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Message from the Chair

Tourism is a key driver of the Murray Region economy, vital to the future growth of our Region and depends on us all playing a role by providing high quality and memorable visitor experiences.

The tourism industry continues to be an important economic and employment driver for the Region, contributing \$2.17 billion¹ and generating over 22,390 full time equivalent (FTE) jobs in 2013-2014. Achieving our projected growth of \$2.27 billion by 2020 has the potential to generate a further 1100 jobs for the regional economy.

Tourism currently attracts 5.46 million visitors to our Region and by 2020 we anticipate this number to rise significantly to 5.72 million.

I have long believed we are all stakeholders in tourism, as all of us impact every single visitor's experience – so getting it right will require partnership. By leveraging

our collective strengths we will achieve the targets set out in our ambitious plan. We encourage enterprise and investment in quality products and experiences that continue to drive our Region's appeal.

It is also imperative that we move tourism up the political agenda to ensure others recognise their role and act on their tourism responsibilities so we can realise our future growth goals.

At Murray Regional Tourism (MRT), we proudly act as champions and give the tourism industry a voice, how we do this, I am pleased to present in this, the Murray Regional Tourism Strategic Plan 2015-2020.

All of us at MRT are clear about our priorities for the next five years, which include:

 Reinforcing MRT as the primary source of expertise in tourism on the Murray.







1 Source IVS, NVS, Urban Enterprise Input and Output Modelling, 2015

- Facilitating growth in visitation to the Region and subsequent employment opportunities.
- Further developing the organisation as an exemplar, progressive tourism board, able to financially support itself and collaborate with destination partners.
- Implementing the long term marketing strategy.
- Education and training.
- Facilitating investment in infrastructure, supporting the development of high quality product and ensuring key marketing initiatives are visitor focused, inspired and respond to current and future visitor needs.
- In partnership, deliver the government's aspirations for the tourism sector as per the national and state strategies.

Through four overarching strategic priority areas, our strategy articulates actions we will take to stimulate tourism in the region.

The strategy has been developed with our Board and in consultation with key industry representatives who have provided invaluable feedback to the process.

Our Board is committed to this Murray Regional Tourism Strategic Plan 2015-2020, and we look forward to working with our partners to implement the initiatives identified.

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Wendy Greiner

Chair









Executive Summary

Our key aim is to grow visitation by developing a quality visitor experience, promoting the destination and continually improving as an organisation and industry, both individually and collaboratively.

The focus of the Strategic Plan is to achieve the Murray's industry potential of \$2.27 billion of visitor expenditure by 2020. This in turn will generate an estimated additional 1100 jobs to the Murray's economy.

Our strategy is based on delivering significant impact through four strategic priorities (referenced pg. 20 to 23):

- Product Development
- Advocacy and Leadership
- Regional Marketing
- Industry Development

This plan will build on our past achievements which have, over the previous plan, delivered strong outcomes across the four pillars, being:

- Contribution to the growth in total visitation in the Murray Region.
- Development of a whole-of-region blue print for growth, the Murray Region Destination Management Plan.
- Alignment of key local and regional priorities to state strategies.

- Enhancement of the level of collaboration by a reduction in fragmentation of the industry.
- Establishment of a singular Murray brand with a focus on the Region's key experiences.

The plan identifies where and how MRT will add value to the success of tourism in the Murray Region, as well as guide our activities for the next five years in collaboration with the tourism industry as a whole.

Developed to unite the tourism industry, from individual operators, major businesses and associations to all levels of government, the strategy highlights the importance of partnerships and investment made by public and private sector partners in growing the Region's visitor economy.

The plan aligns with the Australia-wide approach to Tourism 2020, whose goal is to double the industry's overnight visitor expenditure by 2020.

Tourism will be one of the top five drivers for the Australian economy over the next four years, as identified by the Deloitte Positioning for Prosperity study².

Our strategic focus reflects this. Developing the visitor economy for the Murray to realise the potential of the tourism industry as well as the ability to provide a significant contribution to the Murray Region's economic prosperity, will be our focus over the next five years.



