



Destination **GIPPSLAND**

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

CHAIR'S REPORT 2024

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF DESTINATION GIPPSLAND LTD, I AM PLEASED TO PRESENT THIS REPORT FOR THE 2023-24 FINANCIAL YEAR.



I am delighted to present the Chair's report for the 23/24 financial year. As always it's been a busy and successful year for Destination Gippsland as we strive to support our visitor economy across the region.

There have been many global and national influences on tourism in the past year. Global economic downturns, regional conflicts, climate change and general uncertainty have all had a role to play. Closer to home

in Gippsland we have seen a unique set of circumstances, as the region transitions from the closure of historical industries to those that align to State and Federal strategies for the future.

Notwithstanding these complex and changing circumstances, the Gippsland tourism industry has continued to prove resilient. As an organisation DG continues to do what it can to support the industry and tourism operators through its overarching strategy Gippsland Destination Management Plan: Towards 2030. There have been many success from the year, and I'd just like to highlight a few.

Achievements

- **Visitor Economy Partnership.** During the year Destination Gippsland signed a new funding agreement with the Victorian government, through the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR). This agreement changed the status of Destination Gippsland to a Visitor Economy Partnership. While this new arrangement doesn't result in changes to DG's structure and operations, it does provide an increase in funding levels, as well as an opportunity for a stronger working relationship with the DJSIR team. We look forward to continuing this fruitful relationship into the new financial year.
- **Events Gippsland.** Events Gippsland (EG) is a joint collaborative initiative between DG and Gippsland's six local government authorities. Its purpose is to develop a strong, single voice to attract, acquire and develop events in Gippsland, as well as identify opportunities for collaborative marketing and promotion. EG supported many events throughout the year, both large and small. Since its inception, Events Gippsland has delivered a Return on Investment of 60:1, demonstrating the success of this model. I had the opportunity to attend many of these events in the past year, including The Village Feast at Inverloch, the Latrobe Valley Airshow, and the East Gippsland Winterfest, and could see firsthand the value this model has for bringing visitors to our region.
- **Food, Drink and Agritourism Strategy.** During the year we launched an important new strategy: the Towards 2030 Gippsland Food, Drink & Agritourism Strategy. This strategy aims to position Gippsland as a 'go-to' epicurean travel destination in Australia by 2030. This is a strategic opportunity to present Gippsland as a diverse, distinct, and authentic food, drink and agritourism region, which will continue to drive visitation and economic return to the region for years and decades to come.

- **Dark Skies.** An exciting initiative that we launched in the past year was the Gippsland Dark Skies project. The project is an exciting new astro-tourism experience, developed in conjunction with the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation, Parks Victoria, East Gippsland Shire Council and Wellington Shire Council. The project was developed with funding from the Local Economic Recovery Program – Bushfire Recovery Regional Economic Stimulus and Resilience Recovery Grants through Regional Development Victoria. It provides an opportunity to showcase 13 destinations across Central and East Gippsland, each providing exceptional observational sites for dark sky viewing. Underpinning the experience is the story-telling of land and skies from Gunaikurnai culture.
- **Australian Tourism Exchange.** Hosted in Melbourne for the first time in ten years, ATE 2024 was a highlight on the calendar for the DG team, and for those Board members able to attend. The DG team had an opportunity to present to tourism buyers from over 30 countries, and I was fortunate to sit in on a few of the meetings. It was encouraging to see the genuine interest from tourism buyers and operators from across the world in all that Gippsland has to offer, and the interest culminated in many tours and famils conducted by the DG team following the event. Strategically positioning DG internationally provides a small but important and growing opportunity for increasing visitation to the region.

Board and governance

- **Strategic Plan 2024-27.** The Board met earlier this year to develop a new strategic plan for Destination Gippsland for the next three years. A key pillar of the strategy will be to expand our focus on supply of tourism product, as well as the traditional focus of demand.

Board changes

- **Traditional owner representative.** During 2023 and 2024 the Board determined that our strategic direction – and the Gippsland tourism offering more generally – would be enhanced by bringing a representative from among Gippsland’s Traditional Owners onto the board. We were delighted to welcome Daniel Miller from Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation to the Board at our AGM.
- **Two additional board directors were elected at the AGM.** Neil Plumridge had been filling a casual vacancy and was elected to a full term on the board. Michelle Nicholson was also appointed at the AGM. We farewelled Josh Singh for the board and thank him for his contribution.
- **Two new Local Government CEOs.** With the change of leadership of both Bass Coast Shire and East Gippsland Shire we welcome new directors to the board, and value the fresh approach each brings.
- **Board review.** As part of its commitment to good governance, the Board undertook its biennial board review. It was pleasing to see strong positive results, and a general agreement that the DG board operates collaboratively, strategically and skilfully in its governance and decision making. Opportunities arose from the review, with an action plan developed, with several of these initiatives having already been implemented.

