

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 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.



L1 302-304 Barkly St, Brunswick VIC 3056 +61 3 9482 3888 urbanenterprise.com.au

AUTHORS

Mike Ruzzene Agathy Patsouris Julia Cretan Alana Grollo

DISCLAIMER

Neither Urban Enterprise Pty. Ltd, Murray River Region Tourism Ltd or Destination Riverina Murray, nor any member or employee of Urban Enterprise Pty. Ltd, Murray River Region Tourism Ltd or Destination Riverina Murray, takes responsibility in any way whatsoever to any person or organisation (other than that for which this report has been prepared) in respect of the information set out in this report, including any errors or omissions therein. In the course of our preparation of this report, projections have been prepared on the basis of assumptions and methodology which have been described in the report. It is possible that some of the assumptions underlying the projections may change. Nevertheless, the professional judgement of the members and employees of Urban Enterprise Pty. Ltd., Murray River Region Tourism Ltd., and Destination Riverina Murray have been applied in making these assumptions, such that they constitute an understandable basis for estimates and projections. Beyond this, to the extent that the assumptions do not materialise, the estimates and projections of achievable results may vary.

COPYRIGHT

© Copyright, Urban Enterprise Pty. Ltd, Murray River Region Tourism Ltd. and Destination Riverina Murray, 2022.

This work is copyright. Apart from any uses permitted under Copyright Act 1963, no part may be reproduced without written permission of Urban Enterprise Pty. Ltd, Murray River Region Tourism Ltd. or Destination Riverina Murray.

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
1. COROWA-RUTHERGLEN LOCAL AREA PLAN	3
1.1. THIS PROJECT	3
2. DESTINATION SNAPSHOT	5
2.1. VISITOR ECONOMY	5
2.2. TARGET MARKETS	7
2.3. AWARENESS	8
2.4. MURRAY REGION PRODUCT STRENGTHS AND MARKET ASSOCIATIONS	9
2.5. DESTINATION STRENGTHS AND UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITION	10
2.6. GOVERNANCE	11
3. CONSIDERATIONS FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT	14
4. RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN	16
4.1. PRODUCT, EXPERIENCE AND EVENTS	17
4.2. INFRASTRUCTURE AND PLANNING	20
4.3. BRAND, MARKETING AND VISITOR SERVICING	22
4.4. INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND WORKFORCE	24
APPENDICES	26
APPENDIX A DOCUMENTS REVIEWED	26
FIGURES	
F1. STUDY AREA	3
F2. VISITOR ECONOMY OVERVIEW	6
F3. CONSUMER AWARENESS OF MURRAY REGION NATURE-BASED ASSETS	8
F4. MURRAY REGION PRODUCT STRENGTHS F5. PERCEPTION OF THE MURRAY REGION	9
F3. PERGEPTION OF THE MIGHNAT REGION	9
TABLES	
T1. TARGET MARKET OVERVIEW	7
T2. AWARENESS OF DESTINATIONS IN THE MURRAY	8
T3. GOVERNANCE OVERVIEW	11
T4. CONSIDERATIONS FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT	14
T5. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	17
T6. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	20
T7. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	22
T8. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	24

ACRONYMS

DMP Destination Management Plan

DN Destination Networks

DRNSW Department of Regional NSW
DRM Destination Riverina Murray
GMW Goulburn Murray Water

LAP Local Area Plan

LGA Local Government Area

MDBA Murray-Darling Basin Authority

MRAT Murray River Adventure Trail

MRT Murray Regional Tourism

NPWS NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services

NVS National Visitor Survey
PTV Public Transport Victoria

RDV Regional Development Victoria
TRA Tourism Research Australia
VFR Visiting Friends and Relatives

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Daytrip Visitor Those who travel for a round trip distance of at least 50

kilometres, are away from home for at least 4 hours, and who do not spend a night away from home as part of their travel. Same day travel as part of overnight travel is excluded.

Overnight Visitor People aged 15 years and over who undertake an overnight trip

of one night or more and at least 40 kilometres away from home are referred to as overnight visitors. Only those trips where the respondent is away from home for less than 12

months are in scope of the NVS.

International Visitor A person is defined as an international visitor to Australia if

they are currently a resident overseas, have been in Australia

less than one year and are aged 15 years or over.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

Murray Regional Tourism and Destination Riverina Murray have prepared Local Area Plans for 10 of the Murray region's prominent destinations.

The Local Area Plans are strategic documents that capture local aspirations and directions at a high-level to inform the Murray Region Destination Management Plan 2023-27 (available for download here) and NSW Riverina Murray Destination Management Plan 2023-30. This has ensured local needs and priorities have been captured across both Destination Management Plans.

The Local Area Plans provide the framework for local stakeholders to work collaboratively and in partnership with Murray Regional Tourism and Destination Riverina Murray towards strengthening the regional visitor economy.

This Plan has been prepared for the destination of Corowa-Rutherglen. This includes the destinations in proximity, as described in Section 1.

ANNUAL VISITOR ECONOMY SNAPSHOT

552K

\$28M

Visitors

Spend

UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITION WITHIN THE MURRAY REGION

Wineries and distilleries are the hero experiences and unique selling proposition for Corowa-Rutherglen. The amenity of Corowa's heritage backdrop, in combination with the Rutherglen Wine Region and Corowa Distilling Co, is unique to this destination.



RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR THIS DESTINATION

A range of recommended actions have been identified through consultation with industry and local government stakeholders during the Local Area Plan workshops, assessment of existing local documents and strategies, and in response to visitor economy needs and opportunities for the destination.

These actions are a guide only. It is the role of stakeholders to further investigate the viability and opportunity of each project.

The table below provides a summary of the recommended actions.

