



Ports of the Murray River

Key driver for tourism investment & growth

Ports of the Murray River Project Overview



Vision

To stimulate investment and visitation by showcasing and authenticating the importance of the Ports of the Murray and the role the Murray River played in opening up inland Australia.

Project proponents

Murray Regional Tourism (MRT) unites the Murray region's tourism industry, creating memorable and complementary visitor experiences throughout this beautiful river destination.

MRT was established in November 2010 in partnership with Destination NSW, Visit Victoria and local government councils in the Murray. Since the NSW Government local council amalgamations there are now 13 local government councils in the Murray region.

Providing an overarching tourism strategy, a clear developmental direction, focused product development and support for infrastructure, MRT has set about realising its goal of making the Murray a must-visit destination for local and international visitors alike.

Through energetic, cohesive leadership, MRT improves the supply and quality of tourism experiences and increases awareness of destinations, products, experiences and events within the region for our member councils and the region's tourism industry.



The region

The Murray River is Australia's longest river and the world's third longest navigable river after the Nile and the Amazon. The river flows 2508 kilometers from the mountains of the Australian Alps to the Southern Ocean in South Australia.

The Murray River is recognised as Australia's national iconic river. It is an area with a rich indigenous heritage and was pivotal to opening up inland Australia after colonisation. It is an environmental asset of national significance, and features internationally recognised habitats along its course.

Murray visitor economy indicators

- **Direct expenditure:** \$1.4 billion
- **Direct and indirect expenditure:** \$2.1 billion
- **Estimated FTE jobs:** 24,112
- **Tourism sector employment contribution:** 17% (direct and indirect)
- **Total visitors to the region:** 5.3 million (year ending March 2017)
- **Total visitor nights:** 8.7 million (year ending March 2017)



The project

First conceived in 2010, the Ports of the Murray River (POMR) Strategic Initiative started as a regional change strategy managed by Regional Development Victoria (RDV). The strategy represented a series of projects in the Loddon Mallee region that had the ability to contribute to a change of perception and to reposition the Murray River in the Australian psyche.

The strategy quickly expanded to cover all of the riverside communities within the Murray tourism region – from Albury Wodonga in the east to Wentworth Mildura in the west. The project's geographic boundary has recently expanded to include the whole of the Murray River, linking with South Australia to grow the overall visitor experience.



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Project objectives

- Stimulate investment in developing new product experiences
- Provide alignment between destinations and experiences to create a cohesive visitor experience along the length of the Murray River
- Tell or create a story that highlights a significant attribute of the particular port, which when combined, tells the overall journey of the POMR for the visitor. Individual stories link to create a whole-of-Murray historical narrative for the visitor
- Inspire to create a reason to visit the Murray region
- Diversify the economy and increase the contribution made by the visitor economy
- Build brand awareness of the Murray region



Achieving the vision

Through the initial investigation, 9 core port experiences have been identified which will form the basis for the first phase of infrastructure investment and product development.

The nine key visitor ports are:

1. **Mt. Kosciuszko Snowy Mountains Scheme** – Modern Civil Engineering wonder of the world
2. **Wodonga** – Bonegilla Migrant Experience
3. **Corowa** – Birth place of Federation
4. **Echuca Moama** – Historic Port of Echuca
5. **Swan Hill** – Heartbeat of the Murray
6. **Wentworth** – Junction of the Murray and Darling Rivers
7. **Renmark** – Oldest River Settlement
8. **Mannum** – Birthplace of the Australian Paddle Steamer
9. **Goolwa** – Mouth of the Murray