Stakeholders

An important part of my focus as Chair has been the engagement and meetings with many stakeholders throughout the year, as we continue to prioritise positive outcomes for Gippsland tourism businesses. These have included meetings with federal government and state government – at the ministerial and departmental level – as well as other key state authorities such as Parks Victoria and Regional Development Victoria. We also regularly engage with other tourism and visitor key bodies such as Visit Victoria and VTIC, regional organisations such as One Gippsland, and other local organisations like Food and Fibre Gippsland and the Gippsland tertiary education providers. I have also held several fruitful conversations with other regional tourism bodies across Victoria, including Destination Phillip Island.



In summary

In closing I would like to thank my fellow Board Directors for their commitment and dedication to Destination Gippsland and the collaborative and strategic approach that they each bring to the board and our discussions. I also thank Helen Rose our Company Secretary for the invaluable support she provides to the board.

I would also like to thank our CEO Terry Robinson for his leadership of the organisation through a complex and busy year. Terry and his very talented and dedicated team are leaders in their industry, and punch above their weight with what they deliver for the region. On behalf of the Board, we feel very fortunate to have such a strong and capable team at Destination Gippsland.

As we head into the next three years of our new strategic plan, I am excited for the journey ahead. Collectively the Board, CEO and staff have some new ideas and strategies planned, and will do what we can to work with our industry partners to live out our Tourism Vision that “Gippsland’s natural beauty, outstanding experiences and life changing moments inspire the world to visit”.

Jan Fitzgerald
Chair
Destination Gippsland

CEO REPORT 2024



Gippsland's tourism industry experienced another exceptional year with record highs in visitor nights (8.5m) and expenditure (\$1.9b). These results demonstrate the quality of our experiences and the resilience of our industry. Regional tourism remains an extremely competitive part of the overall travel sector with aggressive spending from international and domestic destinations targeting Victorians to travel outside of the

state. Gippsland has held strong in the face of this competition, and we must continue to expand our product and marketing edge to support the 12,100 jobs and over 3,000 businesses that rely on the visitor economy.

Demand

A key component to Destination Gippsland's work is generating demand for our region by promoting our 'Gippsland - All Kinds of Wonder' brand; and filling our events calendar with the work of Events Gippsland. Driving awareness and intention to #visitgippsland is the key to our marketing and we continue to do this in innovative and effective ways. Social media posts that attract both reach and engagement; campaigns that all point to our award-winning website (visitgippsland); electronic direct mail to over 30,000 loyal Gippsland followers; and hosting over 25 media visits that generated over \$11m in value are examples of our 'always on' marketing approach.

Thank you to our General Manager Marketing Ali Conroy who continues to demonstrate her skills as one of the best destination marketers in Australia. Thank you to Kelly McCarthy who drives the PR and Media activities so effectively and has built relationships with key media outlets and publications around Australia. And thank you to Elysa Sorahan, our Digital Marketing Manager, who is ahead of the game when it comes to best practice use of SEO and social media for destination marketing.

Financial and marketing support was provided by Events Gippsland to 15 events in the past year including the Sale Anzac Airshow, the Annemieke Mein Exhibition, Mirboo North Italian Festa, Victorian Bowls Open, Australian Table Tennis Championships, East Gippsland Winter Festival, Inverloch Village Feast and Mallacoota Wild Harvest Seafood Festival. As a result of this support our events program generated over 50,000 bed nights and \$10m in visitor expenditure. Leading this work is our Project Manager Events Gippsland David Elder who does an outstanding job delivering on our Gippsland Events Strategy by negotiating with event proponents and venues, seeking out new event opportunities, and delivering a high rate of return for all our local government partners.

Supply

To support these demand-side activities Destination Gippsland continues to build on the supply side by working with government and investors in developing new investment and infrastructure, and with industry on the planning, training and information they need to succeed. In the past year we have launched the Dark Skies /Gippsland Stargazing Project; seen new sections of the Great Southern Rail Trail have opened; supported new products and experiences at Wilsons Promontory Boat Tours; and saw the Metung Hot Springs successfully complete its first year of operation. We also ran two booked out Tourism Industry Forums; and celebrated the 10th year of the Ken Hore Mentoring Tourism Program.