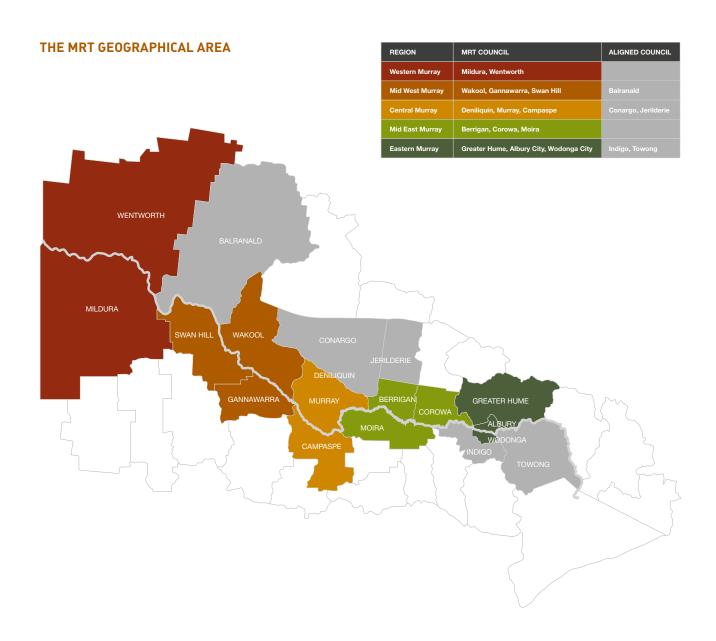




² Deloitte 2014 Positioning for Prosperity, Building the Lucky Country study.

About Us

Murray Regional Tourism (MRT) was established in November 2010 through an agreement between Destination NSW, Tourism Victoria and 14 local government councils in the Murray with the purpose of developing a holistic approach to the effective coordination of tourism activities, as well as growing the visitor economy in the Murray Region.



MRT is a company limited by guarantee which is driven by a highly skilled Board who collectively bring a wealth of experience and skills to the organisation.

We provide member councils, state agencies and the Region's tourism industry with energetic and cohesive leadership to:

- Improve supply and quality of tourism experiences.
- Increase awareness of destinations, products, experiences and events.
- Enhance skills and capacity of tourism industry members.

• Facilitate and where appropriate, coordinate tourism activities within the Region.

MRT will continue to play a key role in ensuring the Murray's economy is sustainable by growing the contribution of the tourism sector. In order to achieve this, it will require many different agencies and organisations working in collaboration to achieve the shared vision.

The below chart outlines the partner framework in which MRT operates.

Private Sector Partners

• Business and Industry



Local Government Partners

- Albury City Council
- Berrigan Shire Council
- Campaspe Shire Council
- Corowa Shire Council
- Deniliquin Shire Council
- Gannawarra Shire Council
- Greater Hume Shire Council
- Mildura Rural City Council
- Moira Shire Council
- Murray Shire Council
- Swan Hill Rural City Council
- Wakool Shire Council
- Wentworth Shire Council
- Wodonga City Council

Government Partners

- Tourism Victoria
- Destination NSW
- RDA Hume, Loddon Mallee & Murray
- Parks Victoria
- NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services
- VIC Dept of Economic Development,

 John Transport and Resources.
- NSW Dept of Industry, Skills and Regional Development

Local Partners

- Regional Tourism
- Local Tourism Associations

Our Approach

OUR VISION

Our vision is to hold our rightful place as one of Australia's most vibrant and iconic tourism destinations focused on the legendary Murray River.

OUR MISSION

To deliver growth by building tourism product, developing quality visitor experiences and promoting the Region in partnership with both the public and private sector.

OUR VALUES

Collaboration

To develop and maintain positive and engaged stakeholders, who promote the development of shared understandings, visions and solutions.

Integrity

To demonstrate honesty and sincerity in all of our dealings, upholding only the highest ethical principles; to provide open and transparent communications to create informed opinions and decisions.

Leadership

To lead by example and actively implement, promote and support these values; to be accountable and take responsibility for outcomes.

Innovation

Provide a proactive and adaptable environment that embraces emerging trends and opportunities, where new paths are considered in the achievement of goals and objectives.

Teamwork

To value and empower people with shared responsibility, equal opportunity and access to expertise and knowledge; provide opportunities for constructive communication, sharing of information and decision-making.





