



*Destination* **GIPPSLAND**

ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

# CHAIR'S REPORT 2023

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF DESTINATION GIPPSLAND LTD, I AM PLEASED TO PRESENT THIS REPORT FOR THE 2022-23 FINANCIAL YEAR.



As I write this report in my first year as Chair of Destination Gippsland I reflect on the busy year it's been for the organisation.

It's been encouraging to engage with a diverse range of stakeholders across Gippsland and beyond, as we work towards supporting the visitor economy in Gippsland and delivering on the vision and actions in the 'Towards 2030 - Destination Management

Plan'. Since September 2019 when the original DMP was launched it has helped secure \$105m in recommended projects to assist the Gippsland tourism sector. The benefit of these projects is already being realised with the launch in 2022-23 of the Metung Hot Springs, Omeo Mountain Bike Park, and East Gippsland Rail Trail to complement projects such as the Raymond Island Koala Trail and Haunted Hills Mountain Bike Park that are attracting many visitors.

Sitting alongside the DMP is Destination Gippsland's Strategic Plan. These two guiding documents shape the strategic priorities for the region, and also Destination Gippsland as an organisation, to ensure we provide a clear vision for achieving long-term, sustainable growth of Gippsland's visitor economy. This Annual Report will outline many of the successes of the year, and I would like to specifically mention a few.

First and foremost is the reappointment of Terry Robinson as CEO of Destination Gippsland. The most important task of any Board is to ensure it has the right CEO in place to lead the organisation. Towards the end of the financial year the Board

was delighted to appoint Terry Robinson for a further three years until 2026. Terry's knowledge of tourism in the Gippsland region, the networks and stakeholders he has access to, and the high regard with which he's held by those across the Victorian tourism industry, give the board every confidence in his ability to maintain the momentum of leading Destination Gippsland for a further three years.

Other highlights for the year include:

- **Events Gippsland.** Events Gippsland was formed in the previous financial year, and is now an established, successful division within Destination Gippsland. Led by David Elder, Events Gippsland has been responsible for bringing a number of successful events to the region, through the collaboration of all six LGAs. Estimates of the value of new events secured for the region are \$50m.
- **Marketing.** Led by Alison Conroy, our marketing and 'All Kinds of Wonder' branding continues to go from strength to strength and is recognised by many in the tourism industry as a successful and unifying brand. Marketing success has no doubt been a contributing factor to Gippsland visitation numbers and expenditure being recorded at an all-time high during the year.
- **Gippsland Tourism Workforce Development Strategy.** To support our tourism businesses, Destination Gippsland needs to understand current and future workforce trends in the Gippsland region. This Workforce strategy was an important piece of work to provide Destination Gippsland with data and information to help shape future initiatives.
- **Completion of strategies and projects.** During the year we saw the completion of some significant and important strategies and projects including Gippsland Food, Drink

and Agri-tourism Strategy; Gippsland Lakes Aquatic Trail Business Case and Product Test; Demand and Supply Analysis of Commercial Laundry Services in East Gippsland/Wellington; Tracks and Trails Design, Construct, Maintenance Social Enterprise Business Case.

- **Support for Industry.** Destination Gippsland continues to support all business in the sector through industry development initiatives such as training, mentoring, and networking. I was fortunate to attend two tourism forums in the financial year and saw first-hand the benefit these events bring to those who attend.
- **Governance and Risk.** The Board continues to focus on ensuring it is conducting its business with the highest standards of governance and risk management. During the year Destination Gippsland refreshed its risk management framework, and developed a cyber plan to ensure it is implementing best practice protocols and practices.
- **Visitor Economy Partnerships.** During the year the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) advised all regional tourism organisations of a planned revised structure for the future, to ensure more consistency and coverage by tourism bodies across Victoria. The CEO and Board commenced engagement with DJSIR on this new format, which will be ongoing into the new financial year.

At a Board level we welcomed two new directors to the Board this year: Josh Singh and Neil Plumridge. Josh was appointed for a three-year term following the retirement from the board of Nick Murray, and Neil filled a casual vacancy left by the resignation of Michelle Dickson one year ahead of her term expiring. We thank both Nick and Michelle for their significant contributions over many years, in particular Nick in his role of

Chair. Nick stepped into the Chair role in late 2019 and led the organisation through the challenging period of 2020 and 2021, and we thank him for his leadership during that time.

As we farewelled Nick from the board in November 2022, I was elected to the role of Chair, and I thank the board for their trust in electing me to this role. Destination Gippsland is fortunate to have an exceptionally skilled and experienced board of directors to oversee its governance, and I thank each of the directors for their contribution this year, and for those who stepped in to take on roles at various times throughout the year when this was needed.