Important tourism planning work was completed in 2024 with the following strategies developed with significant industry and local government contributions:

Gippsland Food Drink Agritourism Strategy – in partnership with Food and Fibre Gippsland, this work highlighted the opportunities and actions for our region to untap the potential of adding value to our food and drink producers and businesses to match growing visitor demand.

Gippsland Visitor Services Strategy – in partnership with local government this work focused on the areas to improve the methods of visitor servicing and information delivery across Gippsland. Understanding the current mix of physical Visitor Information Centres, digital channels and the anticipated ways future consumers will seek information and services is the core of the strategy.

Local Area Tourism Action Plans – in collaboration with local Business and Tourism Associations, community leaders and local government, five local plans were developed to provide a simple and achievable pathway to improve the visitor experiences, marketing and industry co-ordination in Inverloch, Yarram, Neerim South, Lakes Entrance, and Foster.

Special recognition is given to East Gippsland Shire Council for being the first region in Victoria to receive Eco Destination status from Eco Tourism Australia. This sets a high standard for Gippsland and demonstrated great leadership by Council.

Thank you to Janine Hayes, our Industry Development Manager, who has worked tirelessly on these supply side activities and remains passionate about helping the Gippsland industry succeed in the short-term while preparing the region for the long-term opportunities and challenges tourism faces.

Governance

I would also like to thank the Board for their leadership and insight to ensure our governance remains robust and our organisation's capacity serves the interests of our members and the broader Gippsland tourism industry. I would like to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of our Chair Jan Fitzgerald and Company Secretary Helen Rose.

I look forward to working with the Board and team to support the continued growth of the visitor economy in Gippsland.



Terry Robinson
CEO
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

Gippsland National and International Visitor Survey Data	2009 (base year)	2022 (last year)	2023 (this year)	1 year change	Overall change
Domestic overnight visitors	1.55m	2.66m	2.68m	+1%	+74%
Domestic visitor nights	5.03m	7.97m	8.04m	+1%	+60%
Domestic daytrips	2.99m	3.70m	4.45m	+20%	+49%
International overnight visitors	93,000	NA	44,000	NA	-53%
Total visitors	4.54m	6.37m	7.17m	+13%	+58%
Total Expenditure	\$1.33 billion	\$1.76 billion	\$1.89 billion	+6%	+42%

Results are from Tourism Research Australia and are for the year ending December 31, 2023, and are for mainland Gippsland and exclude Phillip Island.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2027

GIPPSLAND'S TOURISM VISION

Gippsland's natural beauty, outstanding experiences and life changing moments inspire the world to visit.

OUR AIM

To support the growth of the visitor economy in Gippsland.

OUR ROLE

As a Visitor Economy Partnership we provide leadership and management capability to deliver marketing that stimulates demand, as well as facilitating the supply of improved visitor experiences.

We will build strong governance, team capability, collaborative relationships with tourism operators, traditional owners, land managers, government and other key stakeholders.

Factors To Enable Success

- Diversify revenue streams to increase financial capacity and independence
- Continue strong governance and accountability on behalf of financial members
- Maintain team performance via professional development and providing a supportive and safe workplace culture
- Maximise opportunities available in the Visitor Economy Partnership model
- Strengthen partnerships and collaboration
- Advocate to grow tourism opportunities in Gippsland with all levels of government

We Value

- Putting the visitor first:
Make research based decisions
- Making a difference:
Build a strategic, Gippsland-wide legacy
- Advocating for Gippsland:
Through positive story-telling
- Collaborating to maximise our impact:
Create partnerships
- Striving to continually improve:
Benchmarking with best practice
- Responding quickly to opportunities and challenges:
Listening to industry
- Diverse contributions:
Provide a supportive team culture

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

GENERATING VISITOR DEMAND FOR GIPPSLAND

Marketing

Maximise the reach and impact of **Gippsland's All Kinds of Wonder brand**. Invest in targeted marketing campaigns, maintain consumer communications, increase our digital capability and be active in growing the **international market**.

Events

Support Events Gippsland to continue to secure new events to build a full calendar. Implement stage 2 and 3 of the Gippsland Events Strategy, work with Local Government partners to leverage the broader tourism benefits of business and leisure events.

