

# LODDON SHIRE COUNCIL

## TOURISM STRATEGY 2016-2019



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## The importance of tourism to our municipality

Loddon Shire understands the importance of growing tourism, not only to our local economy, but also to the regional and state economy. By increasing the number of visitors to the Shire (particularly higher yield visitors) by providing goods, services and experiences for them to spend money on; by encouraging them to stay as long as possible; and by encouraging them to spread the word about the quality visitor experiences Loddon Shire and its towns has to offer, we strive to:

- increase viability of existing businesses through more trade
- encourage new investment in the Shire as people set up businesses to support the needs and demands of visitors and local residents
- create more jobs both within the tourism sector and other supporting industries
- attract new residents to the Shire through the positive experiences they have had as visitors
- increase the sense of community pride through quality tourism offerings
- provide more liveable communities for our residents
- encourage greater respect and appreciation for our natural assets.

## Strategic planning support for tourism

Tourism is a major contributor to economic development within Loddon Shire. Three of the key objectives listed in the Loddon Shire Council Plan 2013-2017 are tied in very closely with outcomes that tourism can support, i.e.:

- Champion our Agrifood enterprises
- Make our towns more liveable and memorable
- Grow and diversify our economy.

In its Economic Development Strategy, Council's vision is to have a thriving tourism sector, focusing on food and heritage experiences. New jobs will exist within tourism by 2019. Further, it states that Loddon Shire will be known as one of regional Victoria's NBN and Wi-Fi hotspots and, more generally, for excellence in food production.

## Our tourism strengths and opportunities

Loddon Shire will focus on developing quality products by building on the strengths and opportunities of our region such as:

- nature based tourism
- agri-business
- historic and cultural features
- indigenous heritage
- the location of some of our major towns on the Calder Highway (and potential access to many visitors passing through towns).

## What we aim to achieve

Council recognises that tourism is operating in an ever changing landscape, and in order to continue to attract visitors to the area, some things need to be done differently in the future.

Research tells us that visitors are looking for opportunities to explore lesser-known destinations, especially those that are untouched or unique. Consequently marketing campaigns are increasingly focussed on image-driven, emotive and absorbing experiences.

There is also a growing interest in food trails, festivals, tours, daytrip food safaris, cooking schools, meet the producers, etc. In fact, many travellers want to feel like locals, i.e. meet the local shopkeepers, rent a home and hire a bicycle. This is the type of visitor experience that must underpin future investment in tourism in Loddon Shire.

By strategically focussing on the following five key areas over the next three years, tourism in Loddon Shire is likely to continue to grow and to provide visitors to the area with unique and memorable experiences and local tourism operators with enjoyable, sustainable and viable businesses:

- product development
- industry development
- research
- marketing
- partnerships.

Council will be rewarded with an increased sense of activity within the Shire, increased revenue from external investments and purchases, in attractive and interesting settings which are well utilised by both local residents and visitors to the area.

Our specific objectives are to:

- develop an array of quality tourism products and services for the region (e.g. events, attractions, trails, itineraries, indigenous tourism – which in turn may encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more)
- provide attractive township settings to encourage visitation
- facilitate the development of a variety of different accommodation options for visitors to the areas
- provide accessible experiences for visitors
- facilitate a variety of events
- promote towns in the region and their distinct personalities and offerings to tourists (through preparation of marketing plans)
- promote greater awareness of tourism products and services in the region
- develop the capacity of the local tourism industry to be sustainable and successful (and thereby encourage more businesses and new jobs)
- develop effective partnerships and networking opportunities
- undertake research that enables the tourism sector to grow and provide quality products and services that meet the needs of visitors to the area.

By achieving these objectives and shifting some of our focus to higher yield visitors, we hope to increase the number of visitors to the Shire, their length of stay and the amount of money they spend on local goods and services.

