

Visit Victoria's Regional Cooperative Marketing Program allowed MRT to invest in collaborative digital marketing packages, with a focus on social media reels. The program also included a selection of still images and features in consumer EDMs.

Objectives

- Increase visitation and expenditure to Murray region
- Drive continued growth of the visitor economy by strengthening consumer awareness
- Support tourism operators and drive conversion with a unifying, consistent and coordinated approach

MRT invested in two packages each offering:-

- 2 night trip to region with Photographer/ Videographer
- 2 x 30 second reels featuring three products – eat / stay and play
- 1 x 30 second reel featuring product
- Raw social footage
- Amplification of reels on VV social channels
- Photography suite – up to 20 high res images
- EDM creation

The Visit Victoria cooperative partnership was still in the delivery phase at June 30. Full campaign results will be delivered in the next report.



REGIONAL MARKETING cont.

Website Refresh

Aligning with the 2024-2027 Strategic Plan's focus on enhancing digital engagement and delivering a seamless user experience across our online platforms, the Visit The Murray consumer platform has been redesigned.

A key aspect of this refresh is better promoting our operators and their ATDW listings, aligning with leading destinations across Australia. By optimising the consumer journey, we aim to make it easier for visitors to find relevant information and take the next step towards booking, which ultimately supports our goal of growing the visitor economy.

The main key improvements include:

- Improved User Experience: A smoother and more intuitive design for visitors.
- Simplified Navigation: Easier access to information and regional highlights.
- Enhanced ATDW Integration: Increased lead generation for local operators.
- Streamlined Content: Bringing twin-towns together for a cohesive story.
- Modern Design: Updated visuals aligning with State Tourism Strategies.

The refreshed Visit The Murray website addresses previous functionality issues and reflects a contemporary, user-friendly design that aligns with state tourism strategies. With improved navigation and enhanced ATDW integration, the platform delivers a more seamless visitor experience and greater visibility for local operators.

Blog Content

Our blog strategy continues to play an important role in driving regional dispersal, encouraging seasonal travel and supporting forward planning. Blogs provide a platform for MRT to amplify key regional events. Each feature is developed with carefully selected search terms and SEO potential in mind, helping inspire wider exploration of the Murray region while assisting visitors to plan their journeys.

Blogs include links to relevant ATDW listings, providing direct referrals to local operators and encouraging visitors to remain engaged on the Visit the Murray website.

Blogs are powerful tools for cross-promotion, regularly shared through EDM and social media, with most content designed for re-use over time to maximise reach and impact.

Some of the blogs we have shared on our consumer website during 2024-25 include:

Big Flavours and Big Thrills in The Murray This Autumn

- Showcasing seasonal food, wine and event experiences.

6 Murray River Beaches and Swimming Spots to Visit This Summer

- Highlighting the best inland river beaches and sandbars across the region.

8 Family Caravan Parks For Your Next Murray Region Escape

- Inspiring families to plan memorable and affordable getaways.

Romantic Getaways in NSW and Victoria: Explore The Murray's Unique Stays

- Promoting unique accommodation and couple-friendly experiences.

Together, these blogs help position the Murray as a year-round destination, spark travel inspiration and strengthen connections between visitors and local operators.



REGIONAL MARKETING cont.



National Geographic’s Best of the World destinations for 2025!

In October 2024, we were thrilled to learn that the Murray River was named among National Geographic’s Best of the World destinations for 2025!

The Murray is the only Australian destination included, and the region’s new PS Australian Star by Murray River Paddlesteamers, set to cruise from Echuca, was also highlighted.

This annual list of awe-inspiring places helps travellers get a jump on planning for the year ahead.

The intensive selection process involves National Geographic’s team of travel experts and National Geographic’s Traveller’s international editorial teams.

Events in The Murray

Events continue to play a vital role in driving visitation to the Murray region. Murray Regional Tourism remains committed to supporting and amplifying key destination events, not only to boost attendance and ticket sales, but also to encourage longer stays and increase visitor spend.

To strengthen our event promotion, a portion of our content writing budget has been allocated to produce dedicated blog content focused on major events and the experiences surrounding them.