Situation Analysis

The tourism sector in the Murray Region is an important driver of the economy and currently contributes over \$2 billion and generates over 5.46 million visitors. To further expand on these indicators, provided below is an overview of the various visitation profiles, economic indicators and key source markets which when combined, are key elements of the Murray Region visitor economy and provide further context for the strategic plan.

MURRAY VISITOR ECONOMY INDICATORS

Direct expenditure: \$1.47 billion

• Indirect expenditure: \$0.696 billion

• Estimated FTE jobs: 22,390

Tourism sector employment contribution: 17%

(direct and indirect)

• Total visitors to the region 5.46 million for the 2014

calendar year

• Total nights 8.5 million for the 2014 calendar year

CURRENT VISITATION PROFILE

MARKET	VISITORS	NIGHTS	TOTAL EXPENDITURE (\$)	EXPENDITURE PER DAY (\$)
Domestic day	2.9 Million	n/a	421 Million	143
Domestic overnight	2.5 Million	7.3 Million	1 Billion	140
International	53,000	1.2 Million	52 Million	45

Source: National and International Survey Data, Tourism Research Australia 2014

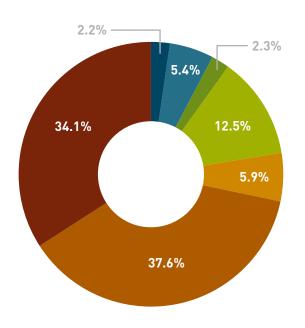




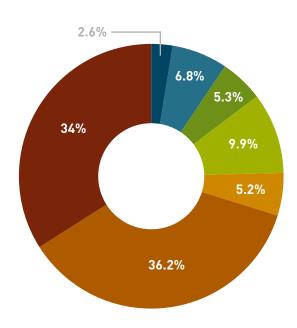
CURRENT DOMESTIC SOURCE MARKET

The Murray Region currently has a heavy reliance on the domestic market both for visitors and nights. Below is a breakdown of the source markets by state driving both these indicators.

VISITORS



NIGHTS





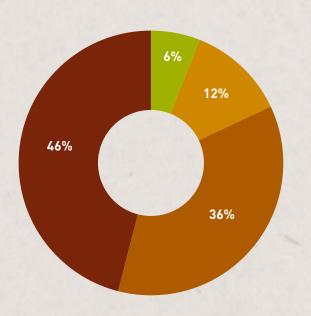


Source NVS, 2014

PURPOSE OF VISIT

The region has four main triggers for visitation. The graph below provides a breakdown of these and is consistent for both domestic and international visitors.

PURPOSE



Holiday or Leisure

Visiting Friends & Relatives

Business

Other







Source IVS, NVS, 2014

CURRENT INTERNATIONAL SOURCE MARKETS

International Visitation currently contributes 53,000 visitors and 1.2 million nights to the region. The table below provides a detailed breakdown of the origin and corresponding contribution for each of the source markets.

NO.	MARKET	SHARE
1	United Kingdom	20.2
2	New Zealand	15.0
3	Germany	6.3
4	USA	5.8
5	Hong Kong	4.6
6	France	3.9
7	China	3.6
8	Switzerland	2.8
9	Italy	2.8
10	Singapore	2.5
11	Malaysia	2.2
12	Scandinavia	2.1
13	Taiwan	2.1
14	Canada	2.1
15	Netherlands	1.8
16	Korea	1.7
17	Japan	1.5
18	Thailand	1.0
19	Indonesia	0.5
20	Other Asia	2.0
21	Other Europe	8.6
22	Other Countries	6.9

Source: IVS, NVS, 2014

CURRENT KEY MARKET SEGMENTS

Specific target market segments for MRT have been identified based on the Murray Region's product strengths. These include:

- Caravan and camping
- Golf
- History and heritage
- Adventure water sports
- Food and wine
- Events
- Nature (eco-tourist)
- Corporate business events visitors
- International

ACCOMMODATION PREFERENCES

Domestic

The most popular accommodation option for domestic visitors to the Murray was visiting friends and relatives' properties at 37.2%, caravan parks or commercial camping grounds accounted for 18.4% of visitors, with standard motel accommodation at 17.7%.