Goals & Measures

- ✓ Market share
- ✓ Events value
- ✓ Visitor Expenditure
- ✓ Brand performance

IMPROVED SUPPLY OF VISITOR EXPERIENCES

Product

Facilitate investment in new tourism product. Look for opportunities in both public and private sector and advocate for Gippsland's priority projects.

- Gippsland Odyssey Rail Trail Network
- Gippsland Lakes Aquatic Trail
- Bass Coast Dinosaur Trail
- Nanjet/Yanakie Cultural Experience

Planning and Resources

Implement tourism plans. Continue to secure resources and action the Gippsland Destination Management Plan (DMP) and related strategies.

- Food Drink & Agritourism
- Tracks and Trails
- Gunaikurnai Aboriginal Tourism Strategy
- Events
- Visitor Services

Industry Development

Support tourism businesses. Provide networking opportunities and communication channels for professional development, and industry insights and research.

Elevate the importance of Indigenous, accessible and sustainable tourism opportunities in Gippsland. Adhere to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Goals & Measures

- ✓ Market share
- ✓ Events value
- ✓ Visitor Expenditure
- ✓ Brand 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)
- **Neil Travers**
(Chair Nominations and Remuneration Committee)
- **Andrew Clark**
- **Neil Plumridge**
- **Mark Dupe**
(Chair Audit, Finance, Risk and Governance Committee)
- **David Morcom**
- **Kerryn Ellis**
- **Steve Piasente**
- **Michelle Nicholson**
- **Nicola Pero**
- **Daniel Miller**
- **Greg Box**

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
- **Elysa Sorahan** Digital Marketing Manager



GENERATING VISITOR DEMAND

MARKETING GIPPSLAND: 2023/24

FINANCIAL YEAR 2024 WAS A YEAR OF STRONG PARTNERSHIP MARKETING, UNDERWRITTEN BY WEBSITE, SOCIAL MEDIA, NEWSLETTER GROWTH AND OUR PUBLIC RELATIONS AND PARTNERSHIP MARKETING CAMPAIGNS FOR GIPPSLAND.

Brand marketing: We continued to deliver brand marketing activity, harnessing the power of Gippsland: *All Kinds of Wonder* for the region across the financial year to continue our goal to create awareness and drive consideration.

Targeted campaign activity: We implemented tactical activity focussing on thematic content around partnership funded 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, with the website acting as the key call to action.

Public Relations: Guided by the content calendar and consumer research 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 continued to work with product across the region to develop commissionable programs and packages to ensure Gippsland's inclusion 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 work with the travel trade to build an understanding of what Gippsland can offer to the international visitor.

We continued to support **events and business events** to grow 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 website provides an information hub aiming to create awareness and inspire people to travel to Gippsland. We aim to raise awareness about all the things to see and do in Gippsland, and to actively encourage users to consider Gippsland for travel by providing them with 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 year, we created new product pages.

Our website is home to over 700 pages of content and over 500 business and event ATDW listings at any time, and delivers industry best-practice travel information in a comprehensive and visual way, with interactive maps, itineraries, event listings and news.

In 2023/24 the website had 783k page views, with an average page view of just under 3 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 339k people across the financial year, with an average open rate of over 43% for the year. The subscriber list increased to 36k by the end of the financial year, an increase of 42% year on year.



Social Media

We focused 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 95k followers across the platforms. In 2022/23 our social media reach was 5.58m and engagement at 118k.

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 \$11.25m 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

This year we delivered crisis recovery marketing for two significant events – flooding at Buchan in late December of 2023 which resulted in the closure of the Buchan Caves and the Reserve, and a weather event for Mirboo North in February 2024.

Both events significantly impacted the local communities, causing wide-spread damage and economic impact for both towns. In both cases, recovery through tourism was a desired outcome.

Recovering campaign for Mirboo North

Following the Mirboo North storm in February, Destination Gippsland undertook a recovery marketing campaign piece of work that included:

- A Weekend in Mirboo North landing page
- Featured content in our newsletters from March
- Social Media: 4 posts about Mirboo North to our 88k database of social media followers, via both Instagram and Facebook – postings on both 28 Feb and 28 March.
- Public Relations: in partnership with South Gippsland Shire Council, we co-hosted travel writer Jeremy Bourke on an extensive itinerary through the town and surrounds.
- Support from Visit Victoria through their marketing channels

Recovering campaign for Buchan

In partnership with the East Gippsland Shire Council, we delivered a recovery campaign for promoting visitor experiences to Buchan and surrounds. Led by the theme of “Buchan beyond the Caves” our aim was to showcase the other attributes of Buchan as a visitor destination. The campaign included:

- @Elisestraveldiary Influencer visit and posts
- An ongoing social media campaign for Buchan
- Organic Facebook and Instagram stories and posts
- A renewed 2-day Buchan itinerary post on visitgippsland.com.au
- Win a stay in Buchan competition

We also undertook video production for Buchan to create TVC assets for use from June to November 2024.