### **Developing products**

We have identified a number of gaps in terms of tourism products and services, and will work towards filling these gaps. Specific areas of focus in relation to product development include:

- Advocate for the development of a major attraction or a unique event
- develop itineraries to encourage people to follow their interests
- encourage the establishment of additional accommodation options

- encourage the establishment of quality food and coffee outlets
- encourage indigenous tourism to continue to grow (particularly in Boort)
- encourage the development of nature based tourism activities such as walking, cycling, canoeing, sky diving, etc jointly between Council and the private sector.

### **Developing the capacity of tourism businesses**

Loddon Shire Council will invest resources into developing the capacity of local tourism operators to improve their skills and subsequently grow tourism in the Shire. Key areas where support is required include:

- improve the technology skills of local tourism operators so that they are able to promote their products and services through Trip Advisor, Google Maps, instagram, facebook, Youtube, etc.
- encourage local tourism operators to develop online marketing and booking systems that can be accessed via computers, smart phones and tablets
- encourage local tourism operators to provide access to or free Wi-Fi at accommodation venues, Visitor Information Centres and other key locations
- encourage local tourism operators to increase their usage of EFTPOS in their businesses
- continue to hold the bi-monthly Networking Dinner for local tourism operators
- provide professional development training opportunities and encourage networking opportunities for both tourism operators and Council's economic development and tourism staff to identify issues and opportunities, enhance skill levels and to work collaboratively by sharing knowledge and resources.
- Collaboration with local operators and Development and Tourism committees for township websites

### **Research**

Data collection will continue to remain an important tool which allows us to evaluate the success of our actions and to identify gaps in service delivery or provision of facilities. With the assistance of local tourism operators, we need to understand the way visitors are travelling across the region and the information sources they are engaging with. We then need to feed this information back to local tourism operators to assist them with their future planning.

### **Marketing focus**

In order to provide a more focussed approach to marketing, we intend to change our focus from marketing the entire Shire as a single destination, to promoting towns and their unique personalities and offerings individually. In order to do this, marketing plans will be jointly prepared by Council in partnership with local tourism operators/organisations.

Loddon Shire has also recently joined forces with Bendigo Regional Tourism, a body comprised of the tourism departments from City of Greater Bendigo, Central Goldfields Shire and Mt Alexander Shire, to collectively promote the region through:

- regional marketing plans
- a shared website
- PR and media program
- social media program.

It is anticipated that through this alliance, where Bendigo becomes the hub (the key location visitors will be drawn to) and the outlying shires are the spokes (destinations that visitors are encouraged to explore while staying in Bendigo), that visitor numbers and visitor yield to central Victoria will increase.

Recognising that visitors are dispersed around the Shire at different rates according to the season or according to events held in towns, visitor information also needs to be delivered differently. In the next three years there will be a greater focus on:

- more creative forms of on ground delivery of information for visitors including touch screens and mobile or pop up visitor information services (particularly in locations such as Bridgewater and Boort or in a town when a major event is being held there)
- working in partnership with local development associations and tourism associations to encourage them to take on more responsibility for the marketing of their towns, particularly as the region will be promoted on a town rather than entire Shire basis in the future.

## **Partners**

To help us deliver the tourism outcomes we desire, we will need to work in close partnership with other organisations, including:

- Tourism Victoria
- Victorian Tourism Industry Council
- Bendigo Regional Tourism
- Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Cooperation
- Goldfields Visitor Centre Networks
- Murray Regional Tourism
- Parks Victoria
- Goulburn Murray Water
- North Central Catchment Authority
- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
- Local businesses
- Local event organisers
- Local Development / Tourism Committees
- Little Lake Boort Committee.

## **Aligning with Economic Development**

Tourism is a key component of economic development. Currently tourism and economic development priorities, strategies and actions are contained within two separate plans. To improve opportunities and synergies, the two separate strategies will be amalgamated into an Economic Development and Tourism Strategy to be prepared in 2019 for Loddon Shire when both plans are due for renewal.



## **1 PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Loddon Shire Tourism Strategy is to help guide Council to understand where to best invest its resources in terms of developing the local tourism industry over the next three years. Council's previous Tourism Strategy was completed in 2010.