International

The most popular accommodation option for visitors to the Murray was rented house/apartment at 26.3%, followed by the home of a friend and or relatives' properties with 24.8%, and backpacker/hostel at 15.3%.

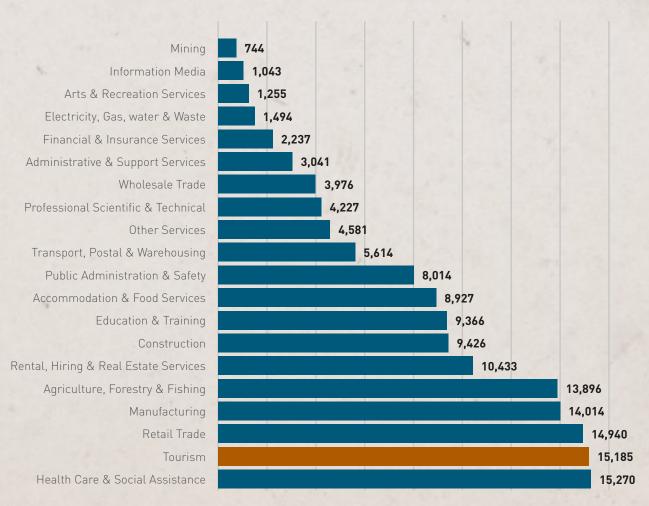
EMPLOYMENT CONTRIBUTION

The tourism industry in the Murray Region directly employs 15,185 people. This employment cuts across a range of traditional Australian Bureau of Statistics defined sectors such as accommodation, food and recreation.

The tourism industry is one of the key employing sectors in the Murray Region along with Health Care and Social Assistance, Retail, Manufacturing and Agriculture.

When indirect flow on employment is included, the tourism industry accounts for 17% of jobs of all jobs across the Murray Region.

MURRAY REGION DIRECT EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR



Source: Urban Enterprise Input Output Modelling, 2015 plus ABS Census Data

Industry Snapshot - Future Trends

FUTURE TARGET MARKETS

For the next five years, MRT will predominately focus its marketing efforts on a key overarching tourism audience market known as the Lifestyle Leader, which offers the greatest growth potential for the Region.

Roy Morgan's Lifestyle Leaders have the propensity and finances to travel, they travel to experience new things and as this segment is based on a mindset, they cut across all regions, age and life-cycle groups, however, they do skew towards a younger age group (15-44 years).

Based on MRT's visitation research, focusing on this market will overcome declining visitation from younger segments and attract new visitors. As this market looks for more active, immersive experiences, it aligns with the Murray's experience strengths. MRT's direction in focusing on the Lifestyle Leaders market also aligns and complements the future focus of our two state tourism partners.

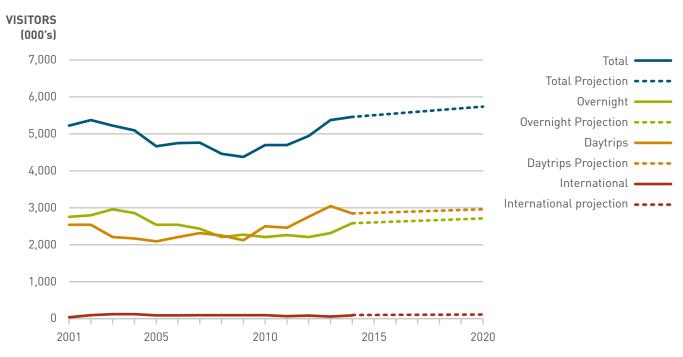
To ensure targeted marketing practice and cut through, Lifestyle Leaders will be further segmented into market sectors based on experience preferences: Inspired by Nature, Creative Opinion Leaders, and Food and Wine Lifestylers; and life stages: Young Families, Active Midlife Families, SINKS, DINKS and Empty Nesters.

To a lesser extent, MRT, along with our destination partners, will also focus on habitual visitors, those who come to the Murray each year, sometimes on numerous occasions, and tend to return consistently to a destination.