Product, Experience and Events	Infrastructure and Planning	Branding, Marketing and Visitor Servicing	Industry Development and Workforce
 Corowa Whisky Cruising Experience Investment Family Activities and Attractions First Nations Experience Food, Drink and Entertainment Activation Rolling Program of Signature Events Rutherglen Silo Precinct Rutherglen Wine Bottle Short Walks with a Story, Rutherglen Trail Links Agri-Tourism Experiences Federation Public Art Trail Federation Museum Urana Lake Master Plan and Business Plan Accommodation Investment Opportunities Murray River Adventure Trail 	 Corowa Streetscape Water Access Infrastructure Shuttle Bus Access and Transport Advocacy Infrastructure Servicing Nature-Based Activation Rutherglen Revitalisation Project Advocacy to Address Housing Crisis 	 Bookable Product and Packaging Cross-Border Collaboration and Promotion Rutherglen Visitor Centre "Muscat Capital of the World" Wine Brand and Destination Brand Project Visitor Information Review and Delivery Murray Region Local Ambassador Project 	 Governance Regional Workforce Pathways and Promotion Program Skills Development Plan Digital Literacy for Operators Indigenous Collaboration Networking and Capacity Building Temporary Workforce Accommodation Weekend Trading

1. COROWA-RUTHERGLEN LOCAL AREA PLAN

1.1. THIS PROJECT

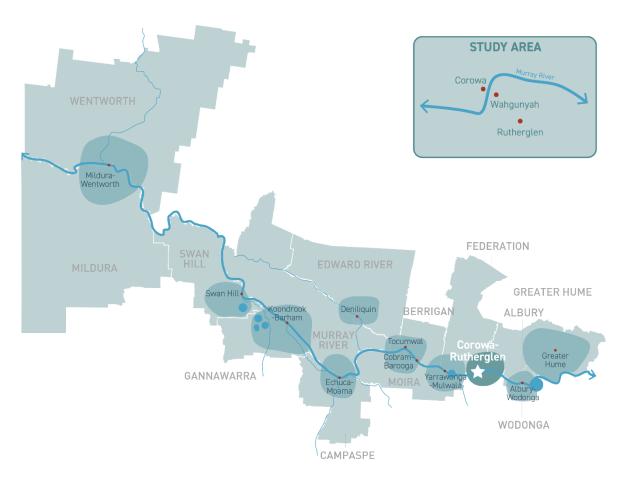
Murray Regional Tourism (MRT) and Destination Riverina Murray (DRM) have prepared Local Area Plans (Plan) for 10 of the Murray region's prominent destinations, as shown in the map below.

These are strategic documents that capture local aspirations and directions at a high-level to inform the Murray Region Destination Management Plan (DMP) 2023-27 and the NSW Riverina Murray Destination Management Plan 2023-30. This has ensured local needs and priorities have been captured across both DMPs.

The Local Area Plans provide the framework for local stakeholders to work collaboratively and in partnership with MRT and DRM towards strengthening the regional visitor economy.

This Plan has been prepared for the destination of Corowa-Rutherglen. This includes the destinations in proximity, as shown in the map below, and does not encompass all towns within the relevant Local Government Areas (LGAs).

F1. STUDY AREA



This project has been funded by the Murray Regional Tourism Board, Destination Riverina Murray, Victorian State Government and Destination NSW.

PURPOSE AND INTENDED USE OF THE LOCAL AREA PLANS

The Local Area Plans are a partnership between MRT, DRM, Local Government, and industry stakeholders.

The purpose of these Plans is to respond to visitor economy needs and opportunities for key Murray region destinations, through a range of recommended actions and suggested next steps. It is intended that stakeholders will collaborate to further define the project specifics and drive the outcomes, in line with local priorities and resourcing.

The Plans are intended to be a reference document and a tool for local stakeholders and partners to collaborate at the destination level. The Plans do not replace local tourism plans and internal council plans.

METHOD

An overview of the project method is shown adjacent.

This Plan has been informed by engagement with local visitor economy stakeholders, review of existing local documentation, and destination research using Tourism Research Australia (TRA) and market research undertaken for the Murray region.

A full-day workshop was undertaken with key stakeholders from industry, local government and other agencies as relevant to the destination. The purpose of the workshop was to identify local issues and opportunities, identify the unique selling proposition for the destination, and develop ideas and solutions for the visitor economy.

This process has ensured the Plan is grounded in local needs and aspirations for the destination.



Context

Review of state, regional and local research, strategics and plans.

A full list of documents reviewed can be found in Appendix A.



Destination Snapshot

Review of visitation data, key products and experiences, market research and target markets.



Key Stakeholder Workshop

1 workshop with 17 operators and government stakeholders.



Project Identification and Prioritisation

Development of projects unique for this destination.

2. DESTINATION SNAPSHOT

2.1. VISITOR ECONOMY

This section provides a snapshot of the Corowa-Rutherglen visitor profile, drawing on data from Tourism Research Australia (TRA), the widely accepted Australian Government data source tracking visitation across Australia.

A profile of existing domestic daytrip and overnight visitation has been provided for the 2019 calendar year¹, in order to reflect a business-as-usual scenario prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data has been provided for the Federation Local Government Area, due to sampling constraints that prevent further fine-grain analysis and for Rutherglen specifically, due to existing reporting available through the Rutherglen Destination Management Plan.

OVERVIEW

This destination attracts an average of 552,000 visitors per annum, including approximately 260,000 visitors to Rutherglen² and 292,000 to Federation Council. Visitation to Federation Council accounts for 5% of total visitation to the Murray region.

Visitation to this destination is primarily driven by daytrip visitors (64%), who spend approximately \$28 million in the region. Daytrip visitors to both Federation and Rutherglen are relatively low yielding (\$75 and \$83 per person, respectively) when compared to the average for the Murray region (\$138 per person).

Although accounting for a smaller proportion of total visitation, overnight visitors generate greater expenditure than daytrip visitors (\$78 million). Visitors to Federation spend on average \$376 per trip, lower than the average spend per visitor to Rutherglen (\$402 per person).

DOMESTIC VISITOR PROFILE

A high proportion of visitors to Corowa-Rutherglen are holiday and leisure travellers, largely owing to the Rutherglen wine region.

The visiting friends and relatives (VFR) market is strong across both overnight and daytrip markets, highlighting the opportunity to educate locals to ensure they are accurately and adequately promoting the region and its assets to their visiting friends and relatives.

The majority of visitors to this region travel from Victoria, with a smaller proportion travelling from New South Wales.

Visitors engage in a variety of activities when visiting this destination, primarily dining out at restaurants and cafes, visiting pubs and clubs, sightseeing and visiting wineries.

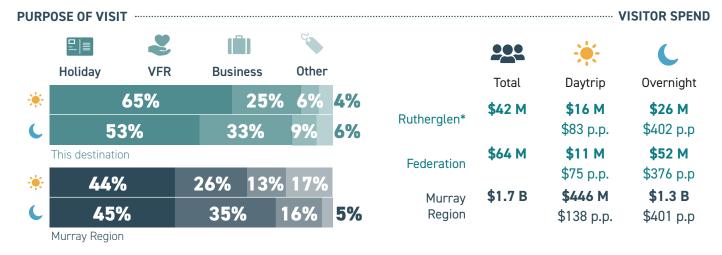
Passive activities, including VFR and general sightseeing are generally low yielding and contribute to the overall low visitor spend in the destination.