In order to identify the key areas on which to focus in the future, both existing tourism operators and those who may like to set up some sort of enterprise in the future were consulted with via written surveys and through a tourism operator workshop. In addition, a range of local, regional and state level tourism and economic strategies, including Council's previous Tourism Strategy (2010), were reviewed to understand future directions, gaps, barriers, opportunities and synergies in relation to tourism products, services and expectations.

The resulting strategy therefore identifies the level of support required by Loddon Shire Council and its partners to take tourism to the next level within the municipality and to help operators to achieve their goals.

## **2 BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

To successfully deliver the new Loddon Shire Tourism Strategy an additional \$20,000 is required over three years.

## **3 RISK ANALYSIS**

No major risks have been identified in relation to implementing the strategy.

## 4 POLICY REVIEW

A total of 18 documents were reviewed in order to gain an understanding of the context in which tourism industry operates at a local, regional and state level. Key points arising from these documents that need to be considered in the delivery of tourism in Loddon Shire into the future include:

### Infrastructure

- Invest funds into Caravan Parks.
- Improve streetscapes and river frontages.
- Improve access to and usage of technology, e.g. Wi-Fi, websites, social media, blogs, travel sites, etc.
- Further develop cycling / walking trails, canoe trails.

### Promotion

- Promote tourism attractions, accommodation and resources through the Bendigo Regional Tourism website.
- Further develop the accessible accommodation guide and continue to promote to existing and new operators.

### Branding

- Recognise the Shire's primary product strength as nature based tourism.
- Establish Loddon Shire as a Recreational Vehicle (RV) friendly Shire.

### Industry development

- Encourage investment in tourism accommodation.
- Collection of localised data from tourism operators from across the Shire.
- Consider providing visitor information in other locations in the Shire as a pop up mobile service.
- Continue industry development training.

### Product

- Provide greater focus on local produce and farm gate sales (agri-tourism).
- Further develop indigenous tourism.
- Encourage development of adventure tourism.
- Further develop festivals and events.
- Further develop culture and heritage tourism.
- Encourage development of farm stays.
- Develop touring routes and packages.

### Partnerships

- Work with a range of partners including City of Greater Bendigo, Mt Alexander Shire, Central Goldfields Shire, Parks Victoria, Goulburn Murray Water, North Central Catchment Management Authority and Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

## 5 TOURISM TRENDS

The trends currently impacting tourism at a local, regional, state, national and international level which may have an impact on the Loddon Shire region include:

### Accommodation

- Rapid increase in the use of Airbnb worldwide by travellers – it hosted more than 10 million people in 2014.
- Development of accommodation inside or just outside national parks.
- Increased demand for pet-friendly accommodation.
- Having holidays close to home is expected to increase.
- More and more travellers want to stay in accommodation that is unique and has a personality of its own.

### Chinese market

- It is expected that the Chinese market for tour and activity companies will continue to grow. Key social media sites to advertise on are: Weibo, QZone and Kaisin00.
- In 2013 100 million Chinese travellers spent US\$129 billion on international tourism.
- Approximately two thirds of Chinese prefer to travel independently.
- Chinese market is more likely to 'sit back and enjoy' rather than take part in outdoor activities.

### Technology

- Many travellers expect accommodation venues to provide free Wi-Fi. Internet access is considered to be the most important hotel amenity for business and leisure travellers.
- There is a growing trend for travellers to want to 'unplug and completely sign-off from work on holiday.'
- Travel reviews, such as those on Trip advisor 'have a significant influence on travel decisions by younger adults (Millennials)' – almost 80% of them state that they are often or sometimes influenced by reviews.
- Over half of the Millennials in the US post photos or comments on social media sites such as facebook, twitter or instagram daily or hourly. By providing free Wi-Fi in town centres or tourist areas, Millennials help use social media to help market an area.
- Social media is expected to be the primary way to generate travel bookings and revenue for half of the travel industry in 2016.
- Travellers seek information increasingly on mobile digital platforms such as smart phones and tablets; hence tourism operators and bodies need to consider apps, mobile payments and meta-search functions. 25% of all smart phone owners will book using their smart phone and 50% of all tablet owners will book with their tablet.
- The best tourism websites today are considered to be 'image-driven, emotive and absorbing'.
- Most travellers will look at multiple sites and read reviews when planning their holiday.
- Online bloggers have an increasingly powerful role in influencing potential tourism sites (or encouraging people not to visit such sites).
- Tourism bodies need to produce videos. A site is 50 times more likely to appear on Google's first page if it has a YouTube video. 85% of users will book a tour after watching a good quality video.
- Good photography on websites, apps, etc is critical.
- Travel websites need to load quickly or potential consumer will go elsewhere and Google will rank the site lower.
- Email marketing, if done correctly, is still an effective tool.
- Google ads help to drive traffic to a website and put the site at the top of the page – important given that 78% of people never click past the first page of Google search results.

