



# BENDIGO REGION DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

PREPARED BY URBAN ENTERPRISE FOR BENDIGO REGIONAL TOURISM | NOVEMBER 2015





# PROJECT PARTNERS

BENDIGO REGION DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

### **Authors**

Chris Funtera

Mike Ruzzene

© Copyright, Urban Enterprise Pty Ltd, June 2015

This work is copyright. Apart from any use as permitted under Copyright Act 1963, no part may be reproduced without written permission of Urban Enterprise Pty Ltd.

### **Document Information**

Filename	Bendigo DMP Final
Last Saved	17 November 2015 5:12 PM
Last Printed	17 November 2015 5:48 PM
File Size	25,434 kb

### **Disclaimer**

Neither Urban Enterprise Pty. Ltd. nor any member or employee of Urban Enterprise Pty. Ltd. 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. 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.

# CONTENTS

GLOSSARY	2	5.1. FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW	38
TERMS USED IN REPORT	2	5.2. PROJECT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY	39
BENDIGO REGION VISITOR ECONOMY SNAPSHOT	4	5.3. STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES	40
PRODUCT STRENGTHS & OPPORTUNITIES	5	<b>6. PRIORITY PROJECTS</b>	<b>44</b>
DMP FRAMEWORK	6	6.1. INTRODUCTION	44
PRIORITY PROJECTS	6	<b>7. DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>56</b>
DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT	8	7.1. OVERVIEW	56
A REGIONAL APPROACH	9	7.2. BENDIGO	57
<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>11</b>	7.3. HEATHCOTE	60
1.1. BACKGROUND	11	7.4. CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS	62
1.2. THE BENDIGO REGION	12	7.5. LODDON	65
1.3. HUB AND SPOKE	13	7.6. MOUNT ALEXANDER	67
1.4. PLAN LAYOUT	13	<b>8. REGIONAL APPROACH TO TOURISM</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>2. BENDIGO REGION VISITOR ECONOMY</b>	<b>15</b>	8.2. SUMMARY OF STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS	70
2.1. INTRODUCTION	15	8.3. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE	72
2.2. SUMMARY OF BENDIGO VISITOR ECONOMY	16	8.4. DIGITAL RESOURCES	80
2.3. VISITATION TRENDS	17	8.5. VISITOR INFORMATION SERVICES	82
2.4. SUB-REGION VISITATION	20	8.6. EVENTS STRATEGY/MANAGEMENT	84
2.5. VISITOR DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE	22	8.7. RESEARCH	85
2.6. VISITATION FORECAST	22	<b>9. STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>3. MARKET SEGMENTATION</b>	<b>27</b>		
3.1. INTRODUCTION	27		
3.2. LIFESTYLE LEADERS	27		
3.3. BENDIGO REGION PERCEPTIONS	28		
3.4. TOURISM ACTIVITY/EXPERIENCE PREFERENCES	31		
<b>4. PRODUCT AND INFRASTRUCTURE</b>	<b>33</b>		
4.1. INTRODUCTION	33		
4.2. PRODUCT STRENGTHS SUMMARY	33		
4.3. INFRASTRUCTURE	35		
4.4. SUB-REGIONAL PRODUCT GAP SUMMARY	35		
<b>5. DMP FRAMEWORK</b>	<b>38</b>		



## GLOSSARY

<b>ABS</b>	Australian Bureau of Statistics
<b>BRT</b>	Bendigo Regional Tourism (organisation)
<b>DMP</b>	Destination Management Plan
<b>IVS</b>	International Visitor Survey
<b>NVS</b>	National Visitor Survey
<b>NBT</b>	Nature-based Tourism
<b>MTB</b>	Mountain Bike
<b>RAPS</b>	Regional Awareness and Perceptions Survey
<b>HTS</b>	Roy Morgan Holiday Tracking Survey
<b>TFC</b>	Tourism Forecasting Committee
<b>TRA</b>	Tourism Research Australia
<b>VFR</b>	Visiting Friends and Relatives

## TERMS USED IN REPORT

<b>Bendigo Regional Tourism</b>	The organisation responsible for delivering tourism in the region
<b>Bendigo Region</b>	The geographic region made up of City of Greater Bendigo, Mount Alexander Shire, Central Goldfields Shire, and Loddon Shire Councils.
<b>Bendigo City</b>	The city of Bendigo (LGA area not including Heathcote)





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BENDIGO REGION DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN



Bendigo Regional Tourism (BRT) is a peak regional tourism body, formed in 2013, as an initiative of the City of Greater Bendigo, Mount Alexander Shire, Central Goldfields Shire, and Loddon Shire Councils. BRT commissioned the development of the Bendigo Region Destination Management Plan (DMP) which provides a strategic approach to growing tourism in the Bendigo Region over the next five years. The key outcomes of the DMP include:

- A set of Strategic Objectives which respond to the key issues and opportunities identified;
- 16 Priority Projects;
- Suite of destination development opportunities; and
- A range of initiatives to strengthen governance and collaboration across the region.

## THE BENDIGO REGION

The Bendigo Region is located in the heart of central Victoria, approximately 150km north-west of Melbourne. The region is made up of the following sub-regions:

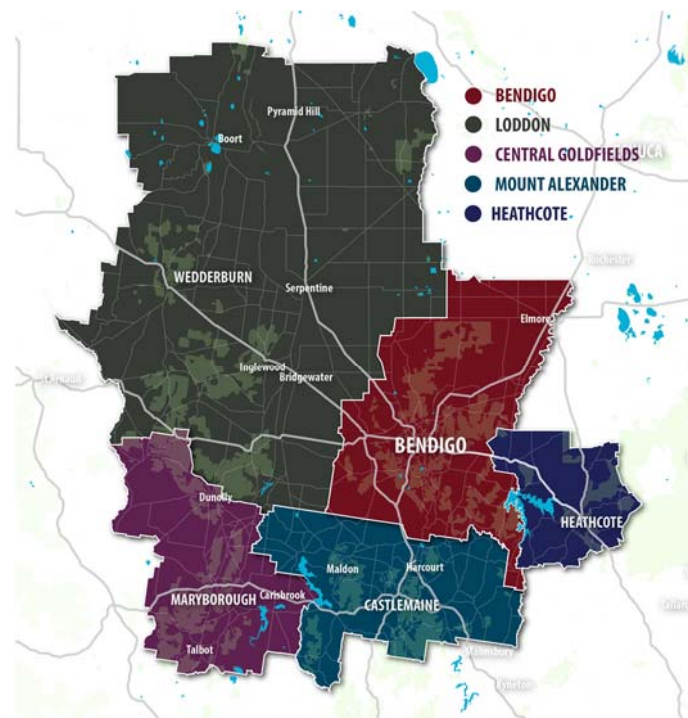
- Mount Alexander Shire;
- Central Goldfields Shire;
- Loddon Shire;
- City of Greater Bendigo (not including Heathcote);
- Heathcote.

Currently the Bendigo Region operates as a 'Hub and Spoke' tourism region with Bendigo City acting as the central hub of the region with a large population, visitor, and accommodation base, and the townships and attractions in the surrounding region providing a complementary tourist offering. This approach provides a platform for regional co-ordination between Councils and to strategically leverage the resident and visitor population of Bendigo City.

The intended outcome delivered through this regional approach is to:

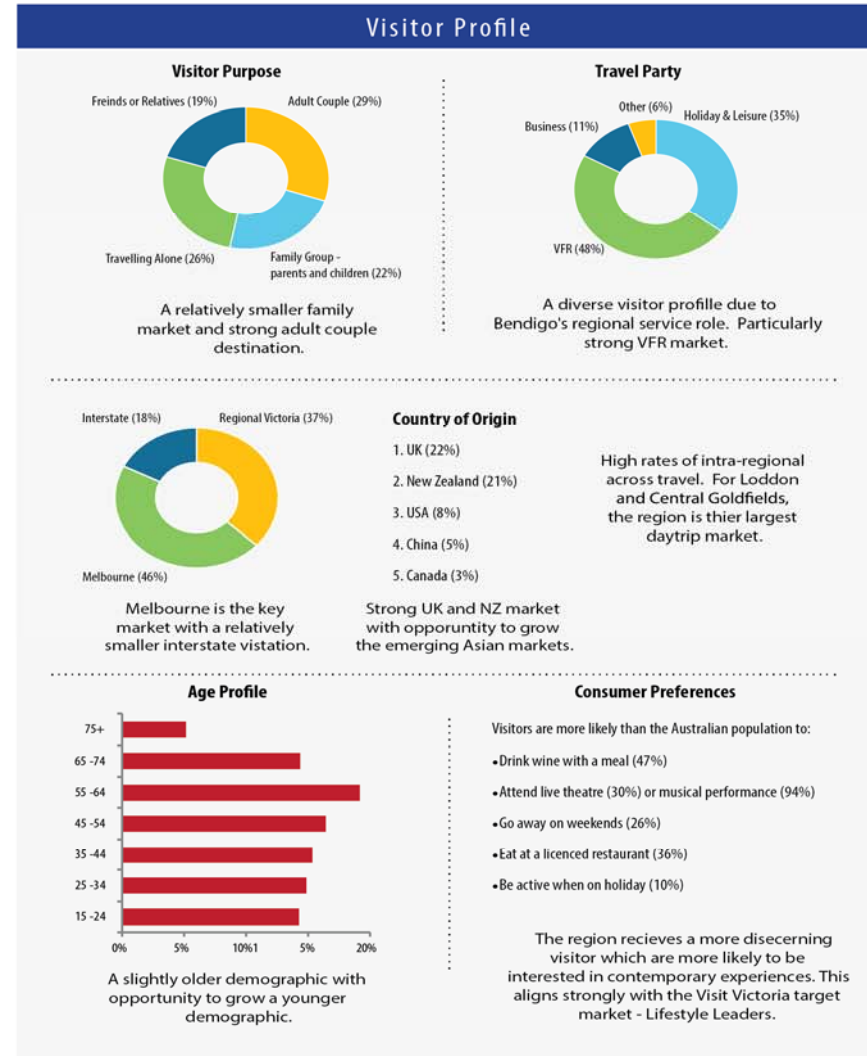
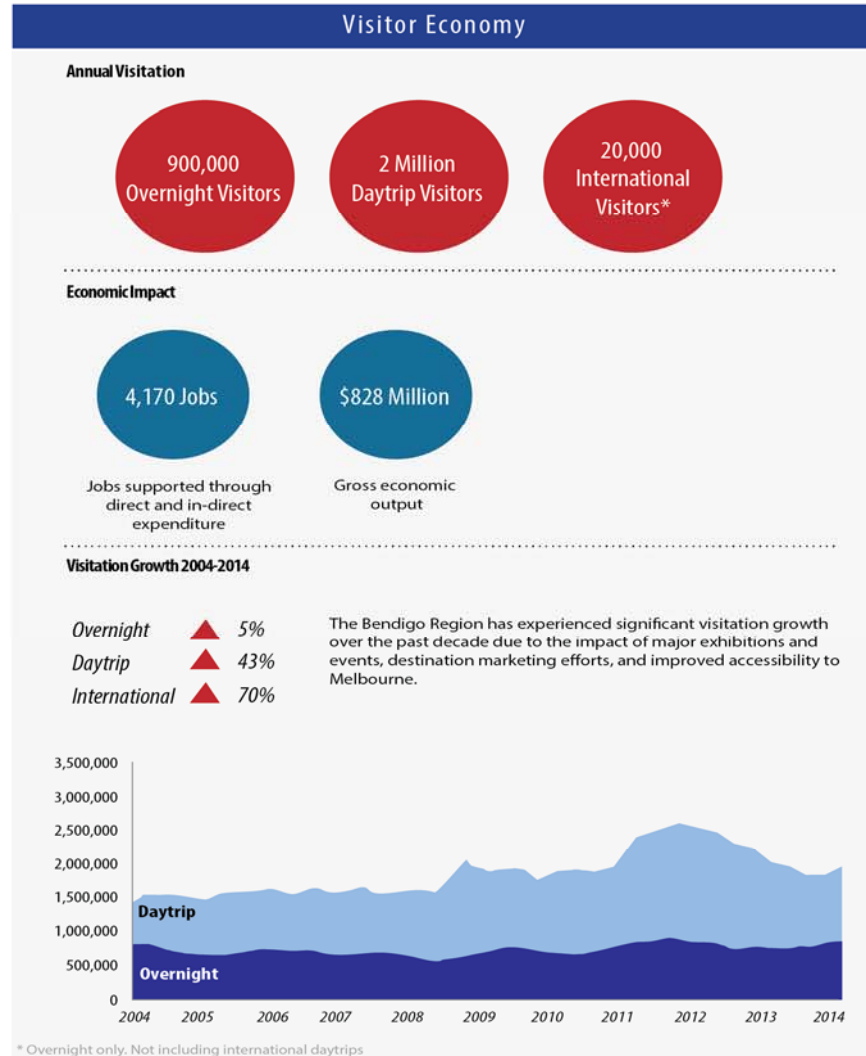
- **Extend the yield and length of stay of visitors by encouraging them to explore the wider region;**
- **Attract new visitors through the development of a high quality tourism network and compelling regional package; and**
- **Encourage intra-regional visitation from the growing Bendigo Region population and significant VFR market.**

The DMP identifies a range of product development and regional collaboration initiatives to realise this outcome.





# BENDIGO REGION VISITOR ECONOMY SNAPSHOT



## PRODUCT STRENGTHS & OPPORTUNITIES

The Bendigo Region has a number of regional strengths that define perceptions of the tourism product across the whole region. The following table illustrates the relative product strengths of each sub-region destination. The product strengths are categorised as:

- **Primary** – well established strength of the region/sub-region, with mature and recognisable assets in the identified tourism product;
- **Secondary** – established strengths in the region/sub-region. However, not considered to be the number one tourism product. There is scope to further develop the product to improve product, awareness and profile;
- **Emerging** – there is evidence of an emerging tourism product in the region/sub-region, which is either new or relatively limited in scale. There could be scope to further develop the product to diversify the product offer.

	History & Heritage	Arts & Culture	NBT & Adventure	Cycling	Food & Dining	Wine, Cideries, & Breweries	Business	Retail	Festivals & Events
<b>Bendigo</b>	Primary	Primary		Emerging	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary
<b>Heathcote</b>				Emerging		Primary			Secondary
<b>Mount Alexander</b>	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Emerging	Primary	Emerging		Secondary	Primary
<b>Central Goldfields</b>	Primary	Emerging	Secondary	Secondary			Emerging	Primary	Primary
<b>Loddon</b>	Emerging		Primary		Emerging				
<b>Bendigo Region</b>	Primary	Primary	Secondary	Emerging	Emerging	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary	Primary

Arts and cultural tourism is a primary strength of the region due to the success of the Bendigo Art Gallery, major events such as the Castlemaine State Festival, as well as the creative communities located in the region. Market testing showed that arts and cultural tourism is the highest rated activity to motivate visitors to the region. There is significant opportunity to leverage the growth of arts and cultural tourism through the development of complementary experiences (e.g. food and wine) and exhibitions and attractions that broaden the appeal (particularly younger markets).

Goldrush heritage remains a primary tourism strength and important part of the region's character. There is a need for reinvestment in major attractions to provide an improved, contemporary interpretation, opportunity to encourage adaptive re-use of underutilised heritage buildings and sites for contemporary tourism uses, and develop historic village touring routes.

Developing the complementary tourism experiences to the region's arts and heritage attractions is an important component in moving the region forward.

Major events including cultural, sport and business events, are an important part of the region's visitor economy with over 130 events and over 140,000 attendees annually. Continued investment in event facilities and the supporting accommodation base should be promoted.

Food and wine tourism is a strong fit for the region due to the strength of the Bendigo and Heathcote wine regions, and emerging dining scenes in Bendigo and Castlemaine. Market testing indicated that wine tourism is a popular activity which will motivate new visitors to the region, but there is currently a low awareness of the winery opportunities in the Bendigo Region.

Nature-based tourism is not prominent in the Bendigo Region. Unlocking the region's natural assets through improved State and National Park and waterway infrastructure, and packaging and promotion of recreational opportunities should be encouraged. Nature-based tourism is a key strength of the Loddon sub-region which can provide a unique offer to the rest of the Bendigo Region.

The Bendigo Region is an established cycling destination which offers a variety of cycling experiences (mountain bike, road, trails). Although cycling remains a niche market, new investments (e.g. Harcourt Mountain Bike Park, O'Keefe Rail Trail) and strong existing infrastructure will assist in growing the cycling market.

## DMP FRAMEWORK

The framework for the DMP is shown below. A set of **six overarching Strategic Development Objectives** were developed to respond to the issues and opportunities identified in background research. **16 Priority Projects** were selected and agreed using a project assessment criterion to provide a set of catalyst projects which are deliverable over the next 5 years.

### OBJECTIVE 1. Primary Destination Development

Develop the primary destinations to support a diverse visitor economy and projected visitor growth

### OBJECTIVE 2. Building The Hinterland Experience

Build the hinterland tourism product to develop a compelling regional experience and encourage visitor dispersal

### OBJECTIVE 3. Heritage Rejuvenation and Positioning

Facilitate reinvestment in heritage attractions to improve interpretation and appeal to new markets

### OBJECTIVE 4. Unlocking Natural Assets

Utilise the region's natural assets to develop nature-based and recreational tourism experiences

### OBJECTIVE 5. Leveraging Arts and Cultural Growth

Leverage the region's arts and cultural brand to develop new experiences which appeal to new markets

### OBJECTIVE 6. Visibility

Improve the services and experiences at every point of the visitor journey

## PRIORITY PROJECTS

Priority Project	Sub-region
<b>INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENABLING PROJECTS</b>	
Maryborough Cultural Arts Precinct	Central Goldfields
Heathcote Town Centre Improvements	Heathcote
Bridgewater and Inglewood Township and Foreshore Improvements	Loddon
Harcourt Town Centre Improvements	Mount Alexander
Maldon VIC and Exhibition Space	Mount Alexander
<b>EXPERIENTIAL PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT</b>	
Bendigo Heritage Tourism Attractions and Positioning	Bendigo
Bendigo Night-Time Economy	Bendigo
Great Stupa Development	Bendigo
Castlemaine Diggings National Park Improvements	Mount Alexander
Winery Tourism Product Development and Marketing	Region-wide
Food Fossickers Network Development	Region-wide
Village Touring and Branding	Region-wide
Ride Goldfields	Region-wide
<b>ACCOMMODATION DEVELOPMENT</b>	
Bendigo High Quality Accommodation and Conferencing	Bendigo
Castlemaine Boutique Accommodation and Conference Centre	Mount Alexander
Maryborough Serviced Apartments and Function Centre	Central Goldfields



- BENDIGO
- LODDON
- CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS
- MOUNT ALEXANDER
- HEATHCOTE

**PRIORITY PROJECT TYPE**

- > INFRASTRUCTURE & ENABLING PROJECTS
- > EXPERIENTIAL PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT
- > ACCOMMODATION DEVELOPMENT

**LODDON**

- > BRIDGEWATER & INGLEWOOD TOWNSHIP AND FORESHORE IMPROVEMENTS

**BENDIGO**

- > BENDIGO HERITAGE TOURISM ATTRACTIONS & POSITIONING
- > BENDIGO NIGHTTIME ECONOMY
- > GREAT STUPA DEVELOPMENT
- > BENDIGO HIGH QUALITY ACCOMMODATION & CONFERENCE

**HEATHCOTE**

- > HEATHCOTE TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENTS

**REGION-WIDE**

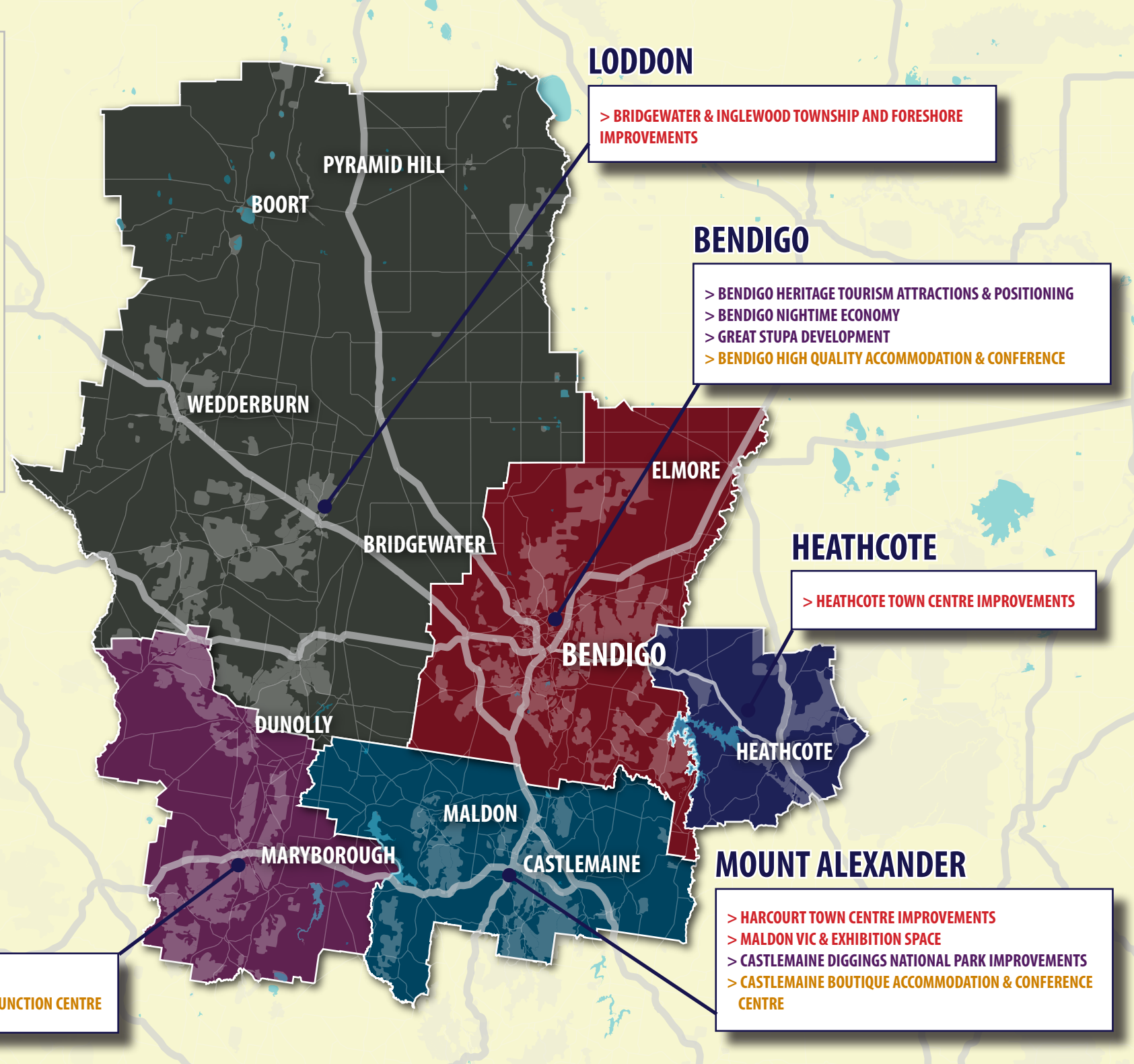
- > WINERY TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT & MARKETING
- > FOOD FOSSICKERS NETWORK DEVELOPMENT
- > VILLAGE TOURING & BRANDING
- > RIDE GOLDFIELDS

**CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS**

- > MARYBOROUGH CULTURAL ARTS PRECINCT
- > MARYBOROUGH SERVICED APARTMENTS & FUNCTION CENTRE

**MOUNT ALEXANDER**

- > HARCOURT TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENTS
- > MALDON VIC & EXHIBITION SPACE
- > CASTLEMAINE DIGGINGS NATIONAL PARK IMPROVEMENTS
- > CASTLEMAINE BOUTIQUE ACCOMMODATION & CONFERENCE CENTRE



## DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

The identification of a suite of Destination Development Opportunities at the sub-regional level, provides the critical mass of product to lift individual destinations and the wider regional product offer; in line with the identified strategic development objectives. There are over 60 product development initiatives which have been identified for each of the sub-regions as summarised below:

### BENDIGO

Development opportunities are focused on the following key areas:

- Leverage the city's reputation for arts and cultural tourism to broaden its appeal and develop more interactive and immersive experiences;
- Continued development of the city's restaurant, café, and bar scene;
- Reinvestment and reinterpreting the city's heritage assets;
- Continued development of the accommodation base, particularly reinvestment in existing motel stock;
- Growing the night-time experience to convert daytrip to overnight stays;
- Developing the Bendigo Wine Region for food and wine tourism.

### CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS

Development opportunities are focused on:

- Strengthening the primary role of Maryborough through development of its cultural tourism, retail and accommodation offering;
- Improving transport connections including train and bus services to Maryborough;
- Improve RV facilities in small townships to increase the stay of touring grey nomads;
- Building the product and branding of historic villages;
- Improving infrastructure and NBT offering in State and Regional Parks.

### LODDON

Development opportunities are focused on:

- Developing the accommodation base, particularly in nature-based accommodation and reinvestment into caravan and camping parks;
- Building the nature-based tourism product to leverage from the region's waterways, lakes and National Parks. This includes opportunities for adventure tourism and indigenous heritage interpretation;
- Leveraging the agricultural strengths of the region to develop farm-gate opportunities.

### MOUNT ALEXANDER

Development opportunities are focused on:

- Strengthening the primary role of Castlemaine through accommodation development and supporting the emerging food and dining scene;
- Developing the accommodation base to attract more overnight stays;
- Investment in the areas boutique arts and cultural experiences;
- Unlocking the recreational opportunities in the region.

### HEATHCOTE

Development opportunities are focused on:

- Town centre and streetscape improvements to integrate elements of the region's wine brand (e.g. vine plantings);
- Leverage from the recently completed O'Keefe Rail Trail to grow cycling tourism in the town and connect to trails which link wine cellar doors;
- Building the Heathcote wine tourism brand through the development of tourism facilities within wineries e.g. restaurants, accommodation, function space;
- Improve the food and dining offer to complement the region's wine brand;
- Improved visitor facilities at Lake Eppalock.

## A REGIONAL APPROACH

In addition to the product development initiatives, the DMP also provides key directions for progressing a regional approach to tourism. It allows Bendigo Region to apply the learnings from other regional tourism organisations and build on the potential economies of scale from a collaborative approach.

The overall aim of establishing a regional approach to tourism is to create greater efficiencies in service delivery and to ensure that messaging and quality delivery of service is achieved across the region. It is critical therefore that any review of a regional approach to tourism includes consideration not only of governance but delivery mechanisms such as visitor services and digital marketing and information.

A Strategic Action Plan is provided in Section 9 of the Plan, and outlines indicative actions, timelines, and resources required to establish a regional approach to tourism and deliver product development initiatives. The immediate next steps for Bendigo Regional Tourism are to look in detail at the resources and effectiveness of current tourism delivery with the aim to establish sustainable tourism governance in the region.

### 1. GOVERNANCE (IMMEDIATE: NEXT 12 MONTHS)

As a matter of priority, undertake a review of the current regional approach to tourism governance in the Bendigo Region with the aim of identifying the following:

- A regional governance model tailored to the unique characteristics of the Bendigo Region;
- Clear roles and responsibilities for all tourism delivery organisations including LTAs, Local Government, and regional organisations (e.g. winemakers groups);
- Potential committee or board structure and the skills mix/ representatives;
- Regional approach to visitor services and digital media;
- Finances required, membership models and targets for funding.

This review should be undertaken with regard to Section 8.3.4 (Governance Considerations) to ensure that the approach adopted does not duplicate resources and provides an efficient use of

Local Government resources in an environment where rate capping will introduce additional constraints on Local Government budgets.

### 2. DIGITAL (IMMEDIATE: NEXT 12 MONTHS)

Establish a regional tourism hero website that has a shared platform across all LGAs. Key elements to this include:

- Destination websites with destination brands and themes;
- One shared content management system;
- Utilisation of open source web platform (e.g. drupal) to ensure that it can be integrated and easily adapted across the region;
- Dedicated personnel to ensure the website is developed consistently across the region.

### 3. VISITOR INFORMATION SERVICES (IMMEDIATE: NEXT 12 MONTHS)

Undertake a regional information services review which includes the following:

- Thorough primary research to understand the way visitors are travelling across the region and the information sources they are engaging with (i.e. Mornington Peninsula Visitor Journeys Report);
- Strategy which investigates physical and non-physical information services;
- Recommendations for a regional and consistent approach to visitor information services delivery;
- Broadening the role of visitor information services to focus on industry development as well as visitor information delivery;
- Opportunities for additional revenue streams;
- Integration of visitor information services with the new regional structure;
- Access to Wi-Fi in VIC locations.



