

WIMMERA MALLEE DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

2024-2033

September 2024



Acknowledgement of Country

Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism acknowledges the Traditional Owners, Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia, Jupagulk, Dja Dja Wurrung and Gunditjmara and neighbouring First Peoples, who are the traditional custodians of the area where friends and family visit to enjoy everything the Wimmera Mallee region has to see and do. We respect their history, culture, and Elders, past and present, and their continuous connection to Country.ˆ

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Part 1: Executive Summary

1.1. Overview

The Wimmera Mallee region offers a unique blend of natural beauty, cultural heritage, and outdoor recreational activities, making it a compelling destination for visitors and residents. This region is characterised by vast, open landscapes, rich flora and fauna, diverse waterways and productive agricultural lands. The region's towns offer a glimpse into rural Australian life with charming streetscapes, local markets, and outgoing communities.

Cultural and historical attractions add depth to the Wimmera Mallee experience. The region is home to significant First Peoples' history along with a range of museums and cultural experiences. The Silo Art Trail, a series of large-scale murals painted on grain silos, has become a major drawcard, celebrating the stories and people of the local communities.

The Wimmera Mallee Destination Management Plan (DMP) has been developed to guide the region's visitor economy. It reflects the needs and aspirations of the community, First Peoples, industry, Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism (GMT) and its four member councils.

The Destination Management Plan

In collaboration with its member councils, GWM Tourism has commissioned Stafford Strategy to develop this Destination Management Plan (DMP). The aim is to create a unified vision and set goals for the region's visitor economy, ensuring its long-term strength, success, and sustainability. This DMP is based on independent research and analysis, complemented by consultation with industry representatives, community groups, businesses, each council, and various government stakeholders.

As the primary document, this DMP oversees the four Local Area Action Plans (LAAPs) developed simultaneously for each Local Government Area (LGA).

The Wimmera Mallee

The Wimmera Mallee is in western Victoria and includes the four shires of Buloke, Hindmarsh, West Wimmera and Yarriambiack. Agriculture is a cornerstone of the local economy and a vital part of the community's identity. The region is renowned for its broadacre farming, with vast tracts of land dedicated to cultivating grains such as wheat, barley, canola, and livestock farming.

The region is dissected by several major highways crucial for its economic vitality. These highways enable efficient transport of agricultural goods, support tourism, and ensure accessibility for residents and businesses.

In 2023, the Wimmera Mallee attracted just over half a million visitors, more than half (53%) of whom were domestic day trippers, contributing \$138 million to the local economy.



1.2. Strategic framework

1.2.1. The framework

The DMP's recommendations and actions have been organised into a framework identifying product development pillars and destination enablers. These are outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Destination management plan framework



1.2.2. The pillars explained

The DMP's recommendations and actions have been organised into a framework identifying product priorities and enablers. These are outlined in Table 1.

The DMP pillars align with the Experience Victoria 2033 plan and the Grampians DMP themes, with two exceptions:

- Experiences and Tours – This category has been added to support the development of more commissionable nature-based and other guided tour products in the Wimmera Mallee region, which currently lacks such offerings.
- Enablers – This is an amalgamation of Themes 6, 7, and 8 from the Grampians DMP and has been included as a more comprehensive category. It acknowledges that the Wimmera Mallee is at an early stage of tourism development compared to the Grampians. Thus, a stronger focus on these essential building blocks of the visitor economy is required. Local communities need to drive the demand for these enablers rather than relying solely on the visitor market.

Table 1: The pillars explained

 1. Nature (including Waterbodies) Recreation & Wellness The Wimmera Mallee region offers diverse outdoor activities, scenic landscapes, and unique natural attractions, and it embodies the essence of the “nature at your fingertips” pillar identified in the Visit Victoria Brand Strategy Playbook. Known for its vast open spaces, rich biodiversity, and vibrant ecosystems, it provides numerous opportunities for nature enthusiasts and adventure seekers. The region's lakes and waterways enhance its natural beauty, support local wildlife habitats, and provide recreational activities for residents and visitors.	 2. First Peoples The Wimmera Mallee region has the potential to offer rich and diverse experiences that enable visitors to connect with the deep cultural heritage of the local First Peoples. These experiences need to be developed and led by the region's First Peoples.	 3. Food (Agritourism) & Drink Known for its vast agricultural lands, the Wimmera Mallee has the potential to grow its profile as an emerging foodie destination, leveraging agri-tourism opportunities and providing visitors with insights into farming practices, local produce, and the daily lives of the farming community.
 4. Arts & Culture The Wimmera Mallee offers a rich tapestry of arts and cultural tourism products that attract visitors seeking unique and immersive experiences. The region is home to vibrant arts communities, significant historical sites, and contemporary cultural attractions, including the well-known Silo Art Trail, which highlights the region's heritage and creativity.	 5. Experiences & Tours The Wimmera Mallee offers a growing and diverse range of tourism experiences that cater to various interests, particularly focused on nature and recreational experiences. The opportunity exists to focus on trail and tour-based products to grow dispersal and exploration throughout the region.	 6. Enabler A variety of enablers should be focused on to improve the visitor and local experience in the Wimmera Mallee. These factors facilitate and enhance the development, promotion, and delivery of visitor experiences and services. They play a crucial role in ensuring a destination can effectively attract, accommodate, and satisfy visitors. Enablers include: - Accommodation - Advocacy - Data and insights - Events - Governance and leadership - Infrastructure - Marketing and identity - Statutory planning environment - Visitor servicing - Workforce

● Product development pillar ● Destination enabler pillar

1.3. The priority regional recommendations

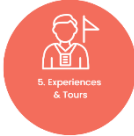
The DMP has identified **75** transformative recommendations (the complete list is located in Section 4.1), each thoughtfully chosen to shape a vibrant future and visitor economy for the region. These initiatives, varying in size and scope, are poised to meet the DMP's Strategic Framework targets.

Of these 75 recommendations, **15** have been prioritised (see Table 2). By harnessing the region's existing strengths and acting upon new opportunities, these priority recommendations aim to unlock new visitor markets and significantly boost visitor engagement, driving the Wimmera Mallee toward a new era of growth and prosperity.

Importantly, this DMP is focused on regional-level recommendations because its role is to deliver and advocate for projects that will significantly benefit the broader Wimmera Mallee regional visitor economy. The LAAPs, completed with this DMP, have a stronger local focus.

It needs to be noted that where public land (controlled by Parks Victoria or DEECA) is involved, some form of co or joint management arrangement with BGLC and the land manager entity is required. This may affect the timeframe for when a specific DMP priority project can be activated. As a result, the priority DMP regional recommendations need to be reviewed annually to avoid the risk of any undue delay in project implementation.

Table 2: Priority regional recommendations linked to the DMP pillars/enablers

● Product development pillar ● Destination enabler pillar ■ Development projects ◆ Strategic initiatives ★ Priority recommendation	
Pillar/Enabler	Recommendation
 2. First Peoples	Support Traditional Owner Groups (when requested) to implement unique visitor experiences ◆
 4. Arts & Culture	Advocate for shared curatorial expertise to support the region's museums ◆
 5. Experiences & Tours	Develop and promote a drive trail circuit (Wimmera Mallee Way) for linking major attractions across the region ■
 6. Enabler	- Accommodation investment strategy and action plan ◆ - Boutique accommodation (B&Bs, cottages, farmstays) planning scheme workshops ◆ - Continue to grow the profile of the Wimmera Mallee brand (<i>Adventures in a Different Light</i>) in key markets ◆ - Deliver an image audit and regional photoshoot and provide this to VV to put into the Visit Victoria Content Hub ◆ - Engagement of an events coordinator to assist in the delivery of 4-5 major regional events ◆ - Establishment of a DMP Implementation Committee ◆ - Expand the network of self-contained cabin stock in caravan parks throughout the region ■ - Greater profiling of the WM Destination Events Calendar and industry upskilling ◆ - High security recreational water allocation for lakes and waterways ◆ - Industry development training ◆ - Investigate packaging up caravan parks to lease to a third party ◆ - Regional signage (directional and interpretive) strategy ◆



1.4. The priority local (LAAP) recommendations

The LAAPs completed concurrently with this DMP also contain more LGA-specific recommendations. In total, **90** LAAP recommendations have been identified.

Of these, **32** are considered priority LAAP recommendations (8 per LGA). These priority LAAP recommendations have been included in Table 3. The complete list of LAAP recommendations can be found in Appendix 6.

Where public land (controlled by Parks Victoria or DEECA) is involved, some form of co- or joint-management arrangement is required with BGLC and the land manager entity. This may have a bearing on the timeframe for when a specific LAAP project can be activated. As a result, the priority LAAP project recommendations need to be reviewed annually to avoid the risk of any undue delay in project implementation.

Table 3: Priority local (LAAP) recommendations linked to the DMP pillars/enablers

● Product development pillar ● Destination enabler pillar ■ Development projects ◆ Strategic initiatives

Pillar/Enabler	Recommendation	Shire
 1. Nature (including Waterbodies) Recreation & Wellbeing	Avoca River activation at Charlton ■	Buloke
	Development and promotion of licensed 4WD operators in Little Desert ■	West Wimmera
	Explore Lake Bringalbert and Dunbopportunity Swamp visitor infrastructure development ■	West Wimmera
	Lake Charlegrark native fish hatchery feasibility study ◆	West Wimmera
 3. Food (Agritourism) & Drink	Boutique whisky, tequila, or vodka distillery, craft brewery or cider house ■	West Wimmera
	Concierge support to advocate and engage with food and beverage project opportunities in the shire to increase niche product offerings, e.g., brewery, distillery, chocolate products ◆	Hindmarsh
 4. Arts & Culture	Assist Mallee Machinery Field Days to grow as a destination event through infrastructure enhancements and profiling ■	Yarriambiack
	Continue to progress Yarriambiack's Heritage Trail project to develop a Shire-wide narrative and cross-promotion of heritage attractions ◆	Yarriambiack
	Continue to promote and support the Heritage events across the Shire ■	Hindmarsh
	Establish shared curatorial expertise to enhance the Shire's museum and historic products ◆	Hindmarsh
	Expansion of Harrow by Night Visitation ■	West Wimmera

● Product development pillar ● Destination enabler pillar ■ Development projects ◆ Strategic initiatives

Pillar/Enabler	Recommendation	Shire
	▪ Expansion of heritage railway experience throughout Yarriambiack Shire with Seymour Heritage Rail and 707 Operations Inc. ■	Yarriambiack
	▪ Implement the Warracknabeal Courthouse Project (including accommodation development) ■	Yarriambiack
	▪ Lake Charlegrark Visitor Destination Plan ◆	West Wimmera
	▪ Llew Schilling silo development ■	Hindmarsh
	▪ Rex Theatre Activation ■	Buloke
	▪ Support the Nhill Silo Heritage Project ■	Hindmarsh
	▪ Support the Stick Shed as a visitor experience and events venue (investment required for design works and change of use) ◆	Yarriambiack
 5. Experiences & Tours	▪ Mt Wycheproof Activation ■	Buloke
	▪ Railway Activation ■	Buloke
 6. Enabler	▪ Birchip Cropping Group Luxury Accommodation to complement farm tours ■	Buloke
	▪ Continue promoting/developing Lake Tyrrell ■	Buloke
	▪ Continue to progress the Hopetoun Old School Site development (including accommodation, worker housing and a nature-based playground) ■	Yarriambiack
	▪ Continue to support existing and encourage new events across the shire to increase visitation for economic benefits to the region. Examples of current events include the Dimboola Steampunk Festival, Nhill Airshow, Pioneer Museum Rally and Rainbow Rises Motorsport events. ◆	Hindmarsh
	▪ Continue with the Council's program of streetscape and signage improvements for gateway towns (Rupanyup, Murtoa, Warracknabeal, Yaapeet, Patchewollock and Woomelang) ■	Yarriambiack
	▪ Develop a promotional campaign to profile new cabin accommodation at Wooroonook Lakes, Charlton, Sea Lake, Wycheproof, Lake Watchem, Lake Tchum, and Green Lake ◆	Buloke
	▪ Kaniva Main Street Parking and Way finding Audit, and Plan ◆	West Wimmera
	▪ Lake Wallace visitor infrastructure enhancements ■	West Wimmera
	▪ Nhill Caravan Park Masterplan implementation ■	Hindmarsh
	▪ Sealing of Sea Lake Airstrip ■	Buloke
	▪ Support events that are held in Yarriambiack to become destination events (i.e. attracting visitors from outside the Shire) ◆	Yarriambiack
	▪ Support the development of Rainbow Rises Events Centre and foster the creation of different events at the precinct ■	Hindmarsh



Part 2: Where are we now?

2.1. Introduction

2.1.1. Overview

Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism (GWM Tourism) has developed this Wimmera Mallee Destination Management Plan (DMP) to:

- provide direction for the sustainable development and management of Wimmera Mallee's visitor economy, which supports developing a balanced approach to supply and demand in the attraction of investment and commitment of marketing dollars across the region; and
- enable and support the Wimmera Mallee region to develop as a destination that is both compelling for visitors and sustainable for local communities.

2.1.2. Methodology

The following nine-stage methodology was followed to inform this DMP (Figure 2).



Figure 2: DMP methodology



2.1.3. Consultation

The input received from various stakeholders was invaluable and provided an essential resource for preparing the DMP. Figure 3 provides a summary of those consulted.

The DMP Project Steering Committee comprises local government and Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism members.

Community consultation revealed strong support for tourism development, recognising its potential to create jobs and enhance town vibrancy. Residents expressed a desire for initiatives that would stimulate the local economy and bring new energy to their communities.

However, there was a consensus that such growth must be managed sustainably. The community emphasised the importance of preserving the natural environment and cultural heritage while promoting the visitor economy. There is a desire for a balanced approach that will not only attract visitors but also ensure long-term benefits and maintain the quality of life for residents. There is also a stronger desire for more higher-yielding visitors than merely generating numbers.

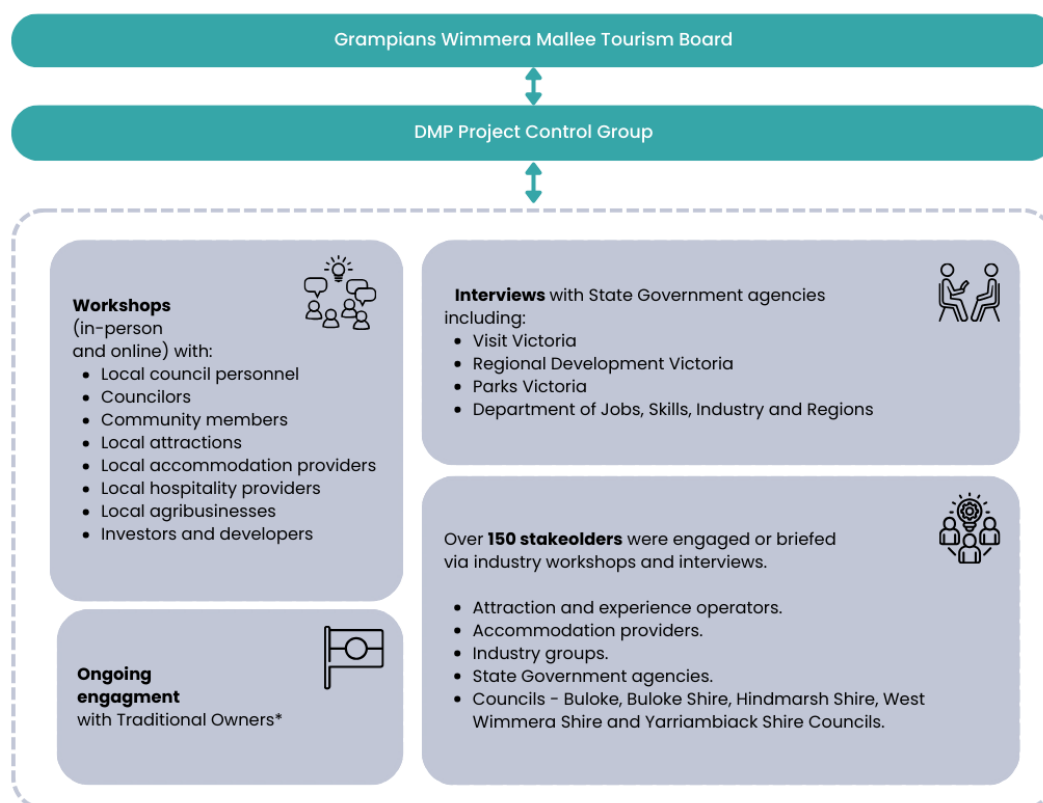
Although volunteer rates are strong in the region, there is concern over volunteer burnout and reduced interest, particularly as volunteer committees run most major visitor attractions and events. These tend to be under-resourced and under increasing pressure to meet compliance rules and regulations, which are becoming more onerous to volunteers.

From a First Peoples' perspective, there is an interest in exploring opportunities within the visitor economy; however, they currently face competing economic sector priorities that require their attention. A fundamental aspect of their approach is preserving their intellectual property and ensuring they authentically represent and convey their stories and narratives.

Any visitor economy initiatives involving First Peoples must be developed in partnership with or under the leadership of First Peoples' communities. This approach ensures that their cultural heritage is respected and that they control how their traditions and histories are shared with visitors. Such collaboration will enrich the visitor experience by providing authentic and meaningful insights into First Peoples' cultures.

First Peoples need to determine the timing of their tourism initiatives and when they are ready and willing to activate these opportunities. This has implications for public land controlled by Parks Victoria and DEECA, where some form of co or joint management arrangement with BGLC is often required. Depending on the ability to create an agreed-upon timely pathway forward, this may result in some projects being designated as longer-term options to consider rather than short-term priority projects.

Figure 3: Consultation summary

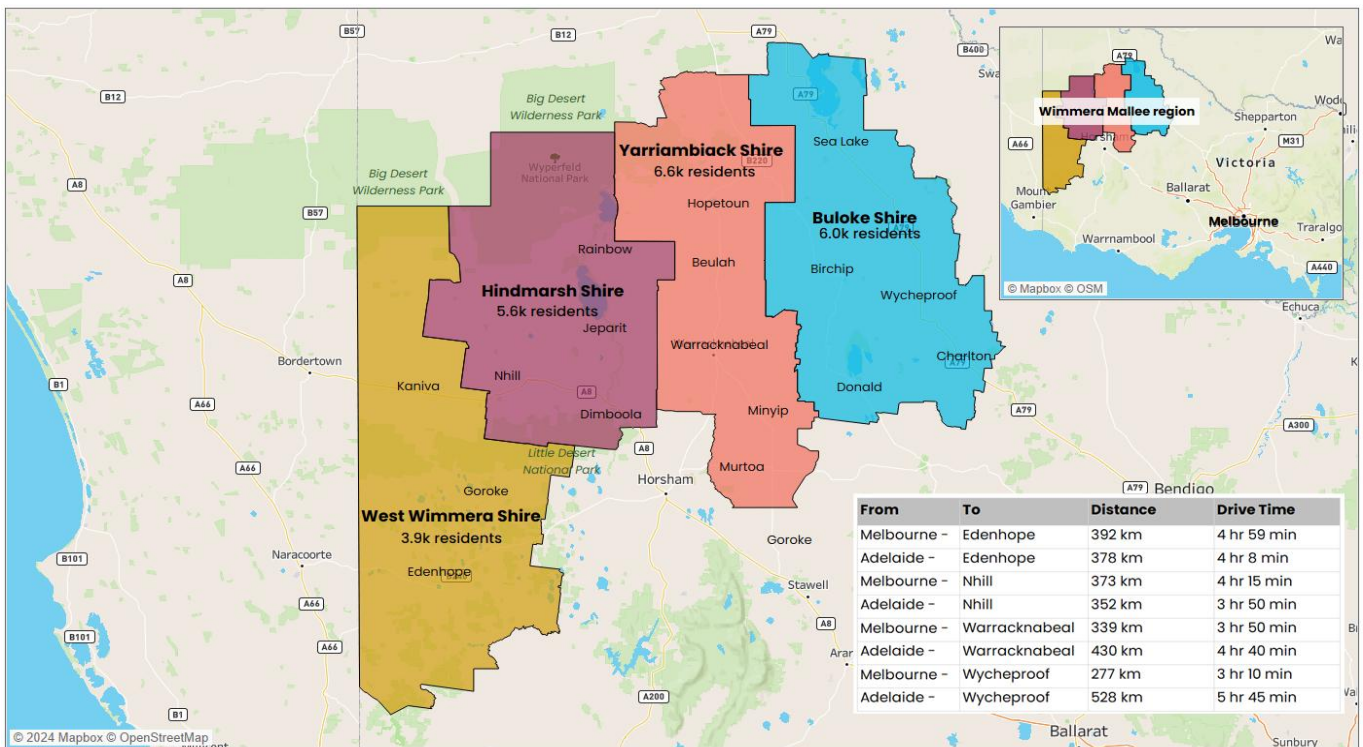


*Barengi Gadjin Land Council (BGLC), Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (DDWCAC), Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (GMTOAC)

2.2. About the Wimmera Mallee

Nestled in the heart of Western Victoria, the Wimmera Mallee region is a hidden gem waiting to be discovered. Offering a scenic drive from Melbourne, the travel time ranges from just over three hours to Wycheproof and close to five hours to Edenhope. Encompassing the shires of Buloke, Hindmarsh, West Wimmera, and Yarriambiack, each boasts its own distinctive charm, making the Wimmera Mallee an appealing regional destination.

Figure 4: The Wimmera Mallee region



The Wimmera Mallee, with a community of just over 22,000 residents, is a region with much potential. Yarriambiack Shire is home to 30% of the region's population, followed by Buloke Shire, with 27%. Although State Government forecasts project a population decline of 6% (around 1,200 residents) between 2026 and 2036¹, this challenge invites innovation and revitalisation.

The development of the visitor economy may assist in reversing this population decline through the following.

- Relying solely on traditional industries may lead to economic stagnation and population decline. Tourism, however, offers an opportunity to diversify the local economy, reducing dependence on a single sector and creating a more resilient community.

- Assisting with economic growth: a thriving tourism sector generates job opportunities and stimulates economic activity, attracting residents and businesses to the region. This economic vitality can provide stability and encourage population growth.
- To accommodate visitors, there is often the need to improve infrastructure such as transportation, accommodation, and recreational facilities. These improvements enhance the visitor experience and benefit local residents, making the area more attractive for living and investment.
- Tourism often promotes the preservation and celebration of local culture, heritage, and traditions. This can instil a sense of pride and identity among residents, making them more inclined to stay or return to their hometowns.

¹ Victoria in Future, Department of Transport and Planning, Total Population, Household And Dwelling Projections.

- Tourism fosters more robust community engagement and involvement, as residents may become involved in hospitality, tour guiding, artisanal crafts, and other related industries. This engagement can strengthen social bonds and create a sense of belonging, making people more likely to stay in the area.

The Wimmera Mallee's primary appeal is its unique natural landscapes, cultural heritage, art trails, outdoor activities, waterways and associated recreational activities. The region provides the quintessential Australian rural experience.

The Wimmera Mallee has the potential to offer visitors rich and diverse cultural heritage experiences that celebrate First Peoples' history, knowledge, and deep connection to Country. However, most of these experiences are currently physical places of significance or interest rather than guided/developed tourism products delivered by First Peoples.

Whilst there is an opportunity for this product offering to grow, its development and delivery must be led by the region's First Peoples. This will ensure that appropriate respect and protection are given to areas of cultural significance and that First Peoples can continue their deep connection with the land they have inhabited for thousands of years.

The region is home to several major national parks and wilderness parks, including:

- Big Desert Conservation Park offers vast, unspoiled wilderness, perfect for adventurous off-road exploration and discovering unique flora and fauna.
- Little Desert National Park's stunning landscape diversity, from sandy dunes to dense woodlands, makes it a haven for hikers, 4WD enthusiasts and nature lovers.
- Wyperfeld National Park is a serene expanse of mallee scrub and tranquil lakes, offering a peaceful retreat for birdwatchers and outdoor enthusiasts.