¹ Source: TRA. Visitor numbers, TRA, 2019, based on 2017-19 3 year average. Average spend per visitor, TRA LGA Profile, 2019, based on 2016-19 4 year average. Total spend, calculated by Urban Enterprise, average spend applied to visitor numbers.

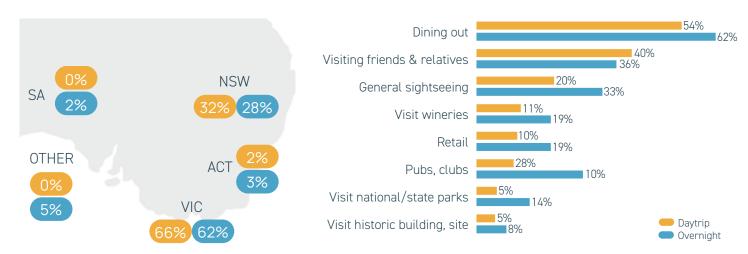
² Rutherglen Destination Management Plan, 2022-2027

VISITOR ECONOMY OVERVIEW This destination **COROWA-RUTHERGLEN** Murray Region Based on Tourism Research Australia (TRA) data for Federation Council and Indigo Shire, which form this destination, unless stated otherwise. **RUTHERGLEN*** 260K **Visitors** MURRAY RIVER FEDERATION 291K \$64M **Visitors** Spend Rutherglen

DOMESTIC VISITOR PROFILE







Source: Tourism Research Australia (TRA). Visitor numbers, TRA, 2019, based on 2017-19 3 year average. Average spend per visitor, TRA LGA Profile, 2019, based on 2016-19 4 year average. Total spend, calculated by Urban Enterprise, average spend applied to visitor numbers.

2.2. TARGET MARKETS

The Murray region has a market of 5.1 million Australians. This represents past and potential visitors to the region, as identified through representative market research undertaken of 2,000 Australian residents.

These are visitors that travel regularly to regional Australia (at least once every two years pre-COVID) and are highly likely to book a future trip to the Murray region.

Segmentation of the Australian market for the Murray region is shown below, which helps to identify the current and target markets for this destination, to provide a focus for investment and marketing.

Each market's alignment with this destination has been determined below.

T1. TARGET MARKET OVERVIEW

Proportion of Murray Region Target Market and Market Size **Murray Habituals Back to Basics Road Trip Explorer** and **Luxury Travellers** 38% Discoverer 35% 8% 10% 1.93 Million 0.43 Million 0.40 Million 1.78 Million 0.52 Million The simple traveller, Inspired by the Socially conscious With a holiday The traditional Murray the free spirit freedom of a road and adventurous mindset of visitor who travels to escaping to nature to trip, this market travellers, open to indulgence, the luxury the Murray at least travelling to new traveller seeks press pause on real wants to explore the once every two years life, spend time with country, see new destinations and relaxation achieved - the Murray's biggest loved ones, and hit destinations and seeking new, unique through high quality advocate. experiences. reset. escape the city. experiences. Strength of Market Alignment to Corowa-Rutherglen and Reason for Target **Moderate** Strong Weak **Strong Strong** The largest Critical market Travel for longer Self-sufficient High overlap in market segment, opportunity to periods than other travellers who characteristics predominately grow visitor yield segments typically self-cater with Murray Millennials, not yet and support opportunity to and stay in Habituals, but fully captured by investment in increase yield and holiday homes, don't regularly the Murray region. more boutique length of stay. caravan parks or visit or have a Young and open offerings. Most likely to free camping. strong allegiance to new Attracted to food travel midweek Stay for long trips to the region. experiences, most and wine, so and off peak -Seek a relaxing during peak likely to engage in growth in this assist in reducing periods. nature-based a diverse range of sector is an seasonality. Travel in large experience away experiences. opportunity to Opportunity for groups, typically from the hustle Want to pack their support local dispersal across family groups, and bustle of trip with activities producers. the region as open friend groups or town. and experiences -A shift in the to exploring all the multi-generational Camping and a key opportunity perception of Murray region's

destinations.

Source: Murray Region Market Research, Urban Enterprise, 2022.

caravanning.

family groups.

Murray region

destinations.

to increase visitor

yield.

2.3. AWARENESS

The following section demonstrates the awareness and reputation of the Murray River and its surrounding regions through consumer research of a representative sample of 2,000 Australians, undertaken in 2022.

Awareness

A high proportion of the Australian market have never heard of Corowa-Wahgunyah or Rutherglen (50% and 47% respectively). Less than a quarter of the Australian market have heard of these destinations and have interest in visiting. This reflects a lack of brand awareness and cut-through in marketing activities, as well as a lack of products and experience to motivate visitation.

There is major potential to grow awareness of Corowa-Wahgunyah and Rutherglen and grow motivation to visit.

T2. AWARENESS OF DESTINATIONS IN THE MURRAY

Destination	I have heard the name and have interest in visiting	I have never heard of this place
Albury Wodonga	29%	23%
Cobram- Barooga	28%	43%
Cohuna	21%	55%
Corowa- Wahgunyah	23%	50%
Deniliquin	26%	39%
Echuca-Moama	26%	35%
Holbrook	23%	49%
Koondrook- Barham	19%	60%
Mildura	38%	12%
Rutherglen	24%	47%
Swan Hill	36%	22%
Tocumwal	19%	55%
Wentworth	31%	33%
Yarrawonga- Mulwala	23%	47%

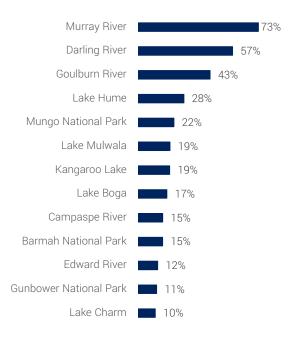
Source: Murray Region Market Research by Urban Enterprise, 2022.

Amongst Murray region nature-based assets, the Murray River has the highest levels of awareness within the Australian market (73%). This highlights the importance of connection to the Murray River to strengthen destination awareness and association.

However, the Murray River is a key feature of all destinations across the Murray region, therefore destinations cannot rely on the river as a point of difference. Destinations must develop hero products and experiences to differentiate themselves from the rest of the Murray region.