#### **4. EVENTS STRATEGY/MANAGEMENT (MEDIUM TERM: 2-3 YEARS)**

Undertake a regional events strategy which includes the following:

- Development of an event assessment system which allows Bendigo Regional Tourism to classify events;
- A comprehensive audit of existing events assigned to a tiering system;
- Development of an evaluation criteria in relation to procurement and potential funding for regional events, including an assessment of the value of events;
- Identification of future regional event opportunities with background justification;
- Investigation of sustainable models for event management;
- Tools for ongoing research and assessment of events;
- Builds on the work completed for the Central Goldfields Events Strategy.

#### **5. RESEARCH (SHORT-TERM/ONGOING: 1-3 YEARS)**

Appoint a qualified consultant to assist in undertaking a research program that includes:

- Primary visitor research to track visitor expenditure, activities, dispersal, and markets across the region;
- Industry research to track performance, trends and needs of the tourism industry.



# PART A: BACKGROUND

BENDIGO REGION DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. BACKGROUND

Bendigo Regional Tourism (BRT) commissioned Urban Enterprise to complete a Destination Management Plan (DMP) for the Bendigo Region. BRT is a peak regional tourism body, formed in 2013, as an initiative of the City of Greater Bendigo, Mount Alexander Shire, Central Goldfields Shire, and Loddon Shire Councils.

The Destination Management Plan is a key tourism strategy of the Bendigo Region for the next five years. The Destination Management Plan:

1. Provides an overarching strategic Destination Management Plan for Bendigo Regional Tourism that defines clear directions and actions highlighting investment (both hard and soft) opportunities;
2. Articulates the current market perceptions of the region (recognising the diversity and maturity of the product) across the broader region;
3. Identifies the triggers of visitation to the region, including marketing strategies and their relative importance and effectiveness;
4. Identifies perceived gaps in the current product and experience offer relevant to the region. Quantify jobs and potential jobs growth in the tourism industry across the region;
5. Prioritises product development opportunities based on: target market appeal, economic viability (investment appeal - be it private or public), and the potential to increase visitation, extend length of stay and improve the quality of the visitor experience;
6. Provides relevant material and information that will be critical to private sector investment decisions making for priority product development opportunities;
7. Responds to projected trends over the next five years;

8. Identifies how the member councils of BRT can work together with their individual and collective marketing, visitor services and digital strategies;
9. Follows best practice Destination Management models as identified by ARTN (Australian Regional Tourism Network).

The DMP report builds on an initial Issues and Opportunities Paper which outlined the key issues and product opportunities to emerge from research, consultation, a review of existing strategic direction and a primary audit of regional products.

### 1.1.1. DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLANNING

The DMP follows the Guide to Best Practice in Destination Management, as developed by the Australian Regional Tourism Network (ARTN). The development of the DMP was a holistic and collaborative approach that ensures that tourism adds value to the economy, social fabric and ecology of the regions. The DMP draws on a wide range of primary research, policy analysis and consultation in order to understand the priorities for tourism development in a region.

## 1.2. THE BENDIGO REGION

The following map shows the Bendigo Tourism Region. The region is made up of the following sub-regions:

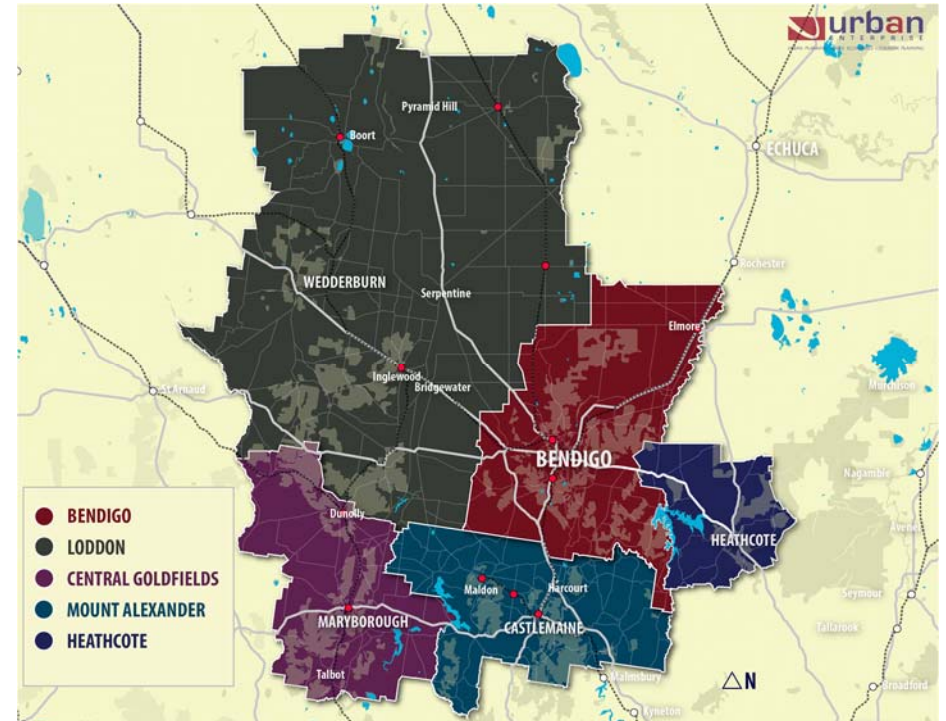
- Mount Alexander Shire;
- Central Goldfields Shire;
- Loddon Shire;
- City of Greater Bendigo (not including Heathcote);
- Heathcote.

Although Heathcote is part of the City of Greater Bendigo municipal area, for the purposes of this report it is considered as a separate sub-region as it receives a unique visitor market, and specific development opportunities which are different to the context of Bendigo.

The Bendigo Region is located in the heart of central Victoria, approximately 150km north-west of Melbourne. It is strategically positioned between the neighbouring tourism regions of Ballarat and surrounds to the south west, the Pyrenees wine region to the west, the Murray region to the north, Spa Country to the south, and the Goulburn River Valley Region to the east.



FIGURE 1 THE BENDIGO REGION AND SUB-REGIONS





### 1.3. HUB AND SPOKE

Currently the Bendigo Region operates as a 'Hub and Spoke' tourism region with Bendigo City acting as the central hub of the region with a large population, visitor, and accommodation base, and the townships and attractions in the surrounding region providing a complementary tourist offering. This approach provides a platform for regional co-ordination between Councils and to strategically leverage the resident and visitor population of Bendigo City.

It is important to note that the use of the 'hub and spoke' model does not mean locations outside of Bendigo City are not/cannot develop as a destination in their own right. Each of the sub-regions has their own product strengths and unique appeal which assist in establishing a stronger regional destination. Building the unique features of each sub-region will be developed through targeted product development and destination marketing.

The intended outcome delivered through this regional approach is to:

- Extend the yield and length of stay of visitors by encouraging them to explore the wider region;
- Attract new visitors through the development of a high quality tourism network and compelling regional package; and
- Encourage intra-regional visitation from the growing Bendigo Region population and significant VFR market.

### 1.4. PLAN LAYOUT

The Destination Management Plan is divided into three sections.

#### PART A - BACKGROUND

The Background section provides a summary of the outcomes of the Issues and Opportunities Paper, including:

- Analysis of visitation trends and profile over the past decade;
- A review of key target markets for the region, using Visit Victoria's Lifestyle Leaders segmentation model;
- A product and experience audit to understand the type and geographical location of existing product across the region;

#### PART B - DMP FRAMEWORK

Focuses on the core product development initiatives for the region, including:

- An overview of the Project Assessment Methodology, which details how project opportunities and initiatives are prioritized and the six overarching Strategic Development Objectives;
- Project profiles for the region's Priority Projects, which are the catalyst opportunities for the Bendigo Region;
- The identification of a suite of Destination Development Opportunities, at a sub-regional level, which provide the critical mass of product to lift individual destinations and the wider regional product offer.

#### PART C - REGIONAL APPROACH

Recommendations to strengthen the regional approach to tourism including:

- A set of regional initiatives aimed at strengthening the Bendigo Region, including regional positioning projects that will assist in knitting together the region.
- A Strategic Action Plan to guide implementation over the next 5 years.

## APPENDICES

Supporting detailed data and analysis is contained in the Appendix. The Appendix is structured as follows:

### **Appendix A - Strategic Policy Review**

- Policy and literature review of the key Federal, State, regional and local strategies which influence tourism development in the Bendigo Region.

### **Appendix B - Detailed Visitor Demographic Analysis**

- Detailed visitor demographic analysis for the Bendigo Region using data from the NVS, IVS, and Roy Morgan HTS.

### **Appendix C - Roy Morgan Product Testing**

- Detailed results of Roy Morgan Lifestyle Leaders Survey Results.

### **Appendix D - Detailed Product and Infrastructure Audit**

- Detailed analysis of the regional product and infrastructure dispersal, and sub-regional tourism product.

### **Appendix E - Priority Project Economic Impact Assessment**

- Detailed analysis for the economic impact assessment of selected priority projects

### **Appendix F - Digital Audit**

- Detailed digital audit of Council resources undertaken by Como Group.

## 2. BENDIGO REGION VISITOR ECONOMY

### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

This section provides an assessment of Bendigo Region visitor economy including key trends over the past decade, visitation projections over the next 20 years, and analysis of the economic impact of tourism undertaken by Remplan.

This section highlights the key findings from the research, with detailed data analysis of the current visitor profile included in **Appendix B**.

#### 2.1.1. DATA SOURCES

##### NATIONAL VISITOR SURVEY (NVS)

Tourism Research Australia is responsible for conducting the National Visitor Survey. 120,000 Australian residents are interviewed annually about their travel, capturing interstate and intrastate visitation. Information that the NVS provides includes visitor destinations, origins, activities, travel methods, activities and expenditure. Daytrips are only included in the NVS if the respondent travelled more than 40kms from their residence, and spent more than 4 hours at the destination. Therefore a large proportion of intra-regional visitation in the Bendigo Region will not be accounted for within the data.

##### INTERNATIONAL VISITOR SURVEY (IVS)

Tourism Research Australia also conducts the International Visitor Survey. The IVS is conducted in the departure lounges of 8 international airports in Australia: Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Cairns, Perth, Adelaide, Darwin and the Gold Coast. 40,000 departing tourists are interviewed about their time in Australia.

##### ROY MORGAN HOLIDAY TRACKING SURVEY (HTS)

As part of the Roy Morgan Research Single Source national survey, the Holiday Tracking Survey data provides for detailed profiles of Australian travellers from a sample of over 15,000 Australians (aged 14+). HTS data has been used in this section to provide a detailed analysis of the profile of visitors to Bendigo and Surrounds compared to the Australian population, looking at their holiday and general lifestyle attitudes as well as their participation in a broad range of sports and leisure activities.



## 2.2. SUMMARY OF BENDIGO VISITOR ECONOMY

- **The Bendigo Region attracts around 2.9 million visitors annually, of which 2 million are day-trippers and 900,000 overnight visitors.** Bendigo City is the major accommodation and visitor hub, and captures approximately 65% of visitation to the region, Mount Alexander is strategically located between Bendigo and Melbourne and captures approximately 18% of visitation. Central Goldfields, Loddon and Heathcote capture a smaller number of visitors with significant scope for growth to leverage from the newly formed regional partnership.
- **The Bendigo Region has experienced significant visitor growth over the past decade due to the impact of arts major exhibitions, destination marketing efforts, and improved accessibility to Melbourne.** Visitor growth has occurred primarily in the daytrip market which peaked in 2012 at 2.5 million visitors but has since dropped to 2 million in 2014. Overnight visitation has grown by a smaller amount, with an additional 50,000 visitors since 2004, in line with growth rates for Ballarat and Regional Victoria.
- **The Bendigo Region attracts a diverse visitor profile due to the large regional service role of Bendigo City.** Only 35% of visitors to the Bendigo Region are travelling to the region for holiday/leisure purposes. Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) accounts for almost half of the total visitor market and business accounts for 11%. As the population and economic base of Bendigo continues to grow so will the VFR and business market and growing the visitor yield from these markets will be important.
- Comparisons of the Bendigo visitor market to other regions shows the following distinctions:
  - **Bendigo receives an older visitor market**, particularly within the 55+ age group. This is due to a number of major art exhibitions targeted at this age group, and strength of the grey nomad market in the region. There is opportunity to grow the younger market (25-45) which is becoming an increasingly important tourism market;
  - Smaller proportions of visitors travelling as a family group;

- Analysis of visitor attitudes and preferences shows that the current visitor profile is a more discerning and likely to be interested in more contemporary art and cultural experiences (e.g. wine, theatre, galleries).
- **Melbourne is the key visitor market for Bendigo** (46% of visitors) followed by Regional Victoria (34%). The region receives a smaller interstate and international market mainly due to the lack of large, iconic attraction (e.g. Ballarat with Sovereign Hill). There may be opportunity to grow this further through the development of regional packaging.
- There is a high rate of intra-regional across the Bendigo Region. **For the sub-regions of Loddon and Central Goldfields, the Bendigo Region is their largest market for daytrip visitors.** This highlights the importance of the strategic alignment between Councils and allows the regional Councils to promote their destinations into the Bendigo market.
- Currently the Bendigo Region visitor economy is estimated to contribute 4,170 jobs and \$828 million in direct and in-direct economic output.

It is important that continued investment in product development is encouraged to maintain visitation levels outside of major arts exhibitions, increase visitor length of stay (particularly converting daytrip to overnight), and build a sustainable and diverse tourism region.

## 2.3. VISITATION TRENDS

### 2.3.1. DOMESTIC VISITATION

#### OVERNIGHT

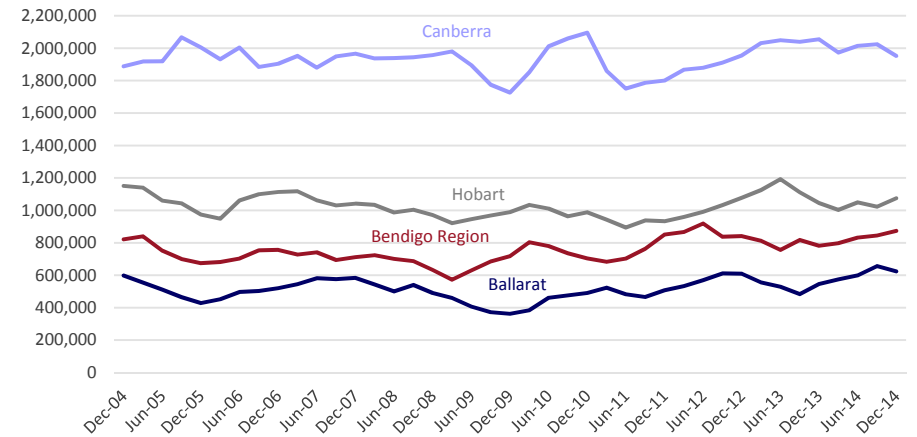
Figure 2 shows overnight visitation growth between 2004 and 2014 for the Bendigo Region compared with Ballarat, and other well known art and cultural destinations (Hobart and Canberra).

In 2014 overnight visitation to the Bendigo Region was approximately 870,000 per annum. Over the past decade the region grew by approximately 50,000 overnight visitors (increase of 5%). This represents a similar rate of growth to Ballarat and regional Victoria.

Figure 3 shows percentage growth in overnight visitation over the decade to 2014. Between 2004 and 2009 overnight visitation to the Bendigo Region declined by approximately 30%.

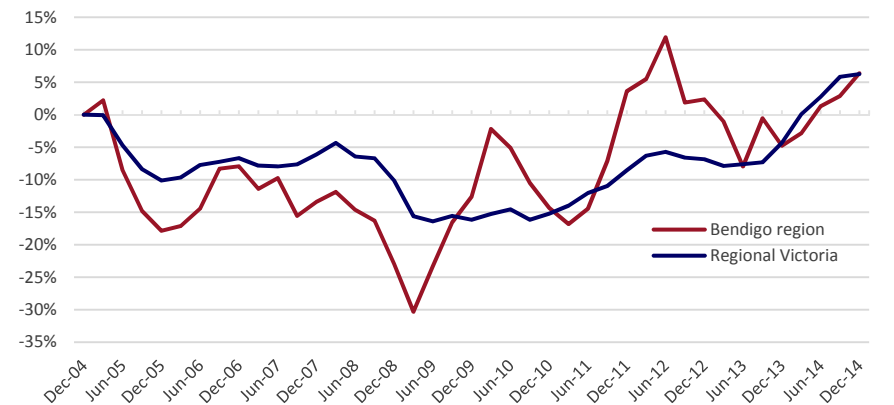
The decline in overnight visitation between 2004 and 2009 was a trend felt across all regional destinations due to a number of factors including the GFC, high petrol prices, and a high Australian dollar encouraging more Australians to holiday overseas. From 2010, overnight visitation has recovered to be slightly higher than it was in 2004.

FIGURE 2 OVERNIGHT VISITATION 2004-2014



Source: Tourism Research Australia, NVS, 2004-2014, 12 months rolling

FIGURE 3 OVERNIGHT TRENDED VISITATION (REGIONAL VIC VS BENDIGO)



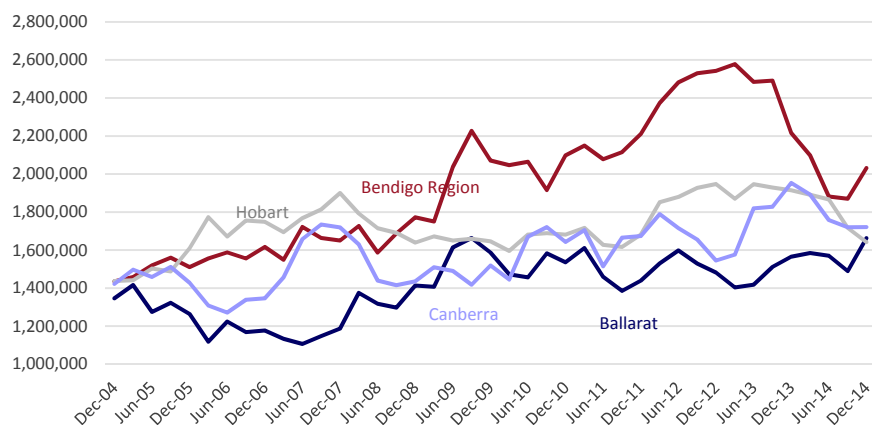
Source: Tourism Research Australia, NVS, 2004-2014, 12 months rolling

## DAYTRIP

In 2014 the Bendigo Region attracted just over 2 million daytrips, more than any of the other comparison regions. Compared to similar regional or small capital city destinations, the Bendigo Region has a strong daytrip market.

Growth in daytrips to the Bendigo Region has been substantial over the past decade. Figure 4 shows that the Bendigo Region attracted a similar level of daytrip visitation to the other comparison regions in 2004, but grew to over 2.5 million, an addition of 1 million daytrips per annum. Between 2012 and 2014, the Bendigo Region experienced a decline in daytrip visitors.

FIGURE 4 DAYTRIP VISITATION 2004-2014

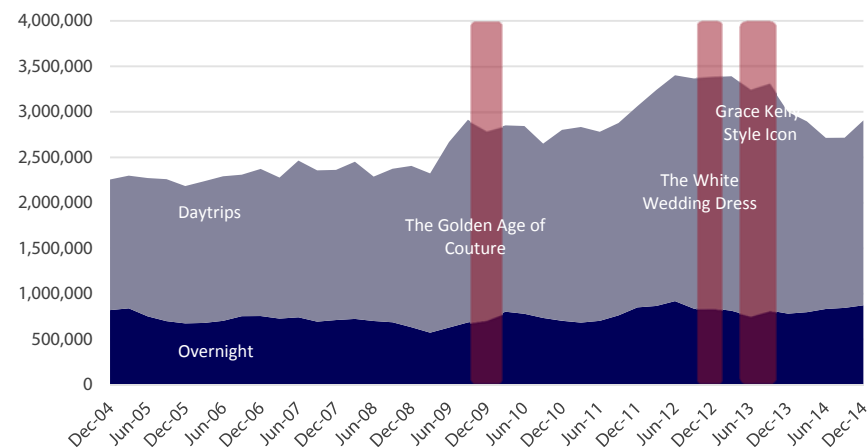


Source: Tourism Research Australia, NVS, 2004-2014, 12 months rolling

## IMPACT OF MAJOR EXHIBITIONS

Figure 5 shows the impact of major exhibitions at the Bendigo Art Gallery and destination marketing efforts on visitation to the Bendigo Region. The White Wedding and Grace Kelly exhibitions peaked visitation in 2012. The decline in visitation since the major Grace Kelly Exhibition suggests that there may be issues in generating repeat visitation from gallery visitors.

FIGURE 5 BENDIGO REGION TRENDED VISITATION AND MAJOR EXHIBITIONS



Source: Tourism Research Australia, NVS, 2004-2014, 12 months rolling

Visitation growth in the Bendigo Region has been largely dependent on major art gallery exhibitions. Whilst this has proven to drive economic growth in Bendigo, additional effort should be made in the investment of long term attraction to sustainably grow visitations. Converting daytrip visitors to overnight should be a core focus and part of the criteria for priority tourism projects across the region.

### 2.3.2. INTERNATIONAL VISITATION

Figure 6 shows international visitation to the Bendigo Region. The region attracted 20,000 international overnight trips in the year ending September 2014. Figure 7 shows trended international visitation growth compared with Regional Victoria. The region has experienced strong growth in international visitation with 70% growth between 2006 and 2014, significantly higher than the regional Victoria growth rate. However, the international market still remains a small market for Bendigo making up only 3% of all overnight visitors.

It is important to note that the daytrip international market is not included in the data and hence international visitation is likely to be understated.

#### COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

The top countries of origin for international visitors include:

- UK (22%)
- New Zealand (21%)
- USA (8%)
- China (5%)
- Canada (3%)

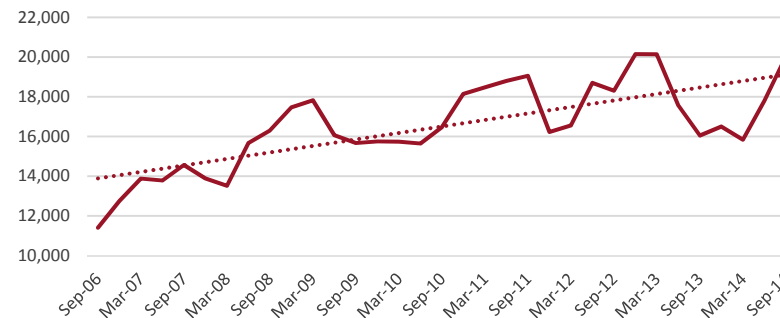
The UK and New Zealand are the strongest international markets for the Bendigo Region. The Bendigo Region receives a relatively smaller Asian visitor market representing a significant opportunity for growth.

The Tourism Forecasting Committee (TFC) predicts Chinese overnight visitors to double by 2020 representing significant opportunity for Victoria's regions<sup>1</sup>.

Bendigo has a strong Chinese Heritage and targeted research undertaken for the Golden Dragon Museum Strategic Plan into the opportunity to grow the Chinese market should be considered in future planning.

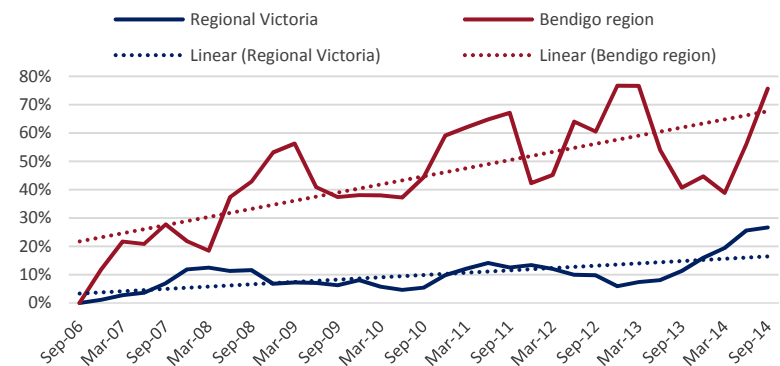
<sup>1</sup> Tourism Victoria, Victoria's Chinese Tourism Strategy 2012

FIGURE 6 INTERNATIONAL VISITATION 2006-2014



Source: Tourism Research Australia, IVS, 2004-2014, 12 months rolling

FIGURE 7 TRENDED INTERNATIONAL VISITATION GROWTH 2006-2014



Source: Tourism Research Australia, IVS, 2004-2014, 12 months rolling



## 2.4. SUB-REGION VISITATION

### 2.4.1. OVERNIGHT VISITATION BY SUB-REGION

As the major accommodation hub in the region, Bendigo City receives the majority of overnight visitation (64% of the region).

Mount Alexander receives 18% of the region's overnight visitation, a reflection of its strategic location between Bendigo and Melbourne, and the popularity of Castlemaine as a lifestyle location.

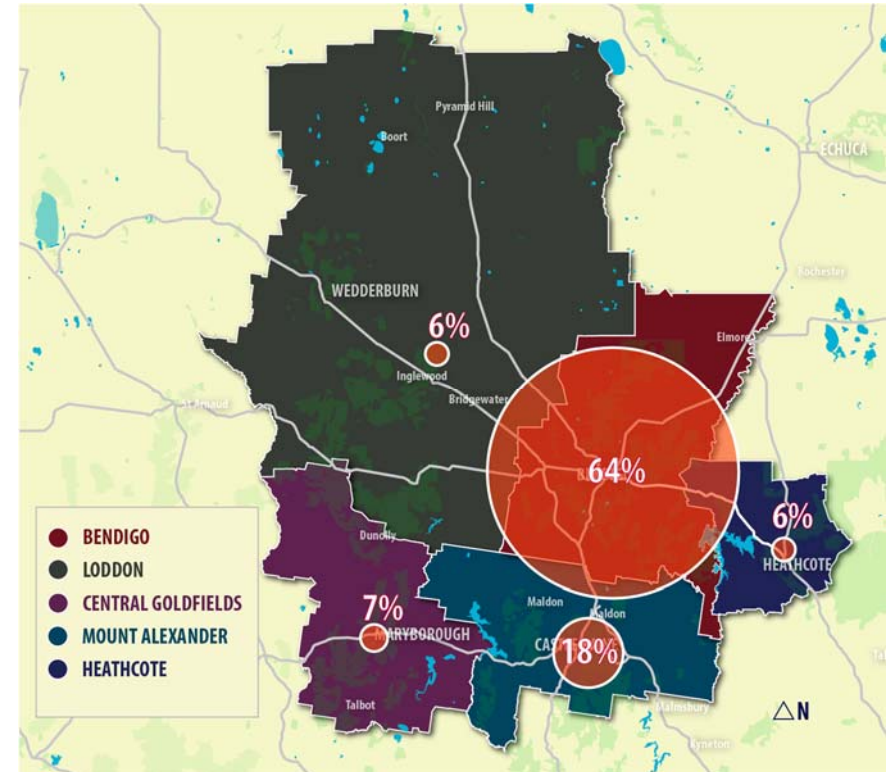
The other sub-regions receive a similar level of overnight visitation (approximately 6% of the region) reflecting their smaller population and low accommodation stock.

**TABLE 1** SUB-REGION ANNUAL OVERNIGHT VISITATION (5 YEAR AVERAGE)

Sub-Region	Annual Overnight Visitation	% of Region
Bendigo	525,095	64%
Mount Alexander	148,637	18%
Central Goldfields	53,900	7%
Heathcote	48,380	6%
Loddon	47,486	6%
Total	823,497	100%

Source: Tourism Research Australia, NVS, 2009-2014

**FIGURE 8** OVERNIGHT VISITATION BY SUB-REGION



Source: Urban Enterprise 2015

### 2.4.2. DAYTRIP VISITATION BY SUB-REGION

The breakdown of daytrip visitation by sub-region is similar to overnight visitation. The concentration of current visitation to the City of Bendigo shows there is further opportunity to drive dispersal to smaller towns and villages.

It is important to note that the definition of a daytrip for the purposes of the NVS is for a visitor to stay within the region for over 4 hours. For smaller townships which receive a lot of touring and stop over visitors, or towns such as Maryborough which attract a lot of shoppers for its large retail sector, many of these visitors will not be counted in the NVS data.