- Hotels are using technology such as Beacon to help people check in quickly and as a remote key to rooms.
- Companies such as Apple are attempting to design end to end travel solutions all from one app.

### **Experiences**

- Tourism bodies need to find and promote the unique and quirky features of their area to capture the imagination of potential visitors.
- Tourists are 'looking for opportunities to explore lesser-known destinations, especially those that are untouched or unique.'
- There is growing interest in food trails, festivals, tours, daytrip food safaris, cooking schools, meet the producers, etc.
- Glamping (higher standard of camping) and safari style accommodation linked to gourmet food, wine and exciting nature experiences are in demand.
- Increased interest in engaging in water based activities which allow visitors to interact with wildlife, e.g. platypus, whales, turtles, etc.
- There is demand for quality golf courses by international visitors, particularly those that offer added bonuses such as kangaroos.
- There is demand for fishing trips with experienced fishing expedition operators.
- Events such as triathlons and Tough Mudder have grown rapidly and attract participants from other locations.
- Many travellers want to feel like locals, i.e. meet the local shopkeepers, rent a home and hire a bicycle.

### **Purpose**

- Consumption of travel experiences signals social status.
- There is a merging of business and leisure travel. People often choose whether or not they will attend a meeting or conference based on the location.

### **Older adults**

- Older adults are more likely to travel closer to home than overseas, more likely to travel in off-peak seasons and more likely to take longer holidays. Given that approximately one third of older adults have some form of physical disability; accessibility will be important for accommodation and attractions.

### **Nature-based tourism**

- Growth in nature-based tourism is forecast. 73% of seniors and 71% of US Millennials like to engage with nature or take part in adventure activities.

### **Cultural tourism**

- There is growing interest in 'intangible heritage' – popular culture, traditions and storytelling. People are most interested in participating, rather than just observing.

### **Source of trend information** (viewed 15/2/16):

- Trek Soft (Australia): <https://www.treksoft.com/en/blog/travel-industry-trends-2016>
- Tourism Australia (Australia): <http://www.tourism.australia.com/story-ideas/destinations-2015-travel-trends.aspx>
- Resonance Consultancy (USA): <http://www.slideshare.net/chrisfair/15-024-res-webinar-tourism-2020-high-res-opt>
- Service (South Africa): <http://www.servicepublication.co.za/articles/tourism-13786.html>
- Senshi Digital (UK): <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20141104213614-17462418-top-10-tourism-marketing-trends-for-2015-infographic>
- The Economic Times (India): [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-01-14/news/58066349\\_1\\_travel-space-hoteltontight-technology](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-01-14/news/58066349_1_travel-space-hoteltontight-technology)

## 6 TOURISM IN LODDON SHIRE

### 6.1 Tourism assets in Loddon Shire

The key tourism assets in Loddon Shire are:

<b>Asset</b>	<b>Details</b>
Nature based tourism opportunities	Bushwalking, camping, picnicking, BBQs, bird watching, animal viewing, cycling, mountain bike riding, canoeing, kayaking waterskiing, boating, fishing, horse riding, orienteering, photography, e.g. Terrick Terrick National Park, Kooyoora State Park, Leaghur State Park, Loddon River, Boort Wetlands, Mount Hope and The "Hill" Pyramid Hill
Cultural and heritage opportunities	Historic streetscapes, Aboriginal heritage sites, gold rush relics, museums, cemeteries
Agri-tourism opportunities	Wineries, farms, food producers (olives, tomatoes, chocolates, jams, etc)
Events	Waterskiing, cycling events, spring festival, Detector Jamboree, Boort Agricultural Show, Wedderburn Engine Rally, Kooyoora Wildflower Show, Rheola Carnival, Pyramid Hill Multi-cultural Festival
Transport	Loddon Shire is on the way to a number of key destinations. The Calder Highway and Loddon Valley Highway are used by a large number of people travelling from places such as Melbourne or Bendigo to Swan Hill or Mildura. Dingee and Pyramid Hill are both connected to rail.