Activation of key nearby assets such as Lake Moodemere will be important to creating a nature-based experience for the destination, as well as developing and promoting linkages to nearby Lake Mulwala.

F3. CONSUMER AWARENESS OF MURRAY REGION
NATURE-BASED ASSETS



Source: Murray Region Market Research by Urban Enterprise, 2022.

2.4. MURRAY REGION PRODUCT STRENGTHS AND MARKET ASSOCIATIONS

Murray Region Product Strengths

A number of regional product strengths within the Murray region were identified in the 2018 Murray Region DMP. These have been highlighted in the below figure.

The Murray River is the key strength of the Murray region. With this, a number of products and experiences have been developed to capitalise on this natural asset, including camping, bushwalking, water sports, fishing and river cruising and houseboating.

F4. MURRAY REGION PRODUCT STRENGTHS

Primary Strengths	Secondary Strengths
Water Sports	Nature based
Food, Wine and Produce	Business Events
Fishing	
Houseboats/River	Emerging Strengths
Houseboats/River Cruise Golf	Indigenous
Cruise	

Source: Murray Region Destination Management Plan, 2018.

What is the Murray Known for?

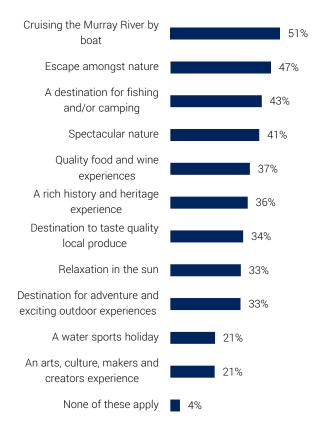
Nature-based attractions and experiences are at the core of what the Australian market perceives to be the "Murray experience".

The below figure shows that the broader Australian market expects to cruise the Murray River by boat (51%), escape to nature (47%) and fish or camp (43%) when visiting the Murray region.

The broader Australian market lacks understanding of the breadth of products and experiences currently offered in the Murray region, as indicated by comparatively low perception of the Murray as a destination for quality food and wine experiences (37%) and quality local produce (37%).

Nature based experiences are a secondary strength of Corowa-Rutherglen, and there is opportunity for further investment and development of nature based experiences and cruising.

F5. PERCEPTION OF THE MURRAY REGION



Source: Murray Region Market Research by Urban Enterprise, 2022.

2.5. DESTINATION STRENGTHS AND UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITION

Product Strengths and Potential Hero Experiences for this Destination

Corowa-Rutherglen has long been a popular destination, however there is opportunity to continue to develop products and experiences of the destination to encourage visit, lengthen stays and increase visitor yield.

Strengths of Corowa-Rutherglen include:

- Corowa and Rutherglen are established destinations for visiting wineries and distilleries, including Corowa Distilling Co., with Rutherglen known as the Topaque and Muscat capital of the world.
- Strategic location in close proximity to Albury Wodonga, Yarrawonga-Mulwala and Victoria's High Country.
- Nature-based attractions including the Murray River and its lagoons, as well as Lake Moodemere.
- Emerging strengths in Indigenous tourism.
- Recreation, clubs, golf and gaming in Corowa.

Corowa-Rutherglen Unique Selling Proposition (USP) within the Murray Region

Wineries and distilleries are the hero experiences and unique selling proposition for Corowa-Rutherglen. The amenity of Corowa's heritage backdrop, in combination with the Rutherglen Wine Region and Corowa Distilling Co, is unique to this destination.



How to build on the destination USP?

The USP needs to continue to evolve to meet market expectations, which means there is a need to continue to deliver quality and unique food and accommodation experiences, supported by a strong arts and cultural offer. Opportunities include:

- Develop a vibrant and attractive streetscape, including public activations.
- Deliver quality accommodation to meet the needs of existing and future markets.
- Contemporary and boutique food and wine experiences in Corowa.
- Development of the night time economy.
- Indigenous cultural experiences.

2.6. GOVERNANCE

The table below outlines the governance structure for tourism in this destination and the responsibilities for each of the key organisations.

Local Government plays a crucial role in supporting the visitor economy, particularly in working closely with industry to support product and experience development and industry growth. At present, there is some fragmentation between Councils and local tourism and traders' associations. In order to develop a strong and sustainable destination, collaboration between the bodies needs to be enhanced to work towards a shared vision for the destination.

In particular, further development of the cross border tourism governance between Corowa and Rutherglen will help to strengthen the industry and enhance the destination value proposition for visitors.

T3. GOVERNANCE OVERVIEW

Organisation	Overview	Activities
Destination NSW	Lead government agency for the NSW tourism and major events sectors. Major role in positioning NSW as one of the world's premier tourism events destinations, as well as achieving the NSW Government's goal of tripling visitation expenditure by 2030.	 Destination marketing. Industry support and engagement. Industry training. Product development.
Visit Victoria	Primary tourism and events company for the State Government, involved in research, advocacy and domestic and international marketing. Visit Victoria is a key partner in promotion and strategic planning for the tourism sector. Council should maintain a strong relationship to ensure alignment with Visit Victoria marketing initiatives.	 Destination marketing. Industry support and engagement. Industry training. Product development.
Office of the NSW Cross-Border Commissioner	The Office of the Cross Border Commissioner advocates and represents cross border communities and businesses. The NSW Cross-Border Commissioner works alongside local, state and federal bodies to ensure cross-border communities and businesses are not negatively impacted by two sets of legislations and policies.	Advocacy.Industry support.
Victoria's Cross Border Commissioner	Victoria's Cross Border Commissioner works with residents, businesses and community organisations along Victoria's border to identify and advocate for change. The Cross Border Commissioner also works with the Office of the NSW Cross-Border Commissioner to ensure economic and community benefits for border towns.	Advocacy.Industry support.
Department of Regional NSW	The Department of Regional NSW is a central agency for regional issues, building regional economies and communities, managing the use of regional land, and ensuring that government investment into regional NSW is fair and delivers positive outcomes for local communities and businesses.	 Regional Economic Development Plans. Regional Event funding. Tourism Infrastructure Funding. Regional Investment support. Regional strategic planning.