VISITOR FORECASTS

The total visitation projected for the Murray Region is based on the long term historic averages. It indicates strong growth over the following ten years, and amounts to an additional 9% of visitors by 2025 or an annual growth rate of 0.8 percent. The projected visitation for 2020 is 5.72 million visitors. This has been revised upwards from previous projections due to the strong performance of the Murray Region over the past 5 years, particularly in domestic markets.

FORECAST VISITATION TO THE MURRAY REGION



Source NVS, IVS, 2014 plus Urban Enterprise Input Output Modelling 2015

Visitor Profile

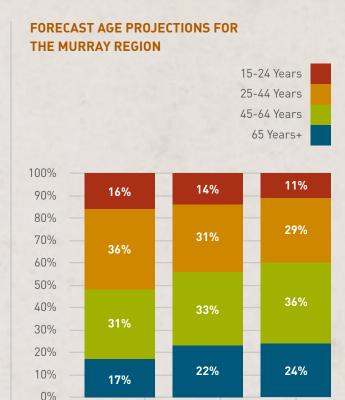
Overall, analysis of the changes in the age of visitors to the region indicates there will be a continued aging of the visitors to the Murray Region over the next five years. Between 2001 and 2011, the percentage of visitors aged 15-44 years decreased from 52% to 44%; the projection for 2021 indicates a further decrease to 40%.

This trend reinforces the need to shift the focus to the Lifestyle Leader segment.

ECONOMIC AND EMPLOYMENT PROFILE

In line with projected growth in visitation to the Murray Region, direct and indirect expenditure from visitors will grow significantly. Total output as a result of tourism (direct and indirect) is projected to increase from \$2.2billion in 2014 to \$2.36 billion by 2025.

As a result of this increase in visitor expenditure, jobs created by the tourism industry (direct and indirect) are projected to increase from 22,390 in 2014 to 24,419 by 2025. A net increase of 2029 jobs over the next 10 years.

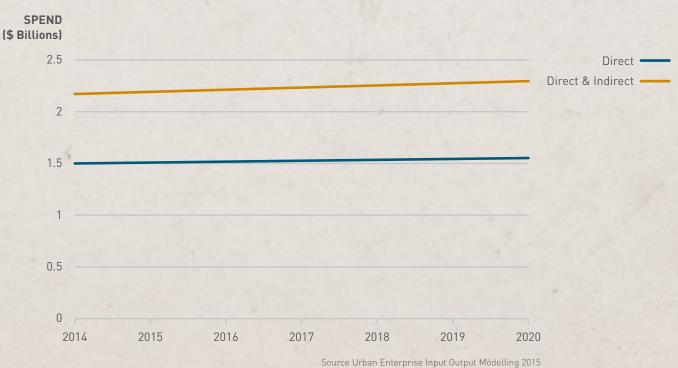


2011

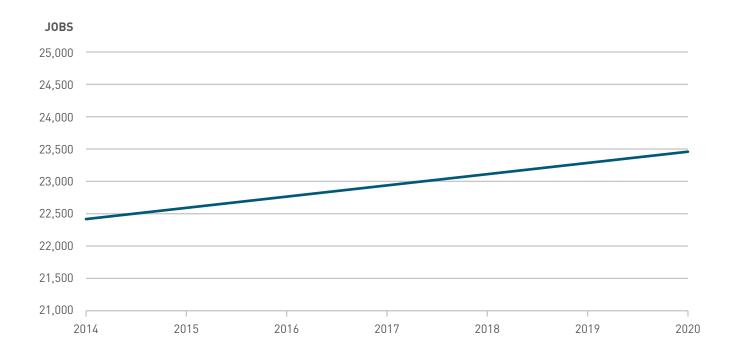
2021

2001

FORECAST DIRECT & INDIRECT EXPENDITURE



FORECAST EMPLOYMENT AS A RESULT OF TOURISM (DIRECT & INDIRECT)