### 6.2 Visitors to Loddon Shire

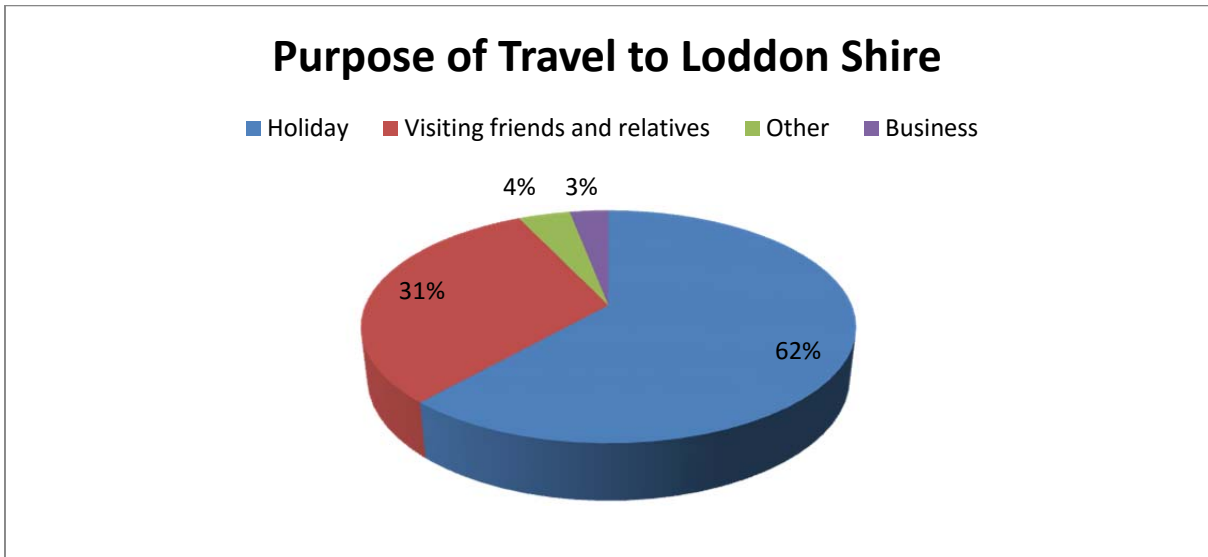
Visitor information has been sourced from the Bendigo Region Destination Management Plan (2015)<sup>1</sup>