Organisation Overview Act		activities		
Murray Regional Tourism	The Regional Tourism Board and peak tourism organisation for the Murray region in NSW and Victoria. MRT is the lead cross boarder entity for strategic planning in the Murray region and collaborates with government and industry partners to undertake planning, marketing, product, industry and infrastructure development, and advocacy	 Destination marketing. Industry support and engagement. Product development. Investment attraction and facilitation. 		
Destination Riverina Murray	DRM is one of seven Destination Networks (DNs) established by the NSW state government to represent the visitor economy in regional NSW. Its principal role is to represent and coordinate the growth and development of the NSW Riverina Murray visitor economy.	 Advocacy. Industry training. Product development. Industry support and engagement. Investment attraction and facilitation. 		
Tourism North East	Indigo Shire is within the geographic boundary of the High Country and is represented by Tourism North East as the peak Regional Tourism Board.	 Destination marketing. Industry support and engagement. Product development. Investment attraction and facilitation. 		
Local Government Federation and Indigo Shire Councils	Councils act as enabler for the visitor economy by providing the foundations, including strategic planning, infrastructure, services, assistance in product development, investment attraction, and support to the local industry.	 Visitor services. Destination marketing. Investment attraction/facilitation. Industry training. Product development. 		
Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation (YYNAC)	Established to represent, make decisions and act on any matters of significance to the Yorta Yorta peoples, and to enter into agreements with any person, Government agency or authority in relation to the protections of Yorta Yorta Country. Yorta Yorta Country is an area spanning a large part of northern Victoria and southern New South Wales, centred around the Murray River.	 Advocacy. Land management and protection. Building capability. resources and education for Aboriginal people. 		
Local Aboriginal Land Council (NSW) Albury and District	Local Aboriginal Land Councils represent Aboriginal affairs at a local level and aim to protect the interests and further the aspirations of Aboriginal communities. This includes working for the return of culturally significant and economically viable land, pursuing cultural, social and economic independence for Aboriginal people and preserving Aboriginal land rights.	 Land acquisition. Establishment of commercial enterprises and community benefit schemes. Maintenance and enhancement of Aboriginal culture, identity and heritage. 		

Organisation	Overview	Activities
Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Education (ACHE)	An organisation owned and operated by traditional owners, the Bangerang People. The organisation offers a range of services, including Welcome to Country's, smoking ceremonies, guest speaking, cultural talks and workshops, awareness training and dance groups, in order to preserve, protect and share knowledge and land.	 Connecting people to country, culture and community. Product development. Workshops and training.
Corowa Business Chamber	The peak representative body for businesses in Corowa. The membership-based organisation provides ongoing support to businesses through networking and information sessions, and by regularly advocating for local businesses.	 Advocacy. Professional development. Industry networking and support.
Destination Rutherglen	A local tourism association aimed at delivering events that attract visitation to the region.	Marketing and events.
Winemakers of Rutherglen	A representative body and collective of 18 wineries from the region. The group is responsible for marketing wine tourism, delivering two significant wine and food events, as well as nontourism wine industry functions.	Marketing.Events.Industry networking and support.
Rutherglen Main Street Traders	A collection of businesses from the Rutherglen main street that advocate for improved placemaking, investment and industry development.	Advocacy.Industry networking and support.
Wahgunyah Progress Association	A member-based association aimed at identifying projects to make the town a better place to live and identifying funding sources to implement the projects.	Product development.Investment attraction and facilitation.
Corowa Tourism Advisory Committee (CTAC)	A member-based organisation providing advice and information to Federation Council in relation to tourism activities within Corowa, as well as supporting tourism businesses and activities in the region.	Tourism promotion.Provide support for tourism activities.Advocacy.

3. CONSIDERATIONS FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

The following section examines the challenges and opportunities for this destination, which have been identified through research and engagement with local visitor economy stakeholders, and review of Council documentation.

These considerations have been used to inform the recommended actions for this destination.

T4. CONSIDERATIONS FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Markets

- Corowa and Rutherglen are viewed by visitors as a single destination. Visitors will usually engage with product and experience
 in both towns during their trip and it is common for visitors to stay in Corowa, using it as a 'base' to visit Rutherglen wineries.
- · Visitation is currently driven by multigenerational family travel, retirees and the caravan/camping market.
- Need to attract visitation from a wider range of markets to address seasonal visitation and increase yield.
- Corowa is largely reliant on the Rutherglen winery market to generate visitation and yield.
- Visitation is largely driven by the Melbourne market. There is an opportunity to attract more visitation from large regional cities, including Griffith, Wagga Wagga and Albury Wodonga.
- The existing golf offering presents the opportunity to attract a niche business and events market.
- The region's untouched natural assets have the potential to attract visitation from the nature-based visitor market.

Product, Experience and Events

- Given the rich Aboriginal history in the area, there is opportunity to grow Indigenous and nature-based tourism through guided tours and experiences.
- Opportunity to link the telling of Indigenous and Federation History as a combined tourism experience.
- Activation of the Murray River and surrounding lagoons through houseboats and cruising.
- Establish an arts and cultural offering linked to local artists, to enrich the visitor experience.
- The current retail offering in Corowa primarily services residents and is not well suited to visitors.
- Need for retail and dining businesses to expand opening hours to meet visitor expectations.
- Opportunity to develop agritourism experiences and elevate the existing paddock to plate and grape to glass experiences.
- Lack of dining in Corowa to support the Rutherglen winery market.
- Opportunity to offer a transport service for winery visitors, linking Rutherglen and Corowa.
- Opportunity for collaborative cross-border experience and product development particularly around First Nations experiences/product and Murray River activations.
- Promote the region as a golf destination and package with other product.
- Highly variable water conditions impact the ability of cruise operators to provide experiences in this part of the Murray River.

Accommodation

- Undersupply of accommodation in Rutherglen and Corowa, exacerbated by motel accommodation being used for short-term worker accommodation.
- Free camp areas are a unique selling point for the region.
- Lack of boutique and experiential accommodation to meet contemporary markets.

Infrastructure and Planning

- Need for streetscaping improvements in Corowa, including revitalisation and restoration of art deco buildings.
- Invest in water-based infrastructure such as pontoons, dump points and safe swimming areas, to enable water-based activity.
- · Improve public transport to better link Corowa and Rutherglen, including water-based transport opportunities.
- Strengthen the connection between Rutherglen and Corowa through shared trails.
- Increase commercial zoned land supply in Corowa.
- Undertake precinct planning for Corowa.
- Improve infrastructure such as roads, water and sewer services and digital connectivity to support residents, local industry and visitors.
- Increase utilisation of river front areas through improved river access and investment in amenity such as toilets and RV
 areas.