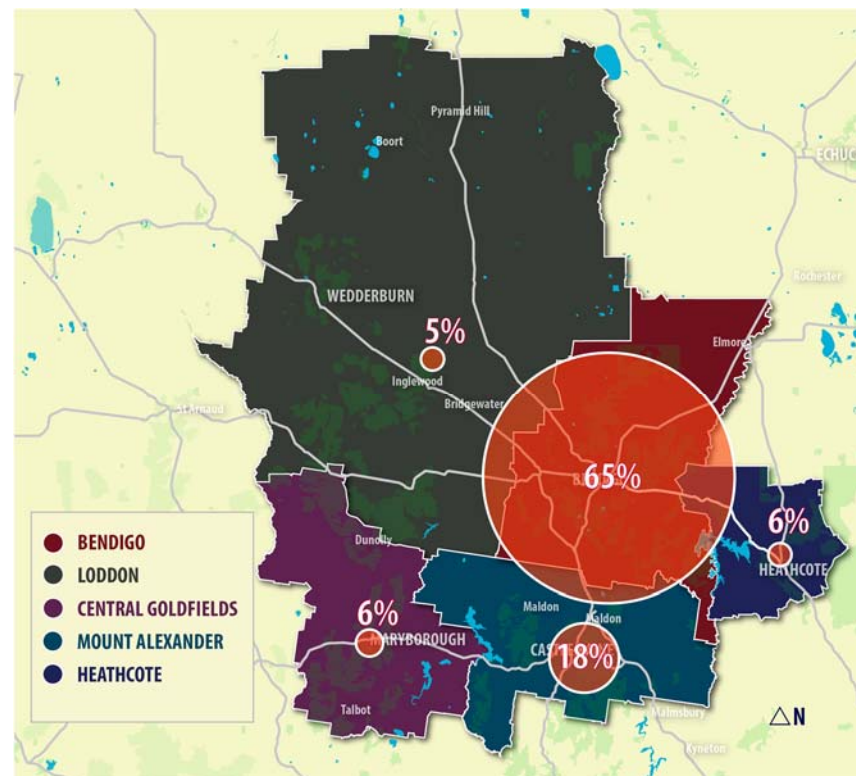
TABLE 2 SUB-REGION ANNUAL DAYTRIP VISITATION (5 YEAR AVERAGE)

Sub Region	Annual Daytrip Visitation	% of Region
Bendigo	1,432,554	65%
Mount Alexander	396,421	18%
Central Goldfields	139,830	6%
Heathcote	131,196	6%
Loddon	119,715	5%
Total	2,219,716	100%

Source: Tourism Research Australia, NVS, 2009-2014

Bendigo City receives almost two-thirds of total visitation to the region demonstrating the hub and spoke model for the Bendigo Region. This highlights the need to disperse visitors from Bendigo. A number of the objectives for tourism development in the region focus on improving the regional and hinterland product such as villages, NBT, and wine and farm-gate experiences.

FIGURE 9 DAYTRIP VISITATION BY SUB-REGION



Source: Urban Enterprise 2015

## 2.5. VISITOR DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

A detailed visitor demographic profile is provided in Appendix C with an overview provided below.

### DOMESTIC VISITOR PROFILE

Some of the key features of the Bendigo Region visitor profile include:

- A strong VFR market (almost half of all visitors) reflecting strong population growth and lifestyle residential development;
- A strong business visitor market to Bendigo City (16%);
- Melbourne is the key overnight visitor market (46%) followed by Regional Victoria (36%). Interstate visitors makes up 18% overall overnight visitors;
- Bendigo receives an older visitor market, particularly within the 55+ age group. This is due to a number of major art exhibitions targeted at this age group, and strength of the grey nomad market in the region. There is opportunity to grow the younger market (25-45 year olds) which is becoming an increasingly important tourism market;
- Analysis of visitor activities demonstrates the strength of the region's arts, cultural and heritage offerings. Activities which are less prominent in the Bendigo Region and could be developed and marketed further include food, wine and NBT activities;
- Strong intra-region travel across the Bendigo Region. The Bendigo Region is the largest daytrip market for Loddon and Central Goldfields;
- Analysis of visitor attitudes and preferences shows that the current visitor profile is a more discerning and likely to be interested in more contemporary art and cultural experiences (e.g. wine, theatre, galleries).

### INTERNATIONAL VISITATION

- The international market accounts for 3% of all overnight visitors to the Bendigo Region, attracting 20,030 international overnight trips in the year ending September 2014;

- The Bendigo Region has experienced stronger growth in the international market compared to total Regional Victoria.

## 2.6. VISITATION FORECAST

Two scenarios were used to project future visitation. They include:

- Scenario 1 - Historical Rate of Growth
- Scenario 2 - Population Growth

The two scenarios are used to provide a range for future growth. It is important to note that forecasting daytrip visitation is challenging due to the number of variables which impact daytrip visitation and the high variability year to year which may be influenced by macro-economic trends.

### 2.6.1. SCENARIO 1 - HISTORICAL GROWTH RATE

Historical growth rates for overnight and daytrip visitation were sourced from the NVS, and international overnight visitation from the IVS.

Domestic daytrip visitation grew strongly over the decade by 3.54% p.a. and, overnight grew at a smaller rate of 0.62% p.a. International visitation grew at a high rate of 7.30% p.a. but off a small base.

TABLE 3 HISTORICAL VISITOR GROWTH

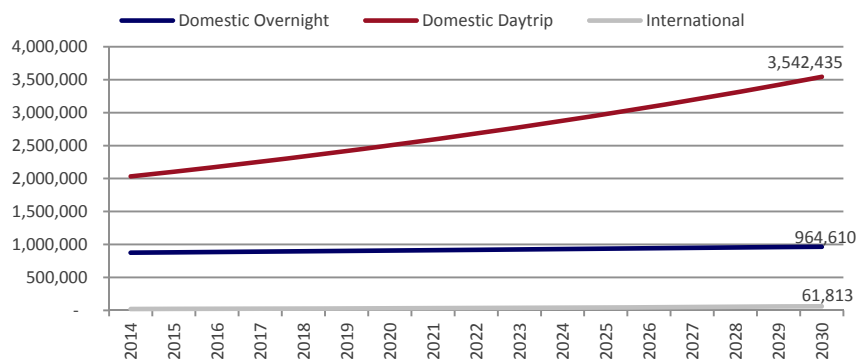
	2004	2014	Nett growth	% Growth p.a.
Domestic Daytrip	1,435,330	2,031,682	+596,352	3.54%
Domestic Overnight	821,376	873,759	+52,384	0.62%
International*	11,402	20,030	+8,628	7.30%
Total	2,268,108	2,925,471	+657,363	2.58%

\*Historical growth rate for international visitors was calculated between 2006 and 2014

Source: Tourism Research Australia, NVS & IVS 2004-2014, compiled by Urban Enterprise 2015

Based on these growth rates, the following graph shows visitor forecast growth to 2030. If daytrip visitation to the Bendigo Region was to continue to grow at the same rate as the past decade, an additional 1.5 million daytrip visitors would be expected by 2030. Overnight visitation is expected to grow by 91,000 visitors, and international by 41,000 to 2030.

**FIGURE 10** VISITATION FORECAST - HISTORICAL GROWTH RATE



Source: Urban Enterprise 2015

### 2.6.2. SCENARIO 2 - POPULATION GROWTH

This scenario forecasts visitor growth using population growth rates for the regions key visitor origin markets as shown in the table below. This scenario assumes that as population grows, Bendigo's market share would remain the same and grow at the same rate.

	% Visitor Origin (overnight)	% Visitor Origin (daytrip)	Growth %p.a.
Greater Melbourne	43%	38%	1.98%
Regional Victoria	36%	58%	1.53%
Interstate	18%	4%	1.76%
International*	3%	-	4.90%

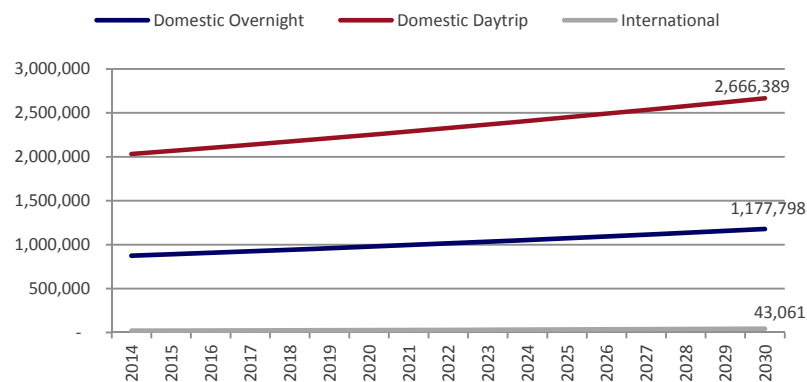
\*International growth rates were sourced from Tourism Victoria Forecasts

Source: Victoria in Future 2014, Tourism Victoria 2014, compiled by Urban Enterprise 2015

Based on the population growth within Bendigo's key markets, daytrip visitation is projected to grow by 600,000, overnight by 287,000, and international by 22,000 visitors.



**FIGURE 11** VISITATION PROJECTION - POPULATION GROWTH



Source: Urban Enterprise 2015

### 2.6.3. FORECAST SUMMARY

Based on the two growth scenarios, projected visitor growth for the Bendigo Region to 2030 is as follows:

- Additional 600,000 - 1.5m domestic daytrip visitors
- Additional 91,000- 287,000 overnight domestic visitors
- Additional 22,000 - 41,000 international visitors

Bendigo is forecast to attract long term growth in visitors at a minimum of an additional 700,000 visitors by 2030. It is critical that this growth is supported through investment in accommodation, attractions, and infrastructure to continue to promote compelling reasons to visit. The DMP includes a number of priority projects that aim to support additional visitation such as accommodation establishments.

## 2.7. ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION OF TOURISM

The tourism sector in the Bendigo Region generates \$443.26 million per annum in direct output, 3.22% of total direct output for the region. There are 2,749 tourism sector jobs in the Bendigo Region, accounting for 5.5% of total employment.

**TABLE 4** DIRECT CONTRIBUTION OF TOURISM

	Gross Output (\$M)	Gross Output (%)	Employment (Jobs)	Employment (%)
Greater Bendigo	\$339.49	3.21%	2,120	5.63%
Loddon	\$17.89	2.72%	100	4.04%
Mt Alexander	\$52.56	3.20%	322	5.29%
Central Goldfields	\$33.33	3.70%	202	5.30%
<b>Total Bendigo Region</b>	<b>\$443.26</b>	<b>3.22%</b>	<b>2,749</b>	<b>5.50%</b>

Source: Remplan 2015

### IMPACT ON EMPLOYMENT

The 2,749 tourism sector jobs in the Bendigo Region are estimated to support up to a further 1,421 local jobs once flow-on industrial and consumption effects are taken into consideration.

*Employment data presented by REMPLAN is destination of work data. That is, no inference is made as to where people in a defined region reside. This employment represents total numbers of employees without any conversions to full-time equivalence. Retail jobs for instance represent typical employment profiles for that sector, i.e. some full time, some part time and some casual.*

TABLE 5 TOURISM IMPACT ON EMPLOYMENT

	Direct Effect (Jobs)	Industrial Effect (Jobs)	Consumption Effect (Jobs)	Total (Jobs)
Accommodation & Food Services	1,324	26	89	1,440
Retail Trade	637	68	189	894
Transport, Postal & Warehousing	202	53	20	276
Manufacturing	102	94	50	246
Education & Training	170	9	68	246
Health Care & Social Assistance	63	2	97	162
Arts & Recreation Services	116	17	14	146
Administrative & Support Services	51	70	14	135
Other Services	23	44	45	112
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	0	84	22	105
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	13	60	13	87
Wholesale Trade	23	29	18	70
Financial & Insurance Services	1	28	34	63
Construction	0	38	14	52
Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services	16	26	7	50
Information Media & Telecommunications	8	22	12	42
Public Administration & Safety	0	16	6	22
Electricity, Gas, Water & Waste Services	0	10	8	18
Mining	0	1	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,749</b>	<b>699</b>	<b>722</b>	<b>4,170</b>

Source: Remplan 2015

## IMPACT ON OUTPUT

The tourism sector in the Bendigo Region generates \$443 million per annum in direct output, and a further \$384 million once flow-on industrial and consumption effects are taken into consideration.

*Output data represents the gross revenue generated by businesses/organisations in each of the industry sectors in a defined region. Gross revenue is also referred to as total sales or total income.*

TABLE 6 TOURISM IMPACT ON OUTPUT (\$ MILLIONS)

	Direct Effect (\$M)	Industrial Effect (\$M)	Consumption Effect (\$M)	Total (\$M)
Accommodation & Food Services	158.9	3.1	10.3	172.3
Manufacturing	57.6	50.3	25.4	133.3
Retail Trade	66.4	7.0	19.6	93.1
Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services	31.5	12.9	38.7	83.1
Transport, Postal & Warehousing	52.7	12.7	5.1	70.5
Financial & Insurance Services	0.5	15.6	20.1	36.1
Administrative & Support Services	11.9	14.2	3.0	29.1
Education & Training	19.9	1.1	7.6	28.6
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	0	21.0	5.5	26.6
Arts & Recreation Services	19.4	2.6	2.4	24.3
Wholesale Trade	7.7	9.5	6.0	23.2
Information Media & Telecommunications	4.2	11.9	6.3	22.4
Health Care & Social Assistance	7.1	0.2	10.8	18.
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	2.6	12.4	2.9	17.9
Construction	0	11.7	4.5	16.2
Other Services	3.0	6.4	5.6	15.1
Electricity, Gas, Water & Waste Services	0	7.4	5.5	13.0
Public Administration & Safety	0	2.7	1.0	3.8
Mining	0	1.3	0.2	1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>443.3</b>	<b>204.2</b>	<b>180.8</b>	<b>828.2</b>

Source: Remplan 2015

### 2.7.1. REGIONAL BENCHMARKING

The table below shows the comparison of the direct economic contribution of tourism between the Bendigo Region and other regional destinations. Tourism provides a similar proportion of economic output across all regions, with Shepparton being the lowest.

TABLE 7 DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TOURISM

	Bendigo Region	Ballarat (LGA)	Greater Geelong (LGA)	Shepparton (LGA)
# Tourism Jobs	2,749	2,267	3,988	1,098
% of Tourism Jobs	5.5%	5.8%	5.1%	4.4%
Tourism Economic Output (\$M)	443.2	360.3	658.5	170.0
Tourism contribution to total economic output (%)	3.2%	3.4%	2.5%	2.4%

Source: Remplan Economic Profile 2015, compiled by Urban Enterprise 2015

Growing the economic benefit of tourism across the region is a fundamental objective which underpins public investment in tourism product. This DMP identifies a number of Priority Projects which have significant scope to deliver on-going employment opportunities. An economic impact assessment has been included for 8 of the Priority Projects which shows a combined output of over \$400 million in on-going contribution to the regional economy if they were delivered.

## 3. MARKET SEGMENTATION

### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

This section provides an assessment of Visit Victoria's domestic consumer market segmentation model 'Lifestyle Leaders' which has been adopted as a key target market for the Bendigo Region. To understand the key motivational drivers for the Lifestyle Leaders Market, Roy Morgan carried out a survey to:

- Assess current perceptions of the Bendigo Region;
- Understand the types of activities and experiences the Lifestyle Leaders would be interested in undertaking in the Bendigo Region; and
- Understand the primary activities which will motivate Lifestyle Leaders to visit the Bendigo Region.

The descriptions of the market segments in this section are based on information sourced from Visit Victoria.

It is important to note that there are other niche market segments which are important to the Bendigo region such as bird watchers, gold fossickers, and school and sporting groups, as well as special interest groups (e.g. religious). The grey nomad touring market in particular is a significant visitor market for the region and important outside of peak times. Targeted marketing should be undertaken to continue to attract and grow these markets in the future.

#### 3.1.1. DATA SOURCES

##### ROY MORGAN BENDIGO REGION LIFESTYLE LEADERS SURVEY

As part of the research program undertaken for the Bendigo DMP, Roy Morgan Research were commissioned to undertake the market research project, recontacting a sample of 200 Roy Morgan Single Source Survey respondents within Visit Victoria's Lifestyle Leader market segment, by Computer Assisted Telephone Interview in August 2015.

Detailed results from the survey are provided in Appendix C.

### 3.2. LIFESTYLE LEADERS

The key domestic target market for the Bendigo Region has been identified as the "Lifestyle Leaders" market, developed and targeted by Visit Victoria. Lifestyle Leaders are based on a mindset, are found in all regions, ages and lifecycle groups and represent approximately a third of the Australian population aged 18+.

Lifestyle Leaders are educated, professional and progressive individuals who enjoy seeking out new information and being the first to try new products. They have a higher level of discretionary expenditure than the general population so they can afford to indulge more often in travel, with a particular desire to escape city life and embrace nature/outdoors and new discoveries. Compared with the average Australian, Lifestyle Leaders:

- Take a greater number of leisure trips per year (4.2 trips compared to 3.9); and
- Spend more on travelling per year (\$4,058 on average compared to \$3,205)

The Lifestyle Leaders market segmentation model also incorporates four categories of target markets specific to the types of experiences sought within the Lifestyle Leaders market, as outlined below.

#### CREATIVE OPINION LEADERS

Creative Opinion Leaders represent approximately 6% of the total population 18+. They are creative both in terms of their involvement in cultural and creative pursuits and their openness to risks, new experiences and new ideas. Their extensive social networks and extroverted nature means that once they've visited a destination, the latest exhibition or experience, they will generate positive word of mouth among their friends and family.



### FOOD AND WINE LIFESTYLERS

Food and Wine Lifestylers represent approximately 13% of the total population 18+. They are a credible authority on eating out and seek to enhance their sophisticated palate and culinary knowledge through an understanding about everything food and wine. In particular they like to get to know the characters and stories behind the food and wine from the winemaker or chef.

### ENRICHED WELLBEING

Enriched Wellbeing represent approximately 7% of the total population 18+. Enriched Wellbeing are progressive, educated and professional individuals who seek luxurious breaks to indulge personal passions within a culturally rich, natural or rejuvenating setting.

Enriched Wellbeing are financially secure, predominately female individuals who earn more and spend more on travel and luxury accommodation. They value quality over price and seek enrichment and rejuvenation through connecting with nature and focussing on their wellbeing. They appreciate quality and freshness in food and are more likely to buy organic foods, and indulge in premium restaurant experiences which offer fresh, seasonal and regional produce.

### INSPIRED BY NATURE

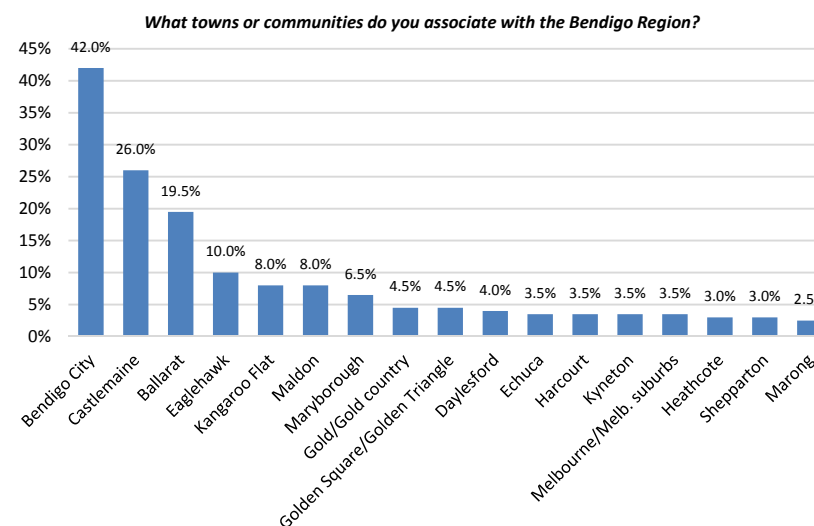
Represent approximately 14% of the total population 18+. They regularly get away for weekends, and want a choice of activities that allow them to get active to varied degrees, from hiking and cycling to shopping and dining. Their genuine environmental concerns lead them towards preferring an eco-tourism experience where respect for natural surrounds is paramount.

## 3.3. BENDIGO REGION PERCEPTIONS

### 3.3.1. AWARENESS

Respondents were asked what towns or communities do they associate with the Bendigo Region. Other than Bendigo City, Castlemaine has a fairly strong association with the region with 26% of respondents identifying it as being within the region. Maryborough was only identified by 6.5% of respondents. Bridgewater was the Loddon town with the highest association with the Bendigo Region at 1.5%.

FIGURE 12 TOWNS ASSOCIATED WITH THE BENDIGO REGION (LIFESTYLE LEADERS)



Source: Roy Morgan Bendigo Region Lifestyle Leaders Survey, August 2015

The results show that there is currently a low awareness of the Bendigo Region. Although this would be expected as the region has only been working together for a short period of time, the results demonstrate the challenges for regional marketing and building awareness around a Bendigo Region brand. The development of a destination website is a key project identified in this plan. This will significantly strengthen regional awareness.

### 3.3.2. TOURISM STRENGTHS

Respondents were asked to list the visitor attractions and activities which they associate with the Bendigo Region. Responses were coded by activity as shown in the Figure 13.

The Bendigo Art Gallery/Art Galleries was the attraction which has the highest association with the Bendigo Region, identified by 23% of respondents. Respondents aged 50+ had the strongest association (31%), but a low profile with respondents aged under 49 (only 9%).

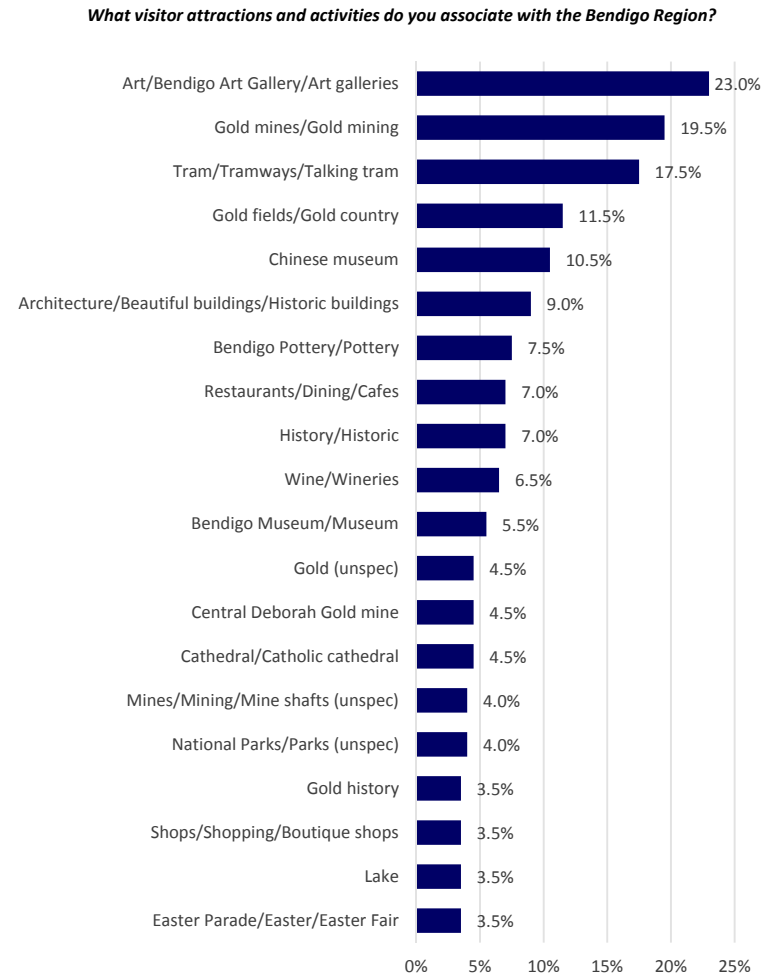
The Tramways is a well known icon of Bendigo with 17.5% of respondents associating it with the Bendigo Region. The Tramways also has a low association with the younger market (under 49 years) with only 8% identifying it as tourism strength of Bendigo.

As a standalone attraction both the Chinese Dragon Museum and Pottery have a relatively high association with Bendigo Region (11% and 7% respectively).

Wine/Wineries have a very low profile in the Bendigo Region with only 6.5% of respondents associating it with the region. It shows that there is significant opportunity to grow awareness of the regions wine strengths.

In general, respondents aged under 49 years did not identify a particular strength for the Bendigo Region. The highest association was with Gold mining at 12%. This highlights the low awareness of Bendigo as a tourism region within the younger demographic.

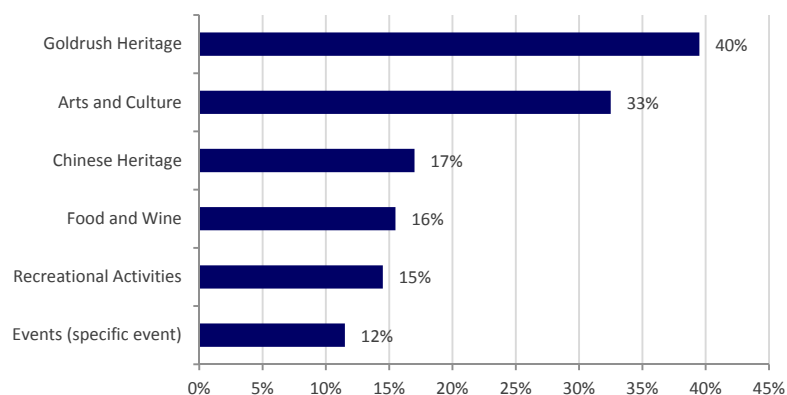
FIGURE 13 ATTRACTIONS/ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE BENDIGO REGION (LIFESTYLE LEADERS)



Source: Roy Morgan Bendigo Region Lifestyle Leaders Survey, August 2015

Figure 14 summarises responses by major theme. It shows that goldrush heritage remains the largest activity type affiliated with the Bendigo Region followed by Arts and Culture. Chinese Heritage was recognised by 17% of respondents due to the Museum and Joss House.

**FIGURE 14** MAJOR THEMES ASSOCIATED WITH THE BENDIGO REGION (LIFESTYLE LEADERS)



Source: Roy Morgan Bendigo Region Lifestyle Leaders Survey, August 2015

### 3.3.3. CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

The Regional Awareness and Perceptions Survey (RAPS) were last undertaken in 2011. It is important to note that the RAPS Survey uses different methodology to the research presented in this section (RAPS was a broad population survey whereas the research presented here is targeted at the Lifestyle Leaders segment). Direct comparisons should not be made between results however; comparing the relative popularity of activities provides an indication of how perceptions may have changed over the past 5 years. Some of the main findings include:

- In 2011 Art and Culture ranked 4th with just 7.2% of respondents associating it as a tourism experience in Bendigo. This demonstrates the impact of the Bendigo Art Gallery and destination marketing efforts in recent years.
- The Tramways ranked 5th with just 5.3% of respondents associating it with the Bendigo Region. The profile of tramways has seemingly increased in recent years.

The primary research into the Lifestyle Leaders Market Segment identified 'Art' and the 'Bendigo Art Gallery' as having the highest association with the Bendigo Region. However, associations with gold heritage still rates as the highest overall theme associated with the Bendigo Region including "gold mining" and "goldfields" with a combined association of 40%.

### 3.4. TOURISM ACTIVITY/EXPERIENCE PREFERENCES

Respondents were asked if they would be interested in undertaking the following activities in the Bendigo Region, and which activity would motivate them to visit the region.

The full results are provided in **Appendix C** with a breakdown of the demographic profile of respondents. A summary of the top rated activities is provided below.

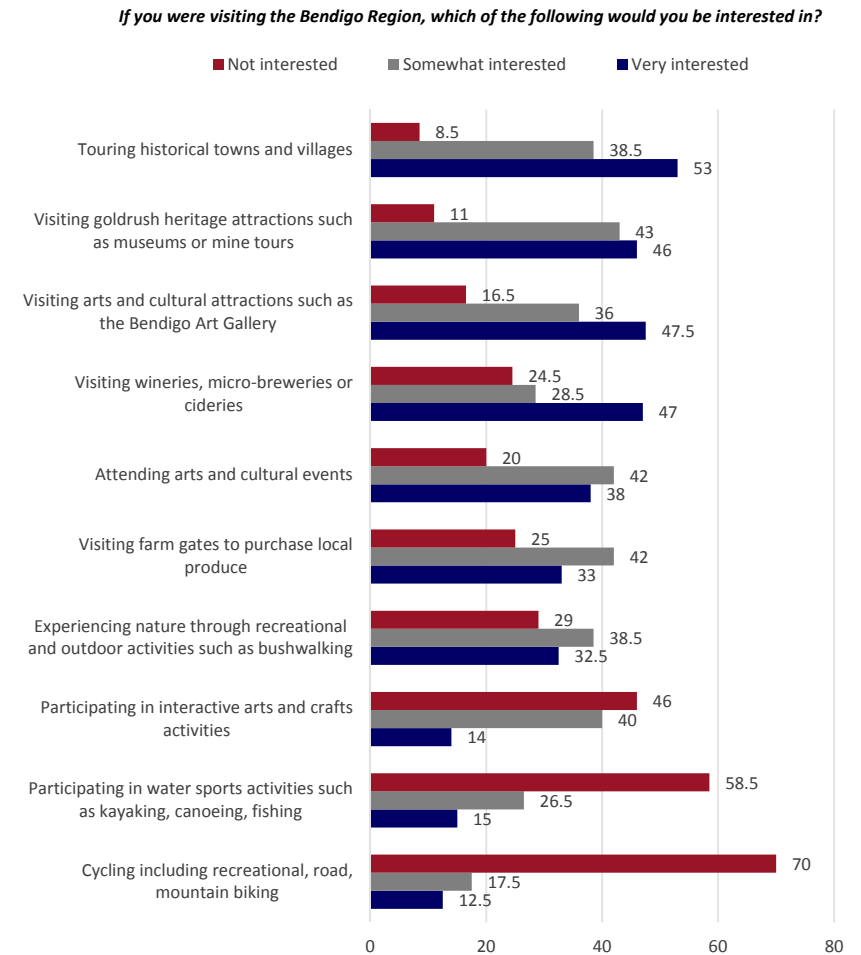
**Touring historic towns and villages:** Ranked as the most popular activity with 53% of respondents being 'Very Interested'. However, only 13% of respondents selected the activity as a motivator to visit the region. It was a particularly low motivational driver amongst male respondents.