Challenges

Infrastructure investment	To deliver on demands of the new visitor, significant investment is required to
	diversify product offerings. This will require investment by both the public and private sectors.
The need for differentiation	Visitors no longer simply choose a holiday destination. They are motivated by experiences and will opt for a destination which offers an authentic experience that meets their needs, one where they can immerse themselves in the culture. Developing and delivering tailored, unique, world-class experiences in the Murray Region will be critical to ensure it is a competitive destination in the future.
The need to be visitor inspired/focused	We need to listen, know, understand and respond to our visitors and their needs. We need to see things from their point of view and deliver unique and authentic experiences. We need to build product, develop quality experiences and deliver marketing communications in response to what visitor research has revealed.
The changing purchase patterns	The way people source, book and discuss their holiday is transforming as social networking and technologies evolve. Technology has helped people to become more value sensitive, allowing consumers to easily shop around in their desire for maximum value and quality.
Intensive competition	Competition globally has intensified and the trend is set to continue. The rise of emerging economic powerhouses and increasing wealth is driving travel demand. This new demand brings intensive tourism competition from all parts of the globe in an effort to secure market share.
Changing travel patterns	Domestic travel no longer meets the aspirations of the new visitor. For over four years the travel deficit in Australia has been growing. This will continue as Generation Y and Z's desire to see the world maintains its growth patterns and the baby boomers take advantage of their accumulated wealth and free time. The increasing trend of short break, domestic holidays (as opposed to traditional long stay holidays) will also be a challenge into the future. The industry will need to adjust to this behaviour and seek new markets to fill capacity.
Price competitiveness	Travel to Australia is regarded as expensive due to the long haul nature of the traditional visitors. The changing dollar will increase the appeal for international visitors, however, it will remain a challenge. Domestically, the same challenge remains. With the globalisation of travel, domestic consumers are constantly being persuaded by high quality, price sensitive messaging, which raises expectations against domestic product offerings.

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Opportunity

The forecast growth and increased importance the tourism sector is estimated to provide over the coming five years to the national economy will provide many opportunities for the Murray Region.

From a sector perspective, the opportunities are to:

- Invest in key infrastructure to prepare for the changing visitor and increased potential on high yield visitors as identified in the Murray Destination Management Plan.
- Consolidate regional investment in tourism to maximise efficiencies and return on investment across the Region.
- Continue to focus on and build the profile of the Region's key strength, the Murray River.
- Embrace digital mediums in delivering marketing programs to create targeted and direct engagement with visitors.
- Focus on all facets of visitor servicing to enhance the quality of experience along with increasing the expenditure per visitor.
- Identify opportunities for increased collaboration with Victorian, NSW and South Australian stakeholders to provide a coordinated whole-of-Murray Region experience.
- Build industry capacity through education and skills development, matched to the identified gaps.

From a market perspective, the potential to service the needs of the changing visitor is directly aligned to the Region's product strengths.

Consumer research undertaken by MRT indicates the low level of market awareness regarding the calibre of experiences in the Region. In particular, nature-based tourism opportunities, waterfront dining, fresh quality produce, food and wine, along with unique accommodation, will all be drivers to potential visitors.

Overall, the experiences that are most likely to generate additional visitation were found to be:

- Escaping into the natural world
- Touring routes
- History and heritage products
- Food and wine

Touring routes, adventure trails and local produce were also identified as being more likely to attract higher income visitors, which may translate into higher visitor yield.

In addition to experience based themes, the following initiatives also provide opportunity to achieve growth:

- Further leverage regional air access of the Region
- Events tourism
- Take advantage of digital capacity
- Rejuvenation of experiences

Strategic Purpose

GROWING THE VISITOR ECONOMY

Our purpose is to increase the contribution of the Murray Region's tourism sector to the economy, employment and quality of life.