Emerging strengths of the region include agri-tourism (market days, farm tours, etc.), destination events and festivals (major agricultural events and shows, enduro events, heritage events etc), tour-based products (including self-drive circuits to view silo art, walking, kayaking and cycling tours, 4WD guided tours in areas such as Little Desert and Big Desert), and bird-watching experiences using the various waterways throughout the region.

While the shires in the region have good cooperative relationships, there is currently limited tourism product that cuts across more than one shire. There are opportunities, therefore, for various circuits and travel loops to encourage greater visitor dispersal and to more strongly link many of the attractions and features of the region (waterways for fishing and recreation generally, silo art, camping and caravan sites etc.).



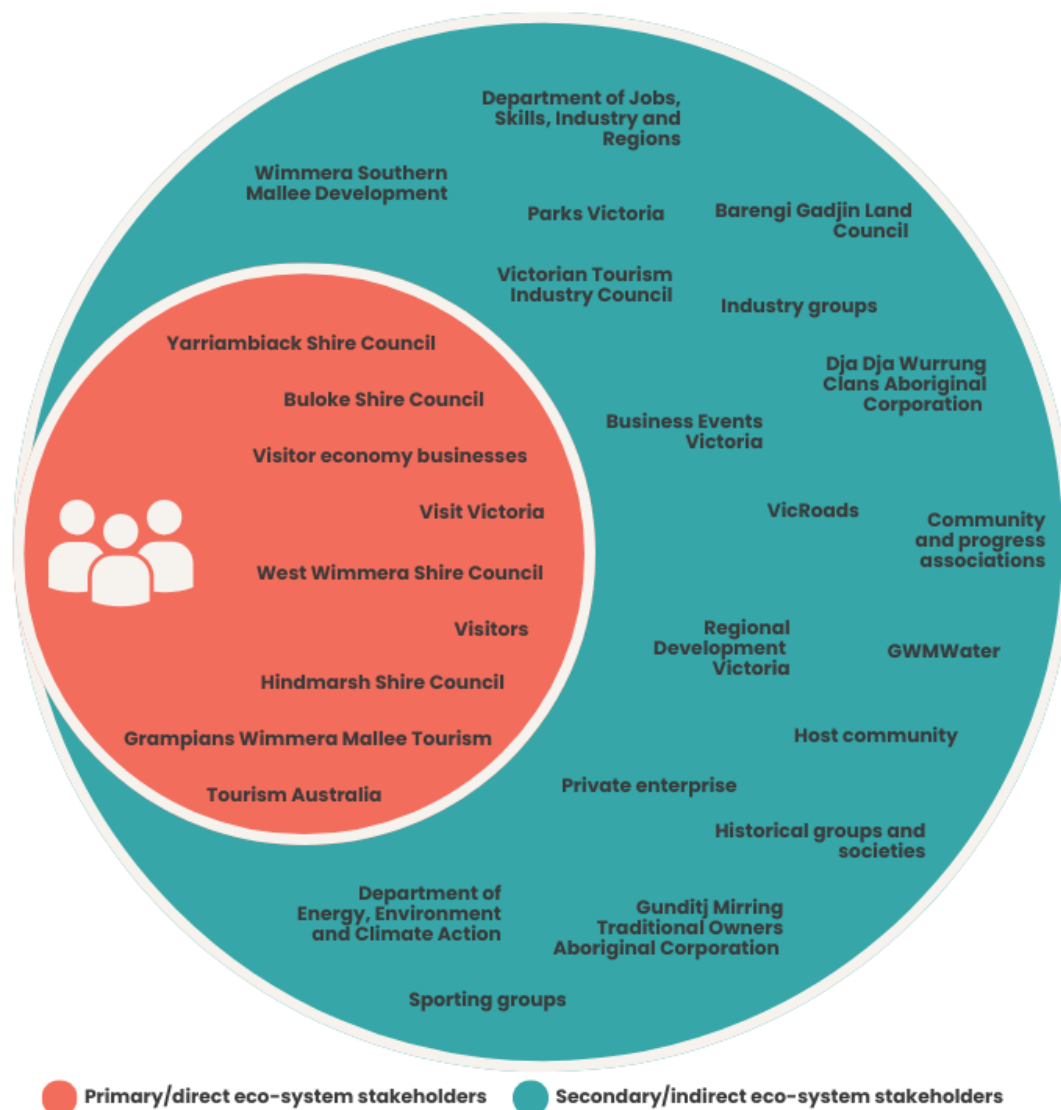
2.3. Wimmera Mallee's visitor economy ecosystem

Figure 5 provides an overview of Wimmera Mallee's visitor economy ecosystem, highlighting direct and indirect stakeholders.

Although each stakeholder group has specific goals and desired outcomes, continuous planning and collaboration will help ensure the ecosystem operates toward a common goal and principles.



Figure 5: Visitor economy ecosystem



2.4. Strengths, barriers and opportunities

To realise the region's vision, the visitor economy stakeholders must identify their comparative strengths, inherent weaknesses, product gaps, opportunities for effective development, and potential threats. Opportunities and challenges are often intertwined in the growth of a thriving industry and region.

Based on Wimmera Mallee's existing attractions and insights from research and consultation, the following opportunities and barriers/challenges (Table 4) have been identified for the region over the next decade. Project opportunities on Park Victoria-managed or co-managed land will require further ongoing engagement to align project opportunities with the land manager's current strategies and aspirations.

Table 4: Wimmera Mallee's strengths, barriers and opportunities

Strengths	Barriers to Growth	Opportunities
- Natural environment assets (scenery, lakes, national parks, parks, natural viewpoints) - History, Heritage (First Peoples, buildings, heritage railways) - Strong agricultural sector and local produce (high-quality agricultural land, especially beef and sheep, cropping) - Safe areas with a quality rural lifestyle - Access to major road transport routes - The halfway point between Melbourne and Adelaide - Silo Art Trail - Lake Tyrrell - Pink Lake - Unique forms of accommodation (e.g. Lake Lascelles accommodation options, Dimboola Imaginarium etc.) - Recreational fishing experiences - Bird watching and diversity of species - Enduro nationally significant events - Existing festivals and events - Volunteerism supporting major attractions and events	- Workforce skill gaps and shortages in key roles - Visitor accommodation does not meet demand, hampering the ability for overnight and longer stays - Variable quality of accommodation stock, including caravan parks - Lack of robust statistical data and lack of market intelligence from the industry - Limited new and/or refreshed tourism-based products - A declining and ageing population - Lack of worker accommodation - Lack of regional brand clarity within the region - Lack of awareness in the market of what the region has to offer - Limited mid-week and night-time economy for locals and visitors - Lack of understanding of the value of the new Visitor Economy Partnership - Lack of directional and interpretative signage - Public transport to and around the region - Beautification of townships, urban design and placemaking - Lack of adequate funding to maintain existing infrastructure on public lands leading to a desire to avoid introducing new facilities and new infrastructure - Accessibility including walkability, proximity, disability considerations - Perception of the area as a worthwhile investment destination - Lack of sufficient food and drink products (cafes, restaurants, bars, etc.) - The planning scheme is viewed as complex, and to undertake reform, it needs the support of local councils and the State Government (planning scheme controls are costly and complex for landowners to navigate) - Labour force limitations – especially mid-week impacting services and experiences, prompting visitation to move to the weekend - Insurance coverage for businesses	- Agritourism (as a commissionable product) - Development of a cohesive regional brand and increased market awareness - Consistent visitor experiences in terms of quality and service delivery - Grow accommodation options, including typology and higher quality - Tourism/visitor database - Lack of awareness of tourism benefits in the general community - Advocate for planning scheme reforms to encourage sustainable investment - Operator training and upskilling - B&B establishment workshops - Introduce products and experiences to leverage the silo art trail - Create a narrative to link the silo art trail - Develop a destination event showcasing the core product priority strengths of the region - Development of an event calendar across the region which addresses the risk of overlapping events occurring - Worker hostel/accommodation - Tourism signage strategy and audit (directional and interpretative) - Introduce recreational infrastructure at various lakes and waterways - Designate small areas of public land (Parks Victoria or DEECA) for visitor activity where these can be more easily managed and infrastructure maintained and upgraded - Raise awareness of the region's trails and the arts, culture and heritage experiences across the region - Work with First Peoples to integrate their stories (where desired) across the region - Broaden night-time experiences for locals and visitors - Leverage the increased profile under the Grampians Wimmera Mallee VEP and advocate more effectively for the region - Support volunteer-run attractions and major events through curatorial assistance and event coordinator support

2.5. Governance

2.5.1. Governance overview

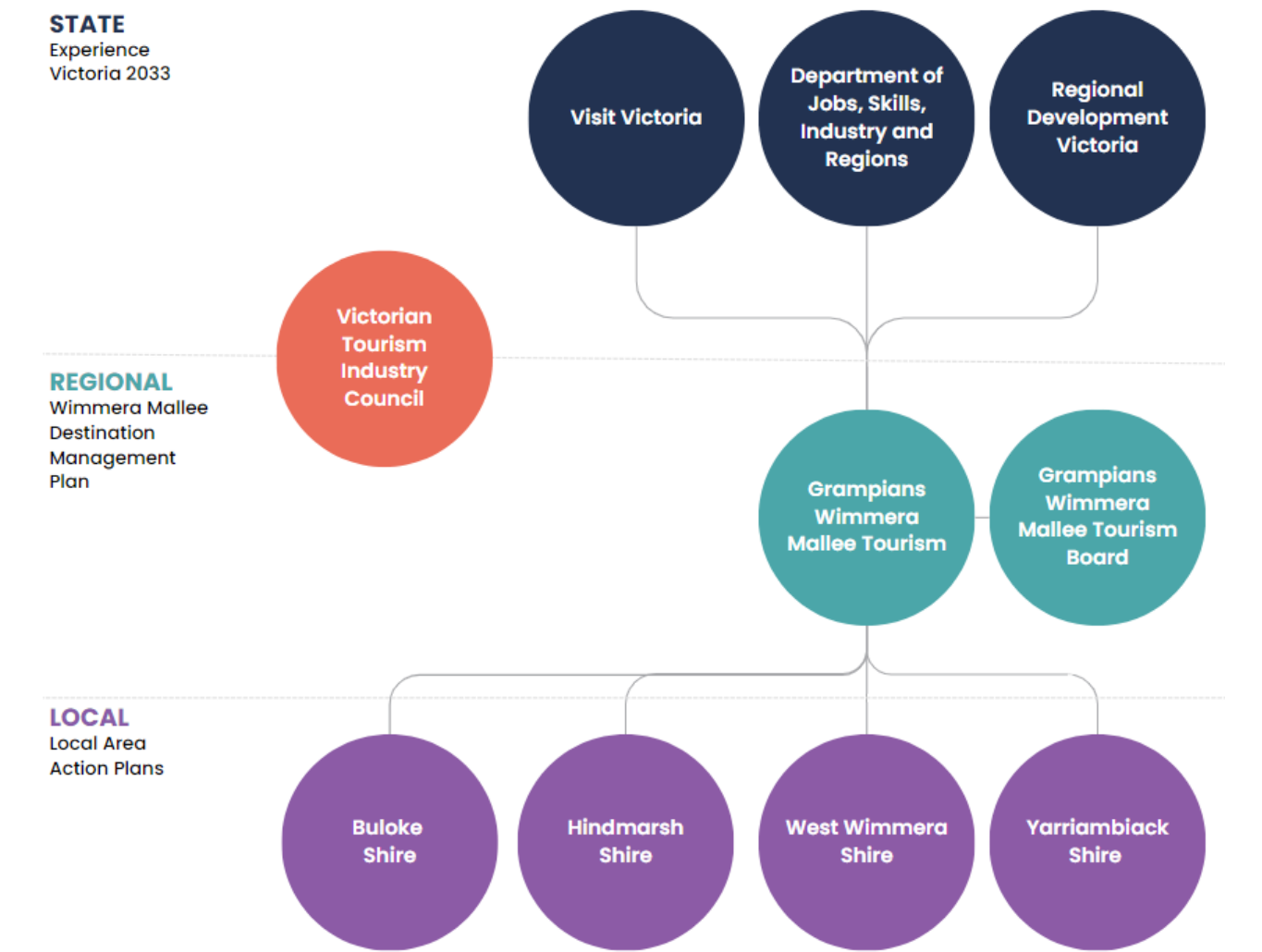


Figure 6 illustrates tourism governance at a state, regional and local level. These bodies/agencies are responsible for setting the frameworks, policies, strategies, and practices that guide and regulate tourism development, management, and promotion across the Wimmera Mallee.

Good governance involves the collaboration and coordination of the various stakeholders to ensure that visitor economy activities are sustainable, beneficial, and aligned with broader social, economic, and environmental goals.

The GWM Tourism Visitor Economy Partnership (VEP) is a significant change for the region. It brings with it greater integration with the broader region, opens up marketing opportunities with Visit Victoria, and provides greater access to funding programs.

Figure 6: Tourism governance summary





2.5.2. Roles and responsibilities

Table 5 outlines the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders involved in the Wimmera Mallee's visitor economy.

Table 5: Tourism roles and responsibilities

Stakeholder/ Partner	About	Key roles/responsibilities
Visit Victoria	Visit Victoria is the state's official tourism and events agency. Visit Victoria plays a crucial role in promoting the state as a premier tourism destination and driving economic growth through tourism-related activities.	- Destination marketing. - Guiding regional positioning and development. - Supporting industry development. - Event attraction and support. - Developing partnerships to support tourism development. - Distributing research and insights. - Promoting and implementing sustainable tourism practices.
Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions	The Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) aims to grow Victoria's prosperity by enhancing the state's economy. It collaborates with Visit Victoria, focusing on tourism and events to strengthen the visitor economy's profile, influence strategic reforms, and achieve economic outcomes for the sector.	- Undertaking research. - Providing policy, strategy and industry development advice to the Victoria Government and industry on the visitor economy. - Providing governance support and advice to several entities that market the state and secure events. - Managing large-scale tourist attractions, precincts, facilities and entertainment venues in Victoria.
Regional Development Victoria	Regional Development Victoria (RDV) is responsible for supporting and facilitating economic and social development in regional areas of Victoria.	- Managing funding streams and grant programs, such as the Regional Tourism Investment Fund. - Business investment. - Industry support. - Advocacy.
The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action	DEECA is a government department in Victoria that is responsible for various matters related to the environment, energy and climate change. The department was renamed from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning on 1 January 2023. The department is focused on creating a liveable, inclusive and sustainable Victoria with thriving natural environments. DEECA is a major public land manager within the Wimmera Mallee region.	DEECA's core business is focused on achieving 8 outcomes. These can be summarised as follows. - Agriculture and Forestry: Sustainable use of natural resources. - Climate Action: Achieve net-zero emissions and prepare the economy and community for climate challenges. - Earth Resources: Sustainable development of Victoria's earth resources. - Emergency Management: Minimise the impact of bushfires and other emergencies on people, property, and the environment. - Energy: Ensure reliable, sustainable, and affordable energy services. - Environment and Resource Recovery: Promote a healthy, resilient, and biodiverse environment.

Stakeholder/ Partner	About	Key roles/responsibilities
		- Land Management: Effective and productive land management (Co- or joint-manage public land with BGLC and other Traditional Owners in the region, establish committees of management where required to manage camping sites or similar and maintain existing public infrastructure and update where required). - Water: Maintain safe, sustainable, and productive water resources.
Parks Victoria	Parks Victoria is a government agency responsible for managing Victoria's network of parks, reserves, and other protected areas. Established in 1996, it operates under DEECA and plays a crucial role in the conservation of the state's natural and cultural heritage. Parks Victoria is a major public land manager within the Wimmera Mallee region.	The key roles/responsibilities of Parks Victoria are centred on the following. - Conservation and environmental management - Park and reserve management (Co- or joint-manage public land with BGLC and other Traditional Owners in the region, maintaining existing public infrastructure and updating where required and managing tourism operator concession licenses and arrangements on public lands.) - Cultural heritage preservation (protection of cultural landscapes) - Recreation and visitor services - Community engagement and education - Fire and emergency management - Sustainable land management
Victorian Tourism Industry Council	The Victorian Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) is an industry association representing the interests of the state's tourism operators and businesses.	- Industry advocacy. - Policy development (at a state and national level). - Industry support and development. - Networking and collaboration. - Education and training.
Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism	Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism (GWM Tourism) is the key tourism body for the Grampians Wimmera Mallee region, backed by DJSIR, local governments, and industry partners. It focuses on marketing, product development, and infrastructure investment to enhance the region's profile, increase visitor numbers, and extend stays through destination marketing and capacity-building efforts.	- Destination management planning. - Destination development. - Crisis planning and response management. - Industry support and strengthening. - Advocacy on behalf of industry and local government. - Destination marketing and regional conversion. - Product development. - Private investment attraction.
Local government	In Victoria, local government plays a key role in supporting the visitor economy. The four local government areas in the Wimmera Mallee all deliver services that contribute significantly to the development and growth of the region's visitor economy.	- Local tourism promotion. - Provision of visitor information services, often via VICs. - Development and maintenance of tourism-related infrastructure that enhances the visitor experience. - Event support. - Engaging with communities to align tourism development with local values. - Coordinating crisis/emergency responses for the tourism sector. - Regulatory functions related to tourism, including land use planning and zoning.
First Peoples/ Traditional Owner Groups	Traditional Owner groups in the region include Barengi Gadjin Land Council (BGLC), Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (DDWCAC) and Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (GMTOAC). These groups are key partners and need to lead Traditional Owners' and First Peoples' stories and land use.	- To guide and inform Councils on strategic land use of culturally sensitive land owned by Council and State Government. - Initiate projects in sensitive State Government Land areas, such as national parks, waterways and lakes. This includes trails and walks that encompass or transverse such areas. Initiate TO stories and signage requests. - All engagement must conform with each council's Local Government Engagement Strategy and Reconciliation Action Plan (if applicable) and follow the endorsed Recognition and Settlement Agreements.
Industry	The tourism industry comprises businesses and organisations established to meet visitors' wants and needs. The sector is broad and includes economic sectors such as transportation, accommodation, entertainment and attractions and food and beverage services.	- Product development. - Marketing and promotion. - Upskilling and training. - Product delivery. - Customer service. - Delivery of events. - Adopting sustainable business practices.
Volunteers	Most visitor attractions and major events throughout the region rely heavily on volunteer support to operate. Governance requirements have become far more demanding, which is diminishing volunteer interest in joining committees to run attractions and major events.	- Responsibility for managing and operating visitor attractions and major events and continuation of this - Streamlining volunteer compliance requirements (police checks, documentation requirements, etc.) is required. - Professional curatorial support and major event coordinator required to support volunteer involvement.



2.5.3. About Victoria's Visitor Economy Partnerships

The Visitor Economy Recovery and Reform Plan released in April 2021 outlined the transition from Regional Tourism Boards (RTBs) to Visitor Economy Partnerships (VEPs).

Under this new model, each VEP will:

- Have a clear sense of purpose and defined responsibilities.
- Encourage local and industry leadership with senior local government, industry and skills-based board membership.
- Include all regions, with boundaries co-designed and agreed upon in collaboration with local government authorities.
- Leverage the benefits of scale.
- Have local ownership and flexibility with the broad geographic coverage to deliver region-wide initiatives.

2.5.3.1. Core responsibilities

The VEP framework provided by the DJSIR clearly outlines the core responsibilities of the VEPs, including the following.

- Deliver enhanced leadership and collaboration at a regional level.
- Tailor industry strengthening support to address regional needs.
- Encourage increased community support for tourism.
- Facilitate enhanced visitor dispersal and experiences.
- Undertake collaborative destination marketing and regional conversion.
- Provide insights and investor connections that inform a strengthened pipeline and product development.
- Provide regional context and insights to inform government policy development, decision making and investment priorities.
- Ensure continued crisis preparedness and support relative to the visitor economy.

2.5.3.2. Core benefits

The VEP framework also outlines the four core benefits of the VEP model, which include:

- Official recognition, increased clarity and collaboration with government.
- A more transparent funding model.
- Enhanced operational support.
- Access to data, insights and tools to track outcomes.

2.5.3.3. Key features

VEPs need to include the following essential elements and align with other VEPs across the state:

- Ensure clear roles and responsibilities, including developing a sustainable regional destination management plan. The DMP should be reviewed and updated in three years.
- Establish solid governance with a broad, skill-based board and a legal organisation with a clear constitution.
- Encourage regional collaboration by engaging.

Designed to strengthen and grow the Grampians Wimmera Mallee visitor economy, GWM Tourism is the conduit between the four local government areas, the state government and the tourism industry. It supports its industry partners through business initiatives, the creation of visitor economy experiences and tourism products, and marketing and industry development.

2.5.3.4. The Role of Grampians Wimmera Mallee VEP

2.5.3.4.1. About the VEP

GWM Tourism, a newly formed VEP, is the peak tourism body in the Grampians Wimmera Mallee region. It is directly supported by DJSIR, along with the Shires of Buloke, Hindmarsh, West Wimmera, Yarriambiack, Northern Grampians, Southern Grampians Shire, the rural cities of Ararat and Horsham and over 300 industry partners. While GWM Tourism focuses on the Wimmera Mallee and Grampians regions, they are marketed and branded as unique and independent sub-regions.

Formerly Grampians Tourism, GWM Tourism aims to create a cooperative and vibrant visitor economy that supports the growth of tourism expenditure and length of stay and adds value to our partners through promotion and increased brand awareness.

GWM Tourism has a leadership and coordination role in the development of the region's visitor economy. It relies heavily on the goodwill, financial support, and cooperative efforts of its public and private industry partners to develop and deliver destination marketing and tourism programs for the region.

GWM Tourism relies heavily on the financial contributions from both state and local governments and businesses to deliver its annual work plan.

The members of the GWM Tourism Board are:

- LGA CEOs of Ararat, Horsham, Northern, Southern Grampians and Hindmarsh (as the representative from the Wimmera Mallee sub-region).
- Two skills-based directors.
- An Independent Chair

The Board's role is to provide expert guidance to the organisation and tourism industry.

2.5.3.4.2. Key partnerships

- Tourism businesses
- Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions
- Visit Victoria
- Tourism Australia
- Parks Victoria
- Regional Development Victoria
- Ararat Rural City Council
- Buloke Shire Council
- Hindmarsh Shire Council
- Horsham Rural City Council
- Northern Grampians Shire Council
- Southern Grampians Shire Council
- West Wimmera Shire Council
- Yarriambiack Shire Council
- Traditional Owner Corporations
- Great Southern Touring Route
- VTIC

2.5.3.4.3. Stakeholders

Members of the tourism industry and other organisations that support the development of the visitor economy in the region include:

- Tourism operators, local tourism associations, industry sector groups and business groups.
- Local community members and groups (including organisers of community-based tourism initiatives).

2.5.3.4.4. Industry and Stakeholder Communications and Engagement

The purpose of GWM Tourism's communications activities is to ensure that the tourism industry within the region, and stakeholders both within and outside the region, are kept informed, are engaged in GWM Tourism's activities, successes are celebrated, and key learnings are shared. Success is the creation of strong, two-way communication between key stakeholders and industry and a definable increase in confidence in GWM Tourism's strategic direction.

The aim of the communications is to stimulate participation and support for GWM Tourism's marketing, product, and industry development activities, as well as to raise the profile of GWM Tourism and promote the broader benefits of tourism to the wider community.

2.5.3.4.5. Strategic Priorities

Priority 1: Destination Marketing

- Deliver effective activity to increase length of stay, dispersal, yield, and regional brand equity.
- Support events aligned with our seasonal and dispersal objectives.
- Drive high-yielding occupancy in shoulder and mid-week periods.

Priority 2: Industry Development

- Champion activities that increase operator capacity and grow the visitor experience.
- Deliver industry strengthening activity (digital marketing, business management, product development and customer experience).

Priority 3: Product Development

- Develop high-quality collateral that supports destination marketing efforts.
- Curate products to create compelling, productive, and sustainable visitor experiences.