Our LGA CEOs (Mark Dupe, Anthony Basford, Ali Wastie, David Morcom, Kerryn Ellis, Steve Piasente) continued to add considerable skills and regional expertise to the Board during the year and I thank each of them for their collaborative approach to growing tourism across the Gippsland region as a whole. In addition to Neil and Josh mentioned above, our other non-LGA independent directors – Nicola Pero, Neil Travers and Andrew Clark – added their considerable talents and knowledge to the board and I thank them for their contribution during the year.

Destination Gippsland is also fortunate to have some dedicated and engaged stakeholders who attend our board meetings as observers. These include Jason Banikoff (Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions), Kerri Villiers (Parks Victoria), and Sara Rhodes-Ward (Regional Development Victoria), and I thank each of them for their support and contribution during the year.

Destination Gippsland is a small organisation that delivers exceptional results for the visitor economy of Gippsland, and it wouldn't be able to achieve what it does without our CEO Terry Robinson, our company secretary Helen Rose, and our small but dedicated team.



It was a busy and productive year, and I look forward to continuing to support the expansion, growth and success of the Gippsland visitor economy in the 2024 year and beyond.

**Jan Fitzgerald**  
Chair  
Destination Gippsland

# GIPPSLAND VISITOR ECONOMY STAKEHOLDERS

## VISITORS

### TOURISM BUSINESSES, PRODUCT AND EXPERIENCES, SUPPORTING VISITOR SERVICES AND COMMUNITY

#### GIPPSLAND LAND MANAGERS

- Parks Victoria
- Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation
- Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water
- Alpine Resorts Victoria

#### LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- One Gippsland
- Bass Coast Shire Council
- Baw Baw Shire Council
- East Gippsland Shire Council
- Latrobe City Council
- South Gippsland Shire Council
- Wellington Shire Council

#### COMMONWEALTH AND STATE GOVERNMENT

- Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions
- Regional Development Victoria
- Regional Development Australia
- Gippsland Regional Partnership

#### PEAK INDUSTRY BODIES

- Victorian Tourism Industry Council (VTIC)
- Business Events Victoria (BEV)
  - Committee for Gippsland
  - Food and Fibre Gippsland
  - Wine Gippsland

#### EVENTS GIPPSLAND

#### TOURISM ASSOCIATIONS

- Local and regional membership based organisations

#### EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- TAFE
- Universities
- Registered Training Organisations

#### VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRES

## DESTINATION GIPPSLAND

## VISIT VICTORIA/TOURISM AND EVENTS

## TOURISM AUSTRALIA

# VISITATION TRENDS

<b>Gippsland National and International Visitor Survey Data</b>	<b>2009 base year</b>	<b>2022 previous year</b>	<b>2023 current year</b>	<b>1 year trend</b>	<b>Overall change</b>
Domestic overnight visitors	1.55m	2.3m	2.69m	+16%	+73%
Domestic visitor nights	4.59m	7.04m	7.99m	+14%	+74%
Domestic daytrips	3.11m	3.33m	4.02m	+21%	+29%
International overnight visitors	57,000	NA	NA	NA	NA
Total visitors	4.73m	5.63m	6.71m	+19%	+44%
Total Expenditure	\$820m	\$1.57 billion	\$1.84 billion	+17%	+124%

Results are from Tourism Research Australia data for the year ending June 2023 and are for mainland Gippsland (excluding Phillip Island).

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2021 - 24

## OUR ROLE

To inspire, influence and lead positive tourism outcomes through partnerships across Gippsland

## OUR CORE CHALLENGE

Deliver effective destination marketing that will drive overnight visitation while improving the visitor experience in Gippsland in response to the impacts of bushfires and the Covid-19 pandemic

## WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

We are valued and recognised by our stakeholders for being the leading Regional Tourism Board, achieving our goals for higher market share and visitor nights, and generating a positive visitor experience



## OUR GOAL

**Reach 9million visitor nights and \$1.3billion in visitor expenditure by 2024.**

This exceeds the original targets and recognises the importance of overcoming the disruption to visitation due to bushfires and Covid-19, and preparing for future disruptions

## OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

### 1. GENERATE VISITOR DEMAND

**Marketing:** Unite Gippsland under the All Kinds of Wonder brand, invest in targeted marketing campaigns, maintain 'always on' consumer communications, increase our digital capability

**Events:** Create Events Gippsland, secure new events to build a full calendar, leverage tourism benefits of events

**Success measure:** Visitation

### 2. IMPROVE VISITOR EXPERIENCES

**Visitor infrastructure:** Secure support for all Gippsland Tracks and Trails signature projects, deliver the Dark Skies Project