**Visiting goldrush heritage attractions:** Remains a popular activity with 46% 'Very interested' and 35.8% 'Somewhat interested'. It is ranked second in terms of motivating visitors to the region (17%). There was no significant variation in preferences between demographics. However, interestingly it rated as the highest motivation activity for Lifestyle Leaders aged 18-49 (22.7%), significantly higher than 50+ years age bracket (13.6%). This may be due to the popularity with young families, as well as the strong alignment with the older demographic and the arts attractions in Bendigo.

**Visiting arts and cultural attractions:** Aligns strongly with the Lifestyle Leaders market with 47.5% of respondents very interested in participating. It ranks as the highest motivating activity (27.5%). It is particularly strong with Lifestyle Leaders aged 50+ as the key motivational driver (38.5%) and females (34.3%). However, it ranked relatively low amongst the 18-49 age group (9.3%).

**Visiting wineries, micro-breweries, or cideries:** Aligns strongly with the Lifestyle Leaders market with 47.5% of respondents very interested in participating. 13% of respondents selected it as the activity which would most motivates to visit. Interestingly only 6.5% of visitors associated the Bendigo Region with wine/wineries (Figure 13), demonstrating that there is significant opportunity to market and grow wine tourism.

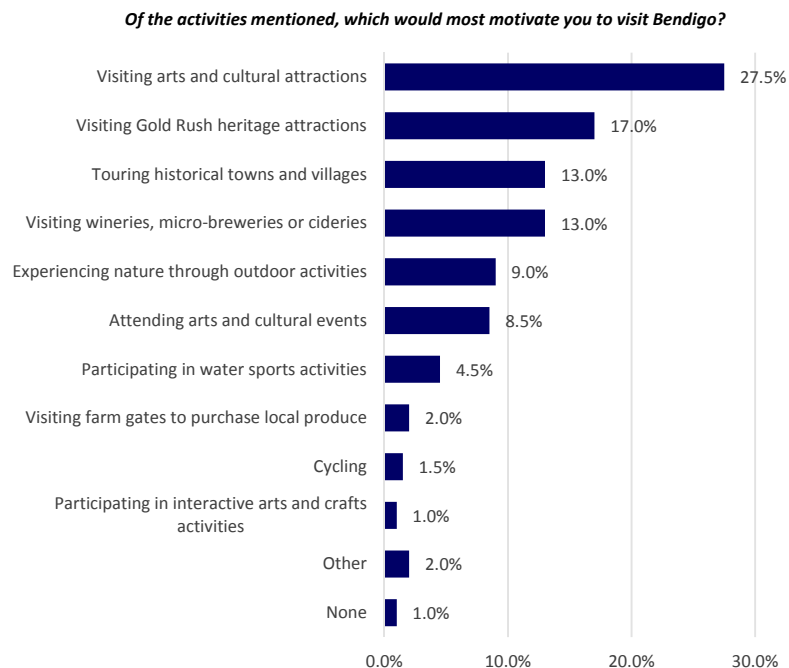
FIGURE 15 ACTIVITY/EXPERIENCE PREFERENCES (LIFESTYLE LEADERS)



Source: Roy Morgan Bendigo Region Lifestyle Leaders Survey, August 2015



**FIGURE 16** ACTIVITIES WHICH WOULD MOTIVATE TO VISIT (LIFESTYLE LEADERS)



Source: Roy Morgan Bendigo Region Lifestyle Leaders Survey, August 2015

Strengthening regional and rural product including historic townships, gold rush attractions and wineries, cideries and microbrewers will complement the well-developed arts and cultural attractions in motivating visitors to the visit the region. Product development, packaging and marketing should focus on both arts and cultural attractions and the rural product offer to stimulate increased visitation.

**TABLE 8** ACTIVITIES WHICH WOULD MOTIVATE TO VISIT (%)(LIFESTYLE LEADERS)

	Lifestyle Leaders	Male	Female	18-49	50+	Melbourne	Victoria excl. Melbourne	Employed FT/PT	Not employed/retired/home duties
Visiting arts and cultural attractions	27.5	19.6	34.3	9.3	38.4	25.4	31.4	23.1	32.6
Visiting Gold Rush heritage attractions	17.0	20.7	13.9	22.7	13.6	18.5	14.3	15.7	18.5
Touring historical towns and villages	13.0	8.7	16.7	13.3	12.8	11.5	15.7	13.9	12.0
Visiting wineries, micro-breweries or cideries	13.0	13.0	13.0	18.7	9.6	13.8	11.4	14.8	10.9
Experiencing nature through outdoor activities	9.0	13.0	5.6	16.0	4.8	10.0	7.1	12.0	5.4
Attending arts and cultural events	8.5	9.8	7.4	6.7	9.6	8.5	8.6	8.3	8.7
Participating in water sports activities	4.5	7.6	1.9	6.7	3.2	4.6	4.3	5.6	3.3
Visiting farm gates to purchase local produce	2.0	0.0	3.7	2.7	1.6	2.3	1.4	1.9	2.2
Cycling	1.5	2.2	0.9	1.3	1.6	2.3	0.0	1.9	1.1
Participating in interactive arts and crafts activities	1.0	1.1	0.9	1.3	0.8	1.5	0.0	0.9	1.1
Other	2.0	3.3	0.9	1.3	2.4	1.5	2.9	1.9	2.2
None	1.0	1.1	0.9	0.0	1.6	0.0	2.9	0.0	2.2

Source: Roy Morgan Bendigo Region Lifestyle Leaders Survey, August 2015

## 4. PRODUCT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

### 4.1. INTRODUCTION

The tourism product and experience audit for the Bendigo Region was prepared to understand the diversity of product across the region and current gaps in the tourism product and experience offer. The audit uses Council product databases as the primary source of information, supplemented by a review of marketing collateral, consultation and web based research.

This section provides a summary of the product and infrastructure audit, with the detailed audit provided in **Appendix D**. Key product gaps and development opportunities are identified within each sub-region.

### 4.2. PRODUCT STRENGTHS SUMMARY

The Bendigo Region has a number of regional strengths that define perceptions of the tourism product across the whole region. Table 9 (overleaf) illustrates the relative product strengths of each sub-regional destination based on the strengths of the wider region. The product strengths are categorised as:

- **Primary** – is a well established strength of the region/sub-region, with mature and recognisable assets in the identified tourism product;
- **Secondary** – established strengths in the region/sub-region. However, not considered to be the number one tourism product. There is scope to further develop the product to improve product, awareness and profile.
- **Emerging** – there is evidence of an emerging tourism product in the region/sub-region, which is either new or relatively limited in scale. There could be scope to further develop the product to diversify the product offer

Arts and cultural tourism is a primary strength of region due to the success of the Bendigo Art Gallery, major events such as the Castlemaine State Festival, and the artistic

communities located in the region. There is significant opportunity to leverage the arts and cultural tourism brand through the development of complementary experiences (e.g. food and wine) and exhibitions and attractions that broaden the appeal (particularly for younger markets).

Goldrush heritage remains a primary tourism strength and important part of the region's character. Improvements to the heritage offer include reinvestment in major attractions to provide an improved, contemporary interpretation; encourage adaptive re-use of underutilised heritage buildings and sites for contemporary tourism uses; and develop the character and appeal of historic goldrush villages.

Food and wine tourism is a strong fit for the region due to the strength of the Bendigo and Heathcote wine brand, and emerging dining scenes in Bendigo and Castlemaine. There is currently low visitor association with the Bendigo Region for food and wine tourism and provides a significant opportunity for growth.

Major events including cultural, sport and business events, are an important part of the region's visitor economy with over 130 events and over 140,000 attendees annually. Continued investment in event facilities and the supporting accommodation base should be promoted.

Nature-based tourism is a relative weakness for the Bendigo Region. Unlocking the region's natural assets through improved State and National Park, and waterway infrastructure, and packaging and promotion of recreational opportunities should be encouraged. Nature-based tourism is a key strength of the Loddon sub-region which can provide a unique offer to the rest of the Bendigo Region.

Bendigo Region is an emerging cycling destination which offers a variety of cycling experiences (MTB, road, trails). Although cycling remains a niche market, new investments (e.g. Harcourt MTB Park, O'Keefe Rail Trail) will assist in growing the cycling market.

TABLE 9 SUB REGIONAL STRENGTHS

Product Category	Bendigo	Heathcote	Mt Alexander	Central Goldfields	Loddon	Bendigo Region
1. History and Heritage	Goldrush and Chinese heritage, architecture and streetscapes		Re-use of heritage buildings, Castlemaine Diggings NP, goldrush villages	Historic villages, grand goldrush buildings	Emerging indigenous interpretation opportunities	Part of the Goldfields, Australia's premier heritage destination
2. Arts and Culture	Bendigo Art Gallery, Ullumbarra Theatre, artist galleries		Local arts and crafts studios, galleries	Emerging arts precinct		Recognised as the premier regional destination for arts and culture.
3. NBT and Adventure Sports			Castlemaine Diggings NP, Cairn Curran Reservoir, Mount Alexander	Lakes and reservoirs, State parks	Loddon River, lakes and reservoirs, National and State Parks	Significant Box Iron Bark system, water-based activities, tracks and trails.
4. Cycling	Popular road cycling destination, start of the Goldfields Track and O'Keefe Rail Trail	O'Keefe Rail Trail, Heathcote Spur Trail	Goldfields Track, Harcourt MTB Park, Castlemaine MTB trails, road cycling	Trails, village road cycling routes		Provides the most diverse and comprehensive cycling experience in Victoria
5. Food & Dining	Popular restaurant and cafe scene, food fossicking tours		Boutique food and café offering		Agri-tourism and farm-gates	Regional food fossicking network, developing restaurant scene
6. Wine, cider and breweries	Bendigo wine region. Significant opportunity to grow cellar door itineraries	Well known wine brand with significant opportunity to grow	Harcourt cideries, Castlemaine brewery			Boutique wine regions with significant tourism development opportunity
7. Business & Conferencing	Growing business base and large conference venues			Maryborough is a regional business service centre and beginning to attract conferences		Bendigo is significant regional business base. Opportunity to disperse visitors through region.
8. Retail	Service retail hub, emerging lifestyle retail		Boutique shops and antiques	Large service retail hub, antiques		Major service retail hubs, growing boutique offering in towns and villages
9. Festivals and Events	Groovin the Moo, Easter Festival, Food & wine events	Heathcote on Show, Food and Wine Show	State Festival, Folk Festival, Farmers Market	RACV Energy Breakthrough, Talbot Farmers Market		Opportunity for regional co-ordination for major events
<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Emerging</b>				

### 4.3. INFRASTRUCTURE

An infrastructure audit identified the critical infrastructure required to improve accessibility, increase visitation and enable new tourism development in the region. The audit analysed road and rail infrastructure, airports, car hire operators and accredited Visitor Information Centres.

The infrastructure needs for the region include the following:

- An increase in the frequency and capacity of rail services to Maryborough and Castlemaine;
- Improved bus services between Bendigo and Maryborough;
- Leveraging the upgrade of Bendigo Airport including a high capacity runway to grow business tourism;
- Providing Wi-Fi connection at VICs throughout the region;
- Investigating new, high exposure locations for VICs in Maldon and Maryborough;
- Upgrading infrastructure to meet the demands of the important grey nomad touring market (e.g. roads infrastructure, rest stops, signage).

It should be noted that the Loddon Campaspe Integrated Transport Plan is currently being undertaken to investigate and prioritise regional transport projects.

### 4.4. SUB-REGIONAL PRODUCT GAP SUMMARY

Based on the detailed Product Audit provided in Appendix D, the following provides a summary of the key product gaps at the sub-regional level. The product gaps are classified using the following themes:

- Accommodation;
- Experiential Product (this includes attractions such arts and culture, heritage and nature); and
- Retail and hospitality.

TABLE 10 BENDIGO PRODUCT GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES

ACCOMMODATION
Group accommodation which can cater for sporting clubs and school groups
Quality branded 4-5 star accommodation (80-100 rooms) located in the CBD
Rural based boutique accommodation (farmstay, eco-cabin, winery) located in the Bendigo hinterland
Re-investment in existing motel stock and improve general quality of accommodation
EXPERIENTIAL PRODUCT
Reinvestment and positioning of Heritage Trust assets including the Tramways and Central Deborah Goldmine
Consideration of the forthcoming Golden Dragon Museum Strategic Plan and opportunities for re-investment
Opportunity for development of a mixed use tourism precinct within Fortuna Villa
An opportunity to develop more interactive and immersive arts experiences which appeal to younger markets (e.g. music, contemporary arts)
An opportunity to build on the religious assets of the region for religious tourism experiences. This includes the Great Stupa, Aspire Cathedral Precinct, and Joss House.
Improve the nature based tourism offer in State and National Parks such as tree top walks, trails and gnome villages. Better promotion of the Bendigo Bushland Track
RETAIL & HOSPITALITY
Develop the retail offer and shopping experience in the CBD. There is an opportunity to develop distinct precincts of the CBD which provide their own unique offering and character. Wayfinding signage could support walkability through the precincts
Encourage traders in the Bendigo CBD to have consistent trading hours (including on weekends) Hold markets in the city, such as twilight markets during the summer months
Development of visitor facilities and promotion of wine tourism opportunities in the Bendigo Wine Region
Developing the night-time offering to encourage visitors to stay overnight

TABLE 11 HEATHCOTE PRODUCT GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES

ACCOMMODATION
High quality, boutique, nature-based accommodation. This could be located on the edge of the Graytown-Heathcote National Park or Lake Eppalock
Hotel/motel accommodation of 4 star standard (20+ rooms) located in Heathcote town centre
EXPERIENTIAL PRODUCT
Better interpretation of gold rush history in the town centre, to add to the place-making and beatification initiatives
Development of the Heathcote Spur Trail to provide a unique cycling experience linking the areas famed wineries
Extend the O'Keefe Rail Trail to Wallan (currently being considered in a feasibility study)
Develop road cycling routes, including opportunities for Lake Eppalock touring
Improve nature-based tourism infrastructure for Heathcote Graytown National Park, such as mountain bike trails, signage and interpretation, picnic areas, and lookouts
Improve tourist facilities and water activity infrastructure at Lake Eppalock
RETAIL & HOSPITALITY
Quality dining opportunities to complement the region's wine offering
Tourism focused retail along the High Street to encourage greater and longer stopovers (e.g. lifestyle, antiques)

TABLE 12 MOUNT ALEXANDER PRODUCT GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES

ACCOMMODATION
Integrated function and accommodation facility in Castlemaine (~40 rooms)
Boutique accommodation within a natural or winery setting
Self contained accommodation for the weekend getaway market
EXPERIENTIAL PRODUCT
Promote the re-use of heritage buildings and sites for contemporary tourism uses
Upgrade visitor facilities at Cairn Curran Reservoir
Improve and upgrade to the Goldfields Track, such as new routes to broaden its appeal
Support the World Heritage listing of the Castlemaine Diggings National Park to create a more cohesive tourism experience
Showcase the creative community through public art installations at key sites
Identify opportunities to improve the visitor experience for the hot rod and wider motor enthusiast market
Leverage the forthcoming Harcourt MTB Park to improve the amenity and commercial tourism opportunities in the Harcourt town centre
Encourage the development of commercial tourism uses in the historic Buda House
Upgrade Council facilities to cater for events
RETAIL & HOSPITALITY
Promote the emerging dining and beverage scene in the Shire
Encourage visitor friendly trading hours particularly on weekends in Castlemaine and Maldon



TABLE 13 CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS PRODUCT GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES

ACCOMMODATION
Maryborough serviced apartment development and function centre to cater for the business market
Support the establishment/reopening of one of the Dunolly Hotel's to become a dual food and accommodation venue
EXPERIENTIAL PRODUCT
Creation of a cultural arts precinct which links the key heritage sites in Maryborough including the Town Hall, Art Gallery, and Train Station
The Central Goldfields is well positioned for road cycling with its flat topography and short distances between historic towns. The development and promotion of road cycling routes linking historic towns.
Talbot's vacant heritage buildings and reputation for local produce gained through the farmers market provide the basis for the possibility of a destination dining establishment e.g. Lakehouse, Royal Mail Hotel
Encourage the adaptive re-use of heritage buildings for commercial tourism uses
Consider new uses for the disused rail line linking Maryborough and Castlemaine (e.g. rail trail)
Work with Goulburn Murray Water to improve and upgrade visitor facilities at water reservoirs
Develop the unique character of villages including streetscape improvements
Work with Parks Victoria to improve visitor facilities and interpretation within State and Regional Parks
RETAIL & HOSPITALITY
Review the role and function of Maryborough retailing centre. Consider opportunities for new uses for activation of vacant premises (e.g. pop up stores)
Develop the dining offer in Maryborough including outdoor dining in the Nolan Street precinct

TABLE 14 LODDON PRODUCT GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES

ACCOMMODATION
Nature-based accommodation along the Loddon River
Farmstay accommodation to leverage the region's agricultural strengths
Reinvestment in existing Caravan Parks, the largest accommodation type across the sub-region
EXPERIENTIAL PRODUCT
Long paddle canoe trails along the Loddon River
Adventure tourism opportunities (e.g. rock climbing and hunting)
Develop indigenous heritage interpretation at Lake Boort precinct including signage and tours
Work with Parks Victoria to improve the visitor facilities at State and National Parks
Cycle trail linking Bridgewater and Inglewood
Planning strategies to improve the layout and function of Bridgewater township and leverage the river frontage
RETAIL & HOSPITALITY
Encourage primary producers to join the Food Fossickers Network and grow farm gate opportunities in the region. Encourage local restaurants to highlight local produce.
Improved dining offer (e.g. gastro pub)
Floating restaurant and function space on the Loddon River



# PART B: DMP FRAMEWORK

BENDIGO REGION DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN



## 5. DMP FRAMEWORK

### 5.1. FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

The opportunities outlined in this Plan have been developed based on the research and analysis undertaken at the Issues and Opportunities stage of the project. The analysis supported the identification of a number of themes, priorities and product development projects across the region and has led to the development of:

- A set of **six overarching Strategic Development Objectives** which provide a framework for the identification of development opportunities across the region. These objectives are common across the whole Bendigo Region and provide an overarching context for the DMP.
- The identification of **Priority Projects** that will act as catalyst, deliverable projects for the region. These projects have been selected using a set of assessment criteria which is explained in more detail later.
- The identification of a suite of **Destination Development Opportunities**, at a sub-regional level, which will provide the critical mass of product to lift individual destinations and the wider regional product offer;
- A suite of initiatives which aim to **Strengthen the Bendigo Region** and assist in knitting the region together and developing how it is positioned and promoted. These include recommendations around the governance of the region, the delivery of information, and digital assets and resourcing (detailed in Part C of the DMP).



## 5.2. PROJECT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The projects identified in this plan have been ranked and prioritised using an agreed assessment methodology. The following discussion provides an overview of this assessment method and the rationale for prioritising each project.

### 5.2.1. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

A set of five assessment criteria were developed in order to prioritise projects. These required projects to:

1. **Align with existing regional and state policy:** Support is provided from strategic funding and regional partners (RDA, RDV, Visit Victoria).
2. **Assist in converting daytrip to overnight:** The project will encourage daytrip visitors to increase their yield and length of stay.
3. **Align with key target markets:** The project meets the tourism preferences of key markets (Visit Victoria Lifestyle Leaders) identified within the research.
4. **Have a positive local economic and community impact:** The project has a local economic impact in terms of employment and flow-on investment, or has a wider community benefit.
5. **Required a regional approach:** The project encourages regional collaboration and should be considered at the regional level (as opposed to the local government level).

An Assessment Criteria Matrix is shown opposite. The Matrix provides a summary of the rationale behind project rankings and weightings for each individual assessment criteria. The assessments were qualitative and subjective; based on local knowledge, stakeholder consultation, professional experience and a general assessment of perceived benefits.

TABLE 15 PROJECT ASSESSMENT CRITERIA MATRIX

Ranking	1. Aligns with existing regional and state policy	2. Will assist in converting daytrip to overnight	3. Align with key target markets	4. Local economic and community benefit	5. Regional approach
5	Specifically identified within existing policy	A major visitor drawcard for the region	Meets the tourism preferences of identified target markets	Significant short-term and on-going economic impact for the region/ address key needs for the community	Requires the collaboration of all Local Governments in the region
4					
3	Aligns with product themes within existing policy	Will increase overnight visitation at the sub-region level	Can be expected to draw some additional visitation from target markets	Provides an on-going economic benefit for a sub-region	Requires the collaboration of multiple Local Governments in the region
2					
1	Not supported in existing policy	Has limited impact on overnight visitors	Does not align with the tourism preferences of target markets	Has a limited economic or community impact	Only relevant to an individual Local Government
Weight	1	1	2	1	2

### 5.2.2. PROJECT SIGNIFICANCE

Using the assessment criteria, the projects have been prioritised and ranked into three tiers. These include:

#### TIER 1 PRIORITY PROJECTS

These projects will act as catalyst, deliverable projects which are of regional significance and should therefore be considered at a regional level.

#### TIER 2: PROJECTS OF SUB-REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

These are important projects to an identified sub-region or sub-regions. These projects will:

- Unlock an opportunity that could transform the product in a sub-region;
- Increase levels of visitation, length of stay and yield in a sub-region with a flow on increase in visitation that could impact a number of destinations;
- Improve awareness and perceptions of the sub-region.

#### TIER 3: PROJECTS OF LOCAL OR DESTINATION SIGNIFICANCE

These projects are important to a specific locality or destination. These projects will:

- Fill a product gap identified in a particular destination and add to the critical mass of product in the region;
- Support tourism product and opportunities in a specific destination;
- Support an increase in visitation, length of stay and yield in a destination;
- Improve awareness of a locality or destination.

### 5.3. STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

The Bendigo Region is a diverse region with varying product strengths and township characteristics. Analysis of the product strengths and product development opportunities across the Bendigo Region identified a number of key strategic objectives that are relevant across the region.

#### OBJECTIVE 1. Primary Destination Development

Develop the primary destinations to support a diverse visitor economy and projected visitor growth

The primary destinations in the region are the key population and accommodation nodes. These centres have a diverse visitor economy with visitors being attracted for a range of purposes other than holiday and leisure including visiting friends and relatives, business, shopping, health, and education. They include:

- **Bendigo** - The major regional city in central Victoria and primary visitor and accommodation hub in the Bendigo Region;
- **Castlemaine** - The largest town in Mount Alexander and a significant visitor node which is strategically located between Melbourne and Bendigo;
- **Maryborough** - The largest town in Central Goldfields and significant regional service centre;

It is important that the role of these centres continue to be strengthened over time to cater for a growing visitor economy. Projections show that the Bendigo Region domestic visitor market is expected to grow by at least 700,000 to 2030, the majority of which will be absorbed within these primary destinations. This objective seeks to support initiatives which build the infrastructure to cater for a growing visitor economy, and address product gaps, and grow visitor yield and length of stay (particularly converting daytrips to overnight). This will include initiatives such as:



- Developing the night time economy to keep visitors in the region longer and convert daytrip to overnight stays;
- Build the accommodation base to cater for the growing visitor economy and major events (particularly reinvestment in existing motel stock);
- Retail offering including consistent trading hours;
- Improving the food and hospitality offering;
- Build on the qualities of each destination to provide a sense of place, including improvements to:
  - Streetscape and landscaping
  - Amenity and services
  - Wayfinding and walkability
- Utilisation of heritage buildings and underutilised sites for tourism purposes.

## OBJECTIVE 2. Building The Hinterland Experience

Build the hinterland tourism product to develop a compelling regional experience and encourage visitor dispersal

A general trend across regional Victoria is the growth of tourism activities within rural and hinterland areas as visitors increasingly seek more immersive and authentic experiences, and townships and regional centre's become more urbanised. The primary research into products which will motivate visitors to the Bendigo Region highlights the importance of rural and hinterland product such as cellar doors, farm gate and village touring. The sub-region's of Mount Alexander, Central Goldfields, Loddon, and Heathcote will be critical to establishment of the region's hinterland.

Bendigo's hinterland offers a variety of opportunities for visitors and tourism product development:

- The Bendigo and Heathcote wine regions are renowned for producing quality, complex wines. However, they have not established as a major wine destination;

- There are a number boutique and historic villages which have their own unique character and provide some of the best examples of gold-rush villages in Victoria. Improvements can be made to develop their own unique character and build a village touring experience;
- The recently established Food Fossickers Network provides a significant opportunity to build new farm-gate experiences with primary producers and boutique food manufacturers;
- Support the development of rural-based accommodation (nature-based, winery, farmstay), and quality accommodation outside of Bendigo.

## OBJECTIVE 3. Heritage Rejuvenation and Positioning

Facilitate reinvestment in heritage attractions to improve interpretation and appeal to new markets

Although arts and cultural tourism has grown significantly in recent years, the Bendigo Region's heritage attractions remain an important part of the region's identity and tourist appeal, and key motivator for visitation to the region. This is supported by the primary research into the lifestyle leaders segment where heritage attractions are ranked second only to arts and cultural attractions in influencing visitation.

There is a need for a number of the large attractions within Bendigo to reinvest and improve interpretation to establish a more contemporary experience, generate repeat visitation and grow new markets. A number of the main attractions are currently undertaking strategic planning, the outcomes of which will need to be considered over the next few years.

In addition to the large gold rush attractions, there are a large number of heritage buildings located across the Bendigo Region which could be restored and repurposed for tourism uses.

#### **OBJECTIVE 4. Unlocking Natural Assets**

Utilise the region's natural assets to develop nature-based and recreational tourism experiences

Although the Bendigo Region has an array natural and recreational assets, nature-based tourism is not currently considered a strength of the region. The region's natural assets are not fully utilised, packaged or recognised as a tourism focused offer. Developing the necessary infrastructure to access key assets and unlock nature-based and adventure tourism experiences will be considered. Some of the regions key assets include:

- Large areas of State and National Parks of Box Iron Bark habitat. Although the Parks do not have the iconic landscapes of other National Parks, they are underutilised and should be activated through bushwalking, cycling and other NBT activities;
- There are a variety of public and private gardens and parklands throughout the region which are important recreational assets and could be further utilised for events;
- The Goldfields Track is a trail of state significance and can be a major drawcard for the region;
- The Bendigo Region provides one of the most comprehensive and diverse cycling experiences in Victoria including road routes, MTB courses, and recreational trails;
- The Loddon River runs through the region and there are numerous reservoirs and lakes (e.g. Lake Boort system) which provide the opportunity for watersports and camping.

The Loddon sub-region in particular has significant opportunity to leverage its natural assets to position and market its natural strengths. Developing its nature-based product including accommodation and reinvestment into caravan parks should be encouraged.

#### **OBJECTIVE 5. Leveraging Arts and Cultural Growth**

Leverage the region's arts and cultural brand to develop new experiences which appeal to new markets

Bendigo has made significant progress towards marketing and promoting itself as a prime destination for arts and cultural tourism over recent years. The Bendigo Art Gallery has hosted a number of large exhibitions and the recently completed Ulumbarra Theatre, a major event and performance space, will strengthen the city's arts offering and provide capacity for major theatre productions. This has provided great benefit to the region in terms of increased visitation, tourism activity, and built Bendigo City's reputation as a modern, prosperous regional city.

Despite the success of the arts and cultural tourism promotion, there are a number challenges:

- The improved accessibility from Melbourne has meant that visitors can experience the city's arts and cultural attractions with a short daytrip from Melbourne, limiting visitor yield;
- The visitor growth success of the Bendigo Art Gallery has had limited impact on the surrounding region (with the exception of Castlemaine which receives a large number of stop over visits from gallery patrons);
- Major exhibitions have targeted a niche audience (mature female) with limited growth in other markets;
- Visitor number decline outside of major exhibitions.