Our partnership with Visit Victoria delivered high-profile exposure for two key winter events: the Echuca Moama Winter Blues Festival and Swan Hill River Lights. Both featured in Channel 9 News Melbourne’s weather segment with Lavinia Nixon, reaching around 280,000 viewers. Swan Hill River Lights was also featured on Urban List Melbourne’s website and social media, further boosting reach into a key source market.

MRT promotes key regional events via event-specific blogs, social media, consumer EDM and updates via Visit Victoria’s seasonal marketing activity.



Events MRT supported include:-

Swan Hill River Lights	Aurora Albury	Hattah Desert Race	Echuca Moama Winter Blues Festival
Deni Ute Muster	Lenny Kravitz in Mildura	EC Griffith Cup	Riverboats Music Festival
North East Food and Wine Festival	Day of the Dead at Cactus Country	Mildura Airshow	Perricoota Pop and Pour Festival
Swan Hill Food and Wine Festival	World Water Ski Championships	Red Hot Summer Tour	Good Friday Easter Powersports Show and Shine

REGIONAL MARKETING cont.

Australian Tourism Exchange 2025

MRT attended the 2025 Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE) in Brisbane.

ATE brought together Australian tourism business operators who had the opportunity to meet with international distribution partners. In total, 800 International buyers were present and keen to learn of the offerings of Australia to include in their 2025/2026/2027 programs.

Over the four-day period MRT conducted 92 face-to-face appointments, with additional opportunities to connect with other international buyers through the activity and networking hubs.

We were pleased to note that many buyers were aware of The Murray region and offered us the opportunity to further highlight the many attributes of the region promoting our International ready product.

Visit Victoria – Product Update

Murray Regional Tourism was invited to deliver a new product briefing to 34 key Visit Victoria staff in Melbourne. These stakeholder updates are vital for the region, ensuring our state tourism organisation remains up to date with the latest opportunities and new developments across the Murray.

We welcomed three operators to showcase significant new tourism products that will drive year-round demand and strengthen the visitor economy:

- Murray River Paddlesteamers (Craig Burgess and Natalie Freeman) shared details of PS Australian Star, a brand-new paddlesteamer launching later this year, offering multi-day cruises along the Murray River from Echuca.
- Mildura Rural City Council (Sara Wrate) highlighted the 'Trail of Lights' and 'FOSO' installations by renowned artist Bruce Munro—now open at Lock Island, Mildura, with a Wentworth opening scheduled for late 2025.
- 1834 Hotels (Rebecca Ward) presented the revitalisation of the Kar-Rama Hotel, now open in Mildura, adding quality stock to support increased length of stay.

Together, these projects reinforce the Murray's competitive positioning, broaden our premium experiences, and help disperse visitor spend across the region.



REGIONAL MARKETING cont.

Media Familiarisations

During the course of the year and in partnership with Visit Victoria and Destination NSW, we welcomed a number of journalists and influencer familiarisations into the region.

These included:-

- Ricky French / Weekend Australian – promoting Elevate Luxury Houseboat, Mildura, All Seasons Houseboats accessible friendly houseboat with glass lift.
- Influencer Lola Hubner who visited various locations across Wentworth, Mildura and Swan Hill.
- JT Travels / Weekend Sunrise promoted Lake Mulwala through their weather crosses.
- Destination NSW 'Boutique Breaks' famil program featuring Moira Station, The Junction, Morrisons Winery and The Timbercutter, tasting at Corowa Distilling Co, and Deni Ute Muster.
- Destination NSW hosted a Business Events NSW Famil for three business event buyers; showcasing conference venues and experiences across Albury and surrounds.

Articles published included

Escape magazine: I found the best Aussie Getaway at Echuca Moama on the Murray River.

Timeout Sydney: The mighty Murray River has been named on the National Geographic's Best of the World 2025 list.

Conde Nast Traveller (USA): The Best Places to Go in Australia, New Zealand & the South Pacific in 2025 featuring the Murray River, Silo Art Trail, PS Australian Star, Restdown Wines, St Anne's Winery and Albury Airport.

TripZilla: Exploring a difference side of Australia: Aboriginal experiences you didn't know about featuring the Murray River, Wagirra Trail and Yindyamarra Sculpture Walk.