**Co-ordinated tourism planning:** Refresh the DMP, connect Council and Local Tourism Plans

**Success measure:** Investment

### 3. HELP BUSINESSES GROW

**Facilitate industry training** to improve standards of servicing visitors (digital, cultural awareness and customer service)

**Deliver recovery and resilience services** (crisis preparation and response support)

**Connect businesses to opportunities** within the broader visitor economy structure (communication and engagement)

**Success measure:** Jobs

## WHAT DO WE NEED TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS?

- 1. Partnerships:** Engage with Traditional Owners, Food and Fibre, Education, Industry Associations, Corporates
- 2. Advocacy:** Influence government with data and research, relationship-building, communicate role and achievements to raise the profile and reach of Destination Gippsland
- 3. Finance and Governance:** Maximise opportunities for Gippsland in the new Visitor Economy Partnership model; confirm longterm funding agreement with Local Government; proactively secure recovery grants; pursue private sector contributions
- 4. People:** Increase team capability via professional development; provide career pathways and a supportive workplace culture; be an employer of choice

## WHAT DO WE VALUE?

- **Informed decision making** (consumer-based market research)
- **Leaving a legacy** (strive for region-wide and lasting outcomes)
- **Collaboration** (we can't do it alone)
- **Economic, environment, social and cultural sustainability** (quadruple bottom line outcomes)
- **ROI for our members** (adding value for Local Government)
- **Continual improvement** (we measure and review our performance)

# SUPPORTING FUNCTIONS

We will also undertake activities in the following four important areas:

- **Finance and governance:** Ensure we maintain high standards of accountability, governance and responsiveness to the Board, our financial members and the broader tourism industry.

- **Advocacy:** Be the primary point of contact for government, media and industry. Provide an evidence based, collective voice to influence positive tourism outcomes.
- **Team development:** facilitate the professional development of our staff and Board to deliver effective services and tourism management.

# CORPORATE STRUCTURE

## DESTINATION GIPPSLAND BOARD

- **Jan Fitzgerald** (Chair)
- **Josh Singh**
- **Neil Travers**
- **Andrew Clark**
- **Neil Plumridge**
- **Mark Dupe**  
(Chair Audit, Finance, Risk and Governance Committee)
- **Anthony Basford**
- **Ali Wastie**
- **David Morcom**
- **Kerryn Ellis**  
(Chair Nominations and Remuneration Committee)
- **Steve Piasente**
- **Michelle Dickson** (resigned November 2022)
- **Nick Murray** (resigned November 2022)

## BOARD OBSERVERS (non-Directors)

- **Jason Banikoff** Department Jobs, Skills, Industry & Regions
- **Kerri Villiers** Parks Victoria
- **Sara Rhodes-Ward** Regional Development Victoria

## DESTINATION GIPPSLAND STAFF

- **Terry Robinson** Chief Executive Officer
- **Alison Conroy** General Manager Marketing
- **Janine Hayes** Industry Development Manager
- **David Elder** Project Manager Events Gippsland
- **Kelly McCarthy** PR & Marketing Partnerships Manager
- **Helen Rose** Company Secretary, Finance & Admin Officer
- **Nicholas King** Project Manager Tracks & Trails  
(resigned January 2023)
- **Elysa Sorahan** Digital Marketing Manager
- **Phoebe Graham** Tourism Administration Officer



# GENERATING VISITOR DEMAND

FINANCIAL YEAR 2023 SAW THE FIRST RETURN TO A FULL YEAR OF MARKETING ACTIVITY SINCE 2019, WITH OUR KEY MARKETING PARTNER VISIT VICTORIA PROVIDING THE MAIN AVENUES TO SPONSORED PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES.

## MARKETING GIPPSLAND: 2022/23

**Brand marketing:** We delivered brand advertising, harnessing the power of Gippsland: All Kinds of Wonder for the region across the year and amplified in low and shoulder seasons to continue our goal to create awareness and drive consideration.

**Targeted campaign activity:** We continued to drive targeted activity to promote the Eat Drink Gippsland message, drive tourism marketing and event marketing.

**Maintain owned and earned channels:** Our website, newsletter (eDM) and social media remained core to our messaging. We focussed on visitor-centric events, seasonality and ad-hoc content opportunities through these channels.

**Public Relations:** Guided by the content calendar and consumer research and working with Visit Victoria we continued to pitch and host travel and mainstream media as well as digital influencers.

Our focus on **digital capability** continued through support for industry and events who have ATDW listings, by providing digital marketing advice and support.

We continue to work with product across the region to develop commissionable programs and packages as we reintroduce Gippsland as a must-see destination for the **international** market, both on its own and as part of the Sydney-Melbourne touring route.