Priority 4: Partnerships

- Facilitate collaboration across our industry and communities including strategic planning, product development, marketing and industry development and investment.
- Leverage and grow our partnerships.
- Introduce innovative ways to add value to industry partnerships.

Priority 5: Investment Attraction

- Engage community and industry on tourism-related projects to raise the visitor economy profile.
- Attract private investment into infrastructure and experiences.
- Work with local government partners to attract new investors and investment opportunities.

2.5.3.4.6. Destination Marketing

2.5.3.4.6.1. Guiding Principles

- Champion the Wimmera Mallee brand to increase awareness of each of the local government areas, develop and refine the brand position for the destination, and operate in alignment with Visit Victoria's state-wide brand positioning.
- Create a cooperative and vibrant visitor economy that adds value to our partners through promotion and increased brand awareness.
- Support events aligned with our seasonal and dispersal objectives.
- Deliver effective marketing strategies to increase length of stay, dispersal, yield, and regional brand equity. And to help drive high-yielding occupancy in shoulder and midweek periods.

2.5.3.4.6.2. Strategy

Implement an integrated destination marketing strategy to build the Grampians Wimmera Mallee brand, raise awareness, drive visitation, and maximise ROI.

Destination Marketing Campaigns

- Visit Victoria's Co-operative Marketing Program: to leverage their reach and activity in alignment with their Masterbrand framework including the sub-brand promise, content pillars and proof points to ensure our region is marketed to its strengths and remains distinctive from the other regions in Victoria.
- Content partnerships: partner with select media to develop a marketing campaign focusing on 'Road Trip' itineraries that encourage dispersal and promote the core assets and complementary activities in the region.

Digital Marketing

- Website: continual content updates and improvements to drive 'conversion' events on our website and optimise opportunities for partner click-outs.
- Social media: develop a strategic and compelling content plan to build engagement on Instagram and Facebook.
- Blogs: regular blogs focused on relevant and compelling content.

Public Relations

- Itineraries and 'Listicles': develop considered content to suit regional/seasonal activity.
- Seasonal media releases: curate seasonal releases that capture the highlights of the region for each season.
- Media familiarisations: execute media famils with select journalists to gain coverage for the region.

Leveraging Events

- Support through marketing content and inclusion in seasonal media releases.

Database Marketing

- E-Newsletter: monthly consumer-focused newsletter aimed to build relationships with the target audience and provide relevant content such as what's on, deals and discounts, seasonal updates, operator features and inspirational content.
- Database growth: develop a high-value, aspirational competition to build the Visit Grampians Wimmera Malee database.

Asset Development

- Collateral: a review of owned assets.
- Renew industry toolkits and brochures.

International Marketing

- Participate in the Great Southern Touring Route.
- Participate at the Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE).

How we inspire and convert:

- **Always Be 'On'** – there will be no gaps in our marketing activities to ensure we are in the minds of our target audience year-round.
- **Building Stronger Consumer Connections** – deliver the right message, in the right way, to the right people at the right time.
- **Brand Message** – we will look for innovative ways to cut through the marketing 'clutter' and be consistent.
- **User-Generated Content** – we will foster and amplify user-generated content to promote the destination.
- **Digital Marketing** – we will enhance our online presence using owned, earned, and paid media, with targeted digital marketing campaign tactics.
- **Public Relations** – we will attract journalists and influencers to the region to generate positive media coverage.
- **Website** – deliver a visually attractive and easy-to-navigate site that is a trusted source of information and supports content marketing and user-generated content.
- **Events** – we will leverage 'homegrown' events to drive visitation and enhance the resident experience to encourage them to help champion our region.



2.6. Strategic alignment

Alignment to strategic policy and direction is critical to the success of the DMP. These documents (see Table 6) provide a range of findings and strategic directions relevant to developing the region's visitor economy.

Table 6: Strategies of relevance

Strategy	What is it?	How has it been aligned to this DMP?
Experience Victoria 2033	The Victorian Government's strategic plan to shape the future of Victoria's visitor economy over the next ten years. Experience Victoria's Product Priorities and Settings are outlined in Appendix 3.	Several product priorities and settings have been identified as the region's current and emerging strengths. These are included in Appendix 3.
Creative State 2025	Creative State 2025 is an integrated strategy to address longstanding and new challenges facing the creative industries and to grow their contribution to our society, economy and culture. Supported by a four-year budget of \$288 million, it is a strategy designed to enrich the lives of all Victorians.	Creative State 2025 builds on Victoria's strengths and tackles pressing and systemic challenges facing creative future collaboration and investment. With the Creative Energy and People and Place product pillars of this DMP, there is alignment through striving to improve equitable access to creative experiences and careers and investment in new and established innovative, creative products and experiences.
Destination Victoria Brand Strategy Playbook	The reference point that defines what makes Victoria and its regions different and compelling. The Destination Victoria Brand Strategy playbook (see Appendix 4) was developed to describe Victoria's overarching brand and its various sub-regional brands and the strategy behind these. A key objective of the playbook is to ensure that the brand messaging for the state and each sub-regional destination is unique and compelling.	This DMP is aligned with the Destination Victoria Brand Strategy by aligning the themes and product development opportunities in the DMP with the state's sub-regional brand pillars of "nature at your fingertips", "passion for quality", and "storied culture".

Strategy	What is it?	How has it been aligned to this DMP?
Grampians Destination Management Plan	The Grampians DMP was developed to provide direction for the sustainable development of the visitor economy. The plan supports the attraction of investment across the region. It ensures the Grampians remains a leading nature-based tourism destination that is both compelling for visitors and sustainable for local communities.	This Wimmera Mallee DMP aligns with the Grampians DMP in the following ▪ Utilising the same strategic framework pillars. ▪ Both plans identified strengths in nature-based tourism, focusing on lakes and waterways. In the Grampians, this is “big nature”; in the Wimmera Mallee, this is focused more on recreational nature-based experiences. ▪ Both DMPs primarily focus on Greater Melbourne as the ‘low-hanging fruit’ target market. There is still low market awareness of both regions. This recognises that many Melbourne residents have not spent a night in regional Victoria.²
Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS)	Developed by Regional Development Victoria, the REDS identify the strategic directions to further drive growth and prosperity in regional Victoria.	The REDS identifies tourism as one of four pillars of its strategy: “promote growth and development of the visitor economy, leveraging natural assets and Aboriginal heritage”. The opportunities identified under this pillar that align with this DMP include the following: ▪ Build the brand ▪ Hero experiences (the Silo Art Trail) ▪ Aboriginal heritage (stronger connections with local Aboriginal groups should be developed) ▪ Food, wine and agritourism (potential to produce artisan F&B leveraging the region’s strong agriculture industry)
National Agritourism Strategy 2030	This strategy provides direction and toolkits for primary industries and producers to diversify and sustain their core business by offering products to visitors. It is a roadmap for farmers to unlock new business opportunities and encourage jobs for regional communities.	The strategy identifies six priorities that underpin the sector’s growth. These strategic priorities demonstrate the opportunity for areas within the region to grow their profile as an agritourism destination and support producers to enable agritourism growth. ▪ Sustainable and inclusive farm diversification. ▪ Community capability and capacity building with a focus on regional employment. ▪ Develop new, high-quality, distinctly Australian agritourism experiences. ▪ Promote the sector responsibly, with an alignment to food and drink. ▪ Encourage genuine collaboration and enduring partnerships. ▪ Provide sector leadership to support inclusive growth.
Dja Dja Wurrung Recognition and Settlement Agreement and Wotjobaluk Jaadwa Jadawadjali Wergaia and Jupagulk People Wotjobaluk nations Recognition and Settlement Agreement ³	These Recognition and Settlement Agreements require Councils to have Local Government Engagement Strategies (it is understood that the Councils are currently implementing these). The Recognition and Settlement Agreements reference lands that Traditional Owners will manage, and therefore, one must be conscious of this before committing to any activities (e.g., trails, walking tracks, etc.).	Engagement has occurred with the region’s three Traditional Owner groups to understand their desire to develop tourism-based products. Any development suggested in this DMP that is on Traditional Owner lands and/or is a Traditional Owner product proposed on government land would need to be initiated and led by Traditional Owners.

² As advised by Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism

³ <https://www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/recognition-and-settlement-agreements>

Strategy	What is it?	How has it been aligned to this DMP?
Mallee Parks Management Plan	The Mallee Parks comprise Hattah-Kulkyne, Murray-Sunset and Wyperfeld National Parks, Big Desert Wilderness Park and Lake Albacutya and Murray-Kulkyne Parks. These Parks represent 40 per cent of the total area of Victoria's Park system. Park management will aim to protect the Parks' wilderness and conservation values and optimise visitor opportunities and experiences consistent with these values.	There is alignment between this DMP and the Mallee Parks Management Plan via its management directions. - Enhancing visitor enjoyment by improving access, developing diverse walking trails, and enriching interpretive information, all of which attract and retain tourists year-round. - The focus on sustainable tourism development supports local economies while preserving the parks' natural and cultural values. - Implementing a cooperative approach to boundary management, including integration with Landcare initiatives, ensures the protection of both park and adjacent land, fostering a holistic and sustainable approach to tourism in the region. Additionally, as identified in the Mallee Parks Management Plan, there are many significant features of each of the parks and opportunities that have been leveraged as part of the DMP. These include the following. - Cultural values: The area has over 3,800 sites listed on the Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (AAV) Register and a variety of significant European historic sites, offering rich opportunities for on-site interpretation of both Aboriginal and European heritage. - Tourism and recreation values: The area provides a variety of recreational activities, including remote, self-reliant experiences, motorised recreation like 2WD and 4WD touring, and high-quality interpretation of Victoria's subtle natural environments.
Wimmera Parks Conservation Action Plan	The Wimmera Park Landscape covers more than 350 parks and reserves (including Little Desert National Park, Lake Hindmarsh Lake Reserve, Jilpanger Nature Conservation Reserve, Mount Arapiles – Tooan State Park, Tallageira Nature Conservation Reserve, Wimmera River Heritage Area Park) with a combined area of about 198,000 hectares. The Wimmera Parks Landscape includes dune systems supporting heathlands and mallee, dry forests and woodlands, and river and wetlands connecting the landscape. The reserve system creates stepping-stones across the landscape, connected by permanent and ephemeral waterways.	The Conservation Action Plan's conservation strategies are integral to sustainable tourism and destination management, and they have been recognised in this DMP. Establishing collaborative partnerships ensures a cohesive approach to maintaining the natural landscape, vital for preserving the region's ecological integrity. Managing total grazing pressure and introduced predators protects native flora and fauna, enhancing biodiversity—a key attraction for eco-tourists. Fire and weed management promote healthy ecosystems, while managing water-dependent ecosystems ensures resilience to climate change, making these parks sustainable and appealing destinations for future generations of visitors. More generally, this DMP emphasises protecting sensitive environments and local flora and fauna while enhancing visitor experiences. It integrates environmental protection into destination management to ensure tourism development maintains the region's ecological integrity and preserves natural heritage for future generations.

2.7. Wimmera Mallee visitor profile

2.7.1. Summary (2023)

In 2023, the Wimmera Mallee attracted 526,000 visitors, of which more than half (53%, or 280,000) were domestic day trip visitors, 46% were domestic overnight visitors (244,000), and a very small share (0.4%) were international visitors.

The domestic market is very much the bread and butter visitor market for the region and is likely to be for the foreseeable future. And within this market, the intrastate market comprises the largest share of visitation. Key intrastate source markets

comprise Melbourne, Western Grampians, Wimmera, Great Ocean Road, Bendigo Loddon and Ballarat. While key interstate source markets include South Australia and NSW.

Visitors contributed over \$138 million to the region's economy, with domestic overnight visitors contributing the most (\$106 million). This demonstrates the value of overnight visitors to the region; while they only comprised 46% of visitation, they generated 77% of total spending.

Table 7: Visitor economy snapshot (2023)⁴



Visitors

526k visitors



Visitor Nights

696k nights



Visitor Spend

\$138.2M

Visitor Type

Domestic day

53.2%



Domestic overnight

46.4%



International

0.4%



Average Length of Stay

2.8 nights



Domestic Visitor Origin

Domestic day

Interstate

6%

Domestic day

Intrastate

94%

Domestic overnight

Interstate

26%

Domestic overnight

Intrastate

74%





2.7.2. How visitor data has been compiled

Data has been sourced from the National and International Visitor Survey (NVS and IVS) published by Tourism Research Australia (TRA). The geographic boundary covers the various SA2s within the Wimmera Mallee region. By utilising the NVS and IVS data, a historical summary of visitors can be compiled that provides the number of visitors to the area and a profile of visitors, including origin, demographic information, spending data, etc.

December YE data (unless otherwise specified) has been applied as this is the most recent iteration of data released by TRA via the NVS and IVS at the time of report writing. As per the methodology used by TRA for LGAs⁵, visitation data is averaged across three-year periods rather than provided on an annual basis. This minimises the impact of variability in estimates from year to year and provides more robust estimates. The exception to this is the period 2020 to 2023, where annualised data has been used due to the impact of COVID-19.

⁴ National and International Visitor Surveys, Tourism Research Australia. December YE. Data is based on three-year averages for all years but 2020 – 2023 (due to COVID-19 impacts).

⁵ <https://www.tra.gov.au/research/regional-tourism/local-government-area-profiles/local-government-area-profiles>

2.7.3. Total visitation

Before COVID-19, visitation to the Wimmera Mallee region steadily increased, increasing from 338k visitors in 2014 to 558k in 2019 (a total growth of 65% or 221k visitors). This growth was primarily driven by the domestic overnight visitor market, which increased by 143k visitors (+94%) over the same period.

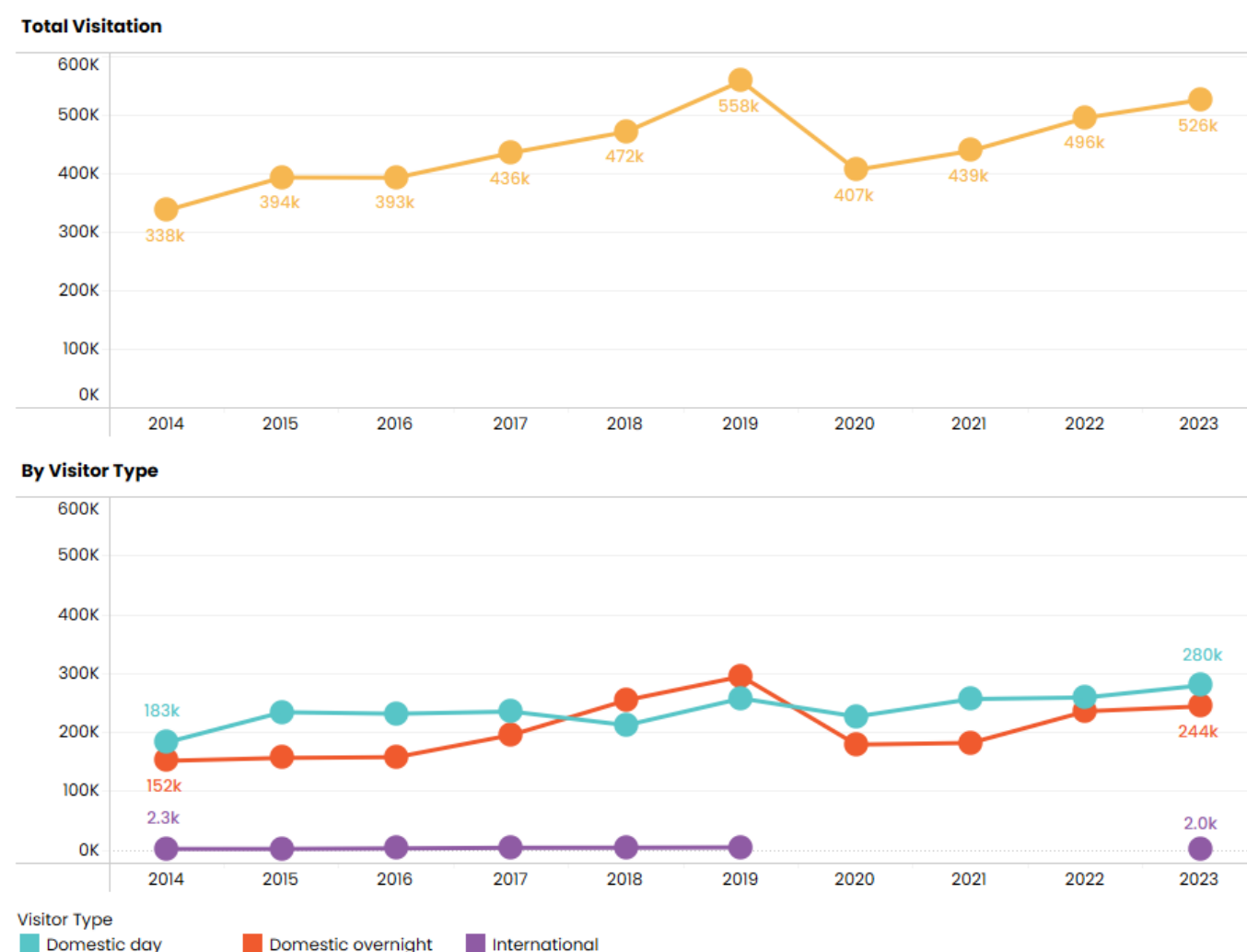
However, COVID-19 saw visitation to the region decline, falling by -27% (-152k visitors). This decline, however, was not as significant as some other regions experienced, particularly those that typically rely more heavily on the international visitor market. By way of example⁶:

- the Great Ocean Road saw a decline of 46% over the same period (equating to -3.2m fewer visitors);

- the Mornington Peninsula also saw a decrease of 46% (equating to -3.9m fewer visitors); and
- Melbourne saw a drop of 60% (equating to -23.6m fewer visitors).

The region is almost at pre-COVID-19 visitation levels, with visitation in 2023 reaching 526k, up 29% from 2020 levels and only 6% down on 2019 levels. This growth has been led by a recovering domestic overnight market, growing by 65k visitors between 2020 and 2023 and a domestic day market, increasing by 53k visitors. This domestic overnight growth is significant given that many destinations nationwide are seeking to grow overnight visitation because of the increased economic benefits that overnight visitors tend to yield.

Figure 7: Total visitation to the Wimmera Mallee region, 2014 - 2023⁷



⁶ Visitors by Victoria's Tourism Regions: 2018-2023, DJSIR, https://tourism.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/excel_doc/0015/2262021/Victorian-tourism-statistics-year-ending-December-2023.xlsx

⁷ NVS and IVS, TRA, December YE, compiled by Stafford

2.7.4. Visitor type

The Wimmera Mallee has traditionally been a domestic day tripper destination, with these visitors typically comprising more than half of all visitation to the region. However, this shifted slightly in 2019 when domestic overnight visitors became the predominant market.

Although the day trip market forms an important component of the visitor economy, it usually is relatively lower yielding comparatively. By way of example, domestic day trippers, on average, spent \$107 in the region, compared with domestic overnight visitors who spent four times this amount at \$435 per trip. Higher spending by overnight visitors is usually generated because of additional spending on accommodation, food and beverage, transport, attractions etc. This is why most destinations Australia-wide are striving to increase the share of overnight visitation to their respective regions.

Over half (50.4%) of domestic overnight visitors to the region used private accommodation⁸ when staying overnight in the region in 2023. This results in a reduced economic impact from these visitors as they are recorded as overnight visitors but

their spending is generally far less as a result of no spending on accommodation. Importantly, however, there are gaps in accommodation within the region – in both availability and diversity – so this limits the ability of overnight visitors to stay in commercial accommodation.

2.7.5. Visitor motivation

The Wimmera Mallee is very much a leisure-based destination, with more than two-thirds of visitation travelling to the region for either a holiday (37%) or to visit friends or relatives (31%) (see Figure 9).

Having a solid base of holiday and VFR visitors is beneficial when looking to grow the visitor economy, as these visitors (particularly VFR visitors) often travel during different seasons, ensuring a continuous flow of income for local businesses and reducing the economic impact of seasonal fluctuations. The extended stays typical of VFR visitors lead to higher overall spending, directly benefiting accommodation providers, restaurants, and local attractions. Holiday visitors bring a demand for an array of experiences, encouraging destinations to diversify and enhance their offerings.

Figure 8: Visitor type to the Wimmera Mallee region, 2014, 2019 and 2023⁹

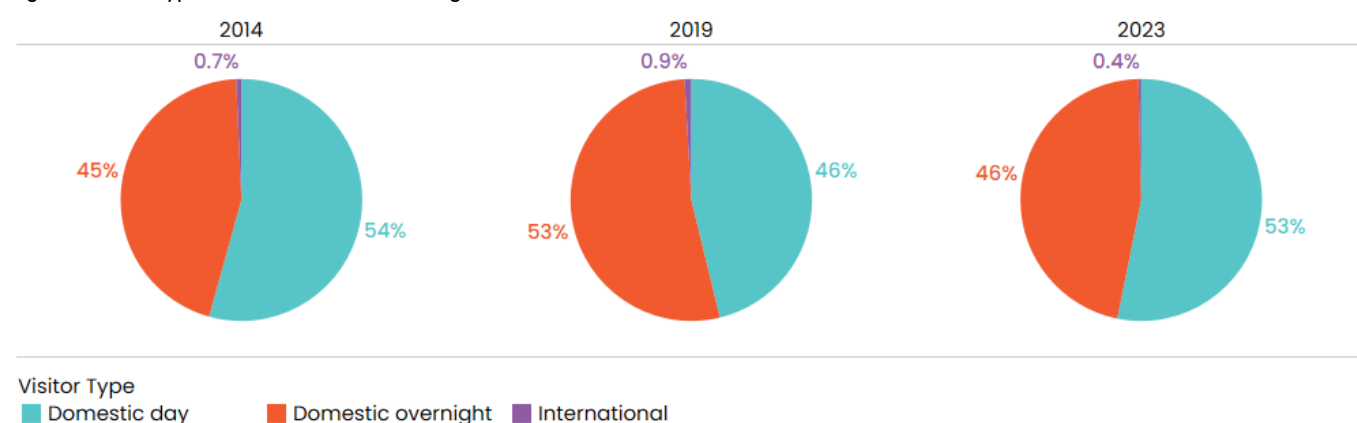
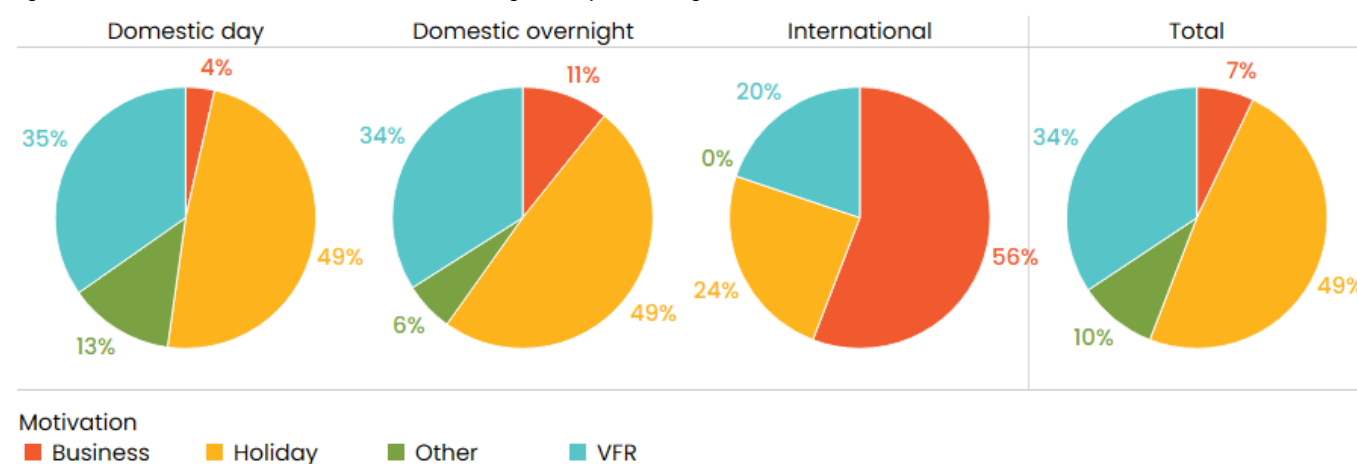


Figure 9: Visitor motivation in the Wimmera Mallee region, 10-year average 2014 – 2023¹⁰



⁸ Private accommodation includes staying in one's own property, staying in a friends or relatives property, non-commercial caravan or camping etc.