The region's reputation for arts and culture can be leveraged further to diversify the offering and appeal to new markets, particularly younger audiences. The development of new cultural experiences (e.g. Great Stupa, Aspire Precinct, indigenous cultural interpretation), greater alignment between the Bendigo Art Gallery and smaller rural galleries, and the development of interactive and art experiences should be encouraged. Castlemaine has a growing reputation for its creative arts community and the repurposing of heritage

buildings for creative businesses and artistic uses (e.g. Railway Goods Shed & Victoria Carpets site) will create new attractions for contemporary audiences.

Arts and cultural attraction development should remain as the primary focus for the region. This is supported strongly by the research into the lifestyle leaders segment which shows that arts and cultural attractions will motivate visit within the target market above other attractions.

## **OBJECTIVE 6.** **Visibility**

Improve the services and experiences at every point of the visitor journey

'Visibility' refers to the sum of the parts which make an outstanding visitor experience<sup>2</sup>. The focus of the objective is on improving the critical services at every point of the visitor journey. This includes:

- Sense of Welcome;
- Packaging;
- Transport;
- Accessibility;
- Visitor information and servicing;
- Digital connectivity.

The approach to visitor servicing is currently fragmented throughout the region. Through Bendigo Regional Tourism, there is opportunity to more efficiently deliver visitor information services, as well as establish, and lobby for, the key infrastructure needs for the region.

---

<sup>2</sup> The 'Visibility' was first used by Destination Melbourne to improve visitor services in Melbourne

The grey nomad touring market is an important and growing tourism market for the region. Infrastructure improvements which support this market should be encouraged (e.g. roads, rest areas, and camping facilities).

## 6. PRIORITY PROJECTS

### 6.1. INTRODUCTION

This section provides an overview of the priority projects identified for the Bendigo Region to facilitate growth in the tourism industry.

A summary of these projects is provided in table opposite. Projects are categorised as:

- Infrastructure and enabling projects;
- Experiential product development;
- Accommodation.

The Priority Projects have been recommended, based on their ability to address the strategic objectives mentioned earlier, their alignment with the Assessment Matrix, rather than their geographical or administrative location. These projects present an opportunity to provide strategic support, prioritise resources and focus public sector support on the projects that can elevate the region.

TABLE 16 BENDIGO REGION PRIORITY PROJECTS

Project	Sub-region
<b>INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENABLING PROJECTS</b>	
Maryborough Cultural Arts Precinct	Central Goldfields
Heathcote Town Centre Improvements	Heathcote
Bridgewater and Inglewood Township and Foreshore Improvements	Loddon
Harcourt Town Centre Improvements	Mount Alexander
Maldon Visitor Information Centre	Mount Alexander
<b>EXPERIENTIAL PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT</b>	
Bendigo Heritage Tourism Attractions and Positioning	Bendigo
Bendigo Night-Time Economy	Bendigo
Great Stupa Development	Bendigo
Castlemaine Diggings National Park Improvements	Mount Alexander
Winery Tourism Product Development and Marketing	Region-wide
Food Fossickers Network Development	Region-wide
Village Touring and Branding	Region-wide
Ride Goldfields	Region-wide
<b>ACCOMMODATION DEVELOPMENT</b>	
Bendigo High Quality Accommodation and Conferencing	Bendigo
Castlemaine Boutique Accommodation and Conference Centre	Mount Alexander
Maryborough Serviced Apartments and Function Centre	Central Goldfields

## MARYBOROUGH CULTURAL ARTS PRECINCT

Maryborough is the second largest town in the Bendigo Region and a significant regional service centre. The town's tourist appeal is built on its gold rush heritage with a number of landmark buildings in the town centre. In recent years a number of these buildings have been left vacant, however new hospitality tenancies in the Railway Station and Bull and Mouth Hotel have the potential to reinvigorate the local tourist offering.

Previous local strategies have highlighted the opportunity to create a cultural arts precinct by linking the main heritage landmarks via Nolan Street.<sup>3</sup> The town's most iconic building, the railway station, is located at the southern end of Nolan Street and is isolated from the commercial centre. The corner of High Street and Nolan Street and the civic square is the other prominent landmark in town with a cluster of heritage buildings (Bull and Mouth Hotel, Town Hall, Post Office, and Courthouse). The Central Goldfields Art Gallery is located in the historic fire station building just north of the civic square.

Linking these heritage landmarks will create a tourist precinct for the town, link the railway station to the commercial centre, and provide a major contribution to the arts and cultural tourism product in the Bendigo Region.

**COST: \$150,000 [MASTERPLAN]**

### NEXT STEPS:

- Develop a brief for a Maryborough Cultural Arts Precinct Masterplan to consider:
  - Improvements to the amenity and streetscape along Nolan Street including opportunities for public art and improved pedestrian experience;
  - The integration and role of the visitor information centre currently located on the corner of Nolan and Alma Street;
  - The encouragement of outdoor dining and other tourism uses along Nolan Street;
  - The development and activation of vacant sites along Nolan Street.

---

<sup>3</sup> Central Goldfields Tourism Plan 2010

## HEATHCOTE TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENTS

The Heathcote town centre can provide an attractive and appealing setting for tourists, and encourage the large number of stop over visitors to spend a greater amount of time in the region. However, there are a number of issues with the streetscape and infrastructure including:

- A number of empty and derelict shopfronts along High Street;
- Poor retail mix which does not appeal to tourists;
- A lack of beautification and plantings along High Street;
- An elongated High Street which it is not walkable and spreads activity across a large area; and
- A lack of signage and interpretation on the gold rush heritage of the town.

Heathcote is identified in regional policy as a strategic growth town with directions for strategic and structure planning to accommodate future growth<sup>4</sup>. Future initiatives should aim to grow the tourism appeal of the town through beautification and place-making initiatives.

**COST: \$80,000 [STREETScape MASTERPLAN]**

### NEXT STEPS:

- Work with Council, State Government, and the local community to develop a Streetscape Masterplan for the Heathcote town centre. Ensure that tourism is an essential consideration in the masterplan, integrate elements of the wine branding (e.g. vine plantings), consider opportunities to link the town centre to trails along the Mclvor Creek, and improve cycling infrastructure;
- Engage with landowners within the town centre to facilitate opportunities to activate vacant shop fronts with artistic uses, and providing space for creative artisans.

---

<sup>4</sup> Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan 2014, RDV, pg 52



## BRIDGEWATER AND INGLEWOOD TOWNSHIP AND FORESHORE IMPROVEMENTS

Bridgewater is an attractive village located on the Loddon River and a popular camping destination, particularly for its water sports. It is strategically located just 5 minutes from Inglewood, a small rural service town, 30 minutes from Bendigo, and receives a large amount of through traffic. Inglewood has good physical infrastructure and functions as a retail and community service centre.

Although Bridgewater and Inglewood are small rural towns at present, regional policy promotes sustainable growth through proactive planning and liveability marketing<sup>[1]</sup>. marketing<sup>[1]</sup>. Concept plans for both towns are currently being completed with improvements considered to the following:

- Pedestrian and cycling linkages to key town assets;
- Drainage, footpath treatments and parking;
- Landscaping, street furniture, and town entrances;
- Incorporation of technology/connectivity (e.g. public Wi-Fi)

Further work required includes detailed design of upgrades, and consideration of strategies to leverage and improve Bridgewater's river frontage.

**COST: \$40,000 [DETAILED DESIGN AND PLANNING], ~\$1 MILLION [PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS]**

### NEXT STEPS

- Undertake detailed design and planning of upgrades to Bridgewater and Inglewood townships and river frontage;
- Identify areas along the Loddon River which could be activated for tourism purposes;
- Investigate the opportunity to link Bridgewater and Inglewood with cycling trails;
- Implement and deliver infrastructure upgrades.

---

<sup>[1]</sup> Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan 2014, pg 52

## HARCOURT TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENTS

Harcourt is a small rural town located just off the Calder Highway, 10 minutes from Castlemaine. The town is a developing tourism destination with its reputation for fruit orchards, wine and cideries and the forthcoming Harcourt MTB Park.

Despite the town's growing tourism reputation, the town centre remains unappealing and lacks a central tourism or commercial precinct. The town has been identified within the Loddon Mallee Strategic Plan 2014 for future residential growth and expansion of the township area. Previous strategic work has identified residential growth areas to the south and west of the town centre<sup>5</sup>. Future residential growth will create greater demand and opportunity for commercial activity in the town centre. New commercial opportunities including tourism uses should be encouraged in the town centre (e.g. hospitality, retail, bike shop).

The Harcourt Mountain Bike Park is due to be constructed in 2016. The new Park has the potential to significantly increase visitation to the town and improved trail connections between the town centre and the Park should be developed.

**COST: \$500,000 [PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS]**

### NEXT STEPS

- Implement landscaping and streetscape improvements as outlined in the Harcourt Town Centre Landscape Masterplan 2015;
- Consolidate commercial and tourism uses along Calder Hwy and High Street between Market Street and Victoria Street;
- Develop trail connections from the Harcourt town centre to the Harcourt Mountain Bike Park;
- Identify trail opportunities which link to local wineries and cideries.

---

<sup>5</sup> Harcourt Masterplan 2010 and Harcourt Town Centre Landscape Masterplan 2015

## BENDIGO HERITAGE TOURIST ATTRACTIONS AND POSITIONING

Bendigo's heritage assets remain a key characteristic of the area and significant tourism driver. The Heritage Trust manages and operates a number of these key assets. In recent years, there has been an identified need to reinvest and upgrade the heritage tourism experience to enhance the visitor experience and ensure that it appeals to contemporary markets.

The Heritage Trust has undertaken a number of strategic planning exercises in recent years to identify asset renewal requirements and opportunities to improve their branding. The Bendigo Tramways is an iconic feature of Bendigo and a Strategic Plan was completed in early 2015 to enhance its operational and infrastructure matters related to its tourism service and identify potential for track extensions and additional stops. The Strategic Plan includes an implementation framework which outlines a number short-term actions (within 3 years) to improve the product offer and value proposition for visitors, and establish new stops at the Sacred Heart Cathedral and Golden Dragon Museum.

The Trust is currently undertaking a design process for improvements to the Central Deborah Goldmine 'above-ground experience'. This includes enhancements to the interpretive material, retail outlet and reception.

### **COST: \$10-\$15 MILLION [TRAMWAYS INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS]**

#### **ECONOMIC IMPACT**

A detailed analysis of the economic impact of the tramways upgrade was undertaken as part of the Tramways Strategic Plan.

**Short Term (construction):** Design and construction of key infrastructure improvements would result in the creation of **53 Jobs** (FTE).

**On-going (operational):** Increased visitation as a result of the upgrades would equate to an addition in direct region expenditure of \$5.2 million, and in-direct of \$3.3 million, a total of **\$8.5 million**. This additional expenditure would result in the creation of an estimated **92 jobs** (FTE) in the City of Bendigo.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

- Support the outcomes of the Tramways Strategic Plan including the short-term actions for two new stops, address traffic conflicts at key intersections, and enhance visitor experience through the use of beacon technology;
- Investigate opportunities to improve visitor facilities for the Central Deborah Goldmine including the 'above-ground experience'.



Bendigo Tramways

## FOOD FOSSICKER NETWORK DEVELOPMENT

Food and agri-tourism is an emerging tourism opportunity across the region as visitors increasingly look for local produce and paddock-to-plate experiences. It forms an important part of building the hinterland experience in the Bendigo Region through farm-gate experiences and improving the local dining offer. The region offers an array of food types with small producers and boutique food manufacturers (sweets, preserves etc) scattered throughout the region.

Food Fossickers is a membership based network of local producers, food manufacturers, and restaurants which seek to build a stronger, independent local supply chain and showcase the region's local produce to visitors. There is currently approximately 40 members, 80% of which are producers, with significant scope to further build the membership base. The network is currently operated on a volunteer basis with assistance from Bendigo Tourism.

There is significant opportunity to support the network and grow its tourism role through the development of food experiences, regional packaging, and greater alignment with winemakers groups for regional food and wine marketing.

**COST: \$100,000 [ANNUAL ONGOING FUNDING]**

### ECONOMIC IMPACT

The economic impact assessment is detailed in Appendix E. To understand the economic impact of the development of Bendigo Region's farm-gate product and brand, the Yarra Valley has been used as a benchmark. If the Bendigo Region were to attract the same proportion of visitors which patronise farm gates in the Yarra Valley, it would have the potential to:

- Increase annual visitation to the region by **1,445 overnight and 1,683 daytrip visitors;**
- Increase total in-region expenditure from visitors by \$1.11 million with in-direct economic benefits of \$1.11 million (**total of \$2.2 million**);
- Increase employment by **16 jobs FTE** (11 direct and 5 in-direct).

### NEXT STEPS

- Develop touring routes which showcase the regions farm-gate experiences. These may be region-wide routes, or small local routes such as the Boort tour;
- Develop packages with attractions (e.g. regional art galleries and theatres) and accommodation providers which combine restaurant and farm-gate opportunities;
- Develop strategic partnerships with the Bendigo and Heathcote Winemakers groups to develop food and wine events and regional marketing campaigns;
- Provide for on-going resourcing support to the network for marketing, events, and operational support.



Wholefoods, Bendigo

## RIDE GOLDFIELDS

There is a growing recognition of the Victorian Goldfields as a premier cycle tourism destination. The region boasts an array of cycling experiences and an extensive network of cycling trails. The *'Ride Goldfields Committee'* has recently been formed to advocate and progress local cycling and cycling tourism throughout the Goldfields Region. A range of initiatives have been proposed including branding, marketing, and cycling product development (new trails, road cycling routes, and MTB courses). The product development opportunities which already been subject to strategic planning include:

- The Heathcote Spur Trail - a series of recreational trails which connect the Heathcote town centre with a number of winery cellar doors and links with the recently completed O'Keefe Rail Trail. A feasibility study for the trails was completed earlier this year and determined the total construction cost at \$1.4 million<sup>6</sup>.
- O'Keefe Rail Trail Extension - The rail trail has recently been extended from Bendigo to Heathcote and there is currently a feasibility study which is underway to consider the extension of the trail from Heathcote to Wallan.
- Trail and signage upgrades to the Goldfields Track including options for new alignments to avoid the steep climb to Mt Alexander and broaden the appeal of the trail.
- The planned Harcourt Mountain Bike Park has received \$1 million in initial funding but requires further funding contributions to be fully realized.

### COST: \$10 MILLION

### ECONOMIC IMPACT

The economic impact assessment is detailed in Appendix E. The High Country has been used as a benchmark for cycle tourism. If the Bendigo Region were to attract the same proportion of visitors which undertake cycling activities than the High Country, it would have potential to:

- Increase annual visitation to the region by **4,505 overnight and 1,029 daytrip visitors**;
- Increase total in-region expenditure from visitors by \$2.7 million with in-direct economic benefits of \$2.6 million ( total of **\$5.3 million**);
- Increase employment by **38 jobs FTE** (27 direct and 11 in-direct).

### NEXT STEPS:

Actions to progress the Ride Goldfields concept over the next 5 years include:

- Progress the planning and design of track upgrades and realignment for the Goldfields Track;
- Undertake detailed design of the Heathcote Spur Trail Network to confirm the route alignment, construction materials, and infrastructure needs of the trail. Secure funding for construction of trails and required infrastructure;
- Advocate for further funding contributions towards the development of the Harcourt Mountain Bike Park;
- Support the findings of the O'Keefe Rail Trail feasibility study to extend the trail to Wallan;
- Develop a website and marketing campaign to showcase cycling experiences across the region;
- Engage with cycle event operators to acquire new cycling events to the region (e.g. Sun Herald Tour);
- Encourage the establishment of cycling related businesses to support visitors e.g. bike hire, tours, shuttle services, repair shops;
- Investigate the use of bicycle-friendly accommodation accreditation (North East Tourism cycling accreditation may be used as a model).

<sup>6</sup> Heathcote Trails Feasibility Study 2015, Community Vibe Consultants

## WINERY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING

The Bendigo and Heathcote Wine Regions are renowned for producing complex red wines, particularly their Shiraz varieties. Compared with other wine regions, they offer a more boutique and authentic wine experience where visitors can interact directly with the winemaker. The small-scale nature of the wineries has meant that they have historically been less inclined to invest in tourism facilities (restaurants, accommodation, function space), and therefore despite the region's reputation for quality wine production, it is yet to mature as a wine tourism destination.

The development of wine tourism is identified as a key opportunity to grow and diversify the tourism experiences in the region. Market testing showed that there is currently low awareness of wine tourism in the Bendigo Region (only 6% of respondents identified it as strength of the region). However, 47% of respondents indicated that they would be 'Very Interested' in visiting wineries in the Bendigo Region, with 13% selecting it as the activity which would most motivate them to visit the region.

Wine tourism is also growing in popularity with international visitors. The recently ratified China-Australia Free Trade Agreement will increase access for Australian wine producers to the China market, building the Australian wine brand and recognition. This may provide greater opportunities for Bendigo and Heathcote wineries to grow interest from the Chinese visitor market.

**COST: \$300,000**

### ECONOMIC IMPACT:

The economic impact assessment is detailed in Appendix E.

If Bendigo Region met benchmarks for other regional food and wine destinations in Victoria, the development of Bendigo Region's wine product and brand has the potential to:

- Increase overnight visitation to the region by **7,140 overnight and 5,797 daytrip** visitors;

- Increase total in-region expenditure from new visitors and yield from existing visitors by \$5.1 million, with in-direct economic benefits of \$5.0 million (**total \$10.1 million**);
- Increase employment by **72 jobs** FTE (51 direct and 21 in direct).

### NEXT STEPS:

- Undertake a branding exercise for Heathcote and Bendigo wine regions.
- Improve online digital content and websites.
- Develop a marketing campaign which promotes the boutique tourism opportunities available in the Heathcote and Bendigo wine regions.
- Develop tour packages which link winery product with the art galleries across the region, Ulumbarra Theatre and business and conference market.
- Develop a winery signage strategy to address:
  - Engagement with Vicroads to streamline the application process
  - Address locations, design, and consistency in branding;
  - Establish signage at key gateway entry points to the region which promotes the boutique offering, and communicates to the visitor that they are within one of Australia's premier wine regions.
- Work with wine tour companies to establish itineraries for Bendigo and Heathcote wine regions.
- Develop a new wine event which combines both the Bendigo and Heathcote winegrowers to showcase the best of the Central Victorian wine regions.



## BENDIGO NIGHT TIME ECONOMY

Bendigo has experienced a significant increase in visitation over the past decade, however, the bulk of this growth has been from daytrip visitors with overnight visitation remaining relatively flat. The improved transport accessibility from Melbourne has meant that visitors can experience the city's arts and heritage attractions with a short daytrip from Melbourne, limiting visitor yield.

In recent years, there has been some growth in the night time activity in Bendigo's city centre with a number of quality restaurants and evening shows in the new Ulumbarra Theatre. However, there is significant scope to further develop Bendigo's night-time offering to convert daytrip to overnight stays and grow visitor yield. The main concentration of night time activity occurs along View Street and High Street. Further development of night time uses in this area such as bars and restaurants should be encouraged.

This project will include a suite of initiatives to improve the night-time offering and activation of the Bendigo CBD including investment in bars, night-time events, and expanded trading hours.

**COST: \$500,000**

### ECONOMIC IMPACT

Based on the assumption that the development of Bendigo's night time economy will convert 5% of daytrip visitors to overnight (based on current levels), and increase current overnight visitors by 5%, it will have the potential to:

- Increase overnight visitation by **136,000 visitors** annually;
- Increase total in-region expenditure by \$21.9 million, with in-direct economic benefits of \$21.6 million (**total of 43.6 million**).
- Increase employment by **311 jobs** FTE (219 direct and 92 in-direct).

### NEXT STEPS:

- Establish a night economy taskforce comprising local business and other relevant stakeholders;
- Investigate the establishment of twilight and evening markets;
- Encourage the growth of major events which bring night-time activity to the Bendigo CBD such as the Bendigo Blues and Roots Festival;
- Investigate the establishment of pop up bars in underutilised public and private spaces;
- Investigate lighting and projections for key buildings;
- Package restaurant and bar specials with passes for attractions and major exhibitions;
- Promote night-time opportunities through branding and marketing campaigns.



Masons Restaurant, Bendigo

## VILLAGE BRANDING & TOURING

Market research shows that touring historic villages ranked as the most popular activity to undertake by the Lifestyle Leader market in the Bendigo Region. A drive through the region takes a visitor through a variety of settings including agricultural landscapes, Box Iron Bark Forest, vineyards, and historic monuments, all connected by a series of charming villages.

There are a number of existing touring opportunities in the region. The Goldfields Touring Route linked Ballarat and Bendigo, via Daylesford, but has recently been made defunct. The route was focused on major towns and was poorly marketed. The Goldfields Way Touring Route has existed since 2013 and also connects Ballarat and Bendigo but via Maryborough. However, this route is also poorly marketed with no digital presence and no understanding of the opportunities within each village.

This initiative will not be to replicate the former Goldfields Touring Route, but build the brand and identity of the villages to provide an appealing touring experience which may include a number of route and itinerary options (including the existing Goldfields Way Route). The routes will leverage from the main transport corridors linking Bendigo to Melbourne and Ballarat. The touring routes may be tailored to a variety of interests to highlight different product types (e.g. gold rush sites, farm-gate produce, wine, antiques). The village routes will need to be supported through quality online marketing and branding content which showcase the experiences and opportunities within each village.

**COST: \$150,000**

### NEXT STEPS:

- Establish a working group to oversee the project;
- Confirm the routes and infrastructure requirements (integrating the Goldfields Way as an existing route);
- Confirm positioning, unique branding of each village, and opportunities along each route;
- Develop marketing collateral;
- Integrate into a regional tourism website;

## GREAT STUPA DEVELOPMENT

The Great Stupa of Universal Compassion is a significant Buddhist monument located in Myers Flat, approximately 9km from the Bendigo City centre. The site is currently under construction but when completed will be the largest Buddhist temple in the western world and house the Jade Buddha, a Buddhist monument of international significance. A masterplan has been completed for the site that includes:

- A hotel and group accommodation;
- Museum and interpretive centre;
- Restaurant; and
- Infrastructure to support a local community.

The proposed development will be a unique attraction to the Bendigo Region and draw new markets including health and wellbeing enthusiasts and international visitors.

A key barrier to the development of the site is the lack of service infrastructure (water, electricity, sewer). The Stupa's board are currently developing a funding proposal to install service infrastructure using sustainable methods so that the site effectively operates 'off-grid'. This will include a mixture of:

- Solar energy;
- On-site sewerage treatment; and
- Potable drinking water treatment.

**COST: \$3 MILLION [SERVICE INFRASTRUCTURE]**

### NEXT STEPS:

- Support the Great Stupa's funding application for service infrastructure;
- Work with the Great Stupa Board in the development of their site masterplan;
- Promote the Great Stupa as a unique and alternative tourism experience.

## CASTLEMAINE DIGGINGS NATIONAL PARK IMPROVEMENTS

The Castlemaine Diggings National Park is a unique attraction in the region which provides a rare snapshot of life in the Goldfields, as well as numerous recreational opportunities. The Park is being considered for UNESCO World Heritage Status which will provide increase interest and exposure for the Park.

Currently the Park is underutilised and attracts only a small number of visitors. There is opportunity to leverage the heritage and recreational assets of the Park to create a tourism product and experience. Further strategic planning will be required to provide direction on linking the heritage sites and identifying future infrastructure needs.

**COST: \$150,000 [STRATEGIC PLANNING]**

### NEXT STEPS:

- Develop a brief which identifies opportunities for tourism development of the Park and infrastructure needs. This includes:
  - Trails specific to MTB and hiking;
  - Interpretive sites;
  - Wayfinding signage;
  - Visitor information (locations and type);
  - Visitor facilities (toilets, picnics, camping);
  - Online interpretive content;
  - School and education programs.

## MALDON VIC AND EXHIBITION SPACE

The current Maldon VIC is located on the fringe of the historic town centre in a low exposure location. There is a current proposal to relocate the VIC into a heritage building on the main street in the heart of the town's historic tourist centre. The design concept for the re-purposed heritage building includes:

- Visitor information centre;
- Offices and meeting area;
- Storage;
- Public toilets;
- Courtyard; and
- Multi-purpose exhibition and conference space.

The new VIC is estimated to capture an additional 25,000 visitors per annum which will likely be encouraged to stay longer or disperse into the region.

**COST: \$850,000 [CONSTRUCTION]**

### ECONOMIC IMPACT

A detailed economic impact assessment has been completed for the development. It shows the following.

**Short-term (construction):** The construction phase of the VIC will generate **\$1.7 million** in economic output and support **5 jobs** (FTE) through direct and indirect expenditure.

**Ongoing (operation):** Employment and increased expenditure from visitors is expected to support an additional **24 jobs** FTE and **\$2.4 million** in economic output.

### NEXT STEPS:

- Advocate for funding for the construction of the new VIC.

## BENDIGO HIGH QUALITY ACCOMMODATION AND CONFERENCING

Bendigo is the major visitor destination and accommodation hub in the region. The city must cater to a variety of visitor markets and needs. The accommodation supply audit shows that a large bulk of the accommodation stock in Bendigo is within the Motel, 3-3.5 star standard, with very little quality and accommodation to cater for the high yielding tourist or business market.

The development of a branded 4.5 - 5 star hotel in the Bendigo CBD would complement the growing business sector and high-yielding tourist market. It would also raise the profile of Bendigo as a world-class destination offering an international quality standard of accommodation. The inclusion of conferencing facilities will cater for the growing business tourism market in Bendigo.

### **COST: \$45 MILLION**

### **ECONOMIC IMPACT**

**Short-term (construction):** The construction phase of the hotel will generate **\$83.6 million** in economic output and support **235 jobs** (FTE) through direct and indirect expenditure.

**Ongoing (operation):** The hotel will directly support an additional **157 jobs** (120 direct and 38 indirect FTE) and **\$24.6 million** in economic output (\$14.8 million direct, and \$9.9 million indirect).

### **NEXT STEPS:**

- Undertake a location assessment to identify suitable sites for development;
- Prepare a development prospectus to take to market and seek a major hotel international brand;
- Consider providing development incentives to secure an appropriate operator such as rates relief, business leases and use of / incentivized sale of public land.

## CASTLEMAINE BOUTIQUE ACCOMMODATION AND CONFERENCE CENTRE

Castlemaine is one of the most popular destinations in the region (second to Bendigo in terms of visitation) due to its heritage streetscape, growing hospitality offering, and rural character. The town and surrounding region has become a popular short-break destination due to its lifestyle appeal and location close to Melbourne and Bendigo. The current accommodation offering is dominated by Motel and Caravan Parks and there is a gap in high quality accommodation. In addition, there is also a gap in purpose built function facilities in the area to accommodate business events, weddings, and other private functions.

The development of a purpose built accommodation and function centre which is of mid-scale (40 - 60) rooms and venue capacity for 50-100 guests) would fill a significant gap in the town and provide new opportunities for higher yielding visitors.

### **COST: \$15 MILLION**

### **ECONOMIC IMPACT**

**Short-term (construction):** The construction phase of the hotel will generate **\$31.4 million** in economic output and support **88 jobs** (FTE) through direct and indirect expenditure.

**Ongoing (operation):** The hotel will directly support an additional **88 jobs** (68 direct and 21 indirect FTE) and **\$13.9 million** in economic output (\$8.3 million direct and \$5.6 million indirect).

### **NEXT STEPS:**

- Undertake a location assessment to identify suitable sites for development;
- Prepare a development prospectus to take to market and seek a major hotel international brand;
- Consider providing development incentives to secure an appropriate operator such as rates relief, business leases and use of / incentivized sale of public land.

## MARYBOROUGH SERVICED APARTMENTS AND FUNCTION CENTRE

Maryborough is a significant regional service centre and important rural business base. The current accommodation mix includes a large provision of motel and caravan park accommodation. Self-contained accommodation is relatively limited and there is opportunity to develop contemporary serviced apartment accommodation to cater for the business market and tourist market which is expected to grow with the development of the Maryborough Arts and Cultural Precinct. There is also opportunity to include ancillary function and conferencing facilities to support Maryborough's growing role as a regional business hub.

Council has undertaken some strategic work to identify suitable sites for a serviced apartment development in the town centre, with opportunities around the railway station precinct.

### **COST: \$12 MILLION**

### **ECONOMIC IMPACT**

**Short-term (construction):** The construction phase of the hotel will generate **\$25.1 million** in economic output and support **70 jobs** (FTE) through direct and indirect expenditure.

**Ongoing (operation):** The hotel and function centre will directly support an additional **79 jobs** (60 direct and 19 indirect FTE) and **\$12.3 million** in economic output (\$7.4 million direct, and \$4.9 million indirect).