We continued to support **events and business events** to recoup market share of the business events sector and increase our reputation across Victoria and interstate as a leading destination for consumer events in Victoria.

### Visitgippsland.com.au

The overarching objective of the website is to provide an information hub that inspires people to travel to Gippsland and make planning seamless. We aim to raise awareness about Gippsland, actively encourage users to consider Gippsland for travel, and provide them with the tools to research and plan a trip. We encourage Gippsland tourism operators' take-up of ATDW listings, which are the passport for participation in our marketing.

During the course of the year, we created new product categories to feed ATDW listings into the areas of golf, spas & retreats, amusement parks and attractions, shopping and hire. Our eat and drink section was updated to map a range of categories, including restaurants and cafes, wineries, breweries and distilleries, farm gates and produce, bars and pubs, and wine and beer trails.

These new categories complement the existing accommodation categories of apartments, B&Bs, caravan and holiday parks, cottages, houses and farm stays, hotels and resorts, houseboats and campervans, motels and retreats and lodges. We also have a booking service category.

We also created a new mapping functionality across the website. The mapping function allows us to map by location and type of product.

Our website is home to over 600 pages of content and over 500 ATDW listings and delivers industry best-practice travel information in a comprehensive and visual way, with interactive maps, itineraries, event listings and news. In 2022/23 the website had 693k page views, with an average page view of just under 2 minutes. The website is the call to action on all our marketing campaign activity.



### **Email Marketing**

Email is a low cost, highly targeted medium that creates conversion and loyalty, as well as top of mind awareness. The newsletter reached 186k people across the financial year, with an average open rate of over 42% for the year. The subscriber list increased by 70% year on year.

### **Social Media**

We focussed on Facebook and Instagram as our social media channels across the last financial year, supplying original and user generated content, posts, stories and reels. Our social media platforms are strong performers for the region, with 84k followers across the platforms. In 2022/23 our social media reach was 6.38m and engagement at 139k.

### **Public Relations**

Guided by the content calendar and consumer research, and working with Visit Victoria we conducted year-round pitches and hosted travel and mainstream media as well as digital influencers. Over the financial year, we achieved \$15.35m of advertising value equivalency for Gippsland across editorial channels and supported and hosted 29 travel writers in the region.

### **Digital Capability for Industry**

Our focus on digital capability continued through support for industry and events with Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW) listings. We delivered an update to the Destination Gippsland Marketing toolkit during the year and provide industry advice on a range of marketing topics.

## MARKETING ACHIEVEMENTS

### **Australian Marketing Institute Award Winner: Marketing Revitalisation**

Destination Gippsland were one of two Victorian finalists in the prestigious Australian Marketing Institute (AMI) Awards for Marketing Revitalisation. At the national awards, we won the award for this category, ahead of twelve other organisations from across Australia.

The AMI Awards recognise excellence in marketing, across a broad landscape of Australian contemporary product. Other finalists in the AMI Awards category include UniSuper, James Cook University, realestate.com.au and Great Southern Bank.

Destination Gippsland had previously achieved Gold in the destination marketing category for the All Kinds of Wonder campaign at the Australian Tourism Awards during the previous financial year.

## FOOD, DRINK, AGRITOURISM GIPPSLAND STRATEGY

The strategy for Gippsland was developed in partnership with Food and Fibre Gippsland. We aim is to set a strategic direction to help develop food, drink and agritourism experiences across the region and to position Gippsland as a leading regional epicurean destination for Victoria.

The goal for the strategy is to increase visitor demand and yield, improve visitor experiences, attract business investment and build sustainability for the sector by providing support for producers and to create jobs.

## INDUSTRY MARKETING AND MARKETING DEVELOPMENT

### **Gippsland Marketing Toolkit**

Destination Gippsland have continued to update the industry toolkit is to provide an outline of how to increase or improve industry digital capability and align with the brand and opportunities that are offered by Destination Gippsland. The marketing toolkit continues to be housed on the industry website, [destinationgippsland.com.au](http://destinationgippsland.com.au).

### **Marketing Opportunities Guide**

A partnership prospectus is available for industry in Gippsland to cooperatively partner with Destination Gippsland on an ongoing basis. The opportunities guide is housed on the industry website, [destinationgippsland.com.au](http://destinationgippsland.com.au).





## MARKETING ACTIVITY

### Visit Victoria cooperative campaign

We undertook a cooperative campaign with Visit Victoria as our key strategic marketing partner.

Activity included social media content development, partnership marketing with Time Out and We Are Explorers, a solus Gippsland newsletter, inclusions in SPACE magazine and in the Melbourne Official Visitor Guides, which has a print run of 250k each quarter.