⁹ NVS and IVS, TRA, December YE, compiled by Stafford

¹⁰ NVS and IVS, TRA, December YE, compiled by Stafford

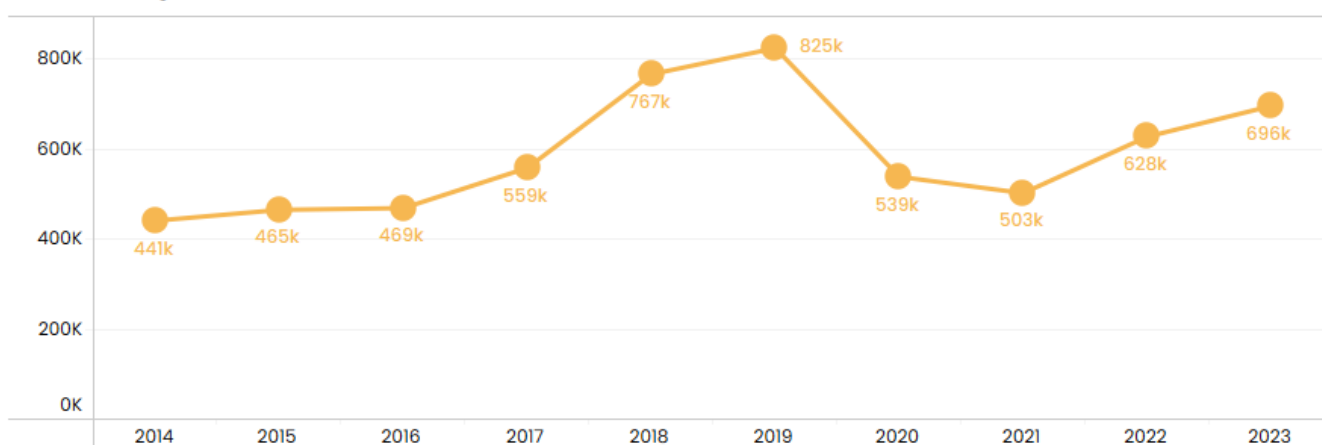
2.7.6. Visitor nights

Figure 10 summarises visitor nights and the average length of visitor stay¹¹. It demonstrates that visitor nights have followed a similar growth and decline pattern to visitation from 2014 to 2023. As of 2023, overnight visitors spend 696k visitor nights. Domestic visitors spent the vast majority of these nights, comprising 84% of all visitor nights.

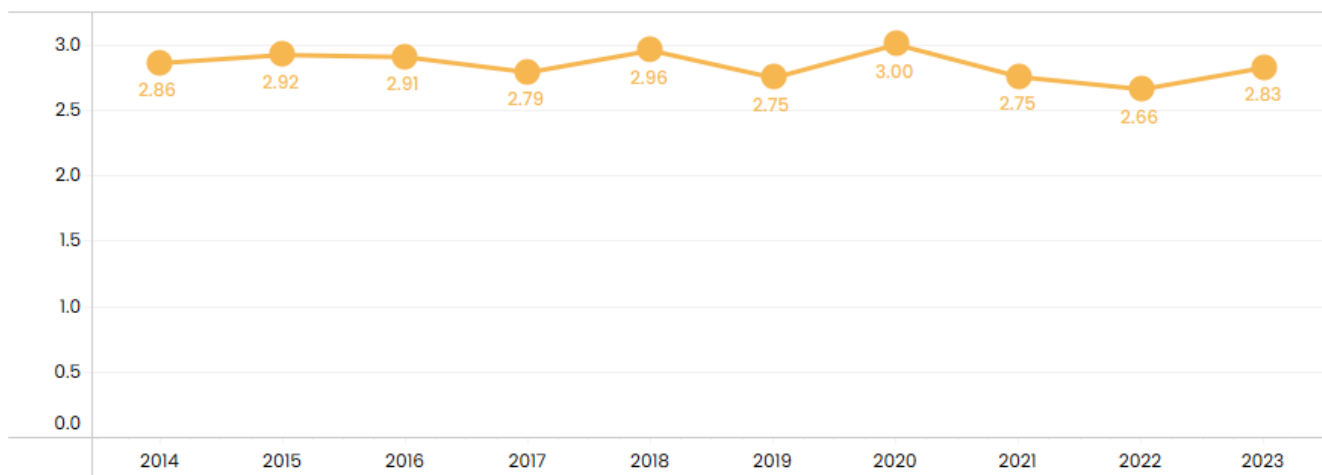
The average length of visitor stay (ALOS) averaged 2.84 nights over the 10 years assessed. The ALOS was slightly higher for those visiting friends and relatives (VFR) at 3.08 nights compared to those travelling on a holiday (2.71 nights) and those travelling on business (2.95 nights).

Figure 10: Total visitor nights and average length of stay in the Wimmera Mallee region, 2014 – 2023¹²

Total visitor nights



Average length of stay



¹¹ ALOS is calculated by dividing visitor nights by total visitation

¹² NVS and IVS, TRA, December YE, compiled by Stafford

2.7.7. Visitor spending

Visitor spending in the Wimmera Mallee region is summarised in Figure 11. Despite visitation declining due to COVID-19, inflationary pressures have caused visitor spending to grow in 2023, increasing to just over \$138 million – up 16% from \$119 million in 2022.

The significance of the domestic overnight market is particularly demonstrated in these figures; while the market only comprised 46% of total visitation in 2023, its spending amounted to 77% of all spending.

Figure 11: Visitor spending in the Wimmera Mallee region, 2018 – 2023¹³



¹³ NVS and IVS, TRA, December YE, compiled by Stafford

2.7.8. Domestic visitor origin

As referred to earlier, the Wimmera Mallee is primarily a domestic destination. Within this, the intrastate Victorian market is the largest source of visitors for both the day trip and overnight markets (see Figure 12), accounting for 94% and 73% of all visitation, respectively, in the years 2014, 2019 and 2023.

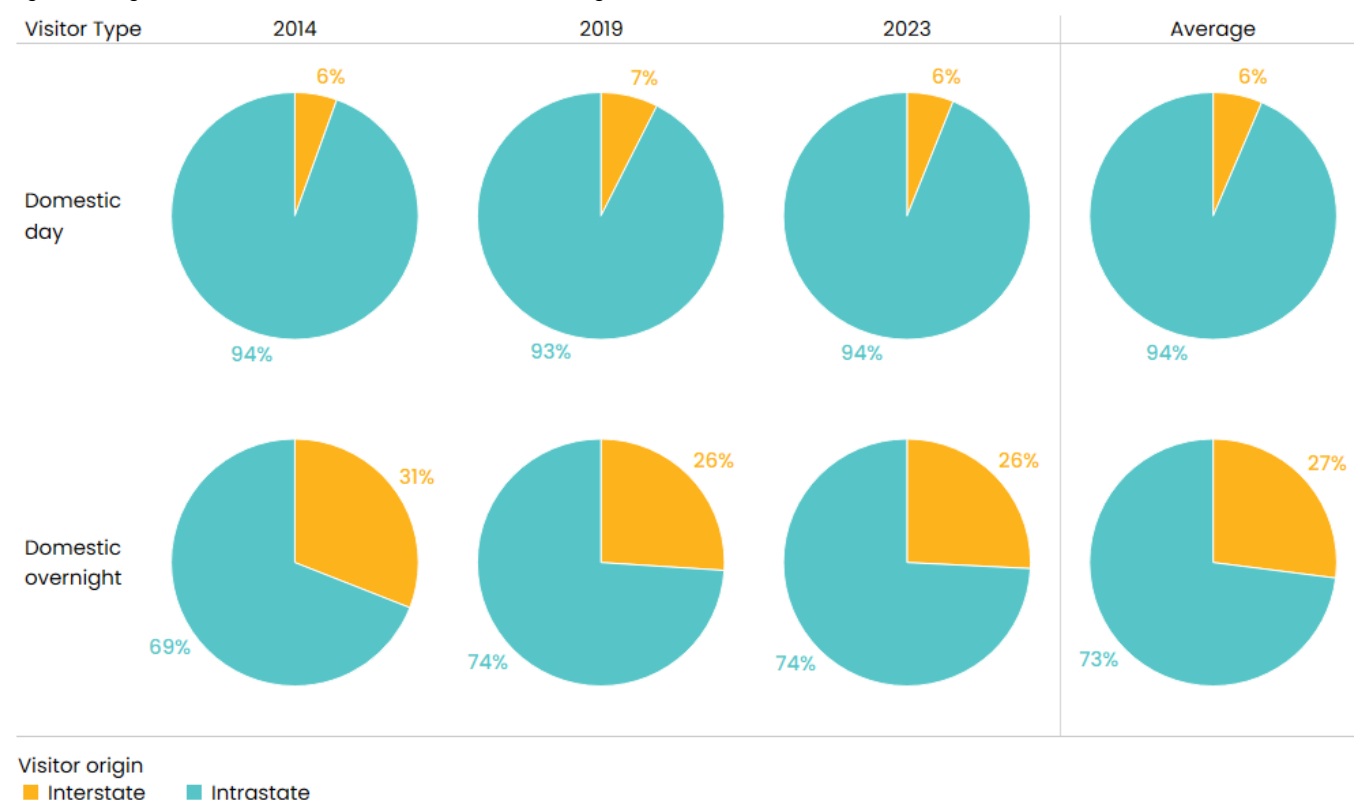
For the domestic overnight intrastate market, the largest source markets (based on a five-year average from 2019 to 2023) comprise Melbourne, Western Grampians, Great Ocean Road, Bendigo Loddon and Ballarat.

For the domestic day trip intrastate market, the largest source markets (based on a five-year average from 2019 to 2023) comprise Western Grampians, Wimmera, Melbourne, Bendigo Loddon and Ballarat.

For the domestic overnight interstate market, South Australians make up the largest share of visitors, comprising nearly half of all interstate visitors in 2023. Many of these visitors are coming from South Australia and are using the Western Highway and stopping off in towns such as Kaniva and Nhill.

The next largest domestic overnight intrastate market is NSW residents, making up 35% of intrastate visitation in 2023.

Figure 12: Origin of domestic visitors to the Wimmera Mallee region, 2014, 2019, 2023¹⁴



¹⁴ NVS and IVS, TRA, December YE, compiled by Stafford

2.7.9. Visitor flows

The Wimmera Mallee region is bisected by a number of major highways, including:

- the primary route from Melbourne to Adelaide is the Western Highway (National Highway A8) via Nhill, Kaniva, Serviceton and across to Border Town (South Australia),
- separately via Edenhope, Apsley on the Wimmera Highway across the border to Naracoorte, Adelaide and other parts of South Australia; and
- from Melbourne to Mildura via Charlton, Wycheproof and Sea Lake in Buloke Shire via the Calder Highway.

The number of travellers crossing through the Wimmera Mallee region at Kaniva into South Australia is estimated at 5,400 people per day (average annual daily traffic)¹⁵ and is forecast to grow to over 6,600 by 2040 per day in both directions.¹⁶ This is a significant number of potential leisure and other visitors travelling through the region on a daily basis. By 2026, this equates to over 2.0 million travellers per annum on the Western Highway alone, in both directions.

Additionally, there are:

- an estimated 555,000 travellers per annum utilise the Wimmera Highway from Edenhope to Naracoorte (SA) via Apsley.¹⁷
- an estimated 803,000 travellers per annum utilise the Calder Highway from Sea Lake to Mildura.¹⁸

With an estimated 3.3 million plus 19 current annual travellers through the Wimmera Mallee each year (in both directions), finding ways to encourage more travellers to stop in highway towns throughout the region is particularly important. Even if it is not possible to initially get many of these travellers to break their journey and stay overnight in the region, daily spending can be significantly strengthened by encouraging more rest breaks for meals, visiting a nearby attraction, etc.

With an estimated 526,000 day and overnight visitors to the Wimmera Mallee in 2023, this represents 16% of total estimated travellers coming through the region, as noted currently. As a percentage of domestic day visitors only (excluding overnight), this represents a market penetration of 8.5%, based on 280k day visitors in 2023. This potentially leaves a significant day traveller market (circa 3.0m plus) who are not yet stopping and spending in the Wimmera Mallee region.

The initial opportunity is likely greater for towns situated directly on major highways, such as Nhill and Kaniva on the Western Highway (A8), Charlton, Wycheproof, and Sea Lake on the Calder Highway, and Edenhope and Apsley on the Wimmera Highway. Additionally, towns near these highways,

like Dimboola, just a few kilometres off the Western Highway, could also significantly benefit from increased visitation as more travellers stop to break their journey in the region. Clear and informative tourism signage will be crucial in maximizing this potential.

Over time, enhanced marketing of visitor attractions and the development of more commercial accommodation and eateries, particularly near major highways, can significantly increase visitor spending and overall visitation. Additionally, promoting major events within the region through highway signage and online channels well in advance can encourage more travellers to attend these events as part of their journey to and from their primary destinations.

The Wimmera Mallee is fortunate to have major highways bisecting the region and offering a range of leisure, business and other travellers who, with the right forms of promotion and product development, may be tempted to be more than impulse visitors or stopover visitors to the region. In time, these could then be encouraged to become repeat planned and overnight visitors where the region is their ultimate destination and/or where the region is designated more time to stop and spend.



¹⁵ Based on 2.0 people travelling in each vehicle. Data sourced from Traffic Volume, Department of Transport:

<https://vicroadsopendata-vicroadsmaps.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/vicroadsmaps:traffic-volume/about>

¹⁶ DOTARS 2007 Melbourne—Adelaide Corridor Strategy. In lieu of up-to-date forecasts, Stafford has applied the growth rate from the Corridor Strategy (1.59% growth rate) to current traffic volume figures based on an average of 2 people per vehicle. Based on average annual daily (AAD) two-way traffic count data on Western Highway btwn Serviceton North-Telopea Downs Road & Commercial Street

¹⁷ Based on average annual daily (AAD) two-way traffic count data on Wimmera Highway btwn Edenhope-Penola Road & Wimmera Highway End

¹⁸ Based on average annual daily (AAD) two-way traffic count data on Calder Highway btwn Sunraysia Highway & Sea Lake-Patchewollock Road

¹⁹ Estimate based on a combination of travellers on these three major highways (Calder, Wimmera and the Western Highways)

2.7.10. Target markets

The Wimmera Mallee has six target market segments which are outlined in Table 8 and further explained in Table 9. Some of these are existing markets, while others have been identified as opportunity markets to target because of their potential to drive visitation and yield. Going forward, it will be essential to target each market with offerings that align with their unique preferences and interests.

Food (agritourism) and drink, as well as outdoor experiences and tours, are common preferences among all market segments that align with Wimmera Mallee's product pillars.

The VFR, event and nature-based segments are the key existing markets for the region. They are already attracted to the region and are interested in the product offering. The opportunity lies in understanding how to extract more yield from this market.

Visit Victoria's identified target markets include the following market segments: Lifestyle Leaders and High-Value Travellers.

It is important to ensure alignment with Victoria's primary target markets.

- Victoria's Lifestyle Leaders market segment is the primary domestic target market. This audience consists of progressive, educated and professional individuals who actively seek out new experiences. This market shares characteristics with the short-break, nature-based, sports and events and special interest markets.
- The High-Value Travellers market is the primary international target market and already has a strong preference to visit Australia. Key drivers for visitation include food and wine, aquatic and coastal, and nature and wildlife experiences. This target market shares characteristics of Wimmera Mallee's special interest market.

Table 8: Wimmera Mallee target markets and related growth opportunities

	Visitor Origin				
	Melbourne and Surrounds	Regional Victoria	Interstate (SA and NSW)	Interstate (Rest of Aus)	International
Target market					
Short break	●	●	●		
Nature-based	●	●	●	●	
Sports and events	●	●	●		
VFR	●	●	●	●	●
Special Interest (agritourism, heritage and arts)	●	●	●	●	●
Family market		●	●		

● = strong marketing investment ● = medium marketing investment ● = lower marketing investment

Table 9: Wimmera Mallee's target markets explained and opportunities for growth

Market Overview	Estimated Market Size to Wimmera Mallee (2023) ²⁰	Alignment to Visit Victoria's Market Segments	Alignment with Strategic Product Pillars	Opportunity
Short break The short break visitor market consists of individuals or groups taking brief Wimmera Mallee trips, typically lasting between 2 to 4 days. These visitors seek quick getaways to various destinations, often to relax, explore, or enjoy specific activities or events. Short-break travellers tend to take multiple trips each year, often during weekends or public holidays.	n/a	Lifestyle Leaders	- Arts and culture - Experiences and tours - First Peoples - Food (agritourism) and drink - Nature (including waterbodies and lakes), recreation and wellness	There is an opportunity to capture a larger market share, especially from metro areas like Melbourne, by increasing awareness of Wimmera Mallee's attractions and events. Targeted marketing can highlight the region's accessibility and diverse experiences within a short travel time from major centres.

²⁰ Note, market sizes are non-unique. i.e. one visitor could belong to several target markets.

Market Overview	Estimated Market Size to Wimmera Mallee (2023) ²⁰	Alignment to Visit Victoria's Market Segments	Alignment with Strategic Product Pillars	Opportunity
Nature-based visitors There are just over 100,000 nature-based visitors already travelling to the Wimmera Mallee. These visitors travel primarily to engage with nature and undertake activities such as hiking, camping, fishing, hunting, 4WDing and other outdoor adventure activities.	113,000	Lifestyle Leaders	- Nature (including waterbodies and lakes), recreation and wellness - Food (agritourism) and drink - Experiences and tours	A significant proportion of the region is relatively unexplored by its visitor markets. To showcase what the region offers in terms of nature-based and eco-tourism experiences, targeted campaigns could be considered for Melbourne and surrounding markets and interstate markets.
Sports and events An estimated 93,000 visitors travelled to the Wimmera Mallee and attended some form of event in 2023. The market includes a broad age range, from young adults to older adults, depending on the type of event. Interest groups include sports enthusiasts, fans of specific teams or athletes, cultural event followers, and general event-goers.	93,000	Lifestyle Leaders	- Experiences and tours - Arts and culture - Food (agritourism) and drink	The region hosts several destination events that attract locals and visitors alike. The opportunity exists to further promote these destination events with targeted campaigns in key source markets such as Melbourne. To support these, there is a need to increase accommodation availability and diversity and the visitor infrastructure offered within towns.
VFR (visiting friends and relatives) The VFR market is one of the largest target markets for the Wimmera Mallee and represents a "low-hanging fruit" opportunity.	181,000	-	- Experiences and tours - Arts and culture - Food (agritourism) and drink - Nature (including waterbodies and lakes), recreation and wellness	There is an opportunity to undertake a targeted campaign to promote local products and experiences and increase local residents' awareness of them.
Special Interest Special interest markets include agritourism, heritage and arts visitors, and other smaller niche markets such as bird watchers.	94,000	Lifestyle Leaders, High-Value Travellers	- Food (agritourism) and drink - Arts and culture - Experiences and tours - First Peoples - Nature (including waterbodies and lakes), recreation and wellness	Targeted social media campaigns and the use of influencers should be considered for the special interest market.
Family market A segment of visitors who travel with their family members, including parents, children, and sometimes extended family such as grandparents. They typically prefer destinations that offer a variety of activities suitable for different age groups.	56,000 ²¹	-	- Experiences and tours - Arts and culture - Nature (including waterbodies and lakes), recreation and wellness - Food (agritourism) and drink	The region should consider investing in family-friendly accommodations and experiences. To attract more visitors, the family market needs larger, self-contained lodging and higher-quality tourist parks. Targeted investment in these areas will boost family market visitation.

²¹ Only includes domestic and international overnight visitors as travel group data is only available for domestic and international overnight visitation.

2.8. Wimmera Mallee's product offering



The Wimmera Mallee provides the quintessential Australian rural experience. The primary appeal (see Figure 13) of the Wimmera Mallee relates to the region's unique natural landscapes, cultural heritage, art trails, outdoor activities, waterways and associated recreational activities.

Emerging strengths (see Figure 14) of the Wimmera Mallee include agri-tourism products, destination events and festivals, First Peoples' products and tour-based products that have the potential to be leveraged and developed.

Currently, the majority of products are raw/undeveloped experiences with significant potential for enhancement.

Areas for further enhancement and development (see Figure 15) include towns and amenities, F&B, transport, access and accommodation. The region has a small supply of accommodation, shared between standard motels, pub-style accommodation and short-term holiday rentals. However, there is an undersupply of quality accommodation, and what is available does not align with contemporary visitor market needs.

2.8.1.1. Primary Strengths

2.8.1.1.1. Heritage and arts-based products (including silo art)

The region's heritage and arts-based product is a key element, and this includes the renowned silo art installations. These silo art installations have transformed rural landscapes into vibrant outdoor galleries.

The Silo Art Trail is a celebrated tourist attraction in this area, showcasing large-scale murals painted on grain silos by various talented artists. The Silo Art Trail began as a way to revitalise small, rural communities in the Wimmera Mallee region, bringing tourism and economic benefits to areas experiencing decline. The project involves collaboration between artists, local communities, and funding bodies,

ensuring that the artwork reflects local heritage, culture, and people.

The trail is designed to be experienced as a self-drive tour, allowing visitors to explore at their own pace and appreciate the unique landscapes of the Wimmera Mallee region.

Examples of other heritage and arts-based products in the Wimmera Mallee include the Murtoa Stick Shed, various heritage museums, galleries and crafts centres, the Dimboola Imaginarium and many historical sites of significance and buildings dispersed throughout the various shires.

2.8.1.1.2. Natural landscapes and outdoor recreation

The region's natural landscapes are a major drawcard, with a diverse range of nature-based assets, including national parks, walks/hikes, 4WD areas and other recreation assets, including swimming pools, skate parks and golf courses.

The region is home to Little Desert National Park and large parts of Wyperfeld National Park as well as part of Big Desert Wilderness Park and Mount Arapiles-Tooon State Park (as well as other smaller conservation reserves and parks). A variety of supporting activities are provided at these assets, such as lookouts and formalised trails.

There is an opportunity to further promote the 4WD experiences available throughout the region to a broader visitor market, in particular, Little Desert National Park. The park offers a mix of sandy tracks and diverse landscapes, and the trails range in difficulty, offering something for both novice and experienced drivers. Anecdotal feedback indicated that due to accessibility and the quality of terrain, more novice 4WD drivers often train at Little Desert before adventuring to more remote and difficult 4WD experiences such as the Simpson Desert.

In addition, the wildflowers, array of bird species, and other niche visitor markets encourage other niche visitor markets to visit Little Desert at different times of the year.

2.8.1.1.3. Lakes and waterways

The region's primary strength is its lakes and waterways. In several towns, these natural assets play a key role in defining the visitor experience. On-water activities vary from waterbody to waterbody but include fishing, boating, kayaking, sailing, yabbying, paddle boarding, etc.

Lake Tyrrell, located near the town of Sea Lake in Buloke Shire, is particularly well-known. It is the state's largest salt lake and a unique natural attraction. The lake is known for its expansive salt flats, which create stunning reflective surfaces, especially after rain when a thin layer of water covers the salt crust. Additionally:

- The remote location and minimal light pollution make Lake Tyrrell a prime spot for stargazing and astrophotography. The reflective salt surface enhances the visibility of the night sky.

- The lake supports unique salt-tolerant plants and is an important habitat for migratory birds, including the endangered Australian Painted Snipe.

The opportunity exists to improve visitor infrastructure for the waterways, including jetties, wharves, boat ramps, parking, signage, toilet facilities, etc. A regional recreational user needs audit of the major waterways is needed to understand what is required at each and prioritise investment needs.