MARKETING ACTIVITY

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 extensive new content and itinerary creation, including 48 hours around Warragul, from Melbourne to Noojee and the Railway towns. A broadcast digital video campaign, image library development, a spring and autumn digital media campaign and influencer cooperative marketing were also included. Over the course of the year, it is estimated that we delivered over \$300k of advertising value equivalency for the West Gippsland region.

East Gippsland winter campaign

In 2024 we delivered an East Gippsland winter digital campaign, in partnership with EGMI. The campaign included themed blogs about Paynesville, extending weekends and road tripping through East Gippsland. Activity included homepage carousel ties, news and events modules, banners, a competition, social media posts, newsletter inclusions and a paid social media campaign.

Buchan and Bruthen tourism asset development

In addition to the disaster recovery campaign, we worked on an ongoing tourism marketing development piece for the towns of Buchan and Bruthen. Photography, videography, website content, influencer visit from @nathsway, social media content and PR formed the basis of this activity. The photography component of the asset development activity was delivered by East Gippsland Marketing (EGMI).

Latrobe City Villages campaign

In partnership with Latrobe City Council, we delivered an autumn promotional campaign. Content featured Boolarra Folk Festival, with a spotlight on Yinnar and a focus on picnic spots in the Latrobe region. The campaign also secured strong PR results.

Eat Drink Gippsland 5th edition

Production of the 5th edition of the popular Eat Drink Gippsland guide was underway 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.

Gippsland Walks and Rides Guide

During the year, a new Walks and Rides Gippsland brochures was delivered. The brochures highlight not only our signature rail trails but several great hiking and biking itineraries across the region. We also produced a new MTB map in partnership with the Gippsland MTB Club.

Bass Coast Villages Guide

In partnership with Bass Coast Shire Council, we created a guide to the villages of the Bass Coast, with an aim to raise awareness of what the small villages of the region offer.

The printed guide aims to complement a similar guide for the towns and villages of Phillip Island.



EVENT MARKETING

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

- The East Gippsland Winter Festival
- Italian Festa, Mirboo North
- Creative Harvest, West Gippsland
- The International Rose Garden Festival, Morwell
- Kilcunda Lobster Festival
- Neerim Bower Sculpture Festival
- Wild Harvest Seafood Festival
- The Anzac Weekend Airshow, Sale
- Annemeike Mein Exhibition, Gippsland Art Gallery
- Tinamba Food and Wine Festival
- The Fish Creek Tea Cosy Festival
- Loch Food and Wine Festival
- Fishy Stories, Fish Creek
- The International Rose Garden Festival, Morwell
- Walhalla Winter Night Train
- Mirboo North Winterfest
- The West Gippsland Rail Towns Food & Wine Festival

The Village Feast

November saw the delivery of The Village Feast (TVF), the marquee event to the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival (MFWF) regional edition, held in Inverloch. The sold-out event was a signature event on the Gippsland events schedule.

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

Annemieke Mien: A Life's Work – A Retrospective, Gippsland Art Gallery

A partnership with the Art Gallery to promote the textile craft exhibition at The Gippsland Art Gallery in Sale formed a key autumn campaign for Gippsland. The campaign was delivered across social media advertising, and a broadcast video on demand (BVOD) ad campaign, with the video also running across YouTube. We engaged with specialist content writers to deliver activity to support the exhibition.

The Anzac Airshow, Sale

We once again partnered with Wellington Shire Council to deliver activity for the bi-annual Sale Airshow, through native content and via a paid social media ad campaign.

Wild Harvest Seafood Festival

We partnered with the Wild Harvest Seafood Festival in Mallacoota to amplify marketing activity for the event in Melbourne, Gippsland and across southern NSW and into the ACT. The activity includes website content, newsletter inclusions, social media posts and PR activity.

Sporting events

We undertook event marketing partnerships with the Victorian Bowls Championship, the Tennis Australia Pro Tour and the Table Tennis Championship event, encouraging visitors competing at these events to stay longer and spend more in region.