### We Are Explorers

A content partnership with We Are Explorers (WAE) a digital influencing adventure travel platform, was a highlight of the year. The partnership included video, editorial, imagery, social media and eDM amplification and featured East Gippsland content. The campaign was supported by East Gippsland Marketing Inc (EGMI) and included photography legacy assets.

### Baw Baw Shire & West Gippsland cooperative campaign

Destination Gippsland partnered with Baw Baw Shire Council to deliver an ongoing campaign for the area of West Gippsland over the course of the financial year.

Activity included image library development, a broadcast video on demand campaign, a spring and autumn digital media campaign and influencer cooperative marketing. Over the course of the year, it is estimated that we delivered \$300k of advertising value equivalency for this cooperative campaign.

### The Gippsland star gazing experience

Over the course of the financial year, we developed a new website for the dark skies project, including branding elements based on the inclusion of a First Nations marker provided by artist Alfie Hudson. We provided marketing support to two sell-out events in Buchan and Loch Sport to deliver the concept of star-gazing events to our industry for future event development opportunities.

### Eat Drink Gippsland 4th edition

The 4th edition of the popular Eat Drink Gippsland guide was produced during the year. This signature guide for Gippsland grows in reputation with each new edition and now is an annual publication. The guide has a readership of 90k.

### Australian Traveller cooperative marketing

Destination Gippsland partnered with Australian Traveller for an autumn campaign to drive awareness to national audiences and provide interstate awareness for Gippsland as a destination for an amazing journey. The campaign included print media, online digital, banner advertising, a solus newsletter and social media.

### Drives campaign

We delivered a drive market campaign for Gippsland in spring. Twelve drives across Gippsland were profiled and supported with a video and digital campaign. The video was supported by Channel 7 network media.

### Buchan marketing partnership

We delivered a branding partnership with the township of Buchan through their local business tourism association.

The Buchan Business and Tourism Association sought our help to strengthen and build awareness of the destination brand proposition for the Buchan region. The project included creating a brand book for Buchan, website content and the redirect of [visitbuchan.com.au](http://visitbuchan.com.au) to a Buchan homepage on [visitgippsland.com.au](http://visitgippsland.com.au). We also produced a printed local guide and pad-map for the township.

### The Gippsland Official Touring Map 2022

The Gippsland Official Touring Map (OTM) 2022 was developed and distributed in FY23. Created in partnership with Councils and advertising businesses across the region, the map is distributed in Melbourne at Tullamarine airport, and at numerous sites across Melbourne metropolitan area, mainly through the hotel distribution system as well as through the Visitor Information Centre network across Victoria and southern NSW. We continue to distribute over 50k maps each year.

### Caravan and Camping Map

In partnership with the six regional councils of Gippsland, we delivered an updated Caravan & Camping map of Gippsland, designed to provide valuable information to the unstructured self-drive mobile home market.

### Influencer partnership: Sally Sees

Destination Gippsland partnered with digital Influencer @Sallysees to create social media content and assets for the region. @Sallysees has a youthful exuberant brand, supported by a “travel thoughtfully” message, with a lean towards sustainable travel. Through her Instagram account and following, Sally created new content and provided legacy photographic assets.

### Asset development

Over the 22/23 financial year, we managed photography projects for Baw Baw Shire and Latrobe City Council, as well as participating in Tourism Australia’s National Experience Content Initiative (NECI) project.

### NECI project

Destination Gippsland, in partnership with Visit Victoria and coordinated by Tourism Australia, the National Experience content initiative (NECI) delivered a major asset legacy for 20 Gippsland businesses during the financial year. Eligible businesses received up to 40 enhanced images and up to 100 unedited images, 1 minute of edited video and up to 10 minutes of B-Roll footage.



## EVENT MARKETING

We continue to support Gippsland's broad calendar of events through a wide variety of marketing mediums. Events supported during the course of the year included:

- The Village Feast
- The Wild Harvest Seafood Festival
- The International Rose Garden Festival, Morwell
- East Gippsland Winter Festival
- Walhalla Springfest

### The Village Feast

The Village Feast (TVF) was a cornerstone event for Gippsland in 2022, aiming to raise awareness and drive continued conversion for Gippsland as a culinary visitor destination.

Produced by Melbourne Food + Drink as part of the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival, Regional edition, the Village Feast took place in Thorpdale in November.

The marketing campaign is a significant partnership opportunity for Gippsland, with a MF+D campaign valued at \$500k supporting the event. The Destination Gippsland content plan focused on staying longer in region and discovering more and was activated through social media, eDM and at [visitgippsland.com.au](http://visitgippsland.com.au)

We undertook sponsored marketing activity across The East Gippsland Winter Festival, Walhalla Springfest, the International Rose Garden Festival and the Wild Harvest Seafood Festival during the year.