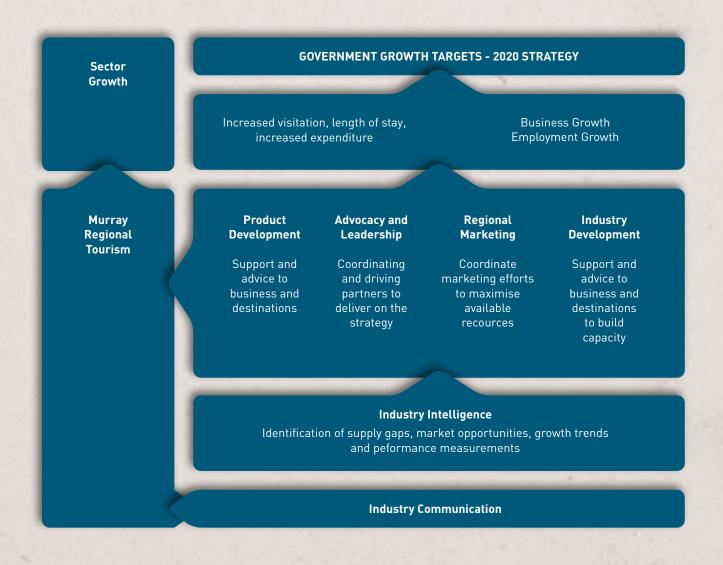
In order to achieve this, the Strategic Plan has been developed on four key strategic priorities:

- 1. Product Development
- 2. Advocacy and Leadership
- 3. Regional Marketing
- 4. Industry Development

The above four strategic priorities, when integrated, will drive the Region's tourism sector to realise the potential and aspirations of the national, Victorian and New South Wales visitor economy 2020 goals.

The quality visitor experiences, economic growth, increased investment and employment can only be achieved in collaboration at both state and local levels.

To ensure this is achieved, below is the framework within which the Strategic Plan will be implemented in order to grow the Murray Region visitor economy.



Strategic Priorities for 2015-2020

1. PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Facilitate investment in infrastructure, new products and experiences that revitalise the Region's tourism offer.

We will achieve this by:

- Coordinating the management of the digital program to ensure a visitor focused whole-of-Murray experience.
- Encouraging investment in new or renewed experiences along with high quality product aligned to the Destination Management Plan.
- Identifying international-ready product.
- Linking key product within the Region to create a touring experience.
- Facilitating the delivery of a whole-of-region events program.

Key Initiatives

- 1.1 In partnership with LGA stakeholders, regional tourism associations, Regional Development Australia and other key state agencies, continually review and implement the Murray Region Destination Management Plan.
- **1.2** Oversee the implementation of Stage 1 of the Murray River Adventure Trail.
- **1.3** Facilitate the implementation of the Murray Region Events Strategy.
- **1.4** Develop a Visitor Service Plan to maximise visitor opportunities
- **1.5** Facilitate an accommodation supply and demand study to ensure investment in new and existing accommodation matches the visitor market needs.
- **1.6** Assist the development of touring routes and product clusters aligned to product segments.
- 1.7 In partnership with industry stakeholders, identify each destination's competitive strength to attract new and/or niche tourism visitors and events.

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Increase in investment in tourism assets and infrastructure measured by LGA area
- Grow the economic contribution of the events sector by 10%
- Shift the comparative product strengths of our key experiences through the product life-cycle stages

2. ADVOCACY AND LEADERSHIP

Provide a clear direction for growth and development for the Murray Region through strong leadership, advocacy and industry engagement.

We will achieve this by:

- Developing a strong and mutually supportive relationship with stakeholder councils, state governments and federal representatives, as relevant.
- Engaging with regional and local tourism associations and tourism managers.
- Diversifying our revenue base.
- Increasing engagement with industry operators and interest groups.
- Focus on the management and sustainability of the regions natural and environmental resources.

Key Initiatives

2.1 Implementation of the Communication and Engagement Plan to raise awareness of tourism developments and the importance of tourism to the economy.

- 2.2 Invest in collaborative research projects with shared benefits that can be adopted widely by industry.
- **2.3** Create opportunities to access government funding assistance for the Region.
- **2.4** Engage with key government agencies to monitor the implementation of the region's natural resource management plans.
- 2.5 Develop evidence-based positions and strong advocacy statements in relation to issues that impede the growth and competitiveness of the tourism industry.
- **2.6** Engage with South Australian Tourism stakeholders to explore collaborative opportunities.
- 2.7 Explore opportunities to become less dependent on public sector sources of funding by assessing the way we deliver services and/or opportunities for alternate revenue services.
- 2.8 Continue to examine, rethink and redesign processes that will help MRT improve performance in areas that are important to our internal and external stakeholders.