We also facilitated promotional activity to support The Tour of Gippsland, for the Summer of Surf TV in East Gippsland, the Junior Surf Titles with Surfing Australia, and for the Bicycle Network/Tour of Gippsland. We also provided collateral for The Teachers Games which took place in Traralgon. Additionally, The Great Vic Bike Ride, visiting East Gippsland, Wellington Shire, South Gippsland, and Bass Coast Shire were supported through our marketing activities.





VISIT VICTORIA COOPERATIVE MARKETING

We undertook a cooperative campaign with Visit Victoria again in FY24. The FY24 campaign was a digital campaign that included newsletter, social media and PR.

Visit Victoria activity

Visit Victoria have shared assets from the series Adam and Poh's Great Australian Bites, which filmed across the Bass and South Gippsland areas. Venues included Dirty Three Wines, Coal Creek Community Park & Museum, the Wanderer Adventures Cruise at Wilsons Prom and at the Meeniyan Garlic Festival.

Visit Victoria have run a schedule of LED advertisements across last AFL season highlighting Gippsland. The ad runs across all Victorian team games at the MCG and Marvel Stadium, in July and August of 2023.

Visit Victoria also delivered their international mentoring program for 2023 and 2024. In 2023, Tour Local participated in the program. The Buchan Motel, and the River Drive Motel in East and South Gippsland respectively represented the region in the 2024 program.

Visit Victoria also ran their annual Marketing Excellence Program in 2023 with Gurneys Cidery in South Gippsland selected to be part of the program.

Sydney Melbourne Touring Route

Gippsland continue to partner with the Sydney to Melbourne Touring route (SMT) to provide international support for Gippsland tourism operators.

During FY24, SMT represented Gippsland on a Visit Victoria mission across the UK and Europe in February and March 2024. They also attended a NSW mission during October/November 2023.

SMT partnered with the Best of Travel Group in Germany and the Netherlands as part of a Visit Victoria touring route campaign with Singapore Airlines. The campaign delivered in key markets from October to June and featuring a microsite, website promotional activity, social media, newsletters, and agency specific marketing.

In May SMT hosted a live stream event at the Metung Hot Springs, providing updates to travel trade worldwide about East Gippsland, including the Hot Springs, Raymond Island and local trade ready accommodation providers around the region.

Additionally, SMT represented the region at the Australian Tourism Exchange and in significant pre and post touring activity.

INTERNATIONAL AND TRADE MARKETING PARTNERSHIPS

Destination Gippsland continues to work with the travel trade to promote Gippsland internationally as a visitor destination. We once again attended the Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE) in May to represent Gippsland. ATE took place in Melbourne for the first time since 2015.

We also attended the Media Marketplace in Melbourne on the Sunday prior to ATE, meeting with over 25 international media.

Pre and post famil program

A significant benefit of holding the event in Melbourne was the opportunity to host buyers and media on familiarisation trips (familis) around the state, offering them a first-hand experience of the tourism products that they promote and sell overseas.

There were 4 streams of familis around ATE that came to Gippsland, including media, luxe, VIP and general familis.

Visit Victoria have reported that Gippsland garnered the most interest from buyers for familis this year and hosted 3 groups in region.

Destination Gippsland provided detailed on-ground support and assistance in the organisation and delivery of the famil program. Attendees included 63 buyers and media across the 2 weeks.

ATE attendance

Over the course of the 4-day event, Destination Gippsland hosted 89 meetings on the booth with Product Managers, wholesale sales staff, media, retail Aussie Specialists, Tourism Australia and Visit Victoria staff from around the world. Other Gippsland businesses in attendance were Walhalla's Star Hotel, Metung Hot Springs and Wanderer Adventures (Wilson's Prom Cruises) as well as Parks Victoria and SMT.

Additionally, Gippsland was included in an ATE Observers Program where 8 businesses representatives were selected to "walk through" the ATE trade show floor, as well as day passes for council tourism officers and properties of significant size, such as Mariners Cove and Saltwater Group.

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.

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 new Events venues Gippsland launched this year. Residing alongside businesseventsgippsland.com.au, this website, eventvenuesgippsland.com.au, aims to showcase the various venues across the region capable of holding business, sporting and arts & cultural events. Gippsland participated in the BEV Planners Guide for 2024, and we provided a product update to 35 Melbourne Meeting planners in partnership with Business Events Victoria, providing information and visual support to train them in the product available across Gippsland to host business events.

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.

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.



EVENTS GIPPSLAND

EVENTS GIPPSLAND, HAVING BEEN ESTABLISHED IN 2021 IS NOW INTO ITS THIRD 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, 81 events have been secured in Phase 1 of the project. Of these, 54 events have been held and 17 are scheduled to be held through to 2030, though most are scheduled in 2024.