### International And Trade Marketing Partnerships

Destination Gippsland continues to work with the travel trade to promote Gippsland internationally as a visitor destination.

We attended the Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE) in May to represent Gippsland. During the week at ATE, we held 84 appointments with representatives from over 15 countries including Australia, the UK, Germany, Netherlands, Canada, Malaysia and Singapore. With 2300 delegates that included 624 buyers from 32 countries, there were additional opportunities to network with buyers from across the globe.

We also conducted training on Gippsland with 76 Australian based Aussie Specialist Agents, and Inbound Tour Operators.

Other inclusions of Gippsland in international training were through our membership of Sydney-Melbourne Touring (SMT). SMT also escorted key Product Managers from Germany on a pre-ATE faml that included Gippsland and undertook additional international sales trips representing our region in meetings with Product Managers and training with front-line sales staff globally.

### Business Events Gippsland

We continued to work with Business Events Victoria (BEV) to deliver information to Melbourne-based meeting planners about event venues and locations across Gippsland.

Business Events Gippsland marketing content activated 2 business event information packs for Business Events Gippsland. The packs provide suggested pre and post touring itineraries and image files for business events in and around the Latrobe Valley (featuring Walhalla, Mt Baw Baw, Yarram, Tarra Bulga and The Prom) and for business events in and around East Gippsland (featuring Buchan, Marlo, Metung, Paynesville and Lakes Entrance experiences).

We created and delivered a Business Events page for East Gippsland, delivering a newsletter and featuring video content from East Gippsland, in partnership with EGMI. The partnership also delivered an e-brochure downloadable from the website.

We delivered 2 other eDMs to our database of Melbourne-based meeting planners that were received by over 1000 contacts, with an average open rate of 44%.

In June, we attended the Business Events Victoria marquee event for promoting regional Victoria, the Regional Showcase in Melbourne. The event attracted over 100 meeting planners keen to hear updates from product in regional Victoria, signalling the return of regional business events.

The call to action for business events is [businesseventsgippsland.com.au](http://businesseventsgippsland.com.au) and inclusion in direct mail activity.



## EVENTS GIPPSLAND

Events Gippsland, having been established in 2021, is now in its second year of operation. Its role is to attract a balanced calendar of events across the region that generates economic, social and legacy benefits. The Gippsland Regional Events Strategy 2020-2025 provides the blueprint to achieve these benefits. At the heart of the strategy is collaboration between all six Gippsland LGA's, working together with a single voice to compete on a national scale to bring events to our region. Phase 1 of the Strategy was the immediate response phase focused on short term response and recovery and attracted \$1m in grant funding, allowing the creation of an Events Acquisition Fund.

To access the fund, LGA's must provide matched funding and can present events for consideration via a formal assessment panel. To date, 59 events have been secured in Phase 1 of the project. Of these, 31 events have been held and 28 are scheduled to be held through to 2030, though most are scheduled in 2024.

### Supporting projects:

- Creation of an event owner facing website, [eventvenuesgippsland.com.au](http://eventvenuesgippsland.com.au). This website showcases all of the event facilities across Gippsland, assisting event owners to make decisions about where to host their next event
- Business Events Victoria – DG continues to represent Gippsland on the BEV Board. Represented Gippsland at the Victorian Business Events Regional Show Case. BEV have created a new website and event owner's handbook to better show the facilities on offer across Gippsland. For 2022/23 a total of 14 leads were received by BEV to host a business event in Gippsland. Of these, 9 were confirmed resulting in 836 delegate days and 984 room nights.
- Everi digital events calendar. The consumer facing calendar that scrapes multiple sites to ensure tourism events across Gippsland are displayed on [visitgippsland.com.au](http://visitgippsland.com.au).

### Advocacy:

Advocacy for funding to deliver Phase 2 and 3 of the Gippsland Regional Events Strategy 2020-2025 continues. We have support from the DG Board, each LGA, One Gippsland and Gippsland Regional Partnerships in our efforts to cement Events Gippsland as a sustainable model for attracting a diverse calendar of events across the region.

## EVENT SNAPSHOT – VICTORIAN BOWLS OPEN 2023-2027

- 5-year agreement secured via financial support from Events Gippsland, Latrobe City Council, Morwell Bowls Club and Traralgon Bowls Club
- 4000 attendees over 8 days of competition
- 20 bowls clubs involved from Stratford to Drouin
- \$3.1m economic benefit generated from the 2023 event.