Continuation of Digital Agencies

To meet the growing demand for high-quality digital content and strengthen our content strategy, MRT engaged a specialist digital content agency to capture fresh imagery and video across the region. This initiative aligns with the strategic direction of state tourism organisations and broader industry trends, supporting the continued growth of our digital platforms.

The project aims to fill existing content gaps and expand our marketing asset library with up-to-date visuals that revitalise campaigns and strengthen promotion of the Murray region. Social-media specific shoots were completed in Holbrook, Albury Wodonga, Corowa, Howlong, Yarrawonga Mulwala, Echuca Moama, Mildura and Wentworth. In partnership with BIG4, MRT obtained high-quality video and imagery from four BIG4 Holiday Parks and their surrounding destinations, generating valuable new assets from Red Cliffs, Swan Hill, Kerang and Deniliquin.

A digital marketing agency was onboarded to support our team by managing all paid digital marketing activities, including ongoing campaigns across Meta and Google platforms. This allows us to focus on organic growth while ensuring a strong and consistent paid media presence.

These combined efforts helped to drive, campaigns, and activations across our consumer social and web platforms, elevating the Murray's online presence and driving direct booking links to consumers.

Through data-driven strategies and optimised digital campaigns, we have enhanced our ability to reach target audiences and position the Murray as a premier destination.



REGIONAL MARKETING cont.

Digital Asset Management

In line with our strategic objective to support the growth of the visitor economy across the Murray region, MRT provide a free Digital Asset Management (DAM) platform, which aligns with our commitment in the 2024-2027 Strategic Plan to enhance marketing collaboration and support local tourism efforts. We regularly encourage all local government partners to upload their high-resolution imagery to the platform.

Key benefits of the platform include:

- **Increased visibility:** Regular access by journalists and tourism operators helps extend the reach of the region's stories and imagery.
- **Controlled image usage:** Any images flagged for approval require authorisation, ensuring appropriate use.
- **Streamlined promotion:** Centralised assets can be seamlessly integrated across EDMs, social media, blogs and print media.

This platform supports the broader strategic goal of driving demand and regional promotion, while enabling efficient management and use of regional assets.



INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

Highlights



6

Industry Training
& Development
Programs Delivered



132

Participation
in Industry &
Development
Training Programs



3

Number of Toolkits
Developed from
Training Programs
and now available
to all operators



6

Tourism Manager
Forums Delivered



21

Letters of Support



1,337

Industry Newsletter
Subscribers



14

Industry Newsletters
published



527

Unique Opens (Avg)



73

Unique Clicks (Avg)



633 Opens

169 Clicks

Top Performing
Article
"Victorian Short
Stay Levy"

Goal

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

Strategic Priorities

- Facilitate tourism education programs to address identified gaps and develop capability and competitiveness of our regions industry.
- Facilitate where appropriate implementation of the Murray Visitor Engagement Strategy recommendations.



INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT cont.

Regional Tourism Industry Strengthening Programs

Murray Regional Tourism offered a range of free training courses to Industry during this financial period.

Tourism Resilience Mindset (Darren Fleming)

This program empowered local operators to shift from reactive problem-solving to resilient, strategic leadership. With practical tools focused on mindset, decision-making, and emotional control, participants gained the skills to lead with confidence during periods of disruption and uncertainty.



AI for Tourism & Hospitality (John Hall)

Through a hands-on six-week series, participants learnt how to use AI tools to streamline content creation, automate guest communications, and enhance digital marketing. The program broke down complex technology into easy, practical applications tailored for tourism SMEs.

Accommodation & Revenue Management (Tamie Matthews, RevenYou)

Targeting accommodation providers, this program taught participants to apply dynamic pricing strategies, understand booking behaviour, and make informed decisions using KPIs—resulting in stronger profitability and better market targeting.



Business By Design Program (Chris Green)

The program is designed for business owners who feel overwhelmed, stuck in operational tasks, and are struggling to grow their business. It aimed to help training participants strategically plan, implement growth, and create a business that serves them.



INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT cont.

Investment Attraction and Grant Funding Support

It is important that our industry and Council partners are supported with their applications to the highly competitive funds offered by both State and Federal Government. The support provided by MRT ensures the ongoing growth of the visitor economy, strengthening the region's position as a premier tourism destination.