Projected outcomes:

- 180k additional visitors
- 200k bed nights generated
- \$55m economic benefit for Gippsland
- ROI of 62:1

Supporting projects:

- Creation of an event owner facing website, 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 owners handbook to better show the facilities on offer across Gippsland.

- Region wide agreement with Sports Marketing Australia means that the whole region has the opportunity to host high participation events. Working as a region, we've negotiated reduced costs to LGA's and a single point of contact means a more streamlined process for securing events. Across the region, 53 events were secured, 23 were declined and a further 17 events are under consideration.

Event Snapshot – Table Tennis Victoria Agreement 2023-2030

- A unique 8-year agreement where Events Gippsland and Latrobe City Council funded the purchase of world class equipment in return for 2 x State Championships per year, resulting in 16 events in total.
- 60 new table tennis tables, court barriers and umpires chairs, all stored onsite at the Gippsland Regional Indoor Sports Stadium.
- Projected to bring some 500 athletes and accompanying partners per annum, resulting in approximately \$3.5m economic benefit over the life of the agreement.
- Has already attracted a National Table Tennis event due to the quality of equipment and facilities and the low cost and streamlined logistics resulting from the equipment living on-site.

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.





HELPING BUSINESSES GROW

DURING 2023/24:

Industry Training

Gippsland Tourism Forums: Destination Gippsland hosted two tourism forums over the course of 2023/24 at locations in Latrobe City Council at the Gippsland Performing Arts Centre (GPAC) and East Gippsland Shire Council at Forestec home to the GunaiKurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation. (GLaWAC) The forums are an opportunity for Gippsland operators both local to the hosting area and from across the region to hear updates from Destination Gippsland staff along with other notable presenters.

Over 120 people registered for the forums with the forum at Latrobe City focusing on accessibility and sustainability. Guest presenters were Ryan Smith from the Access Agency who provided wonderful insights into the importance of looking at accessibility in tourism space from a range of different ways. Shannon Scullion from Eco Tourism Australia spoke about the Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard, a great tool for operators to engage and understand their sustainability journey in relation to environmental, socio economic, cultural impacts and sustainable management.

The forum in East Gippsland was combined with the launch of the Dark Skies project, attendees were able to listen and connect with the work that GLaWAC are doing through both a welcome to country and a cultural session after the launch.

Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW): Destination Gippsland continues to provide 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.

Projects

Local Area Tourism Actions Plans: Funding received through the State Government enabled Destination Gippsland to engage in Local Area Tourism Action planning with five towns across Gippsland. These towns were Lakes Entrance, Inverloch, Neerim South, Foster/Toora and Yarram. Under the guidelines, the development of these plans was to create opportunities for the local visitor economy stakeholders to discuss local tourism ideas and with an understanding of local issues prioritise solutions and provide opportunities for input and encourage local community leadership and engagement.

These local area tourism action plans were supported through the local town's tourism organisations or chambers and the respective local Councils across Gippsland.



Workforce Development: Workforce Development provides the opportunity for businesses to be flexible, adaptable, self-driven, well trained and skilled.

To assist and support the Gippsland tourism industry we are providing opportunities to access initiatives that will educate and train individuals and businesses to meet their current and future needs to maintain a sustainable competitive economic advantage. The Workforce Development Action Plan was developed to provide guidance in this area.

Ken Hore Tourism Mentoring Program: The KHTMP is a collaboration between Destination Gippsland, Destination Phillip Island and Bass Coast Shire Council.

The program is designed to provide annual career development opportunities to young tourism professionals or new entrants in the Gippsland and Phillip Island Tourism Industry. The program is open across all the Gippsland Region and has been running for the past nine years. Once again, the program hosted some wonderful participants who were able to engage with a range of tourism networks throughout the year. We look forward to the upcoming 10th anniversary.

Victorian Tourism Awards: We are always excited for our Gippsland operators to enter the Victorian Tourism Awards and celebrate their successes. Congratulations to the 2023 entrants who worked tirelessly in their businesses and whose submissions were rewarded and recognised at the state awards ceremony. The entrants from across the mainland Gippsland region who were named as finalists were:

Bass Coast Shire Council:

Silver – Local Government Award for Tourism

BIG4 Ingenia Holidays Inverloch:

Finalist (Highly Commended) – Caravan & Holiday Parks

Boat Harbour Jetty B&B:

Finalist (Highly Commended) – Hosted Accommodation

Harman Wines:

Bronze – Tourism Wineries, Distilleries & Breweries

Mercure Warragul:

Finalist – 4-4.5 Star Deluxe Accommodation

Tallawarra Homestead:

Bronze – Hosted Accommodation

Tour Local:

Bronze – Tour & Transport Operators

Communication

The Communications Plan for 2023/2024 has focused on providing comprehensive support through various channels including monthly newsletters, social media engagement and website updates. These channels allow us to effectively engage with the Gippsland tourism industry.