## PROJECTED OUTCOMES FOR SUPPORTED EVENTS:

- 180k additional visitors
- 184k bed nights generated
- \$50m economic benefit for Gippsland
- ROI of 62:1

# HELP BUSINESSES GROW

DURING 2022/23:

## Industry Training

**Gippsland Tourism Forums:** Destination Gippsland has hosted three tourism forums over the course of 2022/23 at locations in Wellington Shire, Baw Baw Shire, and South Gippsland Shire Councils. The forums enable operators to travel and network with other operators from across the Gippsland Region. Across the three forums there were over 150 attendees.

Topics presented at the forums have included, cultural training, wellness tourism, a practical packaging workshop, tracks and trails information and marketing information and updates. We have hosted speakers from Tourism Australia, Visit Victoria, Parks Victoria, Sydney- Melbourne Touring as well as providing local council and Destination Gippsland updates to ensure those attending gain a broader understanding of tourism and its contribution to the economic benefit of the local economy as well as the wider Gippsland region.

**Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW):** Destination Gippsland has provided extensive education, guidance, and training to engage operators in listing both their businesses and events on this online platform which feeds into our consumer site, [visitgippsland.com.au](http://visitgippsland.com.au). We have hosted webinars as well as providing advice directly to operators through personal contact or our communications channels.

**Digital Dial Up:** Online fortnightly sessions were held throughout the year to provide operators with the opportunity to access assistance and advice on all things digital.

## Projects

**Gippsland Tourism Towns of Excellence:** The Gippsland Tourism Towns of Excellence program was finalised with 12 towns across Gippsland audited and provided with feedback. This has been beneficial for towns to utilise this information to improve their customer service offering. It has also provided towns with the opportunity to apply for varying grants and to make cost effective improvements whilst providing major benefits.

**The Dark Skies Project:** Progress has continued for the Dark Skies project, resulting in the completion of the Stargazing Gippsland online portal to support signage that will be installed in East Gippsland and Wellington Shire locations. Destination Gippsland facilitated two industry and consumer events in Buchan at the Stockman's Camp in Buchan, and at the RSL and Loch Sport Golf Club in Loch Sport. The Astronomical Society of Victoria were engaged to provide industry training as well as hosting four nights of star gazing in these locations. The events proved to be a success with over 200 people attending these events bringing visitation to the region in the off peak season.

**Ken Hore Tourism Mentoring Program:** Now in its eighth year, the Ken Hore Tourism Mentoring Program continues the partnership with Bass Coast Shire Council and Destination Phillip Island. Six participants were engaged in face-to-face and online mentoring opportunities. The participants have been able to connect with a variety of industry leaders at local and state level.

**Accessibility:** Thirteen operators from Lakes Entrance and Inverloch were able to participate in the Gippsland Accessible Pilot Program. This program allowed businesses to be assessed for their accessibility and to be provided with a comprehensive report on their offering and how they can improve their accessibility footprint.



**Workforce Development Plan:** The workforce development plan was completed, and a draft action plan has commenced development to meet the strategic objectives. The project has been extended for delivery into 2023/2024.

**Local Tourism Area Action Plans:** The project was commenced with funding from State Government. Initial workshops were facilitated in Neerim South, Inverloch, Lakes Entrance, Yarram, and Foster/Toora. The project will be completed in late November 2023 and aligns with the Destination Management Plan to undertake local area planning for destination hubs/towns. This project has been able to extend and build on the work that was completed in the Gippsland tourism towns of excellence project.

**Sustainability:** Destination Gippsland continues to support and encourage sustainable development in all businesses across Gippsland and has provided extensive support to East Gippsland Shire Council to attain Eco Tourism Accreditation Status through Eco Tourism Australia. This will continue into 2023/2024.

## Relationships

**Industry Survey:** Destination Gippsland surveys the industry annually to illicit information about how businesses are tracking, as well as to understand what we can do better in delivering industry training and marketing. The survey resulted in 94 responses. Key responders were accommodation providers 48%, followed by restaurant/café/bar & winery 15%, tour & transports 8%.

Changes made to business delivery have been even with 50% making changes to their delivery post covid. We saw a 30% increase in product offering with 5% reducing product offering, 25% increased staff while 15% reduced staff and 25% reduced opening hours while 5% increased opening hours.

Maintaining financial viability, staffing, and training are important issues for the industry along with continued improvement in digital capability.

**Industry Advice:** Destination Gippsland continues to contribute to a wide range of industry conversations through contribution on project control groups, provision of letters of support, general business advice, provision of industry statistics or other information as requested.

In 2022/2023 this included the Tourism Opportunity Project for East Gippsland, the Arches Project for Gurneys Cidery, assistance with Eco Tourism Accreditation for East Gippsland Shire, and participation with Federation University and the Latrobe Valley Authority around Sustainable Development Goals. There has been engagement in the forestry transition projects in East Gippsland, Wellington Shire and Baw Baw Shire and this will continue into 2023/2024.