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Long term funding agreements in place with LGA and government partners to 2020

- Diversification of revenue source to 20% from non-government entities
- Increase the employment contribution of the sector by 1100 jobs

3. REGIONAL MARKETING

To promote the Murray Region in partnership with key stakeholders and industry.

We will achieve this by:

- Maintaining a program of Industry Forums in key destinations across the Region.
- Managing and promoting the Murray brand.
- Ensuring all marketing decisions are based on sound research.
- Leveraging the use of best practice digital technology.
- Developing key partnerships to promote the region.
- Maximising return on marketing spend.

Key Initiatives

- **3.1** Implement the MRT Strategic Marketing Plan.
- 3.2 Optimise best practice marketing channels, both traditional and digital, to create two-way communication with key visitor segments and drive online conversion.
- 3.3 Deliver a research program that enables both public and private sectors to make informed decisions that will drive and grow the visitor economy.
- 3.4 Develop product and visitor databases for the Murray Region through a single management system.
- **3.5** Develop visitor focused brand platforms which encourage industry to integrate and facilitate alignment to the overall Murray brand position.
- **3.6** Work with strategic partners to maximise marketing spend against shared objectives and improve return on investment.
- **3.7** Facilitate integrated partner programs that connect all industry stakeholders.

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Increase Visitation to 5.72 million visitors and Expenditure to \$2.27 billion tracked by NVS and IVS data
- Increase in online enquiries and conversion to bookings by 30% from current benchmark
- Increase industry participation rates in marketing services by 20%

4. INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

Improve the supply and quality of tourism experiences in the Region through industry training and development.

We will achieve this by:

- Focusing on a Region-wide educational program.
- Developing the leadership capacity of industry.
- Managing and promoting a Tourism Awards program.
- Understanding visitor and industry trends.

Key Initiatives

- **4.1** Develop a whole-of-Murray Region tourism industry database to enable direct engagement with industry and corporate stakeholders.
- **4.2** Facilitate a Tourism Education program to address the identified gaps, develop the capability and competitiveness of the Region's industry.
- **4.3** Engage with employment and industry stakeholders to support the growth of tourism and hospitality careers and skills in the Region and address both labour force and skills gaps priorities.
- **4.4** Facilitate the implementation of the recommendations of the Visitor Service Plan.
- 4.5 Support industry through the provision of research and insights that identify consumer trends, emerging opportunities and competitor initiatives that are shaping tourism.

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Minimum 25% of operators in the Murray Region participated in training programs delivered by MRT and our partners over the life of this plan
- Growth of industry engagement from current benchmark
- Achieve a satisfaction rating of minimum 70% by training attendees

Implementation

The Murray Regional Tourism 2015-2020 Strategic Plan sets the direction and provides the framework for the collective industry to realise the growth potential of the Region.

The plan provides the top-line initiatives across the four key strategic pillars which we will work collaboratively to achieve and will be supported by a detailed annual plan. The plan will continually be monitored and evaluated on the progress and success against the aspirations.

Success will require all agencies to play a pivotal role, to allocate the right resources and develop a new, shared approach across the sector. It will require sustained investment in integrated marketing programs, better alignment across government resources and investment to better deliver tourism

The vision for the Region by 2020 is:

- Increased visitation in the Murray Region by 4.5% from 5.46 million to 5.72 million.
- Increased employment contribution of the tourism sector by 1100 jobs and an increase in the overall percentage contribution of tourism jobs as a proportion of total employment in the Murray Region.
- Build and maintain the industry's tourism position on the economic agenda in light of the opportunities presented by our growth forecast.

- Continued building of partnerships with stakeholders to ensure government departments recognise and deliver policies, programs and funding in support of tourism.
- Increased investment and participation by our public and private sector stakeholders.
- Established benchmarks in place which demonstrate continual improvements of return on investment ratios, required to increase visitation.
- Continued improvement of the quality of our visitor experience by attracting investment in infrastructure developments that are visitor focused and inspired.
- Increased destination appeal by the delivery of authentic experiences.
- Creation of strong advocates, generating repeat visitation and economic return through product development initiatives.

The Board is committed to achieving the long term goals for the industry, and look forward to working collaboratively with our partners to grow the visitor economy and employment for the benefit of all the community in the Murray Region.