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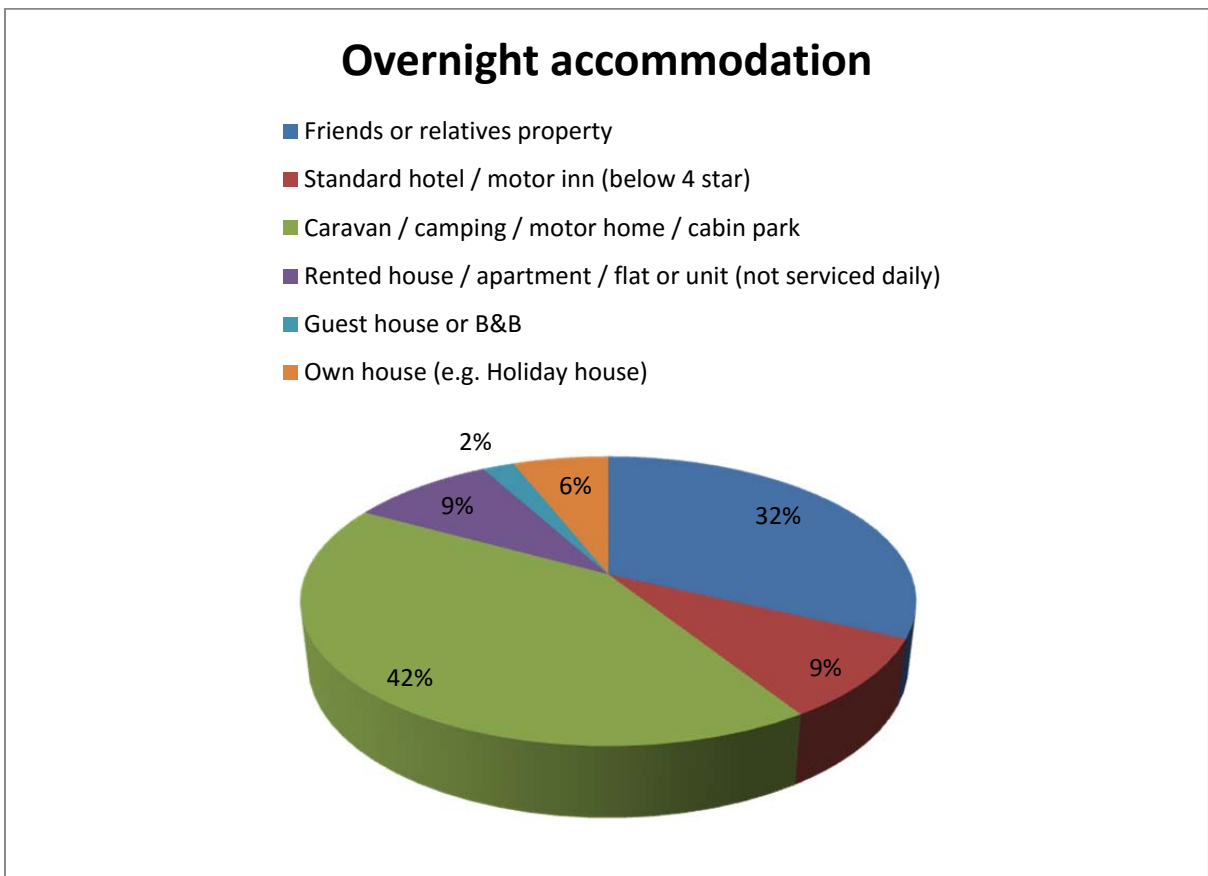
<sup>1</sup> Bendigo Regional Tourism (2015) Bendigo Region Destination Management Plan

### 6.2.1 Overnight visitors

There are approximately 47,486 overnight visitors annually to Loddon Shire. The primary purpose of their visit is for holidays, as outlined in the following graph:



The main types of accommodation utilised by visitors to Loddon Shire is a caravan park, as detailed in the following graph:



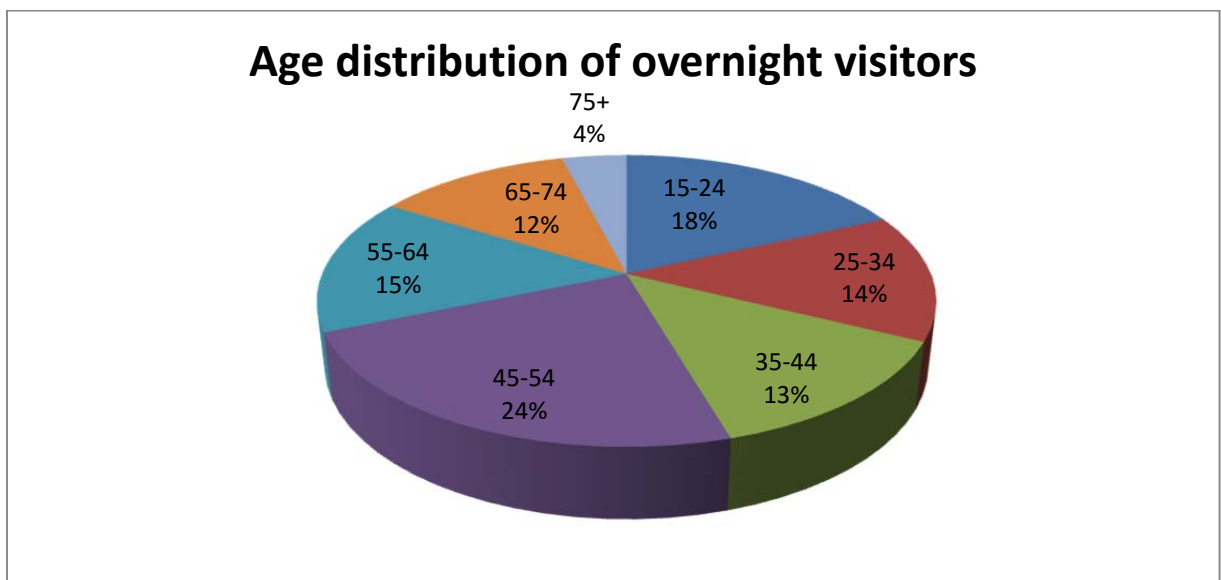
The Bendigo Region Destination Management Plan (2015) Appendix (pg 11) noted that 8.5% of overnight visitors to Loddon Shire are likely to go cycling during their trip (compared with 2.8% for Regional Victoria and 0.7% for Bendigo).

The Bendigo Region Destination Management Plan (2015) Appendix (pg 12) notes that the most likely activities to be undertaken by overnight visitors to Loddon Shire are:

Activity	Percentage of overnight visitors
Visit friends and relatives	39.1%
Eat out / dine at a restaurant and / or cafe	29.2%
Pubs, clubs, disco, etc	24.5%
Sightseeing / looking around	22.8%
Bushwalking	19.7%
Play other sports	12.6%
Visit national parks / state parks	12.2%
Go shopping for pleasure	11.8%
Picnics or BBQs	11.6%
Go to markets	6.2%
Visit farms	5.7%
Exercise, gym or swimming	5.5%
Go on a day trip to another place	4.2%
Visit museums or art galleries	3.5%
Visit history, heritage buildings, sites or monuments	3.5%
Attend festivals, fairs or cultural events	2.0%
Visit botanical or other public gardens	1.6%
Attend an organised sporting event	1.2%
Visit wineries	0.6%

Cycling is not identified as one of the key activities.

Visitors to Loddon Shire are relatively well dispersed across age cohorts, as shown in the following graph:

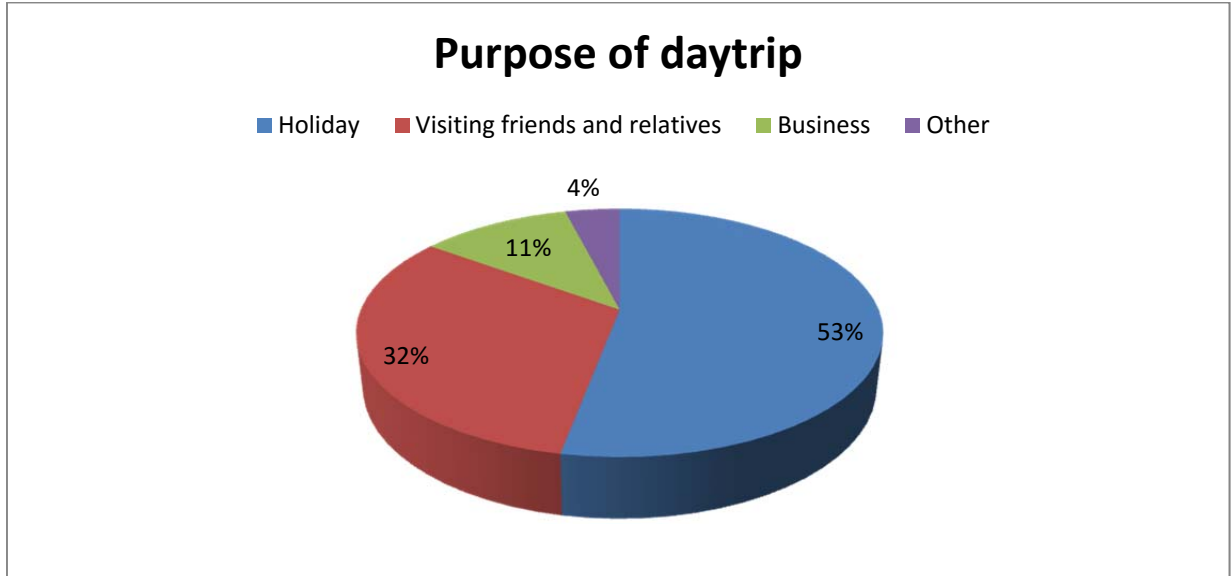


Note that children under 15 years of age have not been included. Given that the largest age cohort is 45-54 and that the main reason for visitation is for a holiday, it is expected that a reasonable number of visitors to Loddon Shire are also under 15 years of age.

### 6.2.2 Daytrip visitation

There are approximately 119,715 day trippers to Loddon Shire annually. The majority of these day-trippers come from the Bendigo Region (62%), with a further 27% from other areas in regional Victoria. Eleven percent (11%) of day visitors come from Melbourne.

Day trippers primarily visit Loddon Shire for a holiday, as shown in the following graph:



### 6.2.3 International visitors

A specific breakdown of the number of international visitors to the Loddon region is not available due to sampling limitations. However, the Bendigo Region primarily attracts international visitors from the following locations:

- New Zealand 22%
- United Kingdom 21%
- United States of America 9%
- Other Europe 5%
- China 4%
- Canada 4%

International visitors primarily visit the Bendigo region for a holiday (42%); to visit friends and relatives (35%); for business (11%); for another reason (6%); for employment (3%); and for education (3%).

### 6.2.4 Financial contribution of tourism

Tourism in Loddon Shire generates approximately \$17.89 million in direct output, which accounts for 2.72% of the direct output within the municipality. Visitor spend contributes to the creation of 100 tourism sector jobs, which accounts for 4.04% of employment in Loddon Shire.



### 6.3 Target market

The key target market identified for the Bendigo region, using Roy Morgan's Bendigo Region Lifestyle Leaders survey<sup>2</sup> is Lifestyle Leaders. This group of people are "educated, professional and progressive individuals who enjoy seeking out new information and being the first to try new products. They have a higher level of discretionary expenditure than the general population so they can afford to indulge more often in travel, with a particular desire to escape city life and embrace nature/outdoors and new discoveries. Compared with the average Australian, Lifestyle Leaders:

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

The four sub-categories of Lifestyle Leaders are:

1. Creative opinion leaders – "they are creative both in terms of their involvement in cultural and creative pursuits and their openness to risks, new experiences and new ideas. Their extensive social networks and extroverted nature means that once they've visited a destination, the latest exhibition or experience, they will generate positive word of mouth among their friends and family.
2. Food and Wine Lifestylers – "they are a credible authority on eating out and seek to enhance their sophisticated palate and culinary knowledge through an understanding about everything food and wine. In particular they like to get to know the characters and stories behind the food and wine from the winemaker or chef."
3. Enriched Wellbeing – they "are progressive, educated and professional individuals who seek luxurious breaks to indulge personal passions within a culturally rich, natural or rejuvenating setting. (The) Enriched Wellbeing (market) is financially secure, predominately female individuals who earn more and spend more on travel and luxury accommodation. They value quality over price and seek enrichment and rejuvenation through connecting with nature and focussing on their wellbeing. They appreciate quality and freshness in food and are more likely to buy organic foods, and indulge in premium restaurant experiences which offer fresh, seasonal and regional produce."
4. Inspired by Nature – "they regularly get away for weekends, and want a choice of activities that allow them to get active to varied degrees, from hiking and cycling to shopping and dining. Their genuine environmental concerns lead them towards preferring an eco-tourism experience where respect for natural surrounds is paramount."

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<sup>2</sup> Bendigo Regional Tourism (2015) Bendigo Region Destination Management Plan