MRT supported a large number of applications into several vital investment and grant funding programs aimed at enhancing the region's tourism infrastructure, events, and community development.

These included:-

- Regional Tourism Investment Fund, which supports tourism infrastructure projects that stimulate economic growth and create jobs
- Regional Events Fund, which helps attract and develop regional events showcasing the Murray's unique culture and natural assets, driving increased visitation and economic benefits.
- Growing Regions Program, which funds community infrastructure projects that improve regional liveability and enhance the visitor experience.

Murray Food and Drink Showcase

The Murray Food and Drink Showcase was a pilot program funded by Agriculture Victoria and delivered in collaboration with Moira and Campaspe Shires, showcasing the region's food and drink sector. MRT supported these councils in securing the necessary funding.



INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT cont.

2024 / 2025 Tourism Manager Forums

During the course of this financial year there have been 6 Tourism Manager Forums delivered online and in person. These forums provided an ideal opportunity to present Local Government partners' Tourism Managers with marketing updates, MRT project updates, Industry training programs and quarterly visitor data.

Keynote Speakers were an integral part of these forums. These Tourism Manager Forums provided an opportunity for Councils to share new products and events with MRT to ensure greater collaboration on marketing and PR content. In person forums also allow the opportunity for the host destination to showcase their region with a planned tour.

Key speakers who presented at this years Forums included:

- Karen Oliver from KO Tourism who hosted an Experience Development Workshop.
- Monique George and Luke Murphy (Visit Victoria) who discussed funding opportunities and best practices for applications.
- Sarah Hope who provided updates on Destination Riverina Murray projects and campaigns and Destination NSW activities.
- Matt Morgan - Tract Consultants who provided an insightful overview of the Murray River Adventure Trail project.



Visitor Information Centre Reference Group Network

Our Visitor Information Centre Reference Group Network focuses on collaborative approaches to visitor servicing across the region, with updates from key stakeholders. It was great to see our partners at the Visitor Servicing Summit in Ballarat.

Tourism Awards

We celebrated with finalists and winners at both the NSW and Victorian Tourism Awards. These prestigious events were held at The Star Sydney and The Crown Melbourne, respectively.

Victorian Tourism Awards Winner:

- All Seasons Houseboats, Mildura
- Unique Accommodation - **GOLD**

NSW Tourism Award Winners:

- Strawberry Fields Festival, Tocomwal
- Major Festivals & Events - **SILVER**
- Sporties Barooga
- Tourist Attractions - **BRONZE**
- Albury Visitor Information Centre
- Visitor Information Services - **BRONZE**
- Tocomwal Chocolate School
- Excellence in Food Tourism - **BRONZE**



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 Murray River Adventure Trail.

The Murray River Adventure Trail

The Murray River Adventure Trail (MRAT) development will create an iconic nature based experience and deliver a multi model 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 by 2040.

Parks Victoria, MRT, Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions, and other partners including Traditional Owners, 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 MRAT.

The Murray River is one of the most dominant features of the landscape in south-east Australia and a key tourist destination. The region includes exceptional natural environments and significant Aboriginal Cultural Heritage.

When fully complete, MRAT will be a series of connected walking, cycling and paddling trails all the way from Lake Hume in the east, near Albury/Wodonga, to Mildura/Wentworth in the west.

A key objective of the MRAT 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.



PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT cont.

MRAT - Stage 1 trail development

Parks Victoria is leading the planning and delivery of Stage One of the project, which stretches from Barmah National Park to Koondrook. It will pass through Echuca, Murray River Reserve, Gunbower National Park and Lower Goulburn National Park.

Proposed features for Stage One include:

- A multi-day on-water experience with new canoe and kayak launches
- Dedicated bookable campsites for multi-day experiences
- New and upgraded walking and cycling tracks

Assessments and fieldwork required for all aspects of the project from Barmah National Park to Koondrook are now complete. This work highlighted that there are extensive approvals required, from both Victorian and NSW authorities as part of the project delivery.

Targeted First works will include:

- Upgrading the Barmah Day Visitor area, including adding a new pontoon
- Upgrading The Gulf Campground upstream of Picnic Point
- Improving the quality of River Track between Barmah Lakes and Barmah township.

Construction is due to be fully complete by mid-2026.