### **NEXT STEPS:**

- Confirm suitable sites for a serviced apartment development;
- Prepare a development prospectus to take to market and seek a suitable operator (e.g. Quest, Mantra);
- Consider providing development incentives to secure an appropriate operator such as rates relief, business leases and use of / incentivised sale of public land.

## 7. DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

### 7.1. OVERVIEW

The following section provides analysis of the product development opportunities recommended to enhance the tourism product offer and build on the existing assets across destinations in the Bendigo Region. These opportunities build on the priority projects and have been divided by sub-region, in order to understand the suite of opportunities that have been recommended in each distinctive destination. In particular, this section provides:

- A description of each product development opportunity, providing a summary of the key elements of initiative; and
- The alignment of projects with the identified strategic themes and the strategic rationale for recommending the project.



## 7.2. BENDIGO

Bendigo is approximately 2 hours drive from Melbourne with most visitors travelling up the Calder Highway. It is a thriving regional city which is currently undergoing significant investment in infrastructure, strong economic growth and continued appeal as a lifestyle residential destination.

The city is an established tourism destination with a mature product offering. It has experienced significant visitor growth in recent years based on its reputation as major regional hub for arts and cultural tourism. The 'View Street Arts Precinct' is a major focus of tourism activity in Bendigo and links a number of the major arts venues.

Goldrush and Chinese heritage remains an important part of the city's character and tourism appeal. There is a need for a number of the large attractions within Bendigo for reinvestment and improved interpretation and establishment of more contemporary experiences to generate repeat visitation and grow new markets.

As the economic and population base of the city continues to grow, the visitor economy will grow and diversify with visitors attracted the city for a range of purposes including leisure, business, health and education, and major events. This growth will need to be matched through initiatives which build the infrastructure to cater for a growing visitor economy, address product gaps, and grow visitor yield and length of stay (particularly converting daytrips to overnight). This will include initiatives such as:

- Leverage the city's reputation for arts and cultural tourism to broaden its appeal, particularly for younger markets;
- Reinvest and reinterpreting the city's heritage assets;
- Leverage business and VFR to grow visitor yield;
- Continued development of the accommodation base, particularly reinvestment in existing motel stock;
- Growing the night-time experience to convert daytrip to overnight stays;
- Developing the Bendigo Wine Region for wine tourism.

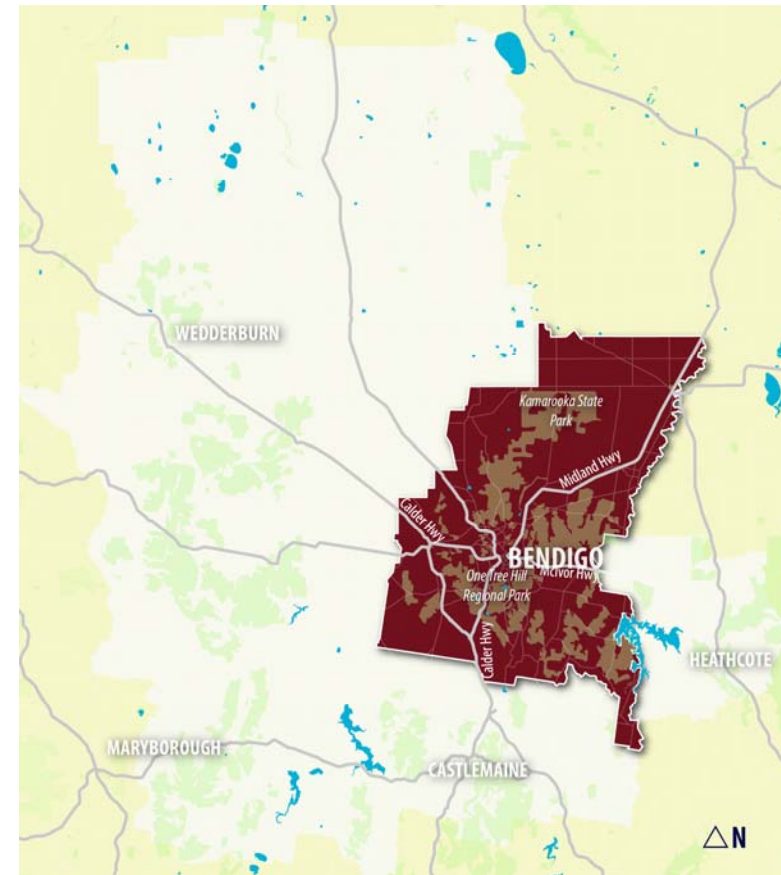


TABLE 17 BENDIGO TOURISM PROJECTS

Title	Objective	Description
<b>TIER 1 PRIORITY PROJECTS</b>		
<b>Great Stupa Development Project</b>	Leverage Arts and Cultural Tourism Growth	Work with the Great Stupa to facilitate development of the masterplan and address issues with service infrastructure.
<b>Bendigo Heritage Tourism Attractions and Positioning</b>	Heritage Rejuvenation and Positioning	Work with the Heritage Trust to reinvest and reposition attractions to broaden market appeal. Support the outcomes of the Tramways Strategic Plan including opportunities for new stops and improved interpretation.
<b>Bendigo Night Time Economy</b>	Primary Destination Development	Improve the night-time offering and activation of the Bendigo CBD including investment in bars, night-time events, and expanded trading hours.
<b>Bendigo Hotel and Conference Centre</b>	Primary Destination Development	The development of a branded 4.5 - 5 star hotel in the Bendigo CBD would complement the growing business sector and high-yielding tourist market.
<b>TIER 2 PROJECTS</b>		
<b>Aspire Precinct</b>	Leverage Arts and Cultural Tourism Growth	Support the development of the Aspire Precinct including a new interpretive centre, community function space, cafe and retail space, a new piazza, to provide a new cultural tourism attraction and landmark gateway to the CBD.
<b>Interactive Arts Program</b>	Leverage Arts and Cultural Tourism Growth	Work with current arts and cultural attractions to identify opportunities and gaps in the sector with the aim to develop more interactive and immersive cultural experiences which are aimed at new audiences. Consider a grant funding program aimed at attractions and community arts groups which may fill this gap.
<b>Golden Dragon Museum</b>	Heritage Rejuvenation and Positioning	The Golden Dragon Museum is an important part of the heritage offer Bendigo. It is currently undertaking a strategic plan. Supporting the outcomes of the plan should be considered.
<b>Bendigo Pottery Expansion</b>	Leverage Arts and Cultural Tourism Growth	Work with the Bendigo Pottery to assist the expansion of operations.
<b>Reinvestment in existing hotel/motel stock</b>	Primary Destination Development	There is a large existing supply of mid-level (3 star) motel and hotel accommodation. Reinvestment in to the existing accommodation stock should be encouraged to support the corporate and high-yield tourist sectors.
<b>Open House Event</b>	Heritage Rejuvenation and Positioning	New event based on the Melbourne Open House. A weekend allowing Bendigo's historic, hidden gem buildings to be opened for public access.
<b>Utilisation of Parks and Gardens</b>	Primary Destination Development	Improved utilisation of parks and gardens for events (the successful Mad Hatters Event as an example).
<b>CBD Retail Development</b>	Primary Destination Development	Support the development of boutique and lifestyle retail for tourists. Continue to develop the distinct 'precincts' which have their own unique character and offering. Support other initiatives including pop ups, laneway activation, wayfinding, signage.
<b>Food and Wine Itineraries</b>	Building the Hinterland Experience	Work with local wineries and producers to develop short itineraries for farm-gate and cellar door experiences which are in close proximity to Bendigo City. Encourage the development of on farm value adds such as farm stays. Encourage joint initiatives with Heathcote wineries.

Title	Objective	Description
<b>Group Accommodation</b>	Primary Destination Development	Quality group accommodation to service the school and sporting groups market.
<b>School Education Tourism</b>	Primary Destination Development	Investigate opportunities to growth education travel market particularly from Melbourne schools.
<b>TIER 3 PROJECTS</b>		
<b>Quality day spa facility</b>	Primary Destination Development	The development of a quality day spa facility which fills a gap in the product offer.
<b>Eaglehawk Town Centre</b>	Primary Destination Development	Eaglehawk is a historic suburb of Bendigo. It has an attractive main street has undergone a number of streetscape improvements in recent years. The main street is an important thoroughfare in and out of Bendigo and there is opportunity to develop a getter food and beverage offering along the street.
<b>Spring Gully MTB Trail Network</b>	Unlocking Natural Assets	Development of MTB trail system through Spring Gully Park.

### 7.3. HEATHCOTE

Heathcote is located on the Northern Highway, within 90 minutes from Melbourne, and approximately 30 minutes from Bendigo. The town receives a large number of stop over visitors who are on their way to the Murray Region and the nearby Lake Eppalock. Many of these visitors are campers and use Heathcote as a stop over to buy basic supplies.

The town is situated on the edge of the Graytown-Heathcote National Park which provides an attractive backdrop. The town is clustered around High Street which has a number of heritage buildings, a physical reminder of the town's rich gold rush history. Although the town can provide an attractive setting, there are a number of issues including:

- A number of empty and derelict shopfronts along High Street;
- Poor retail mix which does not appeal to tourists;
- A lack of beautification and plantings along High Street;
- An elongated High Street which it is not walkable and spreads activity across a large area (reputed to be the longest high street in Victoria); and
- A lack of signage and interpretation on the gold rush heritage of the town.

Heathcote is known as one of Australia's best quality producing wine regions, especially for its famed Shiraz. However, despite its reputation for producing quality wines, Heathcote has failed to secure its place as a primary destination for food and wine tourism. Key opportunities for Heathcote include:

- Town centre and streetscape improvements to integrate elements of the region's wine brand (e.g. vine plantings);
- Leverage from the recently completed O'Keefe Rail Trail to grow cycling tourism in the town, connect to trails which link wine cellar doors, and integrate cycling infrastructure into the town centre;
- Encourage the development of tourism facilities within wineries e.g. restaurants, accommodation, function space;

- Improved visitor facilities at Lake Eppalock; and
- Improve the food and dining offer to complement the region's wineries.

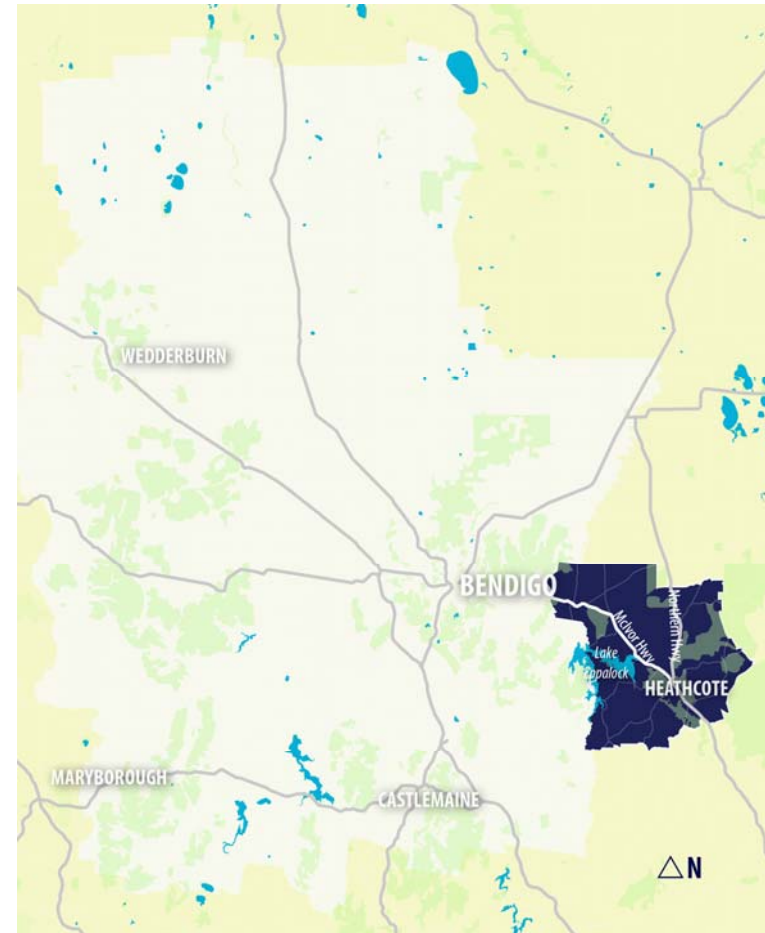
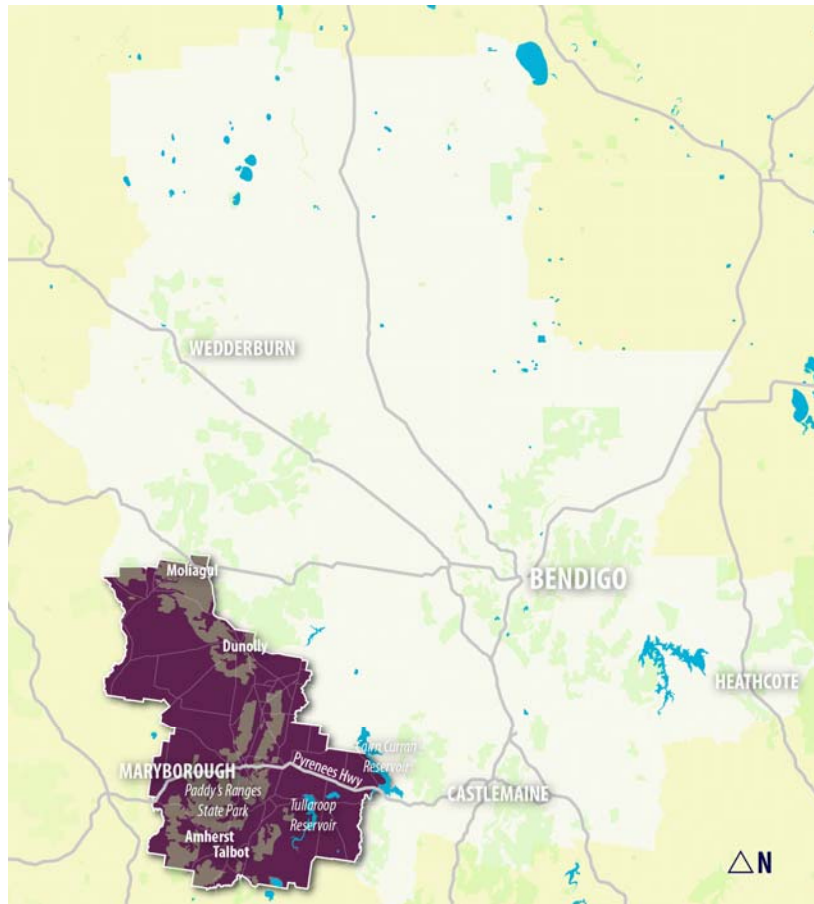


TABLE 18 HEATHCOTE TOURISM PROJECTS

Title	Objective	Description
<b>TIER 1 PRIORITY PROJECTS</b>		
<b>Heathcote Town Centre Improvements</b>	Primary Destination Development	Work with Council, State Government, and the local community to develop a Streetscape Masterplan for Heathcote town centre. Ensure that tourism is an essential consideration in the masterplan, and integrate elements of the wine branding (e.g. vine plantings) and improvements to cycling infrastructure.
<b>Heathcote Spur Trail (included in Ride Goldfields priority project)</b>	Hinterland Experience	Undertake detailed design of the Heathcote Spur Trail Network to confirm the route alignment, construction materials, and infrastructure needs of the trail. Secure funding for construction of trails and required infrastructure.
<b>O'Keefe Rail Trail (included in Ride Goldfields priority project)</b>	Hinterland Experience	Support the findings of the O'Keefe Rail Trail Feasibility Study to extend the trail to Wallan.
<b>TIER 2 PROJECTS</b>		
<b>Food and Wine Event</b>	Hinterland Experience	Develop an additional food and wine event possibly with Bendigo Winegrowers to showcase regional boutique strengths.
<b>Improved Dining Offering</b>	Hinterland Experience	The lack of quality food and dining establishments to complement the regions wine offering is a key barrier to growing visitation. Encourage the development of dining establishments, particularly in wineries and town centre.
<b>Lake Eppalock Tourism Plan</b>	Unlocking Natural Assets	Engage with GM Water on the development of a tourism masterplan for Lake Eppalock. Consider opportunities for events, cycling infrastructure and additional commercial tourism ventures.
<b>TIER 3 PROJECTS</b>		
<b>Nature-based Accommodation</b>	Unlocking Natural Assets	Work with Parks Victoria and GM Water to identify sites that could support eco-cabins. Sites on the edge of the Heathcote-Graythorn National Park may be suitable.
<b>Heathcote-Graythorn National Park Improvements</b>	Unlocking Natural Assets	Work with Parks Victoria to improve infrastructure in the Heathcote-Graytown National Park such as formalising walking trails, camp grounds, improving signage and interpretation of the Box-Iron Bark Forest, bird species and heritage sites; and improving look-out sites.

## 7.4. CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS



The Central Goldfields sub-region has a rich goldrush past which is evident in the grand buildings, historic cottages, gracious homes, and historic streetscapes which shape its towns and villages.

Maryborough is the most significant town of the region with approximately 8,000 residents. The size and service role of the town is evident upon entrance by the large residential base and the presence of large national retail chains. Much of the commercial activity is located around High Street. The corner of High Street and Nolan Street and the civic square is a prominent landmark for the town where a number of iconic heritage buildings are clustered (Town Hall, Post Office, and Courthouse). The Central Goldfields Art Gallery is located in the historic fire station building and is just one block north of the civic square. The railway station, which is the key feature of the town, is located at the southern end of the town, somewhat isolated from the commercial centre.

There is a series of historic villages which comprise the rest of the region. Carisbrook is the second largest town and is located on the Pyrenees Highway, just 7km from Maryborough. It functions as a satellite town to Maryborough.

Talbot is a quiet village 15 km west of Maryborough. It has a picturesque, winding main street which is an excellent example of a gold mining village. Talbot is best known for its monthly farmers market which can draw more than 3,000 visitors to the town.

Dunolly is located 20km north of Maryborough and 60km west of Bendigo. Dunolly and surrounding area is known as the 'golden triangle' for the discovery of more gold nuggets than anywhere else in Australia. It has a wide, attractive main street which is lined with goldrush architecture.

There are also a number of smaller villages including Moliagul, Bealiba, Majorca, and Timor, which make for an appealing touring experience. Central Goldfields borders other significant tourism regions including Daylesford and Spa County to the south and the Pyrenees wine region to the west. There is opportunity to leverage visitors from these destinations.

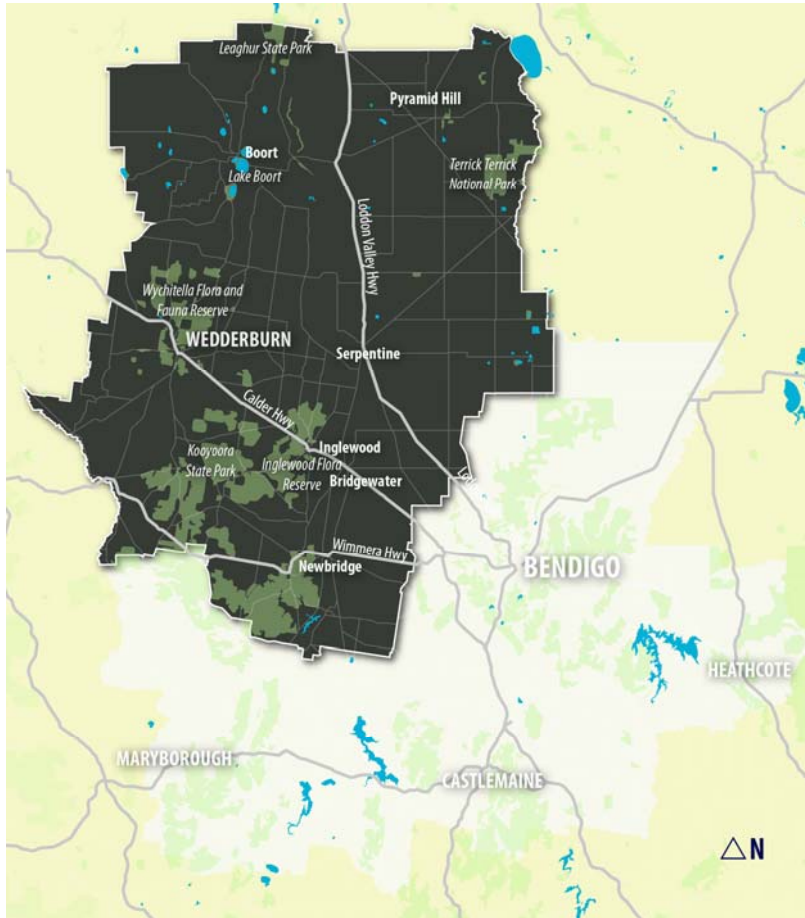


TABLE 19 CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES

Title	Objective	Description
<b>TIER 1 PRIORITY PROJECTS</b>		
<b>Maryborough Cultural Arts Precinct</b>	Leveraging Arts and Cultural Growth	Development of a cultural arts precinct which links the key heritage sites in Maryborough including the Town Hall, Art Gallery, and Train Station.
<b>Maryborough Serviced Apartments and Function Centre</b>	Primary Destination Development	Development of serviced apartments in the Maryborough town centre with supporting conferencing facilities. Identify suitable sites and prepare a development prospectus to take to market to seek a suitable operator (e.g. Quest, Mantra).
<b>TIER 2 PROJECTS</b>		
<b>Maryborough Retail Strategy</b>	Primary Destination Development	Review the role and function of Maryborough retailing centre. Consider opportunities for new uses for activation of vacant premises (e.g. pop up stores).
<b>Maryborough Weekend Activation</b>	Primary Destination Development	Develop initiatives and activities to enhance weekend activation and encourage traders to extend weekend trading hours. Initiatives may include small scale events to attract people to the town centre (e.g. markets and festivals), working with traders to extend trading hours (possibility of having a rotating weekend roster for hospitality businesses), and leveraging from sporting events. This may be investigated through a Maryborough Retail Strategy as mentioned above.
<b>Improved Rail Services</b>	Visitability	Advocate for improved train services and scheduling to Maryborough (via Talbot) for visitor convenience, particularly for Sunday evening trains. This should be considered within the Loddon Campaspe Transport Plan.
<b>State and Regional Park Improvements</b>	Hinterland Experience	Work with Parks Victoria to improve visitor facilities within State and National Parks. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgrades to Paddys Ranges Walking Track including trail work and interpretive signage;</li> <li>• Upgrades to Paddys Ranges Campground and Paddys Ranges Picnic Ground including new BBQs, picnic tables, and visitor signage;</li> <li>• The development of Quartz Reef as a natural attraction including better signage to communicate the significance of the site;</li> <li>• Improvement of interpretive and educational signage throughout State and Regional Parks.</li> </ul>
<b>Township RV Facilities</b>	Visitability	Improve RV facilities across townships to encourage grey nomads and caravaners to stop and spend a greater amount of time in Central Goldfields.
<b>Bus services to Bendigo</b>	Visitability	Improved bus services between Maryborough-Bendigo.
<b>Maryborough-Castlemaine rail line re-use</b>	Hinterland Experience	Investigate new uses for the disused train line between Castlemaine and Maryborough e.g. rail trail, train carts.
<b>Cycling Routes &amp; Itineraries</b>	Hinterland Experience	Develop road and trail cycling routes which connect villages showcasing the natural landscape within State and Regional Parks, building on existing work already completed (as shown in the Central Goldfields Cycling Brochure.). Work with the Ride Goldfields Committee to ensure that the village cycling routes are included in future digital marketing platforms.

Title	Objective	Description
<b>Central Goldfields Village Walking Trails</b>	Hinterland Experience	Develop a mini-series of walking trails throughout each of the Central Goldfields Villages through the natural and built landscape telling the stories of each village.
TIER 3 PROJECTS		
<b>Carisbrook Creek Foreshore Improvements</b>	Unlocking Natural Assets	Landscaping works to improve the foreshore along with the development of a signed walking trail.
<b>Moliagul Historic Reserve Facilities Upgrade</b>	Hinterland Experience	Review the Moliagul Historic Reserve facilities and support the upgrade of signage on the Welcome Stranger Discovery Walk in conjunction with Parks Victoria and other relevant bodies.
<b>Dunolly Hotel reinvestment</b>	Hinterland Experience	Support the establishment/reopening of one of the Dunolly Hotel's to become a dual food and accommodation venue.

## 7.5. LODDON



Loddon is a large sub region to the north west of Bendigo, stretching all the way up to the Murray region. Loddon is composed of a number of small towns separated by a rural

farmed landscape as well as a number of State and National Parks. A number of major highways run through the region (Calder Highway and Loddon Valley Highway) with a large number of travellers coming from Swan Hill and Mildura.

The Loddon River is the key natural feature and runs through the centre of the region. Bridgewater is main town for water-based activities and is located 40km west of Bendigo, along the Calder Highway. Although Bridgewater is a small rural town at present, regional policy promotes sustainable growth through proactive planning and liveability marketing<sup>7</sup>. Planning strategies should seek to improve the layout and function of the town, provide strategies to leverage the river frontage, and identify strategic sites which could support accommodation growth.

Wedderburn is located on the Calder Hwy, approximately 75km from Bendigo. The town includes the municipal offices and visitor information centre. It's a quiet county town which can be used as a base to explore the surrounding natural landscape and wineries. Improvements to the towns main streetscape amenity have been identified.

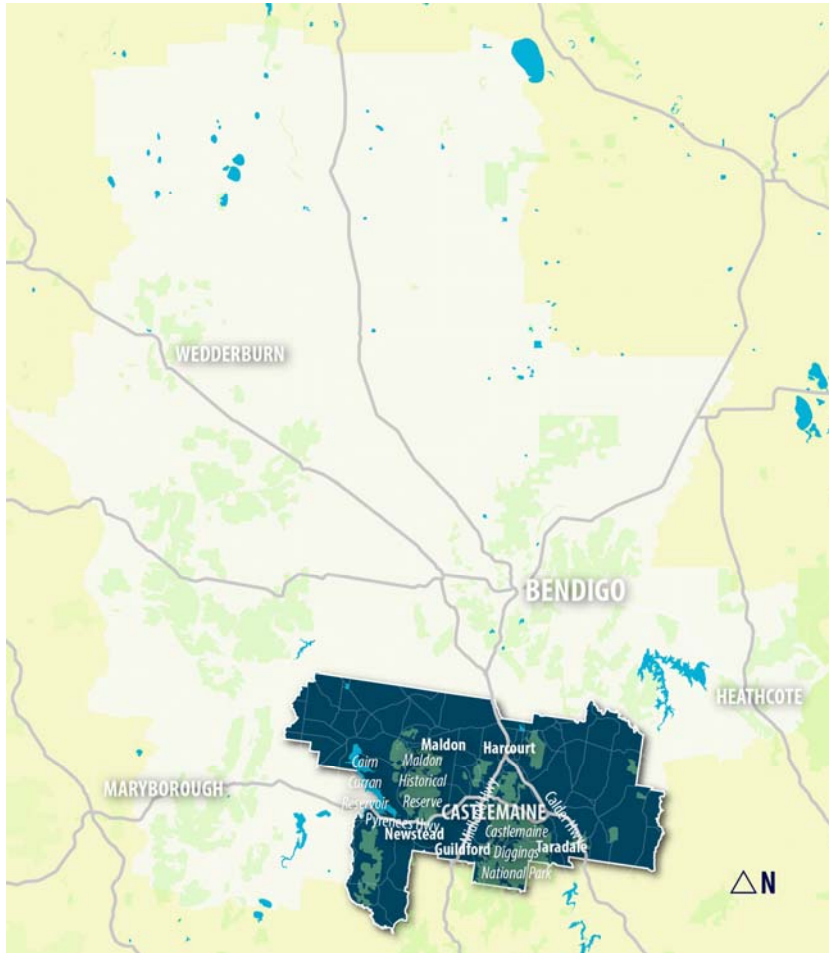
Boort is located around 100 km north of Bendigo, centred around the Boort wetlands system. The town has an attractive town centre which is framed for the lakes at either end. The Boort wetland system is a popular nature-based attraction which could be developed further particularly for indigenous interpretation.