2.8.1.1.4. Agricultural produce

The region is a well-known agricultural region, with a strong focus on grain production, particularly wheat and barley, alongside significant contributions from canola, pulses, and livestock farming. While many of these agricultural operators are focused on their core business, a proportion may be keen to diversify their interests and become 'visitor-ready'.

The potential exists to work with these operators to leverage the region's high-quality agricultural produce and explore downstream processing opportunities and associated visitor experiences, including beverages such as cider, liqueurs, etc. and enhance farmgate with value-added experiences.

Figure 13: Current product strengths



Heritage and arts-based products (including silo art)



Lakes and waterways



Natural landscapes and outdoor recreation



Agricultural produce

2.8.1.2. Emerging Strengths

The following are considered emerging strengths of the Wimmera Mallee region. They have the potential to convert to primary strengths with suitable investment, product development and marketing.

Figure 14: Emerging product strengths



Bird watching experiences



Agri-tourism²²



Destinations events and festivals (motor cross, rail, arts-based)²³



Tour-based product²⁴

2.8.1.3. Supporting infrastructure

Supporting infrastructure, including towns and amenities, transport and access, and accommodation are crucial to the overall visitor experience and the strength of the visitor economy. However, currently, the supporting infrastructure across the Wimmera Mallee does not always appropriately service a growing visitor economy.

2.8.1.3.1. Towns and Amenities

The towns and villages within the region have the potential to be vibrant destinations; however, they often lack the supporting amenities and infrastructure to grow as visitor destinations.

This includes the following.

- Telecommunication black spots and areas with poor services negatively impact the region's visitor economy. Poor telecommunication infrastructure limits visitors'

ability to access visitor information, hinders business operations and impacts new business entrants. There is a need to improve telecommunications infrastructure throughout the region, particularly beyond the main town hubs.

- Visitor signage (directional and interpretive) throughout most towns also needs improvements to encourage visitor dispersal and increased length of stay.
- Most town centres throughout the region require investment and revitalisation to activate main streets, increase vibrancy and diversify the quality of retail.
- Accommodation facilities in many towns are often older and in need of urgent reinvestment. We note that for many pub-style accommodation operators, the compliance costs disincentivise many owners from renovating properties that are falling into disrepair. This means that the actual marketable room stock in the region is lower than quoted.

There is further opportunity to develop town narratives and further promote the unique selling propositions of each key

²² Sapphire Coast Dairy, Greendale, NSW - <https://www.hipcamp.com/journal/hosting/agritourism-reforms-to-make-it-easy-for-working-farms-to-welcome-guests>

²³ Picton, Illuminate Wollondilly Festival of Art and Light

²⁴ Small guided tours, intrepid travel

town throughout the region. At a surface level, the towns provide a largely homogenous experience centred around lakes, silos, agriculture and traditional high streets. There is a need to promote the unique qualities of each town to visitors to help encourage visitor dispersal and build the town's point of difference, such as boutiques, vintage shops, food and beverage experiences, unique artists, links to nearby waterways, major natural attractions, etc.

2.8.1.3.2. Accommodation

Growing the Wimmera Mallee's visitor economy is dependent on its capacity to host overnight visitors and accommodate those working in the area. Economic leakage occurs as many visitors struggle to find overnight accommodation options, so much of the visitor spending²⁵ occurs outside of the region.

Analysis of the current accommodation stock and consultation with stakeholders has highlighted the following challenges:

- Capacity challenges that limit the region's ability to support larger-scale events and festivals.
- Limited midrange or higher quality accommodation.
- The need for newer, more contemporary accommodation to help fill gaps in the typology and range of accommodation available. This may include investment in boutique hotel/motel properties, holiday parks as well as experiential accommodation that will provide a unique point of difference for the region and meet contemporary market expectations. Experiential accommodation includes farm stays, glamping, cabins and eco-retreats.
- The need to improve the quality of the existing supply of accommodation. This includes encouraging existing operators to renovate and retrofit properties.

Currently, the region's accommodation supply is largely dominated by motels and pub accommodation. A desktop audit indicates (see Table 10) that there are 102 accommodation properties, 59 of which are commercial accommodation properties comprising motels, pub accommodation and tourist parks. The region also has a small supply of Airbnb-style accommodation with 43 properties listed.

While the audit has not included a detailed evaluation of the quality of accommodation offered, a top-line desktop assessment along with site visits to the various towns around the region indicates that many of the properties are older-style, tired and in need of refurbishment if they are to continue to meet contemporary visitor expectations.

The audit, together with the top-line quality assessment, demonstrates that there are major gaps in the region's accommodation mix. There is a need to investigate the introduction of new, higher-quality boutique-style accommodation, including cabins, farmstays, refreshed or new motels and revitalised caravan parks with cabins. These are required to meet current visitor market demand and attract higher-yielding visitor markets to the region.

Pub accommodation needs to be upgraded in most destinations to offer a better range and higher standard. This accommodation is often incorrectly listed as hotel accommodation, though much of it does not have ensuites and only offers shared bathroom facilities.

Table 10: Desktop audit of accommodation supply²⁶

LGA	Motels	Tourist Parks	Pub Accommodation	Airbnbs	Total	% of Total
Buloke Shire	8	3	10	16	37	36%
Hindmarsh Shire	8	3	3	10	24	24%
West Wimmera Shire	3	3	4	5	15	15%
Yarriambiack Shire	4	4	6	12	26	25%
Total	23	13	23	43	102	
% of total	23%	13%	23%	42%		100%

²⁵ On average a day visitor spends \$90 approx in the region whilst an overnight visitor often spend 4–5x this level on their trip.

²⁶ Based on AirDNA and Google Travel data. From audit undertaken over the period 21st May – 22nd May, 2024.

2.8.1.3.3. Transport and Access

The region is well-connected to other regions by road, and parts of the region are serviced by rail.

However, the Wimmera Mallee itself is poorly connected internally, with a lack of public transport links and trails between the various LGAs and towns. The quality of roading throughout the region is also challenging at times. This limits the ability to disperse visitors throughout the region, and word-of-mouth feedback from visitors advises in some instances to avoid driving through the region.

Cycling on the road network is not deemed safe given the road conditions and narrow and sometimes windy country roads, and there is a lack of dedicated cycleways for mountain biking and gravel riding.

Mildura, Bendigo and Melbourne provide the nearest passenger airport access to the Wimmera Mallee, the closest of which (Bendigo Airport) is two and a half hours drive away. This makes it difficult to attract non-self-drive interstate and international visitors to the region.

The Wimmera Mallee, however, is well-positioned for intrastate and interstate (particularly South Australian) visitor economy growth due to its location on the Western Highway. The Western Highway dissects the western part of the region and

provides an ongoing opportunity to leverage visitors travelling from Melbourne to Adelaide and vice versa. The Calder and Sunraysia highways traverse Buloke Shire and provide the opportunity to capture visitors travelling from Melbourne to Mildura or further on to NSW and vice versa. While the Borung Highway traverses through the Yarriambiack Shire.

Aligning with the Victorian Government's Zero Emissions Vehicle roadmap, the region has a number of EV charging stations in key townships. Each charging station is fast, publicly accessible and free to access. EV charging stations are located in Edenhope, Kaniva, Jeparit, Dimboola, Warracknabeal, Hopetoun, Wycheproof and Sea Lake.

The Overland rail service operates twice per week between Melbourne and Adelaide, stopping in Dimboola and Nhill. Opportunities to grow rail passenger travel to the region warrant further investigation, noting that Dimboola and Nhill are but two of ten stops on the route, but this provides a gateway for a rail market to the region.

In addition, there are infrequent heritage rail excursions to the region ex Melbourne (the 707 Operations Inc running trips from Melbourne to Mildura and Seymour Heritage Rail from Melbourne to Rainbow and other destinations) which have potential for further and more frequent trips.

Figure 15: Supporting infrastructure



Towns and amenities



Food and beverage



Transport and access

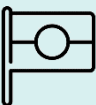


Accommodation

2.8.1.4. Gap analysis

Consultation, desktop research, and site visits revealed the following gaps in the region's products, visitor economy performance, and experiences.

Table 11: Gap analysis

 Accessible attractions	 Bird-watching experiences (guided and un-guided)	 Boutique accommodation (cabins, B&Bs, farmstays, refreshed or new motels and revitalised caravan parks with cabins)	 Collaboration and cooperative marketing to package products and experiences
 Destination events and festivals	 Experiences that leverage the silo attractions	 F&B diversity and availability (opening hours of businesses to suit visitors and locals)	 Family-friendly products and activities
 First Peoples' stories and experiences (led by First Peoples)	 Guided products/experiences	 Inter-region transport services	 Night-time economy
 Primary producers connecting with visitors	 Signage (interpretive and directional)	 Tracks and trail connectivity between and around the towns²⁷	 Visitor infrastructure at lakes and waterways

²⁷ It is important to note that if tracks or trails cross any State Government Land (e.g. DEECA, Parks Victoria etc) then those initiatives must be led by Traditional Owners as advised by Yarriambiack Shire Council.



Part 3: Where do we want to be?

3.1. DMP framework

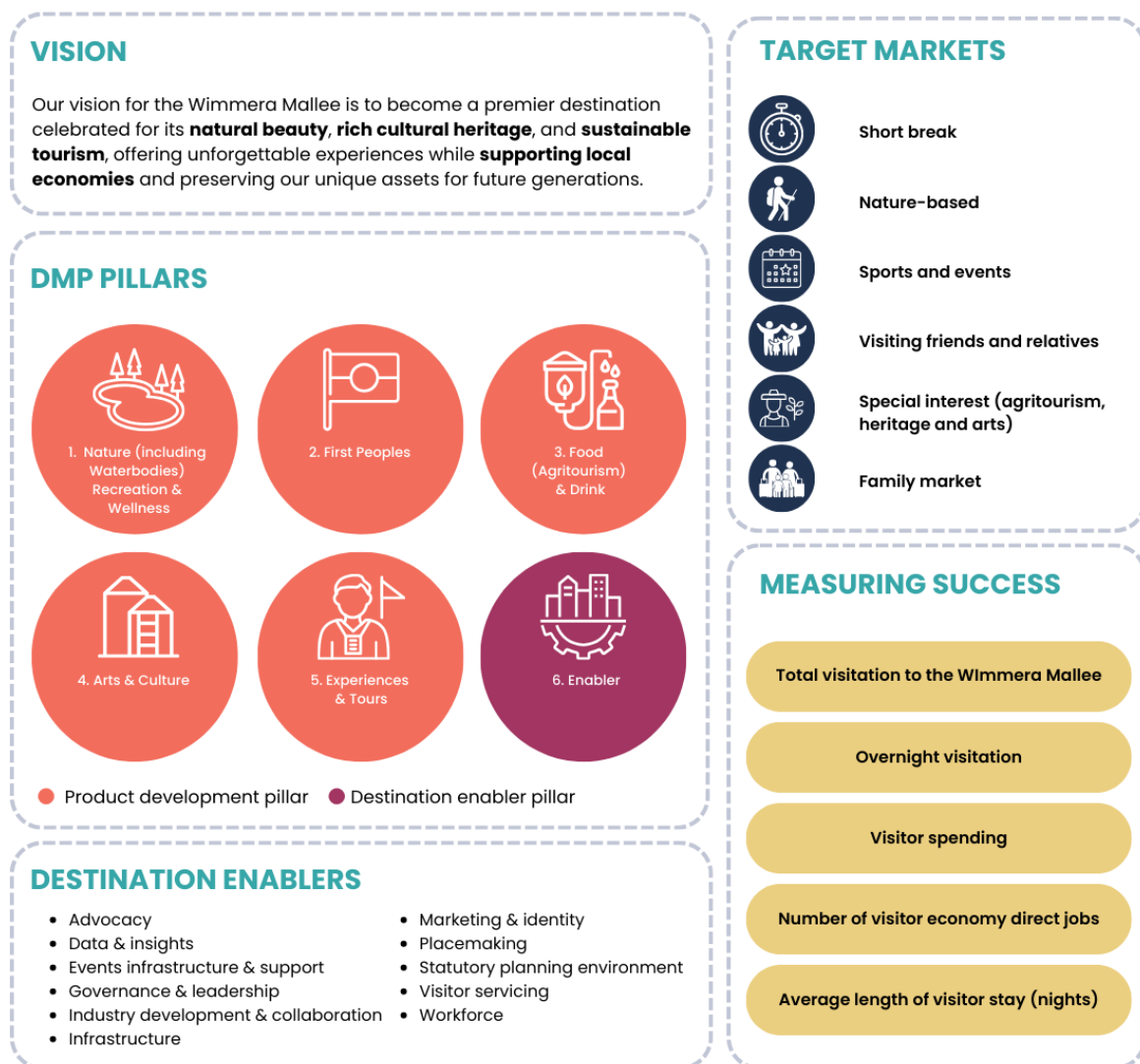
The DMP's recommendations and actions have been organised into a framework that identifies both product priorities and enablers. These are outlined in Figure 16.

The DMP pillars align with the Experience Victoria 2033 plan as well as the Grampians DMP themes, with the exception of:

- Experiences and tours – This has been added to support the development of more commissionable nature-based and other guided tour products in the Wimmera Mallee region, which the region lacks.
- Enablers – This is an amalgamation of Theme 6, 7 and 8²⁸ from the Grampians DMP and has been included as a more comprehensive category, recognising that the Wimmera Mallee is at an embryonic stage of tourism development (compared to the Grampians), requiring a stronger focus on these enablers, which are essential building blocks of the visitor economy. For many enablers, it is crucial that local communities drive the demand for them rather than the visitor market.



Figure 16: Destination management plan framework



²⁸ Grampians DMP Theme 6: Identity, Marketing and Placemaking; Theme 7: Industry Development and Collaboration and Theme 8: Supporting Infrastructure

While the above framework applies to the entire Wimmera Mallee region, specific product priorities or additional initiatives may be more relevant to certain LAAP areas than others.

Table 12 below provides an indicative overview of the key products' importance. Some products are well-established in particular LGAs, while others are reasonably new and emerging across the local area.

Table 12: LGA USPs aligned to the product pillars

	Arts and culture	Experiences & tours	First Peoples	Food (agritourism) & drink	Nature (including waterbodies), recreation & wellness
Buloke Shire	●	●	●	●	●
Hindmarsh Shire	●	●	●	●	●
West Wimmera Shire	●	●		●	●
Yarriambiack Shire	●	●		●	●

● Current core product strength ● Future potential product strength

3.2. Measuring success

To measure the success of this DMP over the next ten years, the following metrics should be applied.

Table 13: Metrics of success

Metric/Measure	2024 ²⁹	Growth	2033
 Visitation	565k	+20% ³⁰	680k
 Overnight visitation	274k	+21% ³¹	330k
 Visitor spending	\$156m	+57% ³²	\$245m
 Visitor economy jobs	288 ³³	+25% ³⁴	360
 Average length of stay (nights)	2.8	+10%	3.1
 GWM Tourism Partner Program industry buy-in	3 partners	+300%	12+ partners
 Number of GWM industry forums	1 p/a	+100%	2 p/a
 ATDW commercial listings	19 ³⁵	+100%	38

²⁹ Base data is sourced from the National and International Visitor Surveys, Tourism Research Australia

³⁰ Determined from visitor growth forecasts in Section 3.3.

³¹ Ibid

³² Ibid

³³ Jobs data is sourced from each Shire's and the Wimmera Mallee's associated Remplan or Profile ID.

³⁴ Determined based on a ratio of jobs currently generated per visitor, applied to 2033 visitation forecast data.

³⁵ Based on data supplied by GWM Tourism for ATDW for-profit listings.

3.3. Visitor forecasts

The Wimmera Mallee's visitor economy is projected to experience solid growth through to 2033, with visitor numbers anticipated to reach nearly 680,000 and tourism spending expected to increase to \$245 million. This increase underscores the region's growing appeal and economic potential.

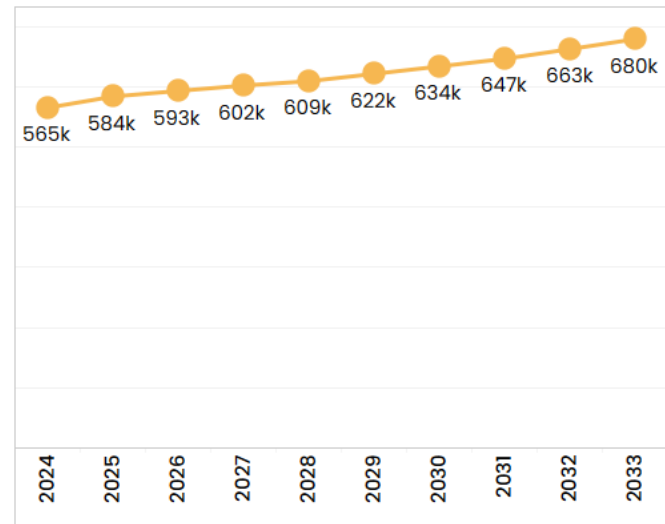
Forecasts are based on State Government projections as well as historic growth rates for the region. Importantly, they do not consider macroeconomic impacts such as recession and cost of living pressures that may impact leisure travel, especially over the next 2 years (2024–2026). It is also important to note that the development of new visitor economy products and experiences and further promotion of

the region may impact visitor growth projections for the region. For example, growing the accommodation stock and improving the quality within the region (as recommended in this DMP) will likely have very positive implications on overnight visitor demand for the Wimmera Mallee. Supporting data for these forecasts are included in Appendix 5.

Figure 17: Visitor forecasts

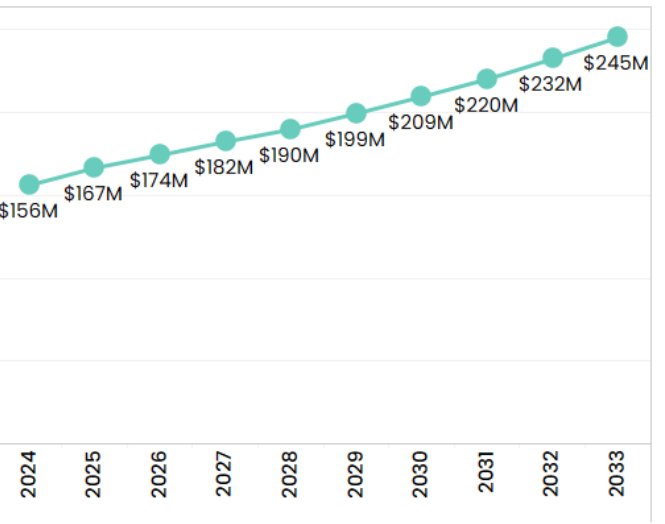
Total visitation to Wimmera Mallee is projected to grow from 565,000 in 2024 to 680,000 in 2033.³⁶

Growth in the region is projected across all visitor markets. Domestic visitors are projected to continue to account for the largest share of visitors in the region, with an estimated 350,000 domestic day trip visitors and 326,000 domestic overnight visitors expected in 2033.



Total visitor spending in Wimmera Mallee is forecast to grow from \$156 million in 2024 to \$245 million by 2033.³⁷

Visitor spending in the region is projected to be 189% above the pre-pandemic level by 2033, generating an additional \$160 million in spend (up from \$85 million in 2020). Much of this growth in spending is anticipated to be generated by the domestic overnight market, increasing by just under \$70 million from 2024 to 2033.



³⁶ Ibid
³⁷ Based on Tourism Forecasts for Victoria, Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (https://tourism.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/2233942/Victorias-Tourism-Forecast-for-2023-to-2028.pdf) and historic average visitor spend data inflated by 3% per annum, compiled by Stafford



Part 4: How will we get there?

4.1. Recommendations



4.1.1. About

In total, **75** recommendations have been identified as part of this Wimmera Mallee DMP. These have been linked to the strategic product pillars and destination enablers in the DMP's strategic framework (see Section 3.1) which carefully align with the State Government's desired outcomes. The recommendations differ in size and scale and have been identified because they will assist in meeting the targets also outlined in the DMP's strategic framework.

Importantly, many of these recommendations are interconnected and, therefore, cannot be addressed independently. By way of example, accommodation development and reinvestment are crucial to meeting increased overnight visitor demand. However, developing more accommodation requires the implementation of several supporting initiatives, particularly within the statutory planning environment, introducing new attractions/experiences and delivering on workforce development. This demonstrates that these priorities need to be undertaken in conjunction with each other and not in isolation, as they are not mutually exclusive.

In addition to these priority recommendations, other emerging regional recommendations will be important to consider over the next 10 years.

This DMP is primarily focused on regional-level recommendations because the role of the DMP is to deliver and advocate for those projects that will provide significant benefits to the Wimmera Mallee regional visitor economy as a whole. While the priority LAAP recommendations have been included in Section 4.2, the full list of LAAP recommendations is included in the separate Local Area Action Plans completed for each Shire.

4.1.2. Action plan framework

4.1.2.1. Projects vs Strategic Initiatives

These recommendations have been categorised according to whether they are Projects or Strategic Initiatives:

- **Projects** reflect physical projects such as new or enhanced accommodation, tourism attractions or events (for example).
- **Strategic Initiatives** reflect those recommendations that are the building blocks to support a visitor destination and, while not being major "ribbon-cutting" projects, they are necessary to ensure a successful destination management approach is achieved (such as marketing initiatives, workforce planning, statutory planning, infrastructure upgrades etc.).

4.1.2.2. GWMT Role

For each action, the role of GWMT is outlined. It specifies whether the role is primarily to deliver the action, as a project partner or as an advocate.

4.1.2.3. Partners

Key partners have been identified for each of the recommendations. The existing roles and responsibilities of these stakeholders are identified in Section 2.5.2 of this DMP.

4.1.2.4. Timing

The following timeframes have been applied within the action plans:

- Short-term (S): within the next 1-2 years
- Medium-term (M): the next 3-4 years
- Long-term (L): 5+ years
- Ongoing (O)

4.1.3. Summary of the recommendations

Table 14 provides a summary of the DMP recommendations and a breakdown of the priority recommendations that have been identified.

It demonstrates that the largest number of recommendations fall into the enablers category (comprising 65% of all recommendations and 79% of priority recommendations). This

is because of the regional focus of the DMP and the role that GWM Tourism plays in ensuring a sustainable visitor economy. To achieve this, enabler projects play a key role.

The LAAPs have a greater proportion of recommendations that fall under the pillars category.

Table 14: The DMP recommendations (categorised by pillar/enabler)



List of the Priority Recommendations (in alphabetical order)

Accommodation investment strategy and action plan	●
Advocate for shared curatorial expertise to support the region's museums	●
Boutique accommodation (B&Bs, cottages, farmstays) planning scheme workshops	●
Continue to grow the profile of the Wimmera Mallee brand (Adventures in a Different Light) in key markets	●
Deliver an image audit and regional photoshoot and provide this to VV to put into the Visit Victoria Content Hub	●
Develop and promote a drive trail circuit (Wimmera Mallee Way) for linking major attractions across the region	●
Engagement of an events coordinator to assist in the delivery of 4-5 major regional events	●
Expand the network of self-contained cabin stock in caravan parks throughout the region	●
Greater profiling of the WM Destination Events Calendar and industry upskilling	●
High security recreational water allocation for lakes and waterways	●
Industry development training	●
Investigate packaging up caravan parks to lease to a third party	●
Regional signage (directional and interpretive) strategy	●
Support our Traditional Owner Groups (when requested) to implement unique visitor experiences	●

Pillar Group

Arts and culture

Enablers

Experiences and tours

First Peoples

4.1.4. Nature (including waterbodies), recreation and wellness recommendations

The Wimmera Mallee region, offers diverse outdoor activities, scenic landscapes, and unique natural attractions, embodies the essence of the “nature at your fingertips” pillar identified in the Visit Victoria Brand Strategy Playbook. Known for its vast open spaces, rich biodiversity, and vibrant ecosystems, it provides numerous opportunities for nature enthusiasts and adventure seekers. The region’s lakes and waterways enhance its natural beauty, support local wildlife habitats, and provide recreational activities for residents and visitors.