MRAT Stages 2 & 3 – Concept Design

The Concept Design report for Stages 2 & 3 of MRAT has been undertaken by MRT, 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 westward from Koondrook/Barham to Mildura/Wentworth, (Stage 2) and eastward from Barmah National Park to Albury/Wodonga and Lake Hume (Stage 3) 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 MRAT. 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.

The Stage 2 & 3 Concept Design Report, supported by the Business Case and Cost Plan are critical documents providing a foundation that will support future stages beyond the scope of this phase, including the detailed design and further development of the trail.



PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT cont.

Destination Riverina Murray Partnership

MRT continue to deliver programs with our NSW funding partner, Destination Riverina Murray. Our partnership agreement for 2024-25 was to deliver two distinct product development programs. These programs are delivered to assist and develop the tourism industry, providing clear outcomes to further enhance their products and thereby grow the industry sector.

Murray Tourism PR Accelerator

In partnership with DRM, MRT delivered the Murray Tourism PR Accelerator, a new capability building initiative designed to help tourism operators and event organisers strengthen their media presence, tell compelling stories and attract more visitors to the Murray region.

Delivered by regional PR specialists Georgie Robertson and Liz Nable from The Regional PR & Co, the program combined in-person workshops with one-on-one mentoring. Seventy businesses attended workshops held in Albury, Yarrawonga, Moama and Euston, building skills in media engagement, digital PR and strategic communication to boost destination visibility and business growth.

Nine businesses progressed to the mentoring stage, receiving tailored one-on-one support from Georgie Robertson to refine their storytelling, develop media strategies and confidently engage with journalists.

Outcomes:

- Increased media capability across participating businesses.
- Practical tools and confidence to pitch stories and engage with media.
- Stronger connections between operators, events and regional PR networks.

The Murray Tourism PR Accelerator has created a stronger media-ready tourism sector for the region. By combining group learning with personalised mentoring, the program has delivered practical skills, increased confidence and a pipeline of compelling local stories ready to be shared with audiences across Australia.



PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT cont.

First Nations Tourism Operators – Content Creation

In partnership with Gidgee Media, Murray Regional Tourism and Destination Riverina Murray delivered high quality, Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) compliant marketing assets for four First Nations tourism operators: Bullanginya Dreaming, Dharnya Centre / Kingfisher Cruises, Wiradjuri Storytellers, and Mungo National Park / Discovery Tours. Filming and photography were completed March to June 2025, with final images, videos, metadata and universal usage rights delivered to MRT in June. Assets are distribution-ready for use across MRT, DRM, DNSW, Visit Victoria, LGAs, ATDW and the ATE 2025 Product Manual.

Outcomes:

- Five complete content packages: long form video, 15–30 sec social clips, and a suite of professional images per operator.
- Cultural protocols and ICIP processes were upheld, with signed approvals for all participants.
- Metadata and captions aligned to DNSW standards for seamless integration into marketing platforms.
- Strengthened relationships and capacity building support for operators, including guidance for future asset use.

This project demonstrated the value of strong collaboration between MRT, DRM, Gidgee Media and the participating operators. By combining cultural integrity with professional production standards, the partnership has produced a diverse suite of images and videos that both celebrate the unique stories of each operator and enhance the region's overall tourism appeal. These assets will inspire visitation, strengthen marketing campaigns, and ensure First Nations voices remain central in promoting the Murray region.



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 tourism ecosystem.

MRT 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.

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

Highlights



9

Murray Regional
Tourism Board
Meetings



13

Partnerships with
Local Government
Agencies Secured



2023-2024

Annual General
Meeting Completed



Audit & Risk
Committee



Finance &
Compliance
Committee



Visitor Economy
Partnership
in Place



2024/2027

Strategic
Plan being
implemented



Strategic
Marketing Review
Undertaken



Strengthened
Relationships
With Key Partners
and External
Stakeholders

PHOTO CREDITS

Murray Regional Tourism

Wentworth Shire - Vision House
Photography & B.Seen Social

Visit Albury Wodonga

Campaspe Shire

Mildura Rural City Council

Berrigan Shire

Moira Shire

Federation Shire

Gannawarra Shire

Swan Hill City Council

Edward River Council

Greater Hume Shire

Murray River Council

Trail of Lights - Serena Munro