The industry website is regularly updated to offer current and relevant information across a range of topics, aiding stakeholders in navigating the visitor economy.

Specifically crisis communication is consistently reviewed to ensure timely dissemination of critical information, helping businesses across the region to respond effectively to challenges.

Overall the plan emphasises proactive communication and support to strengthen industry resilience and engagement.

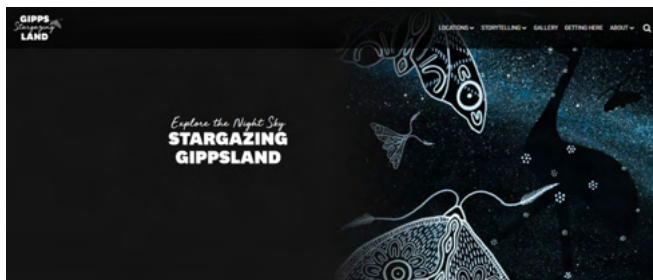


VISITOR EXPERIENCES

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

Investment and infrastructure

New tourism product and investment continued to be developed in Gippsland over the past 12 months. The Dark Skies Stargazing Project was a prime example of this that created a visitor experience by providing interpretation and viewing assets in 11 locations in East Gippsland and Wellington. With funding support from Regional Development Victoria, the collaboration between Destination Gippsland, Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation, Parks Victoria and many communities will encourage overnight stays through storytelling and interpretation of the night sky. For more information go to www.stargaziggippsland.com.au



The focus on new tracks and trails continued with the progression of the Omeo Mountain Bike Park and the opening of new sections of the Great Southern Rail Trail. Future investment in tourism assets was supported with three projects receiving financial support for planning and business case development from the State's Enabling Tourism Fund (Wandilla Estate South Gippsland, Omeo Historic Precinct, and the Walhalla Goldfields Railway). Previously supported projects also progressed with the Metung Hot Springs commencing stage 2 after a successful opening and completion of stage 1; Nanjet Cultural Precinct completing its master planning, and the Kongwak Butter Factory undertaking considerable planning, design and scoping works for the site.

We continue to advocate for funding for our major project priorities that are the Nanjet Cultural Project at Yanakie, Bass Coast Dinosaur Trail, Gippsland Odyssey Trail and the Gippsland Lakes Aquatic Trail.

Tourism Planning

Important tourism planning work was completed in 2024 with the following strategies developed with significant industry and local government contributions:

Gippsland Food Drink Agritourism Strategy – in partnership with Food and Fibre Gippsland, this work highlighted the opportunities and actions for our region to untap the potential of adding value to our food and drink producers and businesses to match growing visitor demand.

Gippsland Visitor Services Strategy – in partnership with local government this work focused on the areas to improve the methods of visitor servicing and information delivery across Gippsland. Understanding the current mix of physical Visitor Information Centres, digital channels and the anticipated ways future consumers will seek information and services is the core of the strategy.

Local Area Tourism Action Plans – in partnership with local Business and Tourism Associations, community leaders and local government, five local plans were developed to provide a simple and achievable pathway to improve the visitor experiences, marketing and industry co-ordination in Inverloch, Yarram, Neerim South, Lakes Entrance, and Foster.

The overarching tourism strategy guiding all of this work is the Gippsland Destination Management Plan Towards 2030. All the above examples were recommended actions in the GDMP. To date 75% of the actions have been completed with the remaining 25% the focus for the immediate future.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

WE WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR FINANCIAL MEMBERS AND MARKETING AND PROJECT PARTNERS AND THANK THEM FOR THEIR ONGOING SUPPORT.

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:

- Buchan Business and Tourism Association
- Bunurong Land Council, Alpine Resorts Victoria
- 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 Art Gallery, Sale
- Gippsland Mountain Biking Club
- Gippsland Regional Partnership
- Gunaikurnai Land and Water Corporation
- Latrobe City Business Tourism Association
- Latrobe Valley Authority
- 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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