Destination Gippsland works across the whole of the Gippsland region and engagement with the local Tourism Managers from each of the LGAs is vital in understanding what is happening across the region. We facilitate quarterly catch ups to exchange and understand how each of us is supporting the industry.

**Victorian Tourism Awards:** Gippsland was represented by nine businesses across eight categories in the Victorian Tourism Awards. Of the nine operators, two received finalist status Mansi on Raymond and the Mercure Warragul (highly recommended), Beachcomber Holiday Units and Harmans Wines were awarded Bronze, Sandbar Motel was awarded Silver and Tallawarra Homestead received a Gold. Tallawarra went on to become silver winners at the Australian Tourism Awards which is a fantastic achievement.

**Victorian Top Tourism Town Awards:** In the top tourism town awards for the first year Lakes Entrance and Noojee were finalists, a big congratulations for the work that was done by these towns on their submissions.

## Communication

**Industry Communication:** Destination Gippsland provides industry support through the industry communications plan 2022/2023. Updated annually, the plan utilises monthly newsletters, social media posts and blogs on the industry website.

**Newsletters:** have an average open rate of 35%.

**Social media:** Facebook followers have increased from 4,024 to 4,401.

**LinkedIn followers:** have increased from 1235 to 1,528.

**The Industry Website:** The industry website is consistently updated to provide current and relevant information on a variety of topics to assist the industry.

**Crisis Communication:** These are constantly updated to ensure businesses receive information in a timely manner that pertains to their sector within the visitor economy.

# VISITOR EXPERIENCES

TO IMPROVE VISITOR EXPERIENCES DESTINATION GIPPSLAND FOCUSES ON TWO KEY AREAS: CO-ORDINATED TOURISM PLANNING AND INVESTMENT IN NEW VISITOR INFRASTRUCTURE.

## Investment Outcomes

The Gippsland Destination Management Plan (DMP) has been the foundation document for our visitor economy's recovery from the devastating impacts of bushfire and the covid-19 pandemic.

In February 2022 we released an Updated DMP to reflect the changes to the tourism industry and to update the pipeline of priority projects. Its seven strategic priorities have been incorporated in Destination Gippsland's annual work plans and guided key decision making by the Board and all levels of government. Since September 2019 when the original DMP was launched it has helped secure \$105m in recommended projects to assist the Gippsland tourism sector. The benefit of these projects is already being realised with the launch of the Metung Hot springs, Haunted Hills Mountain Bike Park, Omeo Mountain Bike Park, East Gippsland Rail Trail and Raymond Island Koala Trail attracting many visitors.

In coming years funded projects such as the Wilsons Promontory Revitalisation, Cape Conran accommodation upgrades, Croagingolong Coastal Walk, Rokeby-Noojee Trail and Great Southern Rail Trail will be completed to provide additional nature-based tourism experiences. We continue to advocate for funding for major project priorities such as the Nanjet Indigenous Cultural Project at Yanakie, Bass Coast Dinosaur Trail, Gippsland Odyssey Trail and the Gippsland Lakes Aquatic Trail.

## Tourism Planning

In 2022/23 we completed important planning projects that included:

1. Gippsland Tourism Workforce Development Strategy
2. Gippsland Food, Drink and Agri-tourism Strategy
3. Gippsland Lakes Aquatic Trail Business Case and Product Test
4. Demand and Supply Analysis of Commercial Laundry Services in East Gippsland/Wellington
5. Tracks and Trails Design, Construct, Maintenance Social Enterprise Business Case

We also commenced five Local Area Actions Plans with the communities of Inverloch, Neerim South, Lakes Entrance, Toora/Yarram, and Loch Sport.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Thankyou to our financial members:

- Bass Coast Shire Council
- Baw Baw Shire Council
- East Gippsland Shire Council
- Latrobe City Council
- South Gippsland Shire Council
- Wellington Shire Council

We also acknowledge and thank our marketing and major project partners who have contributed this year:

- Business & Tourism East Gippsland
- Business Events Victoria
- Committee for Wellington/Central Gippsland Regional Tourism
- Department Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions
- Department of Energy, Environment, and Climate Action
- Destination Phillip Island
- East Gippsland Marketing Inc
- Food and Fibre Gippsland
- Gippsland Mountain Biking Club
- Gippsland Regional Partnership
- Gunaikurnai Land and Water Corporation
- Latrobe City Business Tourism Association
- Latrobe Valley Authority
- Mt Baw Baw Alpine Resort
- One Gippsland
- Parks Victoria
- Regional Development Victoria
- Sydney Melbourne Touring Inc
- Tourism Australia
- Victoria Tourism Industry Council
- Visit Victoria
- Wine Gippsland



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