Brand, Marketing and Visitor Servicing

- Unclear brand/identity for the destination, and confusion of brands (e.g. North of the Murray). Destination name not being
 included in branding contributes to low awareness of Corowa as a destination.
- Rutherglen brand has seen significant investment and is strengthening.
- Opportunity to develop a brand that aligns with target markets, to provide operators and consumers with a clear message. This should include the promotion of hero products or experiences.
- Disconnected governance between the Murray region (Corowa) and Victoria's High Country (Rutherglen) has impeded on the effectiveness of marketing, branding and management activities.
- A need to diversify the products and experiences showcased in marketing activities.
- Promote cross promotion and packaging of products and experiences for visitors.
- Need for operators to have a greater digital presence and to improve online visitor servicing.
- Utilise local ambassadors in marketing activities.

Industry Development and Workforce

- Skilled staff shortages are a barrier to investment and present the risk of brand reputational damage.
- Barriers to workforce attraction include:
 - The distance between Corowa-Rutherglen and major centres (e.g. Albury Wodonga).
 - Shortage of worker housing.
 - Wage increases.
 - Competition between local operators.
- Encourage networking and collaboration between tourism operators.
- Foster a strong business environment and promote sustainable business practices.
- Opportunity to conduct a jobs summit or jobs taskforce to link operators with job seekers.

4. RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN

READING THIS ACTION PLAN

Recommended actions have emerged as a result of consultation with industry and local government stakeholders during the Local Area Plan workshops, an assessment of existing local documents and strategies, and in response to considerations for tourism development.

The following provides a guide for interpreting the Recommended Action Plan.

Recommended Actions

Each of the recommended actions have been identified in response to the key considerations for tourism development in this destination, and aim to address visitor economy needs and opportunities over the next 5 years.

It is the role of key stakeholders to further investigate the viability and opportunity of each project.

Suggested Next Steps

The identified next steps are a suggestion to enable stakeholders to take forward the recommended actions.

The next steps are to be used as a guide, and will be informed by local resourcing and priorities.

Priority

The priority level for each of the recommended actions have been identified by determining their level of importance, logical staging, as well as which actions can be achieved relatively quickly.

The following priority levels have been used:



Key Partners

Key partners have been identified for each of the recommended actions. Current roles and responsibilities of these stakeholders are identified in the Destination Snapshot section of this document.

Key partners include:

- Murray Regional Tourism
- Destination Riverina Murray
- State and Federal Governments and agencies, including:
 - Regional Development Victoria
 - Department of Regional NSW
 - Goulburn Murray Water
 - Murray-Darling Basin Authority
 - Parks Victoria (Parks Vic)
 - NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services
 - VicRoads
 - Transport for NSW
 - Public Transport Victoria
- Local Government Authorities, including:
 - Indigo Shire Council (Indigo SC)
 - Federation Council (Federation C)
- First Nations Group
- Local Learning and Employment Network (LLEN)
- Industry

4.1. PRODUCT, EXPERIENCE AND EVENTS

T5. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Recommended Actions	Suggested Next Steps	Key Partners	Priority
Corowa Whisky Investment in business event development and overall enhancement of the visitor experience.	- Business event development and overall enhancement of the visitor experience.	Industry	Short term
Cruising Experience Investment Refer to the Murray Cruising Strategy for key project opportunities. Specific need include: - Yarrawonga to Corowa Whisky and Wine Multi-day Winery Cruise. - Yarrawonga to Corowa Half Day Winery and Nature Cruise. - Corowa Nature-based Cruise. - Paddle Sports Hubs. - Water taxi service model and feasibility study. - Increased mooring infrastructure in Corowa at Corowa Mooring. - Mooring Infrastructure at wineries in Rutherglen. - Activate Port of Wahgunyah	 Council and stakeholders to facilitate cruising investment. Work with existing cruise operators to elevate offering and address barriers to operation. 	MRT DRM Industry Councils GMW MDBA	Short term
Family Activities and Attractions Investment in a diverse range of family friendly products, including indoor products and experience.	- Promote investment in family friendly activities and experiences.	Industry Councils	Short term
First Nations Experience Building on the cultural strengths of Corowa-Rutherglen, there is opportunity to develop a First Nations experience. This may focus on the Murray River and include nature based and cruising opportunity.	- Work with First Nations peoples to establish a year round cultural experience.	First Nations Groups Councils	Short term
Food, Drink and Entertainment Activation Support attraction of waterfront dining establishments to activate the waterfront and provide contemporary experiences. Opportunities include: - Waterfront dining. - Pop-up food and beverage on waterfront. - Corowa Distillery Expansion Project. - Dining experiences. - New dining experience at All Saints Winery.	 Undertake investment attraction of dining and beverage businesses across the region. Consider incentives and support required to enable businesses to provide new dining experiences. 	Councils Industry	Short term

Recommended Actions	Suggested Next Steps	Key Partners	Priority
Rolling Program of Signature Events The development of a rolling events program for Rutherglen Area is needed to strengthen the brand and attract visitors to the region during off peak periods. This should include at least three new signature events that leverage from the region's strengths. These should be unexpected, contemporary, and provocative events which address the creative deficit and drive brand awareness.	 Develop an events and procurement policy for Indigo Shire. Promote event opportunities. 	Indigo SC Industry	Short term
Rutherglen Silo Precinct Develop the silo precinct into a community-based space that provides a setting for markets, outdoor performances and other emerging artistic events.	 Complete planning and design work. Seek funding to implement. 	Indigo SC	Short term
Rutherglen Wine Bottle Activate the 'Rutherglen Wine Bottle' and lookout area through an immersive light show in the early evenings, helping stimulate the night time economy of Rutherglen – may be linked to the Silo project or Place Plan.	- Council to develop a concept plan and feasibility study.	Indigo SC	Short term
Short Walks with a Story, Rutherglen There are many short walks that are not well promoted or utilised by visitors. Further development of a suite of high amenity short walks should be considered. Improvement to signage and interpretation should also be considered for these short walks which leverage nature based attractions and heritage sites.	 Undertake an audit of short walks. Identify infrastructure improvements. Develop improved information and marketing material. Leverage from regional campaigns of scale under Walk High Country brand. 	Indigo SC	Short- term
 Trail Links Deliver a range of trail links, including: Corowa Mulwala Cycleway (42.9km riverfront trail, linking the towns and connecting to Murray to the Mountains Rail Trail). Corowa – Howlong Trail Connection. Rutherglen Wine Cycling Loop (utilise road easements that pass by Pfeiffers, Bullers, Lake Moodemere, Campbells and returns to Rutherglen). Rail Trail Enhancements, activations and art installations (Rutherglen to Wahgunyah section of the Murray to Mountains Rail Trail). Murray River Adventure Trail – link Wahgunyah with Corowa, Howlong and eventually to Albury Wodonga as part of the broader Murray River Adventure Trial Project. 	 Undertake a feasibility study to identify route options and confirm the preferred loop. Attract funding for delivery. 	Councils Parks Vic NPWS	Short term