4.1.4.1. Action plan

Table 15 provides the action plan for recommendations that fall under the nature (including waterbodies), recreation and wellness pillar. Those marked with a ‘★’ are priority recommendations.

Table 15: Action plan – Nature (including waterbodies and lakes), recreation & wellness

★ = Priority Recommendation ■ Development Projects ◆ Strategic Initiatives

Recommendation	Action	Type	GWMT Role			Partners	Timing
			Deliver	Partner	Advocate		
Birdwatching mobile accessible website with seasonal info/data	- Develop a mobile-accessible website that provides information on birdwatching opportunities throughout the region. - Investigate the potential to integrate the information into the Grampians and Wimmera Mallee Visitor Inspiration Passport (VIP) app. - Over the longer term, identify potential operators who may be interested in offering bird-watching tours potentially on a seasonal basis. - Identify business start-up support packages that could assist.	■	✓			BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, bird/wildlife experts	M
Continue to encourage ‘slow tourism’	Continue to promote ‘slow tourism,’ where travellers immerse themselves in the WM region, discovering hidden treasures and forming personal connections with local owners, operators, and creators.	◆	✓			BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC	O
Continue to profile the Wimmera Mallee Lakes Loop Trail	Leverage the existing work already completed on the Lakes Loop trail to increase awareness of the product.	■	✓			GWMWater, BGLC, Parks Victoria	S-M
Regional fishing trail	- Identify the region’s key fishing locations. - Assess potential grant funding streams that may enable the development of the fishing trail experience. - Profile the fishing trail experience on the Wimmera Mallee destination website. - Over the longer term, identify potential operators who may be interested in offering guided fishing tours potentially on a seasonal basis. - Create promotional collateral that profiles the fishing trail, including online and hard-copy maps.	■	✓			BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, BGLC, Parks Victoria	S-M

★ = Priority Recommendation ■ Development Projects ◆ Strategic Initiatives

Recommendation	Action	Type	GWMT Role			Partners	Timing
			Deliver	Partner	Advocate		
Parks, reserves and waterways infrastructure gap analysis	- Conduct an audit and gap analysis of parks, reserves and waterways infrastructure to identify areas for investment in upgrading and constructing existing visitor facilities and interpretation, including wetlands. - Identify grant funding streams that could assist in undertaking the upgrades.	◆	✓			BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, Parks Victoria, DEECA, BGLC, GWMWater	M
Development and marketing of bridle trails on Forests and Reserves land	- Work with State Forests and horse-riding associations and clubs to determine a horse trail network across or within the region. - Identify potential grant funding streams that could support developing the networks where required. - Develop marketing collateral for the trails and push this out via equine sector websites.	◆		✓		DEECA (Forests and Reserves), horse-riding association	M
Develop kayaking journey trails across the region's wetlands	- Identify the most suitable waterway locations for kayaking experiences. - Develop marketing collateral that profiles the trail, possibly tying in with the Wimmera Mallee Lakes Loop Trail already developed. - Over the longer term, identify interest amongst water-based recreation operators in offering kayak hire and the potential for guided tours.	■		✓		DEECA, water-based recreation operators	M
Regional tracks and trails strategy	- Working with the region's councils, develop a regional tracks and trails strategy that builds on and progresses priorities identified in local plans/strategies. - It is important to note that if tracks or trails cross any State Government Land (e.g., DEECA, Parks Victoria, etc.), then those initiatives must be led by Traditional Owners.	◆		✓		BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, BGLC, Parks Victoria, DEECA, GMTOAC, DDWCAC	M
Support existing and advocate for new wellness operators to be established in the region	- Identify potential wellness-based product opportunities and gaps (yoga, healthy eating, health retreats, spas etc.). - Work with the wellness sector to introduce and profile wellness products that are developed.	■			✓	Existing & new wellness operators	M

4.1.5. First Peoples recommendations

The Wimmera Mallee region has the potential to offer rich and diverse experiences that enable visitors to connect with the deep cultural heritage of the local First Peoples. These experiences need to be developed and led by the region's First Peoples.

4.1.5.1. Priority recommendations

Name:	Support Traditional Owner Groups (when requested) to implement unique visitor experiences
Pillar/enabler:	First Peoples
Type:	Strategic Initiative

The Wimmera Mallee is rich in First Peoples' heritage, reflecting the deep and enduring connection of First Peoples to the land. The region has been home to Aboriginal groups for thousands of years, with a vibrant cultural history that continues to be celebrated and preserved today.

Although First Peoples' tourism is growing in popularity, it is particularly important that Indigenous communities develop, design, lead, and manage these experiences when the timing suits them. Indigenous/First Peoples' tourism has traditionally included a wide range of activities, from guided tours of important sites and landmarks to cultural performances,

workshops, festivals, and accommodation in traditional settings.

For many First Peoples' communities, tourism is not always seen as an easy sector to develop, as human resource requirements are often greater and gestation periods for projects to activate can be longer than for other sectors such as forestry, landscaping services, agriculture and other areas of the economy. However, the potential exists to work with these groups to assist them in developing First People-owned and operated tourism experiences that support their core objectives when they request this.

4.1.5.2. Action plan

Table 16 This provides the action plan for recommendations under the First Peoples' pillar. Those marked with a '★' are priority recommendations.

Table 16: Action plan – First Peoples

★ = Priority Recommendation ■ Development Projects ◆ Strategic Initiatives							
Recommendation	Action	Type	GWMT Role			Partners	Timing
			Deliver	Partner	Advocate		
Support Traditional Owner Groups (when requested) to implement unique visitor experiences ★	Liaise with Traditional Owners to understand and support their desire (if this exists) to develop tourism experiences and products that include a cultural overlay.	◆		✓		BGLC, GMTOAC, DDWCAC	O
Industry training with First Peoples and Elders, including a cultural induction	Organise a series of workshops with First Peoples' elders and industry operators to enable greater cultural understanding.	◆		✓		RDV, BGLC, GMTOAC, DDWCAC	O

4.1.6. Food (agritourism) and drink recommendations

Known for its vast agricultural lands, the Wimmera Mallee has the potential to grow its profile as an emerging foodie destination, leveraging agri-tourism opportunities and providing visitors with insights into farming practices, local produce, and the daily lives of the farming community.

4.1.6.1. Action plan

Table 17 provides the action plan for recommendations that fall under the food (agritourism) and drink pillar. Those marked with a '★' are priority recommendations.

Table 17: Action plan – Food (agritourism) and drink

★ = Priority Recommendation ■ Development Projects ◆ Strategic Initiatives

Recommendation	Action	Type	GWMT Role			Partners	Timing
			Deliver	Partner	Advocate		
Agri-tourism strategy	Work with agricultural providers to create an agri-tourism strategy for the region that explores downstream processing opportunities and associated visitor experiences, including bakeries, distilleries, farmgates etc.	◆	✓			BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, agricultural operators	S-M
Artisan bakery with a regional grain connection	- Work with the region's hospitality sector to understand the interest in developing an artisanal bakery that profiles the region's grain-growing strength. - If interest exists, identify business start-up support packages that could assist.	■			✓	Hospitality sector	M
Consolidation of farming/horticultural agri shows	- Undertake an audit of agricultural/horticultural shows across the region. - Work with Victorian Agricultural Shows Ltd and show/event organisers to determine the level of support for the consolidation of some agricultural/horticultural shows to strengthen their ongoing sustainability.	■			✓	Show/event organisers, Victorian Agricultural Shows Ltd	L
Creation of a café/F&B roster	- Work with F&B operators in each major town to get buy-in from those interested in signing up for an F&B roster system. - Work with operators to develop a roster for each town. - Profile those operators who are involved in the roster system.	◆			✓	Café and restaurant providers	S
Continue to encourage and facilitate improved food and drink experiences throughout the region	- Undertake an annual audit of the region's food and drink experiences, highlighting those that have the potential to be signature experiences. - When enough signature experiences exist, develop a food trail connecting signature food and drink experiences throughout the region.	◆		✓		Food and beverage operators	O
Creation of on-farm experiences	- Work with local industry to develop and package unique on-farm experiences, including exploring education opportunities, hands-on farm experiences, and farmstays. - Identify local demand for creating farm stays across the region	■	✓			BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, agricultural operators	M

★ = Priority Recommendation ■ Development Projects ◆ Strategic Initiatives

Recommendation	Action	Type	GWMT Role			Partners	Timing
			Deliver	Partner	Advocate		
Grain growing and cooking festival	Investigate the feasibility of developing a grain-growing and cooking festival that showcases the region's strength as a major grain-growing region.	■		✓		BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, VV	M
Local produce campaign to encourage profiling of Wimmera Mallee produce	- Undertake a campaign targeting local and regional business operators to encourage them to use local Wimmera Mallee produce. - Leverage the work completed as part of the Wimmera Harvest Fare program and the Wimmera Food Collective.	■	✓			BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, agricultural operators, food and beverage operators, Wimmera Food Collective, Wimmera Harvest Fare	M
Open farm weekend event	- Develop a Wimmera Mallee Open Farm Weekend Event, inclusive of agricultural businesses across the region. - Support event operators through the provision of training, event operation and planning guidelines.	■		✓		Local farmers/ agricultural providers, BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC	M-L

4.1.7. Arts and culture recommendations

The Wimmera Mallee offers a rich tapestry of arts and cultural tourism products that attract visitors seeking unique and immersive experiences. The region is home to vibrant arts communities, significant historical sites, and contemporary cultural attractions, including the well-known Silo Art Trail, which highlights the region's heritage and creativity.

4.1.7.1. Priority recommendations

Name:	Advocate for shared curatorial expertise to support the region's museums.
Pillar/enabler:	Arts and culture
Type:	Strategic Initiative

The Wimmera Mallee is fortunate to have a wide range of museums and cultural experiences which primarily function with the support of strong volunteer groups and committees.

However, it is understood that some of these groups are suffering from volunteer fatigue, ageing volunteers, and struggling to keep up with changing visitor expectations regarding museum and cultural experiences and the way that items are displayed and curated.

The opportunity may exist to advocate to Creative Victoria (as well as other relevant grant funding streams that arise) to obtain shared curatorial expertise to support the Wimmera Mallee's museums. This will bring numerous benefits, including the following.

- **Quality of exhibitions:** Shared curatorial expertise may help deliver higher-quality and more engaging exhibitions at the region's museums and heritage attractions. Experienced curators bring knowledge of best practices in exhibit design, storytelling, and artifact preservation.
- **Consistency:** Professional curators can provide consistency across the region's different museums, ensuring that exhibits meet a certain standard of quality and professionalism.
- **Cost savings:** The region's museums operate on limited budgets. Sharing curatorial expertise can reduce costs associated with hiring full-time staff or consultants for each individual museum in the Wimmera Mallee.

- **Collaborative projects:** Shared expertise may lead to a greater number of collaborative exhibitions, events, and programs that draw on the strengths and collections of multiple museums across the Wimmera Mallee.
- **Community engagement:** Curators can assist in developing programs that engage local communities, making the museums across the Wimmera Mallee more relevant and connected to their audiences.
- **Artifact care:** Professional curators have the knowledge to better care for and preserve artifacts, ensuring the long-term preservation of important cultural heritage items in the Wimmera Mallee.
- **Documentation and research:** Curators can help with the documentation and research of collections, providing valuable information for future generations.
- **Stronger proposals:** Professional curators can potentially help the Wimmera Mallee's museums craft stronger grant proposals, increasing the likelihood of securing funding for projects.
- **Network strength:** Having a shared curator for the Wimmera Mallee may enable a network of museums to work together, which can be more appealing to funders looking to support regional or collaborative initiatives.
- **Strategic planning:** The shared curator should be able to assist in strategic planning, helping the Wimmera Mallee's museums set long-term goals and develop sustainable practices.

4.1.7.2. Action plan

Table 18 which follows provides the action plan for recommendations that fall under the arts and culture pillar. Those marked with a '★' are priority recommendations.

Table 18: Action plan – arts and culture

★ = Priority Recommendation ■ Development Projects ◆ Strategic Initiatives

Recommendation	Action	Type	GWMT Role			Partners	Timing
			Deliver	Partner	Advocate		
Advocate for shared curatorial expertise to support the region's museums ★	- Undertake an audit of the region's museum product and determine those who would be the best fit for shared curatorial support. - Contact Creative Victoria and other potential grant funding bodies to advocate for funding/support for shared curatorial support.	■			✓	Museums throughout the region, BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, Creative Victoria	S
Implement the recommendations of the Silo Art Trail Signage Report and Audit	- Continue to implement the findings of the report. - Ensure regular maintenance and updating of signage when required.	■		✓		Wimmera Southern Mallee Development, BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, VV	S
Op shop/antique shop trail	- Undertake an audit of op shops/antique shops throughout the region. - Develop promotional collateral that showcases these experiences to the visitor market.	■		✓		Antique store operators	S-M
Seasonal art festival with maze	Investigate the potential of introducing a seasonal art festival focusing on outdoor sculpture and art and including the potential for an art-based maze.	■		✓		BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, artists and creators	M
Self-guided heritage and historic tours	- Undertake an audit of heritage and historic products throughout the region. - Develop promotional collateral that showcases these experiences as part of a self-guided trail to the visitor market.	■		✓		Heritage asset owners	S-M

4.1.8. Experiences and tours recommendations

The Wimmera Mallee offers a growing and diverse range of tourism experiences that cater to various interests, particularly focused on nature and recreational experiences. The opportunity exists to focus on trail and tour-based products to grow dispersal and exploration throughout the region.

4.1.8.1. Priority recommendations

Name:	Develop and promote a drive trail circuit (Wimmera Mallee Way) for linking attractions across the region
Pillar/enabler:	Experiences and tours
Type:	Project

The Wimmera Mallee covers a significant geographic area, with the region's attractions dispersed throughout many different parts rather than clustered.

This presents an opportunity to focus on the self-drive tourism market (i.e. those who prefer to explore destinations by driving themselves rather than relying on guided tours or public

transportation). Self-drive tourism is popular for its flexibility, independence, and the ability to explore off-the-beaten-path locations.

The potential exists to develop a Wimmera Mallee Way drive trail circuit that navigates the region and highlights its major attractions. This will encourage visitor dispersal throughout the Wimmera Mallee and help drive longer visitor stays.

4.1.8.2. Action plan

Table 19 provides the action plan for recommendations under the experiences and tours pillar. Those marked with a '★' are priority recommendations.

Table 19: Action plan – experiences and tours

★ = Priority Recommendation ■ Development Projects ◆ Strategic Initiatives

Recommendation	Action	Type	GWMT Role			Partners	Timing
			Deliver	Partner	Advocate		
Develop and promote a drive trail circuit (Wimmera Mallee Way) for linking major attractions across the region ★	- Identify potential 'hero' experiences/attractions in each Shire that should be profiled as part of the trail. - Develop a self-guided drive trail brand focused on The Wimmera Mallee Way. - Create promotional collateral that profiles the Wimmera Mallee Way, including online and hard-copy maps.	■	✓			BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC	S
Development of a highway marketing program/highway tourism	- Identify key product opportunities along the various highways throughout the region that align with a drive trail experience. - Develop marketing collateral to profile the highway drive trail.	◆	✓			BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, VicRoads	M-L
Formalisation of regional drive and motorbike trails	- Develop a series of formalised itineraries covering full-day, single-day, and two-to-three-day overnight circuits to market to car and bike clubs throughout SA and Victoria. - Collate a list of car and bike clubs, including motorbike, mountain bike, and road bike clubs, throughout SA and Victoria. - Develop marketing collateral promoting these circuits and distribute them to car clubs. - Distribute marketing collateral to the database of car and bike clubs. - Brand and market the drive trails via the official tourism website.	■	✓			Car clubs, motorbike clubs	S

★ = Priority Recommendation ■ Development Projects ◆ Strategic Initiatives

Recommendation	Action	Type	GWMT Role			Partners	Timing
			Deliver	Partner	Advocate		
Expanding heritage rail experiences through the region	- Undertake an audit of the region's stations to understand infrastructure improvements that may be required to support greater tourist train usage. - Work with 707 Operations Inc. to understand their needs to potentially offer a service ex-Melbourne with potential stops in Gordon, Wycheproof, Birchip, Woomelang and Sea Lake. - Work with Seymour Railway Heritage Centre to understand their needs to increase the offer of services stopping at Rainbow Station, stations within Yarriambiack Shire and other appropriate stations. - Identify potential grant funding streams that could be accessed to undertake upgrades required.	■			✓	BSC, HSC, YSC, 707 Operations Inc., Seymour Railway Heritage Centre, VicTrack	M

4.1.9. Enabler recommendations

To improve the visitor and local experience in the Wimmera Mallee, a variety of enablers should be focused on. These factors facilitate and enhance the development, promotion, and delivery of visitor experiences and services. They play a crucial role in ensuring a destination can effectively attract, accommodate, and satisfy visitors.

4.1.9.1. Priority recommendations

Name:	Accommodation investment strategy and action plan
Pillar/enabler:	Accommodation
Type:	Strategic Initiative

The Wimmera Mallee lacks the diversity and scale of accommodation needed to promote longer stays and attract overnight visitors. This includes both smaller and larger visitor accommodation across a range of accommodation typologies and both worker and visitor accommodation.

To encourage more accommodation development in the region, a regional Accommodation investment strategy and action plan that provides information to prospective developers about the opportunities and feasibility of developing different forms of accommodation in the region (including re-investment into existing properties) would be a good step.

There is also a need for investment in worker accommodation, which there is a dearth of across the region, which impacts the ability of visitor economy businesses to attract workers.

Coordinated advocacy with state and local government authorities is also required to streamline planning processes and facilitate the development of accommodation in appropriate locations.

Name:	High security recreational water allocation for lakes and waterways
Pillar/enabler:	Advocacy
Type:	Strategic Initiative

There are several recreational lakes and weir pools in the Wimmera Mallee. Some of these have good water supply through water pipeline arrangements with GWMWater and some key naturally fed lakes. The value of these waterways as a visitation driver, particularly for the Victorian intrastate market, cannot be understated. They are vital to the region's tourism and local lifestyle and offer a variety of outdoor recreation, relaxation, and wildlife observation activities for both locals and visitors.

It is understood, however, that there is a risk of major resource projects (such as sand mining) being granted major water access rights, which could potentially reduce the volume of

water piped into waterways throughout the Wimmera Mallee for recreational purposes, town water supply, firefighting needs, etc.

As the region's waterways are a key attraction, reducing water levels could adversely impact visitors coming to recreate. Additionally, it may negatively impact local wildlife that inhabit areas at or near the waterways.

There is a need to collectively advocate to GWMWater and DEECA regarding the importance of the waterways for the region from a recreational, water security and firefighting perspective.

Importantly, however, the region must also ensure that it does not heavily focus on waterways as a drawcard because of the potential risk of waterway levels diminishing over time as other sectors of the economy (sand mining, etc.) start to place greater demands on water use.

Figure 18: Lake Lascelles, Hopetoun



Figure 19: Nhill Lake, Nhill



Name:	Boutique accommodation (B&Bs, cottages, farmstays) planning scheme workshops
Pillar/enabler:	Statutory planning environment
Type:	Strategic Initiative

As indicated previously, the region has a limited supply and typology of accommodation which impacts the ability to encourage visitors to stay longer in the region and also results in economic leakage.

Consultation with the community revealed a strong desire to introduce more boutique accommodation in disused (but renovated) farm cottages etc., however, there is a lack of understanding of the planning rules and regulations and the steps required to introduce this.

It is suggested that each council look to host a series of public workshops to help those interested in the community understand what the basic requirements are that one must fulfil to establish a B&B/boutique accommodation including planning rules at a local and state level. There may also be several concerns that can be addressed through a better understanding of the planning requirements and easier pathways to follow to gain planning approvals.

Name:	Continue to grow the profile of the Wimmera Mallee brand (Adventures in a Different Light) in key markets
Pillar/enabler:	Marketing and promotion
Type:	Strategic Initiative

The Wimmera Mallee's destination brand (see Figure 20), based on existing work completed by Wimmera Mallee Tourism, has been developed to showcase that "no two Wimmera Mallee adventures are the same. [The] region provides visitors a rich, raw, real experience, no matter what kind of getaway [they] seek."³⁸

The brand should continue to be promoted and profiled, with the region focusing on growing its supply of products that support this brand proposition and ensuring that, as a region, it is delivering on its brand promise.

While the Wimmera Mallee and the Grampians are two unique and distinct subregions, continuity and a link between them, which sit under the same VEP, GWM Tourism, must be ensured. These subregions offer different but complementary products.

With respect to branding at a state level (the Visit Victoria Destination Victoria Brand Strategy Playbook, see Appendix 4), the Wimmera Mallee currently sits within the broader Grampians region and is not separately defined. If there a future desire to create a sub-regional brand to cover the Wimmera Mallee, the proposition should link with the broader nature-based themes already profiled for Grampians. While

the Grampians is focused on "big nature", the Wimmera Mallee has strengths in more passive, recreational nature-based experiences.

Figure 20: Wimmera Mallee destination brand



Name:	Engagement of an events coordinator to assist in the delivery of 4-5 major regional events
Pillar/enabler:	Events and infrastructure support
Type:	Strategic Initiative

The region is fortunate to have a very strong volunteer base. These volunteers assist in nearly all facets of the region's visitor economy, particularly regarding the development and management of events.

While high levels of volunteerism are viewed as a positive, it is noted that volunteer groups are strained.

To reduce the risk of volunteer burnout, and to ensure the region's events are still able to take place, the region should advocate for funding for an event coordinator position who can offer shared time to support and coordinate 4-5 of the region's major destination events.

Name:	Establishment of a DMP Implementation Committee
Pillar/enabler:	Governance and leadership
Type:	Strategic Initiative

Although the GWM Tourism Board has ultimate responsibility for the successful implementation of the DMP, a sub-committee including the CEO of GWM Tourism and the Wimmera Mallee LGA CEOs should drive and monitor the DMP's implementation. The committee should be charged with overseeing the implementation of this DMP and its associated actions and recommendations.

³⁸ <https://visitwimmeramallee.com.au/adventure/>

Name:	Expand the network of self-contained cabin stock in caravan parks throughout the region
Pillar/enabler:	Accommodation
Type:	Project

The Wimmera Mallee has a strong and growing caravan and camping market. In 2023, the State Government (via the Regional Tourism Investment Fund) selected the region to introduce 16 additional self-contained cabins at selected caravan parks throughout the region (at a total investment of \$3 million).³⁹

The purpose of the project was to improve the diversity of accommodation options in the region while also enabling visitors to remain close to the Wimmera Mallee's tourist attractions.

Most of the parks selected received 2-3 cabins. To further increase the economic benefit of the project and cater to visitors' growing desire for cabin-based products, the opportunity exists to investigate introducing an additional 3 cabins at these parks (totalling 6 per park). This will create a critical mass of cabin products needed to have a meaningful impact on the region's visitor economy.

Figure 21: Kaniva Poolside Caravan Park new cabins



Figure 22: Jeparit Caravan Park new cabins



Name:	Greater profiling of the WM Destination Events Calendar and industry upskilling
Pillar/enabler:	Events and infrastructure support
Type:	Strategic Initiative

Throughout the Wimmera Mallee, there are a number of high-quality events. However, it is understood that events often clash due to a lack of regional awareness regarding when other events are being planned. As sponsors for events are limited, avoiding duplication of events and/or the same event dates is important.

The Wimmera Mallee destination website already features a comprehensive events calendar (available at visitwimmeramallee.com.au/events/). However, it appears that there may be several industry and event operators throughout the region who are either unfamiliar with this calendar and/or unsure how to get their events listed.

There is, therefore, a need to:

- work with industry and event operators to profile and promote the destination events calendar as a 'one-stop' source of information regarding all events in the Wimmera Mallee region; and
- host industry upskilling/training to ensure that operators are aware of how to get their events listed on the events calendar.

It is important that the calendar focuses on and profiles destination events rather than being a large list of all events (including community events) that are held in the region. Destination events drive new visitation into the region rather than primarily being attended by the local community. Local community events should be profiled separately on local government and/or local tourism websites.