<sup>7</sup> Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan 2014, pg 52

TABLE 20 LODDON TOURISM PROJECTS

Title	Objective	Description
<b>TIER 1 PRIORITY PROJECTS</b>		
<b>Bridgewater &amp; Inglewood Township and Foreshore Improvements</b>	Primary Destination Development	Planning strategies to improve the layout and function of the Bridgewater and Inglewood townships to take advantage of river frontage (re-orient towards river).
<b>TIER 2 PROJECTS</b>		
<b>Nature-based Accommodation</b>	Unlocking Natural Assets	Work with Parks Victoria and GM Water to identify sites that could support eco-cabins. Sites on the edge of the State and National Parks and Loddon River may be suitable.
<b>Loddon River Canoe Trails</b>	Unlocking Natural Assets	Extend existing canoe trails along the Loddon River to develop a long paddle experience which may be completed in stages with overnight stops. This may include routes from Laanecoorie to Loddon Weir (bypassing Newbridge and Bridgewater). This could be done either independently or with a private tour operator. A Masterplan will be required to confirm the route, infrastructure needs, and address varying land ownership issues.
<b>Lake Boort Tourism Development Project</b>	Unlocking Natural Assets	Improvement of Lake Boort frontage and commercial tourism opportunities. Improve interpretation of indigenous heritage sites and investigate opportunities of guided tours.
<b>Caravan Park Reinvestment</b>	Unlocking Natural Assets	The region's caravan parks are the largest accommodation type in the sub-region. Reinvestment into facilities should be encouraged to ensure that they are meeting visitor needs and investigate opportunities for more cabin accommodation.
<b>National and State Park Infrastructure Improvements</b>	Unlocking Natural Assets	Work with Parks Victoria to improve visitor facilities within State and National Parks.
<b>Main Street Presentation</b>	Hinterland Experience	Main street presentation and development program (Living main streets plan).
<b>TIER 3 PROJECTS</b>		
<b>Adventure tourism opportunities</b>	Unlocking Natural Assets	Explore opportunities for adventure tourism operators (e.g. rock climbing, quad biking, sky diving).
<b>Bridgewater-Inglewood Cycling Trail</b>	Unlocking Natural Assets	Develop cycling trail between Bridgewater and Inglewood.
<b>Open air public art spaces</b>	Leveraging Arts and Cultural Tourism Growth	Increasing sculptures in public arts trail.
<b>Events on Major Waterways</b>	Unlocking Natural Assets	Work with competition operators to bring events to major water ways (e.g. Loddon River and Boort Lakes)
<b>Farm-stay accommodation</b>	Hinterland Experience	Farm-stay accommodation leveraging from the regions agricultural strengths.

## 7.6. MOUNT ALEXANDER



Mount Alexander is strategically located between Bendigo and Melbourne, approximately an hour and a half drive from Melbourne. The wider region has established in recent years as a popular 'tree-change' and short-break destination. The region's appeal stems from its forested landscape, historic and boutique villages, and proximity to Melbourne.

Castlemaine is the primary destination in the region. It maintains a 'slow paced' village character, a historic streetscape, and developed a reputation for its creative and artisan community. In recent years, there are a number of heritage buildings which have been repurposed for other tourism related uses such as arts and hospitality.

Maldon is located approximately 15km north-west from Castlemaine. The town is steeped in history and was declared the first Notable Town by the National Trust in 1966. The town has a similar heritage character to Castlemaine with a mix of solid stone buildings and old weatherboard homes.

Harcourt is located at the foot of Mount Alexander, just off the Calder Highway. Known for its apple orchards, the small town is building a reputation for its cideries and wine. The development of the Harcourt MTB Park will provide significant opportunities for the town to grow its tourism base.

Other small villages in the region include Newstead, Chewton, Guildford, Fryerstown, and Taradale. The villages and townships are located within an accessible distance from one another and make for an easy touring route.

The sub-region also has a number of natural assets which could be better utilised. The Goldfields Track is a state significant trail which is being considered for track improvements and new route alignments. The Castlemaine Diggings National Park is being considered for UNESCO World Heritage Status and there is an opportunity to improve visitor facilities and interpretation.

TABLE 21 MOUNT ALEXANDER TOURISM PROJECTS

Title	Theme	Description
<b>TIER 1 PRIORITY PROJECTS</b>		
<b>Castlemaine Boutique Accommodation and Conference Centre</b>	Primary Destination Development	Purpose built conference facility with attached accommodation
<b>New Maldon Visitor Information Centre</b>	Visitability	Relocation of Maldon Visitor Information Centre to refurbished building in the town centre
<b>Harcourt Township Improvements</b>	Hinterland Experience	Implement outcomes of the Harcourt Masterplan, including improved streetscapes and connections to the forthcoming Mountain Bike Park.
<b>Castlemaine Diggings National Park</b>	Unlocking Natural Assets	Support World Heritage nomination and improvement of the Park visitor experience
<b>TIER 2 PROJECTS</b>		
<b>Goldfields Track Improvement</b>	Unlocking Natural Assets	Improvements to the Goldfields Track, including new routes to make it more accessible and avoid the more difficult and technical areas of the track.
<b>Castlemaine Night Time Activation</b>	Primary Destination Development	Develop initiatives and activities to enhance the night time offering and activation of the town centre. This may include twilight markets and events, pop-up bars, building lighting projects
<b>Harcourt MTB Park</b>	Unlocking Natural Assets	Advocate for further funding contributions toward the development of the Harcourt MTB Park.
<b>Mount Alexander Public Arts Masterplan</b>	Leveraging Arts and Cultural Growth	Develop a public arts masterplan to showcase local artist works within the public realm as a place making opportunity.
<b>Walking and cycling trails</b>	Unlocking Natural Assets	Improve and develop trails within and between Shire towns
<b>Motor Enthusiast Industry Development</b>	Leveraging Arts and Cultural Growth	Investigate and develop opportunities to improve the visitor experience for the hot rod and wider motor enthusiast market
<b>Castlemaine Art Gallery Strategic Plan</b>	Leveraging Arts and Cultural Growth	Support outcomes of the Castlemaine Art Gallery & Historic Museum Review to develop the Gallery's strategic direction and operations.
<b>TIER 3 PROJECTS</b>		
<b>Buda Historic House &amp; Garden Tourism Uses</b>	Leveraging Arts and Cultural Growth	Support the outcomes of the Buda Historic House & Garden Feasibility Study to improve the heritage site for tourism uses



Title	Theme	Description
<b>Boutique self-contained accommodation</b>	Hinterland Experience	Boutique self-contained accommodation (e.g. winery, farmstay, nature-based) to cater for weekend stay market
<b>Upgrading Council Venues</b>	Leveraging Arts and Cultural Growth	Improvements to Council facilities to improve suitability for events



# PART C: REGIONAL APPROACH

BENDIGO REGION DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

## 8. REGIONAL APPROACH TO TOURISM

### 8.1. INTRODUCTION

This section outlines the elements that will help to strengthen the regional approach to tourism. Projects identified under each subregion, earlier in this Plan, are focused predominantly on product and infrastructure; however in order to develop Bendigo as a tourism region, there are a number of governance, visitor information servicing and digital initiatives that are required to progress the region over the next 5 years.

### 8.2. SUMMARY OF STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

This Destination Management Plan provides the opportunity to review the approach to regional tourism for Bendigo Region. It allows Bendigo Region to apply the learnings from other regional tourism organisations and build on the potential economies of scale from a collaborative approach.

There are four Local Governments and many other organisations which currently deliver tourism services across the region. Below are a set of strategic directions with regard to governance, digital media, visitor information services and events development across the Bendigo Region.

The overall aim of establishing a regional approach to tourism is to create greater efficiencies in service delivery and to ensure that messaging and quality of delivery of service is achieved across the region as well as to deliver greater dispersal and yield. It is critical therefore that any review of a regional approach to tourism includes consideration not only of governance but delivery mechanisms such as visitor services and digital marketing and information.

The immediate next steps for Bendigo Regional Tourism are to look in detail at the resources and effectiveness of current tourism delivery with the aim to establish sustainable tourism governance in the region.

### 1. GOVERNANCE

Undertake a review of the current regional approach to tourism governance in the Bendigo Region with the aim of identifying the following:

- A regional governance model tailored to the unique characteristics of the Bendigo Region;
- Clear roles and responsibilities for all tourism delivery organisations including LTAs, Local Government, and regional organisations (e.g. winemakers groups);
- Potential committee or board structure and the skills mix/ representatives;
- Regional approach to visitor services and digital media;
- Finances required, membership models and targets for funding.

This review should be undertaken with regard to 8.3.4 Governance Considerations to ensure that the approach adopted does not duplicate resources and provides an efficient use of Local Government resources in an environment where rate capping will introduce additional constraints on Local Government budgets.

### 2. DIGITAL

Establish a regional tourism hero website that has a shared platform across all LGAs. Key elements to this include:

- Destination websites with destination brands and themes;
- One shared content management system;
- Utilisation of open source web platform (e.g. drupal) to ensure that it can be integrated and easily adapted across the region;
- Dedicated personnel to ensure the website is developed consistently across the region.

### 3. VISITOR INFORMATION SERVICES

Undertake a regional information services review which includes the following:

- Thorough primary research to understand the way visitors are travelling across the region and the information sources they are engaging with (i.e. Mornington Peninsula Visitor Journeys Report);
- Strategy which investigates physical and non-physical information services;
- Recommendations for a regional and consistent approach to visitor information services delivery;
- Broadening the role of visitor information services to focus on industry development as well as visitor information delivery;
- Opportunities for additional revenue streams;
- Integration of visitor information services with the new regional structure;
- Access to Wi-Fi in VIC locations.

### 4. EVENTS STRATEGY/MANAGEMENT

Undertake a regional events strategy which includes the following:

- Development of an event assessment system which allows Bendigo Regional Tourism to classify events;
- A comprehensive audit of existing events assigned to a tiering system;
- Development of an evaluation criteria in relation to procurement and potential funding for regional events, including an assessment of the value of events;
- Identification of future regional event opportunities with background justification;
- Investigation of sustainable models for event management;
- Tools for ongoing research and assessment of events;
- Builds on the work completed for the Central Goldfields Events Strategy.

### 5. RESEARCH

Appoint a qualified consultant to assist in undertaking a research program that includes:

- Primary visitor research to track visitor expenditure, activities, dispersal, and markets across the region;
- Industry research to track performance, trends and needs of the tourism industry.

### 8.3. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

This section provides an overview of tourism organisation and governance in the Bendigo Region drawing on an outline of current resources dedicated to tourism and provides some benchmarks for regional tourism delivery. This section also identifies several possible operating models for consideration by BRT to support sustainable future operation.

#### 8.3.1. CURRENT STRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

##### STRUCTURE

Figure 17 provides an overview of the organisational structure of tourism in the Bendigo Region. Tourism governance in the region is delivered by the following main groups:

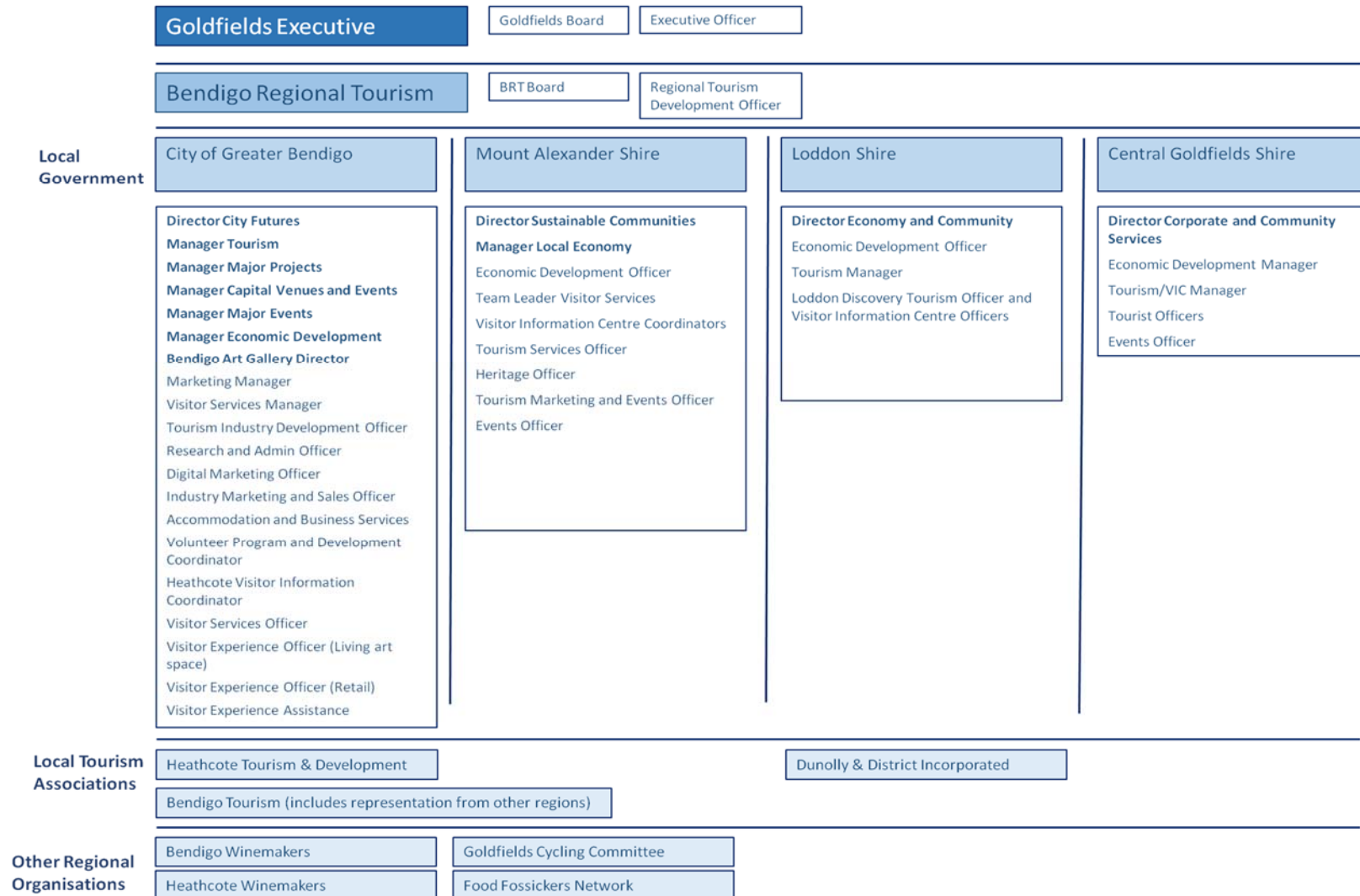
- Goldfields Executive. The overarching tourism organisation in the Goldfields region which allocates funding from Visit Victoria to Bendigo and Ballarat Tourism and provides a conduit between the two organisations for external marketing and promotion.
- Bendigo Regional Tourism. A newly established organisation which sets regional tourism direction and regional marketing.
- Local Governments. Including the City of Greater Bendigo, Mount Alexander Shire, Loddon Shire and Central Goldfields Shire which have the majority of human resources and capital for tourism administration, marketing, visitor information services and product development.
- Local Tourism Associations. Formalised tourism associations responsible for tourism administration at a local level such as Heathcote Tourism Development Inc. Whilst Bendigo Tourism is categorised as an LTA, it operates at a wider level than most other LTAs. Its membership base has representation across the region including outside of the City of Bendigo LGA boundary.
- Other niche organisations. These include product specific organisations such as wine makers and cycling groups.

##### RESOURCES

Figure 17 provides an indication of human resources dedicated to tourism. The majority of paid human resources dedicated to delivering tourism sit within local government. All Bendigo Region local Governments have dedicated resources to managing tourism and visitor information services. In the case of Bendigo which has the greatest number of resources, there are a number of specialist tourism personnel. This level of specialisation is commonly found within large independent tourism organisations such as Ballarat Regional Tourism and Geelong and the Bellarine Tourism.

Overall the region has more than 30 personnel dedicated to delivering a range of tourism services across the region.

FIGURE 17 ORGANISATION STRUCTURE AND RESOURCES





### 8.3.2. BENCHMARKING

A survey of Regional Tourism Organisations was completed by Urban Enterprise in 2012. The survey included responses from 18 RTOs in Victoria. The table below provides a profile of the “average” organisation, taken from data collected.

Overall the average figures for regional tourism organisations include (see table 22 for more information):

- 4.7 FTE equivalent staff;
- 19 volunteers;
- Around \$1 million budget;
- 3.9 municipalities per region.

The resources dedicated to tourism across the four councils would position the Bendigo Region at the upper end of the spectrum with regard to dedicated tourism services. The Bendigo Region has an appropriate size and scale to establish an effective tourism board, with a large industry base and adequate local level funding to support a regional tourism organisation.

TABLE 22 CHARACTERISTICS OF REGIONAL TOURISM ORGANISATIONS

Indicator	Average Response	Maximum	Minimum
Number of FTE Staff	4.7	14	1
Average Number of Volunteers	19	110	0
Average Budget	\$1,027,626	\$3,188,028	\$140,000
Number of Municipalities	3.9	14	1

Source: Urban Enterprise 2012

### 8.3.3. CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL TOURISM ORGANISATIONS

The following characteristics are considered important in building a successful tourism organisation.

- **Multiple revenue streams.** This is critical for sustainability of a tourism organisation. The tourism regions that have larger budgets are able to draw on funding from multiple LGAs, businesses and State Government.
- **Business membership.** Well-developed tourism organisations in Victoria have a strong membership base. This provides revenue for the organisation and also ensures that the organisation has the interests of industry in mind.
- **Scale.** Tourism organisations are strong when they have scale. This includes representation across a wider LGA base and also scale in the number of tourism operators.
- **Support from industry.** Having support and trust from industry is critical to the development of a sustainable tourism organisation. This will ensure buy in to marketing programs and a cohesive approach to visitor services.
- **Experienced manager/leader.** A high quality manager and leader is required to manage a regional tourism organisation. A manager needs to be able to think strategically and have good administration skills, and importantly have a strong rapport with industry.
- **Quality strategic board/committee.** A board or committee which can assist in providing overall strategy, without being involved in day to day activity is critical for achieving a harmonious tourism organization. Board members need to be carefully selected.

#### 8.3.4. GOVERNANCE KEY CONSIDERATIONS

In preparing this plan, discussions with stakeholders and a review of the current tourism structure for the Bendigo Region identified the following for further consideration:

- **Duplication of resources.** As there are very few resources dedicated to the regional tourism board, much of the marketing, collateral and information distribution is undertaken at the Local Government Level. With four local Governments in place there is likely to be duplication of resources across the region, such as:
  - Digital information;
  - Marketing;
  - Training.
- **Lack of clear roles and responsibilities for Bendigo Regional Tourism.** The delineation of roles and responsibilities needs further consideration with regard to the roles of local government, LTAs and the regional tourism organisation with respect to delivering tourism services.
- **Lack of industry representation/ input to the Regional Tourism Board.** Currently the regional tourism board is structured with direct local Government input. There may be a future role to include representatives from the accommodation, attractions and events industry to ensure a broader range of stakeholders provide strategic direction.
- **Integration with other organisations.** There are organisations such as the winegrowers associations which largely operate independently from the regional tourism board and local government. Both groups could benefit from a closer relationship, particularly in regards to packaging product and marketing.
- **Defining a way forward.** Most Regional Tourism Boards in Victoria have established themselves as authorities' independent from Council and have dedicated resources responsible for delivering "regional tourism services". In order to establish a genuine "regional" approach to tourism this may be a consideration.

- **Visitor information services.** A holistic approach to the provision of visitor information services needs consideration. In order to have a truly effective regional approach to tourism, visitor services need to be delivered consistently and to the same quality across the region.
- **Leveraging from Bendigo's resources and knowledge.** Much can be gained by the smaller LGAs in leveraging from the knowledge and resources in tourism by Greater Bendigo City Council.
- **Leverage from existing structures.** Bendigo Tourism is a well-developed local tourism association and has a large regional membership base. There may be opportunity to develop this organisation into a regional tourism board, rather than developing an additional regional tourism structure from scratch. In addition organisations such as Ride Goldfields and Food Fossickers provide product specific initiatives that should be taken into consideration.
- **Funding streams.** Many of the existing regional tourism boards are largely reliant on two funding streams: Local Government and State Government. Additional funding streams should be explored including business partnerships, sponsorships and operation of product.

#### 8.3.5. TOURISM GOVERNANCE MODEL OPTIONS FOR THE BENDIGO REGION

There are many examples of different operating models for tourism governance in Australia. The selection of an operating model which best reflects the regional needs and complexities needs to be considered.

There are four broad operating models which may be considered for the Bendigo Region. These include:

- **An independent highly resourced Regional Tourism Board** with all tourism delivery responsibilities ( e.g. Geelong and the Bellarine & Ballarat);
- **An independent low resourced Regional Tourism Board** with limited tourism responsibilities (e.g. Murray Region, Gippsland, Grampians);
- **A hybrid Local Government and RTO approach** (e.g. the former Mornington Peninsula Tourism model).

- **A customised model.** This model would be developed based on the particular characteristics of the Bendigo Region drawing on the learning from what has and hasn't worked in other regional tourism board models.

A description of each model is provided below.

### **AN INDEPENDENT HIGHLY RESOURCED REGIONAL TOURISM BOARD**

This approach has recently been adopted by Geelong and the Bellarine and Ballarat Regional Tourism Boards. These two boards operate independently of Council and provide all of Council's tourism services. This includes:

- Visitor information services;
- Destination marketing;
- Digital presence;
- Industry networking and development;
- Research;
- Major tourism events.

In the case of Geelong and the Bellarine and Ballarat all of the previously operated council tourism services have been removed from council and placed into an independent tourism organisation governed by a CEO and board.

This model allows decision making independent of Council politics with decisions and strategic directions falling on the CEO and Board. It also is not restricted by internal Council systems, policies and red tape and allows the organisation to be contemporary and flexible to adapt and change.

This model allows for a very efficient use of resources if delivered as there is limited duplication of services within Local Government.

This structure works well for Geelong and the Bellarine and Ballarat as both of these LGAs make up the majority of their respective regions. In the case of Geelong and the Bellarine only part of Golden Plains and the Borough of Queenscliff are located outside of the City of

Greater Geelong and in the case of Ballarat only part of Hepburn Shire and Central Goldfields have an alignment with Ballarat Regional Tourism.

Given that Bendigo Region includes four LGAs, each with their own focus and offer, there would be some difficulty in achieving this model in the immediate term. For this to work appropriately each LGA would need to outsource all of its tourism services to a newly established regional tourism organisation with an independent board. The benefit for each LGA may be the opportunity to minimise their investment in tourism through greater efficiencies achieved through this model.

The Goldfields Library Corporation whilst not a tourism organisation has achieved a similar approach across a broad region. This approach allows for much greater economies of scale to be achieved, provides consistency of service across the region and allows for greater access to resources for small communities which under an LGA model could not be achieved. A case study for this model is provided below.

#### **Case Study: Geelong and The Bellarine Tourism**

*Geelong and the Bellarine Tourism provides a strong comparative case study for consideration by Bendigo Region Tourism. Geelong and the Bellarine Regional Tourism is a large and highly resourced tourism organisation which has shifted much of the City of Greater Geelong's tourism services to an externally developed tourism board. The tourism board represents three Local Government Areas' where Geelong is by far the largest in terms of tourism product and resources.*

*This approach has allowed the smaller Local Governments to leverage from the strength, knowledge and capacity of Greater Geelong. A similar approach may be considered for the Bendigo Region.*

TABLE 23 CASE STUDY: GEELONG AND THE BELLARINE TOURISM

Greater Geelong and the Bellarine	
Area	3 Local Government Areas
Structure	Incorporated Association
Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marketing</li> <li>Production of marketing collateral</li> <li>Market research</li> <li>Provide marketing buy-in opportunities</li> <li>Tourism product and infrastructure development and planning</li> <li>Provide training and advice to members of your organisation</li> <li>Maintenance of the organisation's website</li> <li>Provide professional development opportunities</li> <li>Provide industry leadership opportunities</li> <li>Provide networking opportunities</li> <li>Familiarisation tours</li> <li>Provide lobby power for members</li> <li>Operate Visitor Information Centre/s</li> <li>Provide a booking service for accommodation</li> <li>Provide a booking service for tours and activities businesses</li> <li>Coordinate the Official Visitor Guide</li> <li>Bid for business events</li> <li>Liaison on behalf of members with local, state and federal governments</li> </ul>
Paid Business Membership	Yes
Number of Paid Members	300
Number of Staff	14
Number of Volunteers	110
Annual Budget (estimate)	Over \$2 million
Funded by	Local Government, State Government, Industry

### Goldfields Library Corporation

Goldfields Library Corporation was established in 1966 to provide library and information services to the City of Greater Bendigo, Loddon Shire Council, Macedon Ranges Shire Council and Mount Alexander Shire Council. The organisation receives ongoing funding by its member local Governments. In 2014/15 this funding was reported as \$4.7 million. The library service employs 53 EFT staff which service 982,000 visitors.

The corporation has 10 physical libraries across the region as well as mobile library services.

The Board of the Goldfields Library Corporation consists of two representatives from each of the four member Councils and meets bimonthly.

The Board appoints the Chief Executive Officer who is responsible for all aspects of the Corporation's strategic planning and future directions and oversees the day-to-day operations and management of the GLC.

Source: Library Plan 2013 – 2017, Goldfields Library Corporation

### **AN INDEPENDENT LOW RESOURCED REGIONAL TOURISM BOARD WITH LIMITED RESPONSIBILITIES**

This approach is widely used in Victoria, NSW and Tasmania. Examples include North East Tourism, Grampians and Murray.

This approach allows the Regional Tourism Board to have responsibilities for external marketing, strengthening regional messaging, branding in some cases, industry leadership, research, digital resources and setting strong regional strategy.

Physical on ground visitor information delivery and product development is limited in this model.

This model works best when representing a broad region and there are many successful case studies including some of those established in Victoria such as the Murray Region, North EAST, Gippsland and Grampians.

The success of these RTOs is dependent on having a dedicated CEO who is independent and represents the needs of all Local Governments in a region. Establishing a quality strategic board is also important and those organisations who not been able to achieve strong leadership have struggled.

The other issue for this approach is accessing appropriate levels of funding and recourse to achieve strategic direction. This will require equitable funding from each LGA and Visit Victoria in the case of Bendigo Region.

One of the key risks for this model is duplication of resources and effort. There needs to be clear delineations of responsibility.

This model may be considered for the Bendigo Region as it can ensure a strong focus on regional tourism development, marketing and packaging of product.

### **A HYBRID LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND RTO APPROACH**

The current approach to Bendigo Regional Tourism and the previous approach for Mornington Peninsula Tourism utilised a hybrid approach. In this approach the staff and resources of Local Government are provided to a regional tourism board/organisation.

This approach has benefits in maximising connections and resources within Council, however it is difficult to achieve true regional representation of all member Local Governments if staff are employed directly under one organisation.

If additional resources from Local Government are not provided towards a regional approach for tourism, this may be the only operating option that is feasible.

### **A CUSTOMISED MODEL**

A customised model may be explored for the Bendigo Region which draws on the lessons from other regional tourism boards. Below is a discussion of some of the issues with existing board structures which should be avoided by a new customised approach:

- Large delivery expectations compared with resources available. Many of the existing Regional Tourism Boards have limited resources available to deliver the extensive number of projects in annual strategic plans.
- Time, resources and effort spent on reporting to boards. A board structure requires regional CEOs to spend a lot of their time meeting and reporting to boards. Given the lack of delivery and staff resources available, this approach takes up valuable executive staff time.
- Board mix and personalities. Attracting the right mix of board personalities and skills sets is critical to the success of boards. Board members need to provide strategic advice without overstepping in day to day activity.
- Reliance on State and Local Government funding. Many of the Regional Tourism Boards are overwhelming reliant on public sector funding and in particular funding from State and Local Government. This funding model may be unsustainable in the long term, particularly with changes in Government direction.

These learnings highlight that a customised model should consider the resources that are currently available to tourism and build a structure that is financially sustainable. In the case of the Bendigo Region there is opportunity to leverage from the leadership of Bendigo City Council, however there is also a requirement to have dedicated personnel who drive regional programs.

In addition to this a customised model may investigate the future role of Bendigo Tourism, which already has a large regional membership base and regional representation on its board. There may be potential to transition this organisation to a regional tourism organisation, leveraging from its current linkages with industry.

The case study of Margaret River Busselton Tourism Association is one of the only self-funded regional tourism associations in Australia. It derives the majority of its revenue from operating a number of attractions and Busselton Airport. A customised model for Bendigo Region should investigate the potential revenue streams outside of local and state government funding.