Recommended Actions	Suggested Next Steps	Key Partners	Priority
Agri-Tourism Experiences Consider experience opportunities that connect visitors with local producers. Consideration should be given to: Growing farmers market experiences to link producers and consumers an enable their stories to be shared. Host 'meet the maker' and other events in wineries, the visitor centre and outdoor venues.	- MRT to share agri-tourism research and recommendations with industry through further engagement with the sector.	Local producers MRT DRM	Medium term
Federation Public Art Trail Establish a public art trail through the communities within Federation Council and to link with attractions of neighbouring Councils.	 Identify suitable route. Undertake concept plan and feasibility study. 	Federation C	Medium term
Federation Museum A new building for the Federation Museum to complement existing facilities to enhance the tourism product offered by the region and improve facilities available to volunteers and professionals in their role of custodians of the history significant to local, regional and national audiences.	- Undertake concept plan and feasibility study.	Federation Museum Federation C	Long term
Urana Lake Master Plan and Business Plan Development of Master Plan & Business Plan for a key tourism growth asset in Federation Council, with consideration of: Potential commercial development and management of water supply within the Lake. Environmental management requirements. Potential indigenous significance. Infrastructure requirements. Flood mitigation measures.	- Conduct concept plan and feasibility study.	Federation C	Long term
Accommodation Investment Opportunities There are a range of accommodation opportunities and needs for the region (identified through engagement and the Murray Region Accommodation Study). These include: - Large Integrated Resort Accommodation. - Howlong Riverfront Accommodation. - Corowa Ball Park Caravan Park Redevelopment. - Corowa Golf Club Redevelopment. - Corowa Eco Tourist Resort.	 Council should facilitate investment by identifying suitable sites, with consideration of suitable zoning/need for rezoning. Promote the opportunity to a developer and facilitate planning process. 	Industry Councils	Ongoing
Murray River Adventure Trail Investment in the Murray River Adventure Trail is underway across the Murray region. Some stages have been funded, however there is further design and construction work required to deliver on stages 2 and 3 of the trail.	- Work with MRT and relevant stakeholders to develop stage one of the Murray River Adventure Trail.	Councils MRT DRM Parks Vic NPWS	Ongoing

4.2. INFRASTRUCTURE AND PLANNING

T6. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Recommended Actions	Suggested Next Steps	Key Partners	Priority
Corowa Streetscape Corowa's streetscape requires improvement to realise the town's potential as a visitor and lifestyle destination, and to meet the needs and expectations of visitors.	 Develop concept plans aiming to improve the Corowa town centre and facilitate connections between the Murray River, civic buildings and key visitor attractions. Develop modern streetscapes and landscaping consistent with the local brand and the Corowa Waterfront Masterplan. 	Federation C	Short term
Water Access Infrastructure Develop Corowa Riverfront into a hero water-based destination and support the development of commercial cruising through: - Water equipment hire. - Water taxis. - Marinas. - Moorings and safe boat parking. - Safe swimming areas. - Dump points. - Floating pontoons.	 Identify sites for water access and moorings. Undertake discussions with water agencies (GMW, MDBA) to discuss long-term potential for weir/lock to improve regulation of water levels. 	Councils GMW	Short term
Shuttle Bus Establish a shuttle bus which operates between Rutherglen wineries and accommodation operators in Corowa.	- Promote the concept to private sector investors.	Industry Councils	Short term
Access and Transport Advocacy The public transport linkages and road infrastructure for access to Corowa and Rutherglen are poor. This impacts on the ability for workers to travel between towns and if delivered could also strengthen visitation from Yarrawonga-Mulwala and Albury Wodonga.	- Undertake population and visitation modelling to provide a case for public transport links and road upgrades.	PTV VicRoads Transport for NSW Councils	Medium term
Infrastructure Servicing Services infrastructure to allow new development and business investment, including: - Address water pressure constraints for new development Mobile network and coverage / NBN Sewerage and water capacity where required.	- Work with service authorities to deliver required infrastructure.	Service authorities Councils	Medium term

Recommended Actions	Suggested Next Steps	Key Partners	Priority
Nature-Based Activation The Murray River, Lake Moodemere, Lake King require enhancement and improved visitor facilities to encourage recreation and tourism utilisation.	 Improve walking tracks and trails and recreational infrastructure at Lake Moodemere and Lake King. Work with Parks Victoria and DELWP to continually improve the visitor facilities along the Murray River and Lake Moodemere. 	Parks Vic NPWS Councils	Medium term
Rutherglen Revitalisation Project Rutherglen township is at the heart of the Rutherglen wine region and has potential to improve its credentials as a tourism hub. The town centre has poor amenity when compared with Beechworth and Yackandandah townships. Wahgunyah requires investment in visitor amenity related to linkages to key tourism experiences; Murray River (and Adventure Trail), Lake Moodemere, walking and cycling trails and the Murray to Mountains Rail Trail.	 Progress Rutherglen Revitalisation project implementation. Linkage/connectivity Plan for Wahgunyah in the context of trail developments and integrated activation of waterways. 	Indigo SC	Medium term
Advocacy to Address Housing Crisis Continued advocacy to State and Federal Government to address housing crisis.	- MRT and Councils to work with regional stakeholders to quantify housing needs and delivery of programs to meet required demand.	MRT DRM RDV DRNSW Councils	Ongoing