GWMT and local councils may need to offer a commitment to event organisers and the tourism sector more generally to only support those destination strategic events which are pre planned (and well planned), and with specific dates locked in the calendar so all event organisers understand which events have been committed to on an annual basis, well in advance.

Figure 23: Murtoa's Big Weekend



³⁹ <https://djsir.vic.gov.au/news-and-articles/wimmera-mallee-to-receive-16-new-cabins>

Name:	Industry development training
Pillar/enabler:	Workforce
Type:	Strategic Initiative

The Wimmera Mallee's visitor economy industry operators (accommodation, attractions, events, food and beverage, retail, etc.) are dedicated, but like all areas, the industry needs to upskill and stay ahead of evolving industry trends and customer expectations.

Industry development training is essential for building a skilled, knowledgeable, and adaptable sector that can drive growth, maintain high standards, and contribute to the success of the region's visitor economy.

A series of industry development workshops should be offered throughout the region (and on an annual basis), looking to enhance the skills, knowledge, and capabilities of individuals working within the tourism industry. The focus of these could include:

- Skills enhancement programs (customer service, digital literacy, the ATDW, and social media).
- Professional development (career pathways, industry certification, leadership and management training).
- Workshops/seminars focused on emerging trends, technological advancements, sustainability practices, and regulatory updates impacting the tourism industry.

This work should leverage the existing work undertaken by Wimmera Mallee Tourism which is available as an online training toolkit at visitwimmeramallee.com.au/industry-resources.

Name:	Investigate packaging up local government-run caravan parks to lease to a third-party
Pillar/enabler:	Accommodation
Type:	Strategic Initiative

Currently, caravan parks across the region are managed by a mixture of groups/societies, private enterprises and respective councils.

A third party could potentially lease a number of council-managed caravan parks to streamline operations across the region and help grow market awareness. Operating caravan parks is not generally considered a core business for councils, and they typically end up in council management due to market failure.

However, packaging up several parks across the region could create economies of scale and make the proposition far more attractive for one operator/provider. This may assist in encouraging greater visitor dispersal and spending across the Wimmera Mallee region through the on-selling of caravan and camping sites and encouraging greater length of stay in the region.

It is noted that Hindmarsh Shire Council are already working towards bringing leased caravan and camping parks back internally to Council to manage and therefore may not be interested in being included in this regional initiative. However, the opportunity still remains for the other three councils.

Name:	Deliver an image audit and regional photoshoot and provide this to VV to put into the Visit Victoria Content Hub
Pillar/enabler:	Marketing and promotion
Type:	Strategic Initiative

A well-organised tourism media library serves as a valuable resource for tourism groups, travel agencies, media outlets, and other stakeholders looking to promote a destination effectively.

While it is understood that Wimmera Mallee Tourism had developed a comprehensive imagery/media library for the region, much of this content is not currently available on the Visit Victoria Content Hub (contenthub.visitvictoria.com).

There is a need to undertake an image audit to understand gaps and imagery that may need updating and to commission a regional photoshoot to fill these gaps.

Once the photoshoot has taken place, VV needs to be supplied with this imagery to ensure that the region is being appropriately profiled and that media, etc., can access it to promote the region.

Name:	Regional signage (directional and interpretive) strategy
Pillar/enabler:	Visitor servicing
Type:	Strategic Initiative

The Wimmera Mallee lacks directional and interpretive signage that facilitates easy navigation and exploration by visitors. At times, signage is missing, in the wrong location or lacks consistency in approach.

To overcome this, a regional signage strategy is required. This strategy could provide a planned approach for designing and implementing signage throughout the region that guides visitors to attractions, provides information about points of interest, and enhances their overall experience.

This strategy should cover:

- wayfinding and navigation;
- location and placement of signage;
- accessibility and safety;
- educational and cultural content signage;
- trail and site markers;
- the theme and design of signage to ensure consistency in approach;
- Traditional Owner engagement for approval/review for signage involving any First Peoples' sites.

4.1.9.2. Action plan

Table 20 provides the action plan for recommendations in the enablers category. Those marked with a '★' are priority recommendations.

Table 20: Action plan – Enablers

★ = Priority Recommendation ■ Development Projects ◆ Strategic Initiatives

Enabler	Recommendation	Action	Type	GWMT Role			Partners	Timing
				Deliver	Partner	Advocate		
Accommodation	Accommodation investment strategy and action plan ★	- Develop an accommodation investment prospectus that profiles accommodation investment opportunities and sites (identified by Councils) - The prospectus should focus on both visitor and worker accommodation needs.	◆		✓		BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC	S
Accommodation	Expand the network of self-contained cabin stock in caravan parks throughout the region ★	- Investigate grant funding opportunities to introduce further cabin accommodation stock (two additional cabins per park). - Introduce a strategy to phase out permanent residents from destination caravan parks to ensure they are visitor focused.	■			✓	Caravan park operators, BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC	S-M
Accommodation	Investigate packaging up local government-run caravan parks to lease to a third party ★	- Assess the potential for leasing several local government-run caravan parks (including the VEP) under a common brand. - Develop EOI and take this to market to gauge interest.	◆	✓			BSC, WWSC, YSC	S-M
Advocacy	High security recreational water allocation for lakes and waterways ★	Continue to advocate to GWMWater and DEECA to emphasise the importance of these waterways for the region.	◆			✓	GWMWater, DEECA, BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC	O
Events and infrastructure support	Greater profiling of the WM Destination Events Calendar and industry upskilling ★	- Undertake workshops with industry (event operators) to upskill them in how to get their event profiled on the existing WM Destination Events Calendar, which is available online (visitwimmeramallee.com.au/events/). - Profile/market the events calendar more strongly in industry communications and via the visitwimmeramallee website. - Consider tiering events so that the calendar is able to profile major destination events (rather than community-focused events) - GWMT and the local councils supporting strategic level destination events with an agreed/established set of dates locked in as part of an events calendar	◆	✓			Event operators, BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC	S

★ = Priority Recommendation ■ Development Projects ◆ Strategic Initiatives

Enabler	Recommendation	Action	Type	GWMT Role			Partners	Timing
				Deliver	Partner	Advocate		
Events and infrastructure support	Engagement of an events coordinator to assist in the delivery of 4-5 major regional events ★	- Apply for grant funding to support a paid event coordinator position. - Each council to determine one of their (primarily) volunteer-run major destination events to apply the support of a paid event coordinator for one day per week who works across the WM region.	◆			✓	BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, DJSIR	M
Governance and leadership	Establishment of a DMP Implementation Committee ★	- Under the guidance of GWM Tourism, a committee should be established comprising members of the visitor economy. The committee will oversee the implementation of this DMP and the underlying actions and recommendations. - Ongoing monitoring of DMP activations by the committee.	◆	✓			BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, industry, tourism and business groups	S
Marketing and promotion	Continue to grow the profile of the Wimmera Mallee brand (Adventures in a Different Light) in key markets ★	- Ongoing investment and promotion of the existing brand. - Ongoing monitoring of comparative strengths of the region and integration of this into brand work and marketing collateral.	◆	✓			BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, industry operators, VV	S
Marketing and promotion	Deliver an image audit and regional photoshoot and provide this to VV to put into the Visit Victoria Content Hub ★	- Undertake an audit of destination imagery for each area in the Wimmera Mallee. - Commission a professional photographer to travel throughout the region and capture destination media of any gaps missing in the existing media library. - Distribute media to VV to ensure the region is profiled in the Visit Victoria Content Hub	◆	✓			Visit Victoria, BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC	S
Industry development & collaboration	Industry development training workshops ★	- Work with DJSIR and RDV to develop a region-wide industry training program for tourism industry operators. - Leverage existing work (online training toolkit) available on visitwimmeramallee.com.au/industry-resources. - Workshops should focus on digital literacy, customer service, product/experience development, social media, marketing, and grant application writing.	◆	✓			DJSIR, RDV	O
Statutory planning environment	Boutique accommodation (B&Bs, cottages, farmstays) planning scheme workshops ★	- Facilitate a series of 2-3 workshops for local interested community members and other parties. - Facilitated by the Councils and offering a half-day workshop in major towns. - Development of a check sheet to encourage informed and more structured approaches to planning for bed and breakfast style of accommodation approvals.	◆			✓	BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, Department of Transport and Planning	O

★ = Priority Recommendation ■ Development Projects ◆ Strategic Initiatives

Enabler	Recommendation	Action	Type	GWMT Role			Partners	Timing
				Deliver	Partner	Advocate		
Visitor servicing	Regional signage (directional and interpretive) strategy ★	- Commission a regional tourism signage audit that focuses on both direction and interpretive signage and provides recommendations for improvements - Audit key visitor sites to identify wayfinding and other marketing assets that can be used to aid dispersal across the region.	◆	✓			BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC	M
Accommodation	Caravan/camping marketing campaign (family market & couples)	- Development of a targeted marketing campaign targeting the caravan/camping market. - Working in tandem with caravan and camping associations in Victoria, South Australia and potentially other states and territories. - Working with other major sector industry stakeholders, including caravan clubs and other user groups, to raise awareness.	◆	✓			Caravan park operators, Association of Caravan Clubs of Victoria, Caravan Industry Victoria, Caravan & Camping SA	O
Accommodation	Freedom camping site gold coin entry (policy change)	Investigate a policy change to introduce gold coin entry fees to freedom camping sites to support their ongoing viability and reinvestment.	◆			✓	BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC	M
Accommodation	Motel retrofitting advocacy and workshops	- Host an annual workshop in each LGA with motel and accommodation operators to promote the benefits of accommodation retrofitting, demonstrating case studies of success and where this has led to improved ROI and demand. - Profile grant opportunities (when available) to operators.	◆		✓		BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, industry operators, RDV	S
Accommodation	Reclassification of commercial accommodation (i.e., pub accommodation as pub stock rather than hotel stock)	Ensure pub accommodation stock is profiled on the Wimmera Mallee destination website as pub accommodation rather than being listed as hotels.	◆	✓			P-	M
Accommodation	Seek to implement the findings of the Wimmera Southern Mallee Eclectic Accommodation report	Profile and pursue the opportunities identified in the Wimmera Southern Mallee Eclectic Accommodation report.	■		✓		BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, vacant building owners	M

★ = Priority Recommendation ■ Development Projects ◆ Strategic Initiatives

Enabler	Recommendation	Action	Type	GWMT Role			Partners	Timing
				Deliver	Partner	Advocate		
Accommodation	Pet-friendly accommodation focus	- Undertake a pet-friendly audit of existing accommodations in the region. - Development of a targeted marketing campaign to promote those properties in the region that are pet friendly. - Consider running famil trips with tourism magazines/websites/blogs to promote pet-friendly Wimmera Mallee.	■		✓		Accommodation operators	M
	Worker accommodation hostels	- Collaborate with WSMD who are undertaking projects relating to worker accommodation. - Work with the region's councils to identify potential sites for the development of worker accommodation. - Undertake workshops with the tourism industry to gauge interest in establishing partnerships to support the development of worker accommodation. - Integrate opportunities into the regional accommodation prospectus.	■			✓	Tourism businesses, BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, WSMD	M-L
Advocacy	Advocate for improved internet services	- Identify the investment required to support improved internet connectivity throughout the region (including identifying major blackspot locations), leveraging the WSMD Regional Partnership Digital Plan and letters of support provided by LGAs, WSMD, and GWM Tourism. - Publish this as an advocacy document to take the State Government.	◆			✓	BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, WSMD, WMS Regional Partnership	O
Advocacy	Advocate for improved mobile phone coverage	- Identify the investment required to support improved mobile phone coverage throughout the region (including identifying major blackspot locations), leveraging the WSMD Regional Partnership Digital Plan and letters of support provided by LGAs, WSMD, and GWM Tourism. - Publish this as an advocacy document to take the State Government.	◆			✓	BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, WSMD, WMS Regional Partnership	O
Advocacy	Advocacy and support infrastructure upgrades in the region's parks	- Work with the region's councils to identify the key infrastructure needs that are required in the region's parks. - Deliver this to Parks Victoria as an advocacy document.	◆			✓	Parks Victoria, BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC	M

★ = Priority Recommendation ■ Development Projects ◆ Strategic Initiatives

Enabler	Recommendation	Action	Type	GWMT Role			Partners	Timing
				Deliver	Partner	Advocate		
Advocacy	Community tourism awareness program	Working with the region's councils, develop a tourism community awareness that focuses on the value and importance of the visitor economy as a mechanism to support community social licence, economic outcomes, and environmental and cultural benefits.	◆		✓		BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC	S-M
Data and insights	DMP data updates	Engage industry expert/s to review tourism data regularly throughout the lifecycle of the DMP and provide updated insights to the industry.	◆	✓			Data analyst	O
Data and insights	Tourism data sharing	- Work with Councils to share data and insights with the tourism industry using available sources such as Annual Surveys, Spendmapp, TRA data and other tourism-related information. - Distribute this data to the tourism industry in an easy-to-understand format and keep updated.	◆	✓			BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC	O
Events and infrastructure support	Annual volunteer appreciation event	- Work with the region's councils to develop an annual event (picnic, fair, barbeque etc.) to show appreciation to community volunteers across the region. - Rotate the event each year in different towns where Council facilities can be used.	◆			✓	BSC, WWSC, YSC	S
Governance and leadership	Crisis management planning	- Develop a GWM Tourism Crisis Management Plan. - Provide an industry-resilient ready/crisis preparedness program.	◆	✓			BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC	O
Governance and leadership	Facilitate networking, collaboration and partnerships between industry and government	Host regular workshops with industry and the public sector to facilitate stronger collaboration and communication between stakeholders and to ensure dialogue is occurring regularly.	◆	✓			BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, industry operators, DJSIR, land managers	O
Industry development & collaboration	Australian Tourism Accreditation Program (ATAP) awareness and participation	Increase Wimmera Mallee businesses' awareness of the Australian Tourism Accreditation Program (ATAP) by profiling the program, its benefits and case studies.	◆	✓			-	O
Industry development & collaboration	Small Business Bus by Business Victoria profiling	- Profile the Small Business Bus by Business Victoria and encourage industry operators to utilise the service. - Communicate with Business Victoria to establish stronger lead times to promote the visits to towns.	◆		✓		BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, Business Victoria	O

★ = Priority Recommendation ■ Development Projects ◆ Strategic Initiatives

Enabler	Recommendation	Action	Type	GWMT Role			Partners	Timing
				Deliver	Partner	Advocate		
Industry development & collaboration	Tourism business growth workshops	- Facilitate industry business growth workshops via state government training assistance offered. - Secure funding and assistance from RDV, VV and other relevant agencies. - Offered free to industry operators and those looking to establish tourism entities.	◆		✓		BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, WSMD, RDV, DJSIR	O
Infrastructure	Continue to increase the supply of vehicle charging stations for EVs throughout the region	- Work with the region's councils to identify additional sites where EV charging stations would be beneficial. - Identify future grant funding streams that may support the rollout of these charging stations, - Profile the location of chargers on the Wimmera Mallee destination website.	■			✓	BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, DEECA	M
Infrastructure	National parks and state forest parks safety signage (audit)	- Work with the associated land managers to identify signage requirements with an emphasis on safety signage within their remits. - Identify future grant funding streams that may exist to roll out recommendations.	◆			✓	Parks Victoria, DEECA	M
Infrastructure	Road improvements to VicRoads	Continue to advocate for road improvements to VicRoads.	◆			✓	VicRoads	O
Marketing and identity	Digital literacy operator training program	- Facilitate industry upskilling in digital literacy via state government training assistance offered. - Secure funding and assistance from RDV, VV and other relevant agencies. - Offered workshops as free to industry operators and those looking to establish tourism entities.	◆	✓			BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, RDV, VV	S
Marketing and identity	F&B and tourism operator ATDW & digital awareness readiness	- Host a series of workshops in each major town in collaboration with VV and/or ATDW to promote the importance of the ATDW and its benefits - Host an annual ATDW sign-up day in each town to demonstrate to operators how to self-list.	◆	✓			VV, ATDW	S-M

★ = Priority Recommendation ■ Development Projects ◆ Strategic Initiatives

Enabler	Recommendation	Action	Type	GWMT Role			Partners	Timing
				Deliver	Partner	Advocate		
Marketing and identity	Lake marketing and water levels profiling on regional destination website	- Integrate information available on the GWMWater website regarding lake water levels and facilities⁴⁰ into the sub-page on the Wimmera Mallee destination website. - Profile this feature/data to visitors.	◆		✓		BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, GWMWater	S-M
Placemaking	Main street façade update/refresh of the region's main towns	- Work with the region's councils to identify primary towns that require main street upgrades. Where main street revitalisation plans have already been developed, ensure these are leveraged (e.g. the Nhill Townscape and Lake Concept Plan⁴¹). - Identify the level of investment required for the entire project. - Package this up as a collective regional project for grant funding opportunities. This may extend beyond tourism grant funding opportunities.	◆			✓	BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, RDV	M-L
Statutory planning environment	Development Approval Concierge for tourism businesses	- Identify potential grant funding streams that could be applied to fund the Concierge position. - Work with each Council to develop a role description for the position. - Go to the market to advertise for the position.	◆			✓	RDV, BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC	M
Statutory planning environment	Planning scheme change to encourage tourism development in urban areas	- Reassess the need for more land to be designated in each town for tourism development, specifically to encourage cabin and chalet developments, cottages, and worker accommodation. - Work with the Department of Transport and Planning to update the planning scheme to enable tourism development to be a preferred form of development to support the town's economic sustainability.	◆			✓	Department of Transport and Planning, BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC	M-L
Visitor servicing	Regional approach to visitor servicing via a regional visitor servicing strategy	Commission the development of a regional visitor services strategy to build a networked approach for the region's visitor centres to deliver a regional approach to visitor information and servicing.	◆	✓			BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, visitor servicing providers	S-M

⁴⁰ <https://www.gwmwater.org.au/using-lakes-and-reservoirs/our-reservoirs/>

⁴¹ <https://haveyoursay.hindmarsh.vic.gov.au/nhill-townscape-and-lake-concept-plan>

★ = Priority Recommendation ■ Development Projects ◆ Strategic Initiatives

Enabler	Recommendation	Action	Type	GWMT Role			Partners	Timing
				Deliver	Partner	Advocate		
Workforce	Connecting VCAL students with tourism businesses	Connect tourism businesses in the Wimmera Mallee with Year 11 and 12 students undertaking VCAL studies and promote opportunities for work experience.	◆		✓		Local high schools, WSMLEN, WSMD	S-M
Workforce	Digital recruitment training for Wimmera Mallee operators	Host a series of workshops with Wimmera Mallee operators focused on digital recruitment training techniques.	◆		✓		BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, WSMD	S-M
Workforce	Explore the potential for labour exchanges across the region	- Review the results of the skills needs survey. - Explore the need for and practicality of a labour exchange program in consultation with VEPs, DJSIR, RDV - Work with operators who expressed an interest to support the take-up of the program.	◆		✓		BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, WSMD, RDV, DJSIR	M-L
Workforce	Profile the Western Victorian Careers Expo and other initiatives developed by the WSMLEN	- Profile the Western Victorian Careers Expo held annually as an opportunity to encourage career paths in the sector. - Work with WSMLEN to identify tourism training opportunities that can be promoted and activated throughout the region.	◆		✓		BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, RDV, DJSIR, WSMLEN	S-M
Workforce	Expansion of in-region tourism training opportunities for locals to support local employment	Work with local providers to expand in-region training opportunities, including building a business case for more in-region training to grow local skills to support a broader range of roles and support out-of-the-box employment.	◆			✓	RDV, BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, DJSIR	S-M
Workforce	Industry forums focused on workforce issues	Deliver a series of industry forums to gain an understanding of the current skill needs and gaps.	◆		✓		BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, WSMD, RDV, DJSIR	M
Workforce	Innovative and flexible employment opportunities	- Continue to raise awareness of the availability of support programmes for 'out-of-the-box' employment, including the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme, through the distribution of regular email updates. - Review the range of information-sharing channels (including meetings, newsletters, and other tools, e.g., the LinkedIn Network) for employers to find the best ways of getting information to the industry and for the industry to share information, issues, and opportunities. This includes the promotion of success stories of local staff and tourism careers.	◆		✓		BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, WSMD, RDV, DJSIR	M

★ = Priority Recommendation ■ Development Projects ◆ Strategic Initiatives

Enabler	Recommendation	Action	Type	GWMT Role			Partners	Timing
				Deliver	Partner	Advocate		
Workforce	Victorian Training Guarantee (VTG) program awareness and participation	▪ Increase business awareness of and participation in the Victorian Training Guarantee (VTG) program.	◆		✓		BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, WSMD, RDV, DJSIR	M
Workforce	Wimmera Mallee "Employer of Choice" program	▪ Develop a Wimmera Mallee "Employer of Choice" program. ▪ Profile these employers to help boost recognition.	◆		✓		BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, WSMD	M
Workforce	Workforce planning promotional campaign	▪ Develop a coordinated campaign to sell the benefits of investing in workforce planning (profile, identify and use case studies on local businesses as a medium for promotion, noting that both WSMD and GWM Tourism have case studies that can be profiled).	◆	✓			BSC, HSC, WWSC, YSC, WSMD	O

4.2. Priority LAAP recommendations

The LAAPs that have been completed as part of this DMP also contain more LGA-specific recommendations. In total, 90 LAAP recommendations have been identified (see Table 21). Of these, **32** are considered priority LAAP recommendations. These priority LAAP recommendations have been included in Table 22. The full list of LAAP recommendations can be found in Appendix 6.