#### **Margaret River Busselton Tourism Association**

*The Margaret River Busselton Tourism Association was established on 1 July 2015 and is the product of two previously competing entities, the Augusta Margaret River Tourism Association and Geopraphe Bay Tourism Association.*

*Marketed as "Margaret River Region" it is a not for profit incorporated association with 820 members and is governed by a Board of nine industry Directors and an independent chairperson.*

*Margaret River Busselton Tourism Association is one of the very few examples of a self-funded regional tourism organisations in Australia. In addition to revenue from its extensive membership base the key revenue drivers from the association are from operating six tourist attractions – Lake Cave, Mammoth Cave, Jewel Cave, Ngilgi Cave, Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse, Cape Naturaliste Lighthouse and managing ground handling at Busselton Regional Airport.*

*The association not only provides marketing and industry development services, it also operates visitor centres in Busselton, Dunsborough, Margaret River and Augusta.*

#### **8.3.6. CONCLUSION**

The Bendigo Region should consider a customised approach to regional tourism governance which is informed by the learnings of existing Regional Tourism Board Structures and investigates a more sustainable funding model for regional tourism delivery. In order to achieve greater sustainability in regional tourism, member Local Governments may need to review the role of local visitor information services programs and look to economies of scale provided by a regional approach. This will allow greater efficiencies of service delivery as demonstrated by the Goldfields Library Corporation and Margaret River Busselton Tourism Association case studies.

The review provides the opportunity to take a first principles look at regional tourism delivery and to identify potential new funding streams such as operating attractions, expansion of merchandise, expansion of booking systems to a regional approach, and sponsorship and membership buy-in.

#### **8.3.7. STRATEGIC DIRECTION**

**Undertake a review of the current regional approach to tourism governance in the Bendigo Region with the aim of identifying the following:**

- **A regional governance model tailored to the unique characteristics of the Bendigo Region;**
- **Clear roles and responsibilities for all regional tourism organisations including LTAs, Local Government;**
- **Potential committee or board structure and the skills mix/ representatives;**
- **Current expenditure on tourism by Local Governments;**
- **Multiple revenue streams;**
- **Finances required, membership models and targets for funding;**

**This review should be undertaken with regard to Section 8.3.4 (Governance Considerations) to ensure that the approach adopted does not duplicate resources and provides an efficient use of Local Government resources in an environment where rate capping will introduce additional constraints on Local Government budgets.**



## 8.4. DIGITAL RESOURCES

### 8.4.1. INTRODUCTION

This section provides an overview of the online presence of the Bendigo Region and the digital assets held by each of the Councils. It provides a technical and qualitative review of websites to assess their useability and visitor friendliness. The review was completed by COMO Group.

A summary of results is provided within this section, with a formal audit contained in Appendix C.

### 8.4.2. METHODOLOGY

The site review includes Council and destination websites, and social media pages which are used for tourism marketing and visitor information purposes. They include:

#### City of Greater Bendigo

- Tourism Website - [www.bendigotourism.com](http://www.bendigotourism.com)
- Facebook Page - <https://www.facebook.com/ExploreBendigo>
- Twitter Account - <https://twitter.com/ExploreBendigo>
- Instagram - <https://instagram.com/explorebendigo>
- YouTube Channel - <https://www.youtube.com/user/BendigoTourism>

#### Central Goldfields

- Tourism Website - [www.visitmaryborough.com.au](http://www.visitmaryborough.com.au)
- Facebook Page - <https://www.facebook.com/Visit.Maryborough>

#### Mount Alexander

- Tourism Website - [www.maldoncastlemaine.com.au](http://www.maldoncastlemaine.com.au)
- YouTube Channel - <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFNhwGhnDwUVOx7WUSsHzOA>

#### Loddon Shire

- Local Council Website - <http://www.loddon.vic.gov.au/Visit>
- Local Council Facebook Page - <https://www.facebook.com/LoddonShire>

### 8.4.3. AUDIT SUMMARY

The audit assessed websites and pages on eight key criteria. A full description of the methodology and of each criteria are provided in Appendix C. A summary of the key outcomes is provided in Table 24.

Some of the common issues identified in the audit include:

- Poor social media integration across all websites;
- Outdated design methods across many of the sites including inconsistent formatting;
- Lack of cross promotion between different tourism product types;
- The quality of content was generally good and up-to-date;
- The use of small and compressed imagery including collages (generally considered outdated);
- Lack of social media feed and integration with social media sites;
- Outdated home page design and navigation is using the "shop that sells everything" approach, rather than a strategically considered hierarchy.

Recommendations for improvements and upgrades for each of the websites are provided in Appendix C.

TABLE 24 SUMMARY OF AUDIT

Assessment Area	Greater Bendigo	Central Goldfields	Mount Alexander	Loddon Shire
Design	Good	Poor	Poor	Poor
Information Architecture & Usability	Poor	Good	Good	Poor
Google Best Practices	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor
Content	Great	Good	Good	Poor
Call to Action	Good	Poor	N/A	N/A
Cross Promotion	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor
Social Media Integration	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor
Social Media Profiles	Great	Good	Great	Poor
<b>Overall Result</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Poor</b>

**N/A:** Does not exist or could not be evaluated

**Poor:** Requires significant attention - generally doesn't meet user needs, or low strategic value

**Good:** Reasonable - generally meets user needs, or moderate strategic value

**Great:** Best practice - meets or surpasses most user needs, or high strategic value

#### 8.4.4. OBSERVATIONS

The Bendigo Region does not have an integrated approach to destination marketing in the online space, and a significant opportunity exists for the region to create, develop and grow an integrated online presence that highlights the destination, attractions, packages and experiences available across the region.

A number of options exist for the Bendigo Region to build and improve its online presence:

- **Business as usual** - each Council continues to operate and maintain their own sites, with the upgrade and improvements as outlined in the Como Review;
- **Develop a new hero destination site** which is the central point of contact for visitors to the region;
- **Develop a common web platform** for each Council to manage and operate their own destination website.

Given the low level of resources within some of the regional local governments and in particular Loddon and Central Goldfields, it will be difficult to establish a consistent level of quality if each Local Government were to operate their own destination website. It is recommended that a new hero website be developed which will become the central point for visitors and includes good quality regional destination information. The Geelong and the Bellarine website provides a good example of a hero website with high quality destination information.

Each destination may continue to pursue social media activities to ensure ongoing information is being fed and distributed.

#### 8.4.5. STRATEGIC DIRECTION

**Establish a regional tourism hero website that has a shared platform across all LGAs. Key elements to this include:**

- **Destination websites with destination brands and themes;**
- **One shared content management system;**
- **Utilization of open source web platform (e.g. Drupal) to ensure that it can be integrated and easily adapted across the region;**
- **Dedicated personnel to ensure the website is developed consistently across the region.**

## 8.5. VISITOR INFORMATION SERVICES

### 8.5.1. DISPERSAL OF VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRES

The provision of visitor information throughout the Bendigo Region is provided through the following accredited Visitor Information Centres:

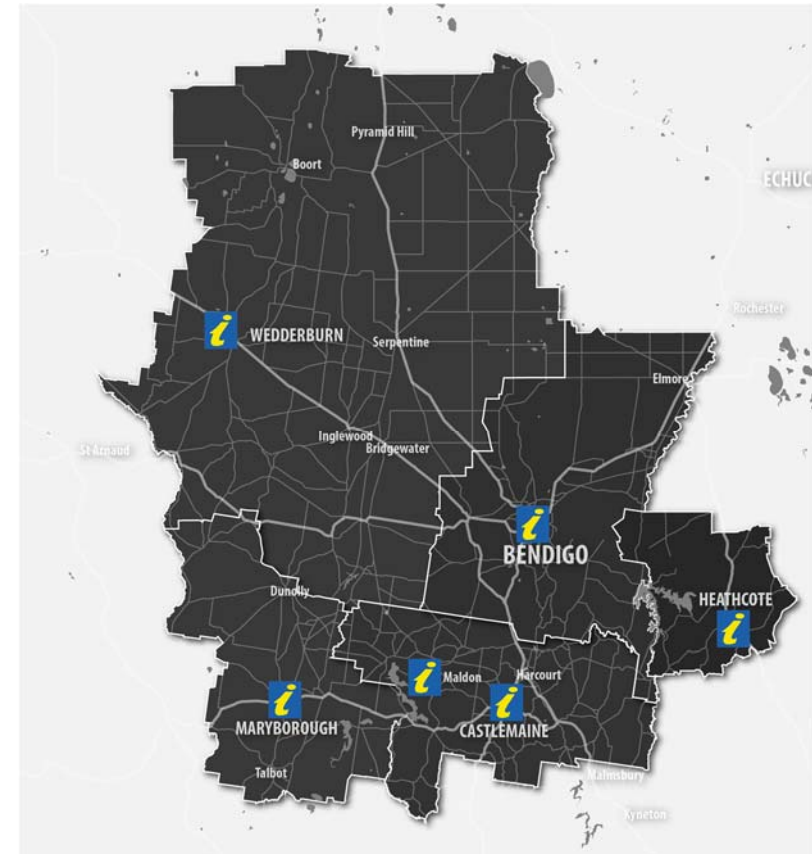
- Bendigo
- Heathcote
- Castlemaine
- Maldon
- Maryborough
- Wedderburn

These centres are shown on the map opposite.

The Maryborough and Maldon VICs are currently in locations with low exposure and are being considered for relocation.

Delivering physical visitor information in Loddon is challenging given its large area and distance between towns. Wedderburn is located over an hour from Bendigo. Bridgewater is a popular stop-over and camping destination, and improved visitor information should be considered at this location.

FIGURE 18 BENDIGO REGIONAL TOURISM VIC NETWORK



### 8.5.2. RESOURCES DEDICATED TO VISITOR INFORMATION SERVICES

The table below provides an overview of resources dedicated to the delivery of visitor information services. Overall there is around \$1.3 million in total net expenditure dedicated to delivering visitor information services.

It is understood that Visitor Information Centres, however have a much broader role than provision of visitor information. Bendigo is well acknowledged for its visitor information centre which acts as a tourism hub and provides wider services to the tourism industry.

TABLE 25 VIC RESOURCES

	Staffing	Accredited Visitor Information Centres	Nett Expenditure
Central Goldfields	1 x FT 4 x PT 10 x volunteers	1 (Maryborough)	\$149,200
Bendigo	5 x FT 5 x PT 100 x volunteers	2 (Bendigo, Heathcote)	\$760,446
Loddon	1 x FT 2 x PT 25 x volunteers	1 (Wedderburn)	\$193,627
Mount Alexander	2 x FT 1 x PT 40 x volunteers	2 (Castlemaine, Maldon)	\$200,000
<b>Total Bendigo Region</b>	<b>9 x FT 12 x PT 175 x Volunteers</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>\$1,303,273</b>

### 8.5.3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are extensive resources dedicated to delivering on the ground visitor information in the Bendigo Region. With the continued emergence of digital information pre and post trip it is important that visitor information services are reviewed and resources are allocated to need. Considerations for future delivery of visitor information services include:

- **Multi skilled staff.** Staff that are multi skilled who can also assist in developing live digital content and experienced in industry development;
- **Focus on yield.** The need for VICs to focus on selling and yield. In particular sharing information that will disperse visitors, sell product and increase length of stay;
- **Integrated digital, content management and bookings.** There is opportunity for this to be tackled at a regional level to ensure a consistent approach to digital information and bookings;
- **Creative on ground delivery.** Greater flexibility and use of digital can provide new approaches to on ground delivery. This includes use of touch screens which link to the regional destination website, portable/temporary visitor information booths for peak festival times and peak weekends. This is particularly important for locations such as Loddon which dispersed product and villages;
- **Consistent regional approach.** There is opportunity for VICs across the region to collaborate, share ideas and learn from one another. A program of famils, networking sessions and a combined strategic plan for visitor information delivery should be considered;
- **Broader role of visitor information services** to consider industry development, social media content development, training and sales. This will ensure that resources in visitor information centres are utilised effectively.

#### 8.5.4. STRATEGIC DIRECTION

**Undertake a regional information services review which includes the following:**

- **Thorough primary research to understand the way visitors are travelling across the region and the information sources they are engaging with (i.e. Mornington Peninsula Visitor Journeys Report);**
- **Strategy which investigates physical and non-physical information services;**
- **Recommendations for a regional and consistent approach to visitor information services delivery;**
- **Broadening the role of visitor information services to focus on industry development as well as visitor information delivery;**
- **Opportunities for additional revenue streams;**
- **Integration of visitor information services with the new regional structure;**
- **Access to Wi-Fi in VIC locations.**

## 8.6. EVENTS STRATEGY/MANAGEMENT

### 8.6.1. OVERVIEW OF KEY ISSUES

Bendigo Region has a number of key events across the region which are significant drivers of visitation. Currently the approach to events development, marketing, coordination, and funding is undertaken predominantly at the Local Government level.

There are a number of challenges facing the events sector which need to be considered at a regional level. These include:

- Event funding. Funding criteria should be reviewed across the region to ensure that events that are funded are providing economic benefit to the region;
- Gaps in event infrastructure and facility utilization. There are potential gaps in event infrastructure such as a large ballroom in Bendigo to support large sit down dinners and events;

- Sustainability of volunteer groups. The majority of events in the region are likely to be operated by volunteers. There is issues with sustainability of events with declining volunteerism and burnout. Other models which look to professional event operators needs to be explored. An example of this is the Ute Muster in Deniliquin which has transitioned into a professional events venue and organization.
- Conflicts in the event calendar. There has been no regional review of the events calendar to understand conflicts in event schedule across the region and also potential to leverage further from existing events with scheduling of smaller events which encourage visitors to stay overnight.
- Standardised approach to gathering research and impact analysis. Events across the region do not have a standardised practice for collecting and analysing events impacts.

### 8.6.2. STRATEGIC DIRECTION

**Undertake a regional events strategy which includes the following:**

- **Build on the work completed in the Central Goldfields Events Strategy;**
- **Development of an event assessment system which allows Bendigo Regional Tourism to classify events;**
- **A comprehensive audit of existing events assigned to a tiering system;**
- **Development of an evaluation criteria in relation to procurement and potential funding for regional events, including an assessment of the value of events;**
- **Identification of future regional event opportunities with background justification;**
- **Investigation of sustainable models for event management;**
- **Tools for ongoing research and assessment of events.**

## 8.7. RESEARCH

There is currently a lack of on-ground primary research to assist with decision making in the Bendigo Region including:

- an understanding of markets and the way visitors journey through the region;
- an understanding of industry performance and needs; and
- tracking of events and accommodation sectors;

Bendigo region should become a leader in tracking industry and visitor trends to ensure that ongoing strategies and actions are well supported and justified by data.

This research is important for tracking the success of the Destination Management Plan and the impacts of the regional approach to tourism.

### 8.7.1. STRATEGIC DIRECTION

***Appoint a qualified consultant to assist in undertaking research that includes a program of:***

- ***Primary visitor research to track visitor expenditure, activities, dispersal, and markets across the region;***
- ***Industry research to track performance, trends and needs of the tourism industry.***



## 9. STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

The following action plan provides indicative actions and timeframes. It provides a general framework which allows key partners and stakeholders to identify and kick start project opportunities. Note: this is not a definitive implementation program, and it does not represent a commitment to undertake the projects by the identified stakeholders.

It is envisaged that the action plan will be a working document and be updated regularly to meet the resources and priorities Bendigo Regional Tourism and its stakeholders.

The Plan follows a 5 year timeline and is prioritised by:

- Immediate: year 1
- Short-term: years 1-3
- Medium term: years 3-5

STRATEGY & ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	COST	PRIORITY
<b>INFRASTRUCTURE ENABLING</b>			
<b>Maryborough Cultural Arts Precinct Masterplan</b>			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a brief for a Maryborough Cultural Arts Precinct Masterplan to consider:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Improvements to the amenity and streetscape along Nolan Street including opportunities for public art and improved pedestrian experience;</i></li> <li>• <i>The integration and role of the visitor information centre currently located on the corner of Nolan and Alma Street;</i></li> <li>• <i>The encouragement of outdoor dining and other tourism uses along Nolan Street;</i></li> <li>• <i>The development and activation of vacant sites along Nolan Street.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Seek funding from State or Federal Government partners</li> <li>3. Tender the Masterplan project</li> </ol>	Central Goldfields Shire, Regional Development Victoria	\$150,000	Short-term

<p><b>Heathcote Town Centre Improvements</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prepare a brief for a Town Centre Masterplan including streetscape design, trail linkages, cycling infrastructure, signage, interpretation and plantings.</li> <li>2. Seek funding from State Government partners</li> <li>3. Tender the Masterplan project</li> </ol>	<p>Bendigo City Council, Heathcote Tourism and Development Association, Regional Development Victoria, Tourism Victoria</p>	<p>\$80,000</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
<p><b>Bridgewater and Inglewood Township and Foreshore Improvements</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Undertake detailed design and planning of upgrades to Bridgewater and Inglewood townships and river frontage;</li> <li>2. Identify areas along the Loddon River which could be activated for tourism purposes;</li> <li>3. Investigate the opportunity to link Bridgewater and Inglewood with cycling trails;</li> <li>4. Implement and deliver infrastructure upgrades.</li> </ol>	<p>Loddon Shire, Regional Development Victoria</p>	<p>\$40,000 (Detailed design and planning) ~\$1 Million ( Estimate of all physical improvements)</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
<p><b>Harcourt Town Centre Improvements</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Seek funding partners for improvements as outlined in the town centre masterplan;</li> <li>2. Tender out work packages to implement town centre improvements;</li> <li>3. Undertake a signage and wayfinding plan for Harcourt;</li> <li>4. Establish trail links to mountain bike course.</li> </ol>	<p>Mount Alexander Shire, Regional Development Victoria</p>	<p>~\$500,000 ( Estimate of all physical improvements)</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
<p><b>Maldon VIC and Exhibition Space</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Seek funding from State and Federal Government Partners</li> <li>2. Fund and construct new VIC in Maldon</li> </ol>	<p>Mount Alexander Shire</p>	<p>\$850,000</p>	<p>Short-term</p>

EXPERIENTIAL PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT			
<b>Bendigo Heritage Tourism Attractions and Positioning</b>			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implement the “enhancing the product” strategies identified for the Bendigo Tramways Strategic Plan;</li> <li>2. Establish new stops at Cathedral Precinct and Golden Dragon Museum and address priority traffic conflicts as specified in the Bendigo Tramways Strategic Plan;</li> <li>3. Implement design concepts for the Central Deborah Goldmine above ground visitor centre.</li> </ol>	Bendigo Heritage Trust, City of Greater Bendigo, Regional Development Victoria	\$5 Million (for stage 1 infrastructure improvements)	Short-term
<b>Food Fossicker Network</b>			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a strategic action plan for the food fossicker network which includes consideration of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop touring routes which showcase the regions farm-gate experiences. These may be region-wide routes, or small local routes such as the Boort tour;</li> <li>• Develop packages with attractions (e.g. regional art galleries and theatres) and accommodation providers which combine restaurant and farm-gate opportunities;</li> <li>• Develop strategic partnerships with the Bendigo and Heathcote Winemakers groups to develop food and wine events and regional marketing campaigns;</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Provide for on-going resourcing support to the network for marketing, events, and operational support;</li> <li>3. Provide ongoing funding to the Food Fossicker Network;</li> </ol>	Food Fossicker Network, Local Government, Bendigo Regional Tourism, Regional Development Victoria	\$100,000 (Annual funding)	Short-term/Ongoing

Ride Goldfields			
<p>1. Prepare a Ride Goldfields strategic plan that builds on the existing Ride Goldfields concept that prioritises projects across the Goldfields region. This includes consideration of the following projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress the planning and design of track upgrades and realignment for the Goldfields Track;</li> <li>• Undertake detailed design of the Heathcote Spur Trail Network to confirm the route alignment, construction materials, and infrastructure needs of the trail; Work with stakeholders (DEPI, Vicroads, Powercore, Parks Victoria) to secure agreement on design and alignment;</li> <li>• Advocate for further funding contributions towards the development of the Harcourt Mountain Bike Park;</li> <li>• Support the findings of the O'Keefe Rail Trail feasibility study to extend the trail to Wallan;</li> <li>• Develop a website and marketing campaign to showcase cycling experiences across the region;</li> <li>• Engage with cycle event operators to acquire new cycling events to the region (e.g. Sun Herald Tour);</li> <li>• Encourage the establishment of cycling related businesses to support visitors e.g. bike hire, tours, shuttle services, repair shops;</li> <li>• Investigate the use of bicycle-friendly accommodation accreditation (North East Tourism cycling accreditation may be used as a model).</li> <li>• Establish Ride Goldfields website</li> </ul>	<p>Ride Goldfields Committee, Local Governments, Bendigo Regional Tourism, Parks Victoria, DELWP</p>	<p>\$10 Million (estimate of all infrastructure projects)</p>	<p>Short-term</p>

<p><b>Winery Tourism Development and Marketing</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake a branding exercise for Heathcote and Bendigo wine regions.</li> <li>Improve online digital content and websites.</li> <li>Develop a marketing campaign which promotes the boutique tourism opportunities available in the Heathcote and Bendigo wine regions.</li> <li>Develop tour packages which link winery product with the art galleries across the region, Ulumbarra Theatre and business and conference market.</li> <li>Develop a winery signage strategy to address: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engagement with Vicroads to streamline the application process</li> <li>Address locations, design, and consistency in branding;</li> <li>Establish signage at key gateway entry points to the region which promotes the boutique offering, and communicates to the visitor that they are within one of Australia's premier wine regions.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Work with wine tour companies to establish itineraries for Bendigo and Heathcote wine regions.</li> <li>Develop a new wine event which combines both the Bendigo and Heathcote winegrowers to showcase the best of the Central Victorian wine regions.</li> </ol>	<p>Bendigo Regional Tourism, City of Greater Bendigo, Heathcote Tourism and Development Association, Heathcote Winemakers, Bendigo Wine Makers, Regional Development Victoria</p>	<p>\$300,000 for project work</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
<p><b>Bendigo Night Time Economy</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a night economy taskforce comprising local business and other relevant stakeholders;</li> <li>Undertake a night time economy strategy which investigates the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate the establishment of twilight and evening markets;</li> <li>Encourage the growth of major events which bring night-time activity to the Bendigo CBD such as the Bendigo Blues and Roots Festival;</li> <li>Investigate the establishment of pop up bars in underutilised public and private spaces;</li> <li>Investigate lighting and projections for key buildings;</li> <li>Package restaurant and bar specials with passes for attractions and major exhibitions;</li> <li>Promote night-time opportunities through branding and marketing campaigns.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<p>City of Greater Bendigo, Regional Development Victoria, Various Bendigo Traders groups</p>	<p>\$50,000 for Strategy \$450,000 for Implementation</p>	<p>Short-term</p>

<p><b>Village Touring and Branding</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish a working group to oversee the project</li> <li>2. Undertake a village touring and branding project which includes the following <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirm the routes and infrastructure requirements (integrating the existing Goldfields Way Route);</li> <li>• Develop brand and collateral to market the touring routes.</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Implement physical and nonphysical elements of the project including digital assets, signage</li> </ol>	<p>Bendigo Regional Tourism, Regional Development Victoria</p>	<p>\$150,000</p>	<p>Medium-term</p>
<p><b>Great Stupa Development</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Advocate for funding for service infrastructure to support growth and development of the Great Stupa</li> </ol>	<p>Great Stupa Board, City of Greater Bendigo, Regional Development Victoria</p>	<p>\$3 Million</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
<p><b>Castlemaine Diggings National Park</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a masterplan brief which identifies opportunities for tourism development of the Park and infrastructure needs. This includes, but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Trails specific to MTB and hiking;</i></li> <li>• <i>Interpretive sites;</i></li> <li>• <i>Wayfinding signage;</i></li> <li>• <i>Visitor information (locations and type);</i></li> <li>• <i>Visitor facilities (toilets, picnics, camping);</i></li> <li>• <i>Online interpretive content;</i></li> <li>• <i>School and education programs.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Advocate for UNESCO World Heritage Status</li> </ol>	<p>Parks Victoria, Regional Development Victoria, Bendigo Regional Tourism</p>	<p>\$150,000</p>	<p>Short-term</p>



ACCOMMODATION			
<p><b>Bendigo High Quality Accommodation and Conferencing</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Undertake a location assessment to identify suitable sites for development;</li> <li>2. Prepare a development prospectus to take to market and seek a major hotel international brand;</li> <li>3. Consider providing development incentives to secure an appropriate operator such as rates relief, business leases and use of / incentivized sale of public land.</li> </ol>	<p>City of Greater Bendigo, Private Sector</p>	<p>\$15K for prospectus \$45 Million (investment)</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
<p><b>Castlemaine Boutique Hotel and Conference Centre</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Undertake a location assessment to identify suitable sites for development;</li> <li>2. Prepare a development prospectus to take to market and seek a major hotel international brand;</li> <li>3. Consider providing development incentives to secure an appropriate operator such as rates relief, business leases and use of / incentivized sale of public land.</li> </ol>	<p>Mount Alexander Shire, Private Sector</p>	<p>\$15K for prospectus \$15 Million (investment)</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
<p><b>Maryborough Serviced Apartments</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Confirm suitable sites for a serviced apartment development;</li> <li>2. Prepare a development prospectus to take to market and seek a suitable operator (e.g. Quest, Mantra);</li> <li>3. Consider providing development incentives to secure an appropriate operator such as rates relief, business leases and use of / incentivized sale of public land.</li> </ol>	<p>Central Goldfields Shire, Private Sector</p>	<p>\$15K for prospectus \$12 Million (investment)</p>	<p>Short-term</p>

REGIONAL APPROACH TO TOURISM			
<b>Governance Structures</b>			
<p>1. Undertake a review of the current regional approach to tourism governance in the Bendigo Region with the aim of identifying the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A regional governance model tailored to the unique characteristics of the Bendigo Region;</li> <li>• Clear roles and responsibilities for all regional tourism organisations including LTAs, Local Government;</li> <li>• Potential committee or board structure and the skills mix/ representatives;</li> <li>• Current expenditure on tourism by Local Governments;</li> <li>• Multiple revenue streams;</li> <li>• Finances required, membership models and targets for funding.</li> </ul> <p>2. Appoint an external consultant to review the current structures, roles and make recommendations to establish a new regional approach that meets the objectives of having an RTB.</p>	<p>Bendigo Regional Tourism, Local Government Organisations</p>	<p>\$25,000</p>	<p>Immediate</p>
<b>Digital Assets</b>			
<p>1. Establish a regional tourism hero website that has a shared platform across all LGAs. Key elements to this include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination websites with destination brands and themes;</li> <li>• One shared content management system;</li> <li>• Utilisation of open source web platform (e.g. drupal) to ensure that it can be integrated and easily adapted across the region;</li> <li>• Dedicated personnel to ensure the website is developed consistently across the region.</li> </ul> <p>2. Establish MOUs for all LGAs to commit to the development of a regional hero website platform</p> <p>3. Establish a brief to tender the web development and appoint a preferred organisation</p>	<p>Bendigo Regional Tourism, Local Governments, Regional Development Victoria, Tourism Victoria</p>	<p>\$200,000</p>	<p>Immediate</p>

<p><b>Visitor Information Services</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Undertake a regional information services review which includes the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Thorough primary research to understand the way visitors are travelling across the region and the information sources they are engaging with (i.e.: Mornington Peninsula Visitor Journeys Report);</i></li> <li>• <i>Strategy which investigates physical and non-physical information services;</i></li> <li>• <i>Recommendations for a regional and consistent approach to visitor information services delivery.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Establish a brief and program</li> <li>3. Seek funding partners (Regional Development Victoria, Tourism Victoria)</li> <li>4. Tender the project to an independent consultant</li> </ol>	<p>Bendigo Regional Tourism, Local Governments, Regional Development Victoria, Tourism Victoria</p>	<p>\$80,000</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
<p><b>Events</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Undertake a regional events strategy which includes the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Development of an event assessment system which allows Bendigo Regional Tourism to classify events;</i></li> <li>• <i>A comprehensive audit of existing events assigned to a tiering system;</i></li> <li>• <i>Development of an evaluation criteria in relation to procurement and potential funding for regional events, including an assessment of the value of events (this may link to Central Goldfields event criteria);</i></li> <li>• <i>Identification of future regional event opportunities for with background justification;</i></li> <li>• <i>Investigation of sustainable models for event management;</i></li> <li>• <i>Tools for ongoing research and assessment of events.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Establish a project brief</li> <li>3. Seek funding partners</li> <li>4. Tender the project to an independent consultant</li> </ol>	<p>Bendigo Regional Tourism, Local Governments, Regional Development Victoria, Tourism Victoria</p>	<p>\$50,000</p>	<p>Medium-term</p>

<p><b>Research Program</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Appoint a qualified consultant to assist in undertake research that includes a program of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Primary visitor research to track visitor expenditure, activities, dispersal, markets across the region;</i></li> <li>• <i>Industry research to track performance, trends and needs of industry.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Establish an annual program with a research partner to undertake ongoing research and tracking of industry</li> </ol>	<p>Bendigo Regional Tourism, Local Governments</p>	<p>\$20K per annum</p>	<p>Short-term/ Ongoing</p>
--	--	------------------------	----------------------------