4.3. BRAND, MARKETING AND VISITOR SERVICING

T7. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Recommended Actions	Suggested Next Steps	Key Partners	Priority
Bookable Product and Packaging There are limited online bookable products in Corowa-Rutherglen. This presents an opportunity to increase length of stay and improve visitor experience.	 Develop bookable product and product packages including accommodation and dining packages. 	Industry Councils	Short term
Cross-Border Collaboration and Promotion There is opportunity for more cross-border collaboration and promotion, which will strengthen the value proposition for visitors to the region and ensure both Corowa and Rutherglen can leverage greater visitor yield. Whilst separate brands can still be maintained, there is a need to explore how visitors can experience the region more cohesively and plan to visit the two destinations. This should include consideration of opportunities to leverage MRT cooperative marketing activities.	- Undertake a review of cross border marketing, promotion and branding activities, and identify areas for collaboration and improved cohesion	Councils MRT DRM	Short term
Rutherglen Visitor Centre Develop Rutherglen Visitor Centre as a modern experience-based destination with a focus on experiencing wine and a meeting point for visitors, locals and industry.	- Council to develop a concept plan and feasibility and location study for the proposed centre.	Indigo SC	Short term
 "Muscat Capital of the World" Wine Brand and Destination Brand Project Muscat is unique to Rutherglen and considered one of the finest fortified wines in Australia. Similar to the Prosecco Road branding of the King Valley, Rutherglen should promote its ownership of the Muscat brand. *This should be achieved with recognition of Wine Victoria supported Muscat/Rutherglen initiatives, but should consider: Muscat event. Food matching. Mixology Vs Purists wine bar dedicated to the Muscat experience. 7 generations of Muscat story. Marketing and promotion, digital content. Rutherglen requires a cohesive Destination Brand and a brand development project is require to identify 'what we stand for, and who we are targeting' to inform all product, event and experience development and marketing. 	 Establish a communication protocol to ensure wine brand project work carried out by Winemakers of Rutherglen is supported by Tourism North East and Indigo Shire Council and feeds into Destination Branding work. Establishment of a strategic plan to promote the awareness and branding of Muscat. Implementation plan. Establish a Destination Brand development steering committee to oversee the brand development work, including Winemakers of Rutherglen, Destination Rutherglen, Tourism North East and Indigo Shire Council. 	Indigo SC Local Producers	Medium term

Recommended Actions	Suggested Next Steps	Key Partners	Priority
Visitor Information Review and Delivery Undertake a visitor information and signage review across the two Councils, and prepare a strategy to deliver the following needs as one destination: - Signage (wayfinding and tourism) Gateway enhancements and interventions Visitor information touchpoints throughout the visitor journey.	- Undertake a visitor information services review.	Councils	Medium term
Murray Region Local Ambassador Project MRT to develop a region-wide program to encourage local knowledge of and local pride in the tourism industry. This should include ongoing initiatives that aim to educate local industry and residents about the product offering and events, including notification of new business, events and promotional activities to create engagement. This may include: - Incentive system for residents and industry to engage in tourism offerings and promote through social media. - MRT branded business swap card system to encourage cross-business promotion and visitor information. - Local area tourism industry communication framework.	 MRT to develop and deliver plan. Councils to deliver actions at local level. 	MRT DRM Councils Industry	Ongoing

4.4. INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND WORKFORCE

T8. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Recommended Actions	Suggested Next Steps	Key Partners	Priority
Governance Undertake an industry governance review for the broader region to identify an improved approach for industry collaboration, branding and marketing.	- Deliver governance review.	Councils	Short term
Regional Workforce Pathways and Promotion Program MRT to develop and implement a framework that promotes the attractiveness of the tourism industry and attracts new workforce. The program should be twofold: - Work in the Murray promotion to attract new tourism industry workforce (think Want To Work in Paradise promotion from Tourism Queensland). This should consider non-monetary incentives for new workers to the region. - Development of pathways program to attract and retain staff, including: o Attraction of secondary students. o Communication of clear progression pathways within and between business. o Encouraging use of staff sharing platform to provide consistency of work.	 MRT to develop a regional workforce skills gap analysis and campaigns. MRT to work with local Councils and other stakeholders (jobs boards, LLENs etc) to promote opportunities. 	MRT DRM Councils Secondary schools Higher education Employment networks	Short term and Ongoing
Skills Development Plan Using the outcomes of the regional workforce gap analysis and feedback from industry, collaborate with TAFE's, LLEN's and higher education providers to deliver tailored and location-based industry training solutions.	 Undertake workshop with industry to identify specific skill and training needs. Work with higher education providers to develop courses and course material. 	Councils Industry MRT DRM Higher education TAFEs	Short term and Ongoing
Digital Literacy for Operators Improve the capability of operators to utilise online visitor services, such as online booking services, social media and motivational websites.	- Deliver a digital literacy program for industry.	MRT DRM Councils	Ongoing

Recommended Actions	Sug	ggested Next Steps	Key Partners	Priority
Indigenous Collaboration Develop stronger relationships with Yorta Yorta Nations with the objective of developing First Peoples tourism product that may include signs, interpretation, storytelling or other experiences as Yorta Yorta feel is appropriate.	-	Conduct an annual round table with councils, industry and First Nations group to explore visitor economy opportunities.	First Nations Groups Industry Councils	Ongoing
Networking and Capacity Building Ensure the tourism industry is well-connected and supported through the development of networking opportunities.	-	Host a bi-annual networking event for tourism and hospitality businesses from both Corowa and Rutherglen.	Industry Councils MRT DRM	Ongoing
Temporary Workforce Accommodation Temporary workforce accommodation hub to absorb worker housing which is impacting on visitor accommodation.	-	Investigate the delivery of temporary workforce accommodation in Corowa.	Councils	Ongoing
Weekend Trading There is a need to address the very limited trading hours of businesses within the region, including restaurants, cafes and retail stores. This includes extending businesses hours when major events are occurring in the region.	-	Work with retail and hospitality businesses to encourage longer weekend trading hours during events, as a first step in extending trading hours.	Councils Industry	Ongoing

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

Murray Regional Tourism

- Murray Regional Tourism Annual Report 2019-20
- Murray Regional Tourism Strategic Plan 2021-24
- Murray Region Destination Management Plan 2018-2022
- Murray Region Cruising Strategy 2022
- Murray Region Accommodation Study 2022
- Murray Region Consumer Research 2022
- RDA Murray Strategic Plan 2019
- NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2030
- Riverina Murray Destination Management Plan 2023-30
- Riverina Murray Accommodation Market Assessment 2019

Federation Council

- Federation Council Priority Projects
- Federation Council Economic Development Strategy 2021-25
- Corowa Riverfront Masterplan Report 2010
- Delivery Program and Operational Plan, Federation Council 2021

Indigo Shire Council

- Rutherglen and Surrounds Destination Management Plan 2022-2027
- Indigo Shire Destination Gamechanger 2023 Tourism Strategy
- Active Indigo Recreation Strategy 2018-2026
- Indigo Shire Economic Development Strategy 2018
- Hume Region Significant Tracks and Trails Strategy 2014-2023

Other documents

- North of the Murray 5 Year Destination Marketing Strategy and Implementation Plan 2020-2024
- Yorta Yorta Whole of Country Plan 2021-2030