Table 21: Summary of LAAP recommendations

Shire	Number of LAAP recommendations	Number of LAAP priority projects
Buloke	26	8
Hindmarsh	15	8
West Wimmera	35	8
Yarriambiack	14	8
Total	90	32

Table 22: The priority LAAP recommendations

● Product development pillar ● Destination enabler pillar ■ Development projects ◆ Strategic initiatives

Pillar/Enabler	Recommendation	Shire
 1. Nature (including Waterbodies) Recreation & Wellness	Avoca River activation at Charlton ■	Buloke
	Development and promotion of licensed 4WD operators in Little Desert ■	West Wimmera
	Explore Lake Bringalbert and Dunboperty Swamp visitor infrastructure development ■	West Wimmera
	Lake Charlegrark Native Fish hatchery feasibility study ◆	West Wimmera
 3. Food (Agritourism) & Drink	Boutique whisky, tequila, or vodka distillery, craft brewery or cider house ■	West Wimmera
	Concierge support to advocate and engage with food and beverage project opportunities in the shire to increase niche product offerings e.g., brewery, distillery, chocolate products ◆	Hindmarsh
 4. Arts & Culture	Assist Mallee Machinery Field Days to grow as a destination event through infrastructure enhancements and profiling ■	Yarriambiack
	Continue to progress Yarriambiack's Heritage Trail project to develop a Shire-wide narrative and cross-promotion of heritage attractions ◆	Yarriambiack
	Continue to promote and support the Heritage events across the Shire ■	Hindmarsh
	Establish shared curatorial expertise to enhance the Shire's museum and historic products ◆	Hindmarsh
	Expansion of Harrow by Night Visitation ■	West Wimmera
	Expansion of heritage railway experience throughout Yarriambiack Shire with Seymour Heritage Rail and 707 Operations Inc. ■	Yarriambiack
	Implement the Warracknabeal Courthouse Project (including accommodation development) ■	Yarriambiack
	Lake Charlegrark Visitor Destination Plan ◆	West Wimmera
	Llew Schilling silo development ■	Hindmarsh
	Rex Theatre Activation ■	Buloke
	Support the Nhill Silo Heritage Project ■	Hindmarsh
	Support the Stick Shed as a visitor experience and events venue (investment required for design works and change of use) ◆	Yarriambiack

● Product development pillar ● Destination enabler pillar ■ Development projects ◆ Strategic initiatives

Pillar/Enabler	Recommendation	Shire
	■ Mt Wycheproof Activation ■	Buloke
	■ Railway Activation ■	Buloke
	■ Birchip Cropping Group Luxury Accommodation to complement farm tours ■	Buloke
	■ Continue promoting/developing Lake Tyrrell ■	Buloke
	■ Continue to progress the Hopetoun Old School Site development (including accommodation, worker housing and a nature-based playground) ■	Yarriambiack
	■ Continue to support existing and encourage new events across the shire to increase visitation for economic benefits to the region. Examples of current events include the Steampunk Festival, Nhill Airshow, Pioneer Museum Rally and Rainbow Rises Motorsport events. ◆	Hindmarsh
	■ Continue with the Council's program of streetscape and signage improvements for gateway towns (Rupanyup, Murtoa, Warracknabeal, Yaapeet, Patchewollock and Woomelang) ■	Yarriambiack
	■ Develop a promotional campaign to profile new cabin accommodation at Wooroonook Lakes, Charlton, Sea Lake, Wycheproof, Lake Watchem, Lake Tchum, and Green Lake ◆	Buloke
	■ Kaniva Main Street Parking and Way finding Audit, and Plan ◆	West Wimmera
	■ Lake Wallace visitor infrastructure enhancements ■	West Wimmera
	■ Nhill Caravan Park Masterplan implementation ■	Hindmarsh
	■ Sealing of Sea Lake Airstrip ■	Buloke
	■ Support events that are held in Yarriambiack to become destination events (i.e. attracting visitors from outside the Shire) ◆	Yarriambiack
	■ Support the development of Rainbow Rises Events Centre and foster the creation of different events at the precinct ■	Hindmarsh





Part 5: Appendices

Appendix 1 Glossary

BGLC	Barengi Gadjin Land Council
BSC	Buloke Shire Council
CAPEX	Capital Expenditure
CBD	Central Business District
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
DEECA	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
DJSIR	Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions
DMP	Destination Management Plan
DDWCAC	Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation
F&B	Food and Beverage
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMTOAC	Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation
GWM Tourism	Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism
GWMWater	Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water
HSC	Hindmarsh Shire Council
HVTs	High-Value Travellers
IVS	International Visitor Survey
LAAP	Local Area Action Plan
LGA	Local Government Area
NVS	National Visitor Survey
PCG	Project Control Group
RDV	Regional Development Victoria
REDS	Regional Economic Development Strategy
RTB	Regional Tourism Board
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TRA	Tourism Research Australia
VEP	Visitor Economy Partnership
VFR	Visiting Friends and Relatives
VTIC	Victoria Tourism Industry Council
VV	Visit Victoria
WWSC	West Wimmera Shire Council
WSMD	Wimmera Southern Mallee Development
WSMLLEN	Wimmera Southern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network
YSC	Yarriambiack Shire Council
YE	Year End

Appendix 2 Phrases/concepts to know

There has been a considerable shift in how destinations view and interact with visitors to ensure tourism benefits the community more broadly. As a result, new concepts and terminology have been introduced to outline the procedures required to achieve these benefits. These are outlined in Table 23.

Table 23: Terms to note

Term	Description	Relevance to the DMP
Sustainable tourism	Sustainable tourism strives to reduce tourism's negative effects on the environment, society, and economy. It focuses on preserving natural resources, safeguarding cultural heritage, and supporting local communities, often guided by principles like minimising carbon footprints and promoting conservation efforts.	This DMP adopts a sustainable approach to tourism, seeking to identify mechanisms to mitigate any negative impacts tourism may have on the region's economy.
Regenerative tourism	Regenerative tourism extends beyond sustainability by actively restoring and improving destinations. It aims to make a positive impact on the environment and communities through initiatives like reforestation, wildlife conservation, and community development programs.	This DMP has been guided by a regenerative tourism approach to decision-making, governance and implementation. The underlying objective is for The Wimmera Mallee to be left in a better state than it was before sustained tourism development and growth.
Stewardship	Stewardship refers to the responsible and sustainable management of natural and cultural resources by those involved in the tourism industry. It involves taking care of and preserving the environment, local communities and cultural heritage to ensure that tourism has a positive and sustainable impact.	This DMP sees stakeholders involved in tourism in The Wimmera Mallee as stewards and caretakers of the region's environment, community and culture.
Value of the visitor economy	Measuring the value of the visitor economy involves a range of qualitative and quantitative assessments, incorporating economic, social, environmental and cultural data.	This DMP acknowledges that the value of the visitor economy cannot simply be measured through economic measures—a sustainable visitor economy can create a host of social, cultural and environmental benefits. This plan, therefore, adopts a range of qualitative and quantitative targets to measure success.
Climate action	Climate action in the context of tourism refers to efforts and initiatives taken within the industry to mitigate and adapt to climate change.	The DMP's recommendations include strategies and measures to reduce the environmental impact of tourism activities and make the sector more resilient to the challenges posed by climate change. Several stakeholders highlighted this as a key desired outcome.
Visitor economy ecosystem	The visitor economy ecosystem represents the interconnected and interdependent stakeholders that contribute to and are influenced by the tourism industry within a specific geographic area or destination.	The Wimmera Mallee's expansive visitor economy ecosystem has many stakeholders. This DMP seeks to continue strengthening the many relationships already in place and facilitating the development of new connections and collaborations.
Visitor economy	The visitor economy encompasses the economic activities and benefits created by visitors to a destination. It includes a wide array of industries and services catering to tourists, such as accommodation, transportation, attractions, entertainment, dining, retail, and other tourism-related activities.	This phrase is used throughout this DMP to emphasise the economic significance of tourism and related businesses in the Wimmera Mallee, particularly the role of tourists (including those visiting for a holiday, visiting friends and relatives, business, education etc) in supporting economic growth and job creation.

Appendix 3 Experience Victoria 2033 Product Priorities and Settings

Figure 24: Experience Victoria 2033 Product Priorities and Settings⁴²

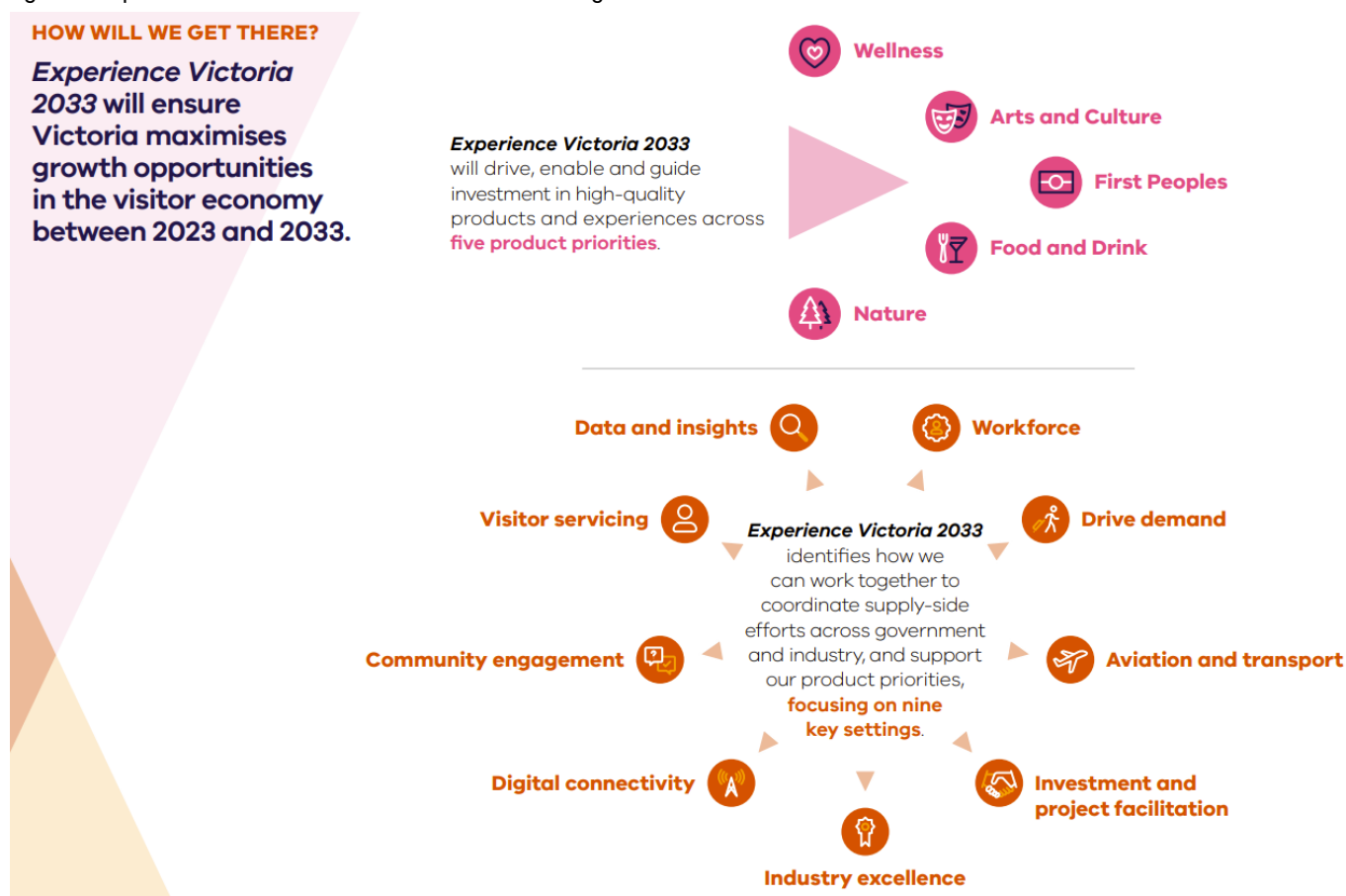


Table 24: Experience Victoria 2033 Product priorities and settings, and alignment with the Wimmera Mallee

Experience Victoria 2033 Product Priorities and Settings	Current Strengths for the Wimmera Mallee	Emerging Strengths for the Wimmera Mallee	To be Worked On
Wellness			✓
Arts and Culture	✓ (Culture & Heritage)	✓ (Arts)	
First Peoples			✓
Food and Drink		✓	
Nature	✓ (free independent travel)		✓ (structured/guided travel)
Workforce		✓	
Drive Demand	n/a	n/a	n/a
Aviation and Transport			✓
Investment and Project Facilitation			✓
Industry Excellence		✓	
Digital Connectivity		✓ (regional areas)	
Community Engagement	✓		
Visitor Servicing		✓	
Data and Insights		✓	

⁴² Experience Victoria 2033, page 9.

Appendix 4 Visit Victoria Brand Playbook

Figure 25: Regional sub-brand framework – Grampians⁴³

Regional sub-brand framework			
Grampians			
Visitation drivers	Escape my everyday	Surprise and delight me	Spark my imagination
Victorian Masterbrand promise Grampians sub-brand promise	Enrich every moment with Ancient mountain grandeur		
Pillars	Nature at your fingertips - Mountain ranges - Hikes and bushwalking trails - Waterfalls and lookouts - Lakes - Scenic drives	Passion for quality - Premium food and drink experiences - Wine region and cellar doors - Artisans	Storied culture - First Peoples cultural experiences - Grass roots community culture - Towns and Villages - Art galleries and history
Proof points	- Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park - Grampians Peak Trail - Mackenzie Falls, Beehive Falls, Reed Lookout and The Balconies - Lake Bellfield, Lake Fyans, Lake Lonsdale - The Grampians Way touring route	- Wickens at Royal Mail Hotel, Flame Brothers Restaurant & Bar, Paper Scissors Rock Brew Co. - Seppelt Wines, Best's Wines Great Western, Grampians Wine Cellar, Pomonal Estate - Mount Zero Olives, Five Ducks farm - Grampians Grape Escape	80% of Victoria's rock art with sites dating back 20,000 years - Brambuk - The National Park & Cultural Centre - Moyston, birthplace of Marngrook (AFL) - Harrow, home of the First XI - Stawell Gift - St Arnaud gold history - MOCO Gallery, Hamilton Gallery, Ros McArthur's Studio - Gum San Chinese Heritage Centre, J Ward
Personality traits	Open-minded	Creative	Intriguing

⁴³ Destination Victoria Brand Strategy, page 26.

Appendix 5 Forecast supporting data

Table 25: Forecasts supporting data

Visitor Forecasts – Wimmera Mallee Region

	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033
Domestic day	291,694	299,996	305,018	309,314	313,763	320,038	326,439	332,967	341,292	349,824
Domestic overnight	270,993	281,155	285,358	289,961	292,679	298,533	304,504	310,594	318,359	326,318
International	2,618	2,737	2,889	2,962	3,032	3,093	3,155	3,218	3,298	3,380
Total	565,305	583,888	593,265	602,236	609,474	621,664	634,097	646,779	662,948	679,522

Visitor Spending Forecasts – Wimmera Mallee Region

	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033
Domestic day	\$32.2m	\$34.1m	\$35.7m	\$37.3m	\$39.0m	\$41.0m	\$43.1m	\$45.2m	\$47.7m	\$50.4m
Domestic overnight	\$121.4m	\$129.8m	\$135.6m	\$142.0m	\$147.6m	\$155.1m	\$162.9m	\$171.2m	\$180.7m	\$190.8m
International	\$2.5m	\$2.6m	\$2.9m	\$3.0m	\$3.2m	\$3.4m	\$3.5m	\$3.7m	\$3.9m	\$4.1m
Total	\$156.1m	\$166.5m	\$174.2m	\$182.3m	\$189.8m	\$199.4m	\$209.5m	\$220.1m	\$232.4m	\$245.3m

Appendix 6 Full list of LAAP projects

Table 26 includes the full list of projects from the four LAAPs developed concurrently with this DMP. For further details, please see individual LAAP documents.

Table 26: Full list of LAAP projects

■ Development projects ◆ Strategic initiatives ★ Priority Project			
Pillar Group	Recommendation	Type	Shire
Nature (including waterbodies), recreation and wellness	Avoca River activation at Charlton ★	■	Buloke
Nature (including waterbodies), recreation and wellness	Bike trail link between Lake Bringalbert and Lake Charlegrark	■	West Wimmera
Nature (including waterbodies), recreation and wellness	Investigate bird-watching hides at Lake Hindmarsh	■	Hindmarsh
Nature (including waterbodies), recreation and wellness	Completion of the Kaniva Wetlands project	■	West Wimmera
Nature (including waterbodies), recreation and wellness	Creation of a sensory playground trail (leveraging existing playgrounds in Goroke and Kaniva)	■	West Wimmera
Nature (including waterbodies), recreation and wellness	Demarcate Lake Tyrrell 'no-go' areas	◆	Buloke
Nature (including waterbodies), recreation and wellness	Develop packages of Yarriambiack's bird-watching hotspots in a way that enables visitors to pre-plan and book by type of experience and by tour routes (including at Lake Lascelles, Beulah and Patchewollock)	■	Yarriambiack
Nature (including waterbodies), recreation and wellness	Develop packages of Yarriambiack's night time economy, dark sky and sunset experiences in a way that enables visitors to pre-plan and book by type of experience and by tour routes.	■	Yarriambiack
Nature (including waterbodies), recreation and wellness	Development and promotion of licensed 4WD operators in Little Desert ★	■	West Wimmera
Nature (including waterbodies), recreation and wellness	Enhance the visitor experience at Pink Lake in partnership with Traditional Owners and Parks Victoria	■	Hindmarsh
Nature (including waterbodies), recreation and wellness	Extended Sea Lake Astro Fest event	■	Buloke
Nature (including waterbodies), recreation and wellness	Extension of the boardwalk from Apsley to Newlands Lake Reserve	■	West Wimmera
Nature (including waterbodies), recreation and wellness	Goroke Mini triathlon event	■	West Wimmera
Nature (including waterbodies), recreation and wellness	Introduce kayak hire and storage facilities in Donald and Charlton	■	Buloke
Nature (including waterbodies), recreation and wellness	Investigate the creation of motorsport events and initiatives in the Shire that leverage existing motorsports facilities	■	Yarriambiack
Nature (including waterbodies), recreation and wellness	Explore Lake Bringalbert and Dunboperty Swamp visitor infrastructure development ★	■	West Wimmera
Nature (including waterbodies), recreation and wellness	Lake Charlegrark Native Fish hatchery feasibility study ★	◆	West Wimmera
Nature (including waterbodies), recreation and wellness	Murray Cod Fishing Competition at Lake Charlegrark	■	West Wimmera
Nature (including waterbodies), recreation and wellness	Position Edenhope as a hub for motor racing and motocross events	■	West Wimmera
Nature (including waterbodies), recreation and wellness	Support new events and the expansion of Apsley & District Motorsports Club and Possum Park Enduro Track	■	West Wimmera
Nature (including waterbodies), recreation and wellness	Tyrrell Creek to Lake Tyrrell walking track	■	Buloke
Arts and culture	Activation of Kaniva Town Hall for movie nights and events	■	West Wimmera
Arts and culture	Assessment of old flour mill future use in Charlton	■	Buloke
Arts and culture	Assessment of Serviceton Railway Station as a heritage attraction/event venue	■	West Wimmera
Arts and culture	Assist Mallee Machinery Field Days to grow as a destination event through infrastructure enhancements and profiling ★	■	Yarriambiack
Arts and culture	Continue to profile the Esoteric Festival	◆	Buloke

■ Development projects ◆ Strategic initiatives ★ Priority Project

Pillar Group	Recommendation	Type	Shire
Arts and culture	Continue to progress Yarriambiack's Heritage Trail project to develop a Shire-wide narrative and cross-promotion of heritage attractions ★	◆	Yarriambiack
Arts and culture	Continue to promote and support the Heritage events across the Shire ★	■	Hindmarsh
Arts and culture	Development of evening events (light show, outdoor cinema)	■	West Wimmera
Arts and culture	Establish shared curatorial expertise to enhance the Shire's museum and historic product ★	◆	Hindmarsh
Arts and culture	Enhance volunteerism which manages most major events and visitor attractions through streamlining volunteer compliance requirements	◆	Hindmarsh
Arts and culture	Expansion of Harrow by Night Visitation ★	■	West Wimmera
Arts and culture	Expansion of heritage railway experience throughout Yarriambiack Shire with Seymour Heritage Rail and 707 Operations Inc. ★	■	Yarriambiack
Arts and culture	Implement the Warracknabeal Courthouse Project (including accommodation development) ★	■	Yarriambiack
Arts and culture	Investigate the feasibility of a music event at Lake Tyrrell	■	Buloke
Arts and culture	Lake Charlegrark Visitor Destination Plan ★	◆	West Wimmera
Arts and culture	Llew Schilling silo development ★	■	Hindmarsh
Arts and culture	Photography workshops and events	■	Buloke
Arts and culture	Promotion of the Henley on Lake Wallace Event, along with the greater promotion of all events	■	West Wimmera
Arts and culture	Rex Theatre Activation ★	■	Buloke
Arts and culture	Support the Nhill Silo Heritage Project ★	■	Hindmarsh
Arts and culture	Support the Stick Shed as a visitor experience and events venue (investment required for design works and change of use) ★	◆	Yarriambiack
Food (agritourism) and drink	Birchip bake-off event	■	Buloke
Food (agritourism) and drink	Boutique whisky, tequila, or vodka distillery, craft brewery or cider house ★	■	West Wimmera
Food (agritourism) and drink	Concierge support to advocate and engage with food and beverage project opportunities in the shire to increase niche product offerings e.g., brewery, distillery, chocolate products ★	◆	Hindmarsh
Food (agritourism) and drink	Distillery in the old Fire Station in Charlton	■	Buloke
Food (agritourism) and drink	Support the creation of pop-up seasonal food outlets (centred at towns & lakes)	■	West Wimmera
Experiences and tours	BMX track at Sea Lake	■	Buloke
Experiences and tours	Development of a fishing, kayaking and river walking trail at Harrow	■	West Wimmera
Experiences and tours	Development of self-guided and guided bird and frog-watching tours	■	West Wimmera
Experiences and tours	Development of self-guided and guided orchid tours	■	West Wimmera
Experiences and tours	Engage with Journey Beyond to develop stop-over packages for Nhill and Dimboola linking with the Overlander service	■	Hindmarsh
Experiences and tours	Mt Wycheproof Activation ★	■	Buloke
Experiences and tours	Railway Activation ★	■	Buloke
Experiences and tours	Walking and cycle track to Green Lake	■	Buloke
Enablers	Annual Council tourism update workshop	◆	West Wimmera
Enablers	Birchip Cropping Group Luxury Accommodation to complement farm tours ★	■	Buloke
Enablers	Buloke Events Centre	■	Buloke
Enablers	Charlton Park Complex promotion	■	Buloke
Enablers	Continue promoting/developing Lake Tyrrell ★	■	Buloke
Enablers	Continue the transition of Hindmarsh's town retail areas into revitalised and vibrant town centres.	■	Hindmarsh
Enablers	Continue to progress the Hopetoun Old School Site development (including accommodation, worker housing and a nature-based playground) ★	■	Yarriambiack
Enablers	Continue to support existing and encourage new events across the shire to increase visitation for economic benefits to the region. Examples of current events include the Steampunk Festival, Nhill Airshow, Pioneer Museum Rally and Rainbow Rises Motorsport events. ★	◆	Hindmarsh

■ Development projects ◆ Strategic initiatives ★ Priority Project

Pillar Group	Recommendation	Type	Shire
Enablers	Continue with Council's program of streetscape and signage improvements for gateway towns (Rupanyup, Murtoa, Warracknabeal, Yaapeet, Patchewollock and Woomelang) ★	■	Yarriambiack
Enablers	Create online digital itineraries of Yarriambiack's antique and second-hand shopping experiences	◆	Yarriambiack
Enablers	Creation of a digital map for Harrow with a linked QR code	■	West Wimmera
Enablers	Develop a promotional campaign to profile new cabin accommodation at Wooroonook Lakes, Charlton, Sea Lake, Wycheproof, Lake Watchem, Lake Tchum, and Green Lake ★	◆	Buloke
Enablers	Develop distinctive themes for each key town	◆	Hindmarsh
Enablers	Development of West Wimmera events guidelines document	◆	West Wimmera
Enablers	Directional and interpretative signage upgrades for Harrow	◆	West Wimmera
Enablers	Kaniva Main Street Parking and Way finding Audit, and Plan ★	◆	West Wimmera
Enablers	Green Lake caravan and camping upgrades	■	Buloke
Enablers	Improve town signage in all major towns in the Shire	◆	Buloke
Enablers	Johnny Mullagh Memorial Caravan Park dump site	◆	West Wimmera
Enablers	Lake Ratzcastle visitor infrastructure enhancements	■	West Wimmera
Enablers	Lake Wallace visitor infrastructure enhancements ★	■	West Wimmera
Enablers	Main street activation enhancements for Donald	■	Buloke
Enablers	Nhill Caravan Park Masterplan implementation ★	■	Hindmarsh
Enablers	Position Hopetoun and Yaapeet as gateways to Wyperfeld National Park	◆	Yarriambiack
Enablers	Position Kaniva as the western gateway to Victoria	◆	West Wimmera
Enablers	Position Rainbow as the gateway to Big Desert Wilderness Park	◆	Hindmarsh
Enablers	Positioning of Sea Lake as an overnight destination	◆	Buloke
Enablers	Profiling of waterways as a key visitor experience	■	West Wimmera
Enablers	Promotion of the mosaic art trail linking Edenhope to Apsley	■	West Wimmera
Enablers	Sealing of Sea Lake Airstrip ★	■	Buloke
Enablers	Serviceton Reservoir visitor infrastructure improvements	■	West Wimmera
Enablers	Support events that are held in Yarriambiack to become destination events (i.e. attracting visitors from outside the Shire) ★	◆	Yarriambiack
Enablers	Support the development of Rainbow Rises Events Centre and foster the creation of different events at the precinct ★	■	Hindmarsh
Enablers	Support the refresh of existing infrastructure and amenities at Lake Lascelles to help the sustainability of the precinct	■	Yarriambiack
Enablers	West Wimmera Digital Explorer app (further site implementation and business/reward integration)	■	West Wimmera



WIMMERA MALLEE DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

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