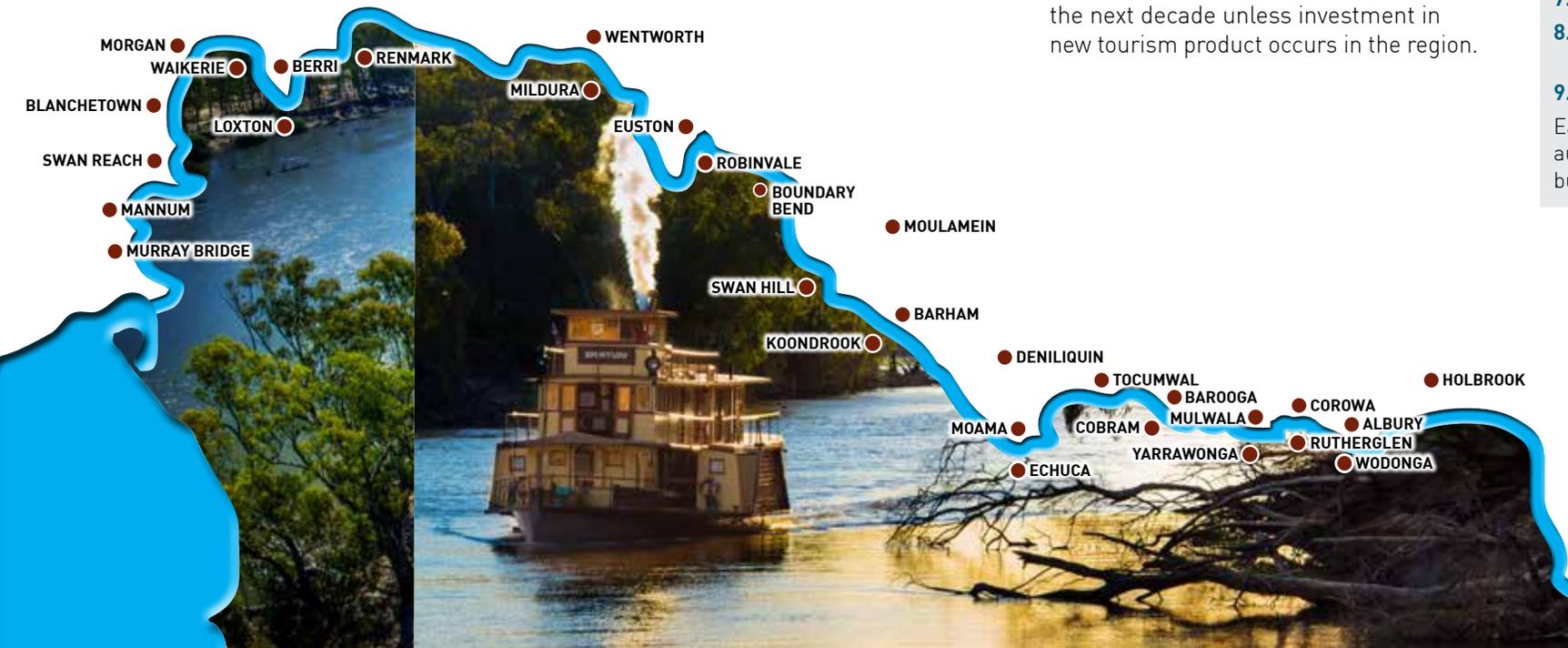
Each of the nine locations has a rich and authentic story, forming a strong base to build the POMR experience.

Project stakeholders

- Murray Regional Tourism Board (lead)
- Local government representatives
- State government (Vic, NSW, SA)
- Federal government

Strategic context

The Murray Region Destination Management Plan identified POMR as a major opportunity for facilitating new investment and tourism product development by capitalising on the unique heritage of the ports. Visitation forecasts indicate limited growth over the next decade unless investment in new tourism product occurs in the region.



Project journey to date

Many of the individual experiences have been successful in attracting significant infrastructure investment. Local governments have invested in these projects, with support from both State and Federal grants programs. Funding in the order of \$28 million has already been secured to implement the following POMR infrastructure projects:

- Bonegilla Migrant Experience Stage 1 (Wodonga Council)
- Pioneer Settlement's 'Heartbeat of the Murray' (Swan Hill Rural City Council)
- Koondrook Wharf Development (Gannawarra Shire)
- Port of Echuca (Shire of Campaspe)
- Mildura Riverfront Precinct Redevelopment Stage 1 (Mildura Rural City Council) economy.

A range of related projects have been identified as high investment priorities to support POMR as they are likely to act as catalysts of further development and investment in the local area.

- **Thompsons Beach Jetty** (Moira Shire Council)
- **Barmah Punt Restoration** (Moira Shire Council)
- **Bonegilla Migrant Experience** (Wodonga Council)
- **Burraja Aboriginal Centre** (Wodonga Council)
- **River Boardwalk** (Wentworth Shire Council)
- **Heritage Loop** (Wentworth Shire Council)
- **Mildura Riverfront Precinct Redevelopment Stage 1**
- **Barham River Boardwalk** (Murray River Council)
- **Moama Murray Access Plan** (Murray River Council)
- **Bridge Arts Project** (Murray River Council)
- **Old Moama Heritage Trail** (Murray River Council)
- **Corowa Riverfront Precinct Redevelopment** (Federation Council)
- **Albury Riverside Precinct Redevelopment Phase 1** (Albury City Council)
- **Central Albury Riverside Parks** (Albury City Council)
- **Wagirra Trail** (Albury City Council)
- **Wonga Wetlands** (Albury City Council)
- **Tocumwal River Boardwalk** (Berrigan Shire Council)

Contact

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Realising the vision

In order to achieve the vision of the POMR project, two streams have been identified:

• Investment Attraction

This stream seeks to attract continuing investment in the development of the identified priority port infrastructure projects. MRT is working with several LGA partners to advance these opportunities by identifying suitable funding programs.

• Product Development

This stream seeks to attract funding for product and experience development initiatives. It is critical that each port delivers a superior interpretive experience for visitors, as well as providing a return on investment for the significant infrastructure projects already completed.

MRT is supporting LGAs to fully develop the visitor experience and interpret the stories of their destination which when combined, tell the overall journey of the POMR.



Next steps

The establishment of a POMR Project Committee will be driven by MRT. The role of the group will be to guide the project's strategic direction and implementation, attract ongoing investment, and further develop the experiences and stories to create better linkages between the ports. Representatives from MRT and local and state government from Victoria, NSW and South Australia will be invited to participate.

MRT is currently seeking a partnership approach across the three states and local governments in Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales to advance both the infrastructure investment and product development streams of this project. Longer term, we will seek a funding commitment to promote the POMR experiences to consumers. This will be critical in order to drive increased visitation and realise the significant economic benefits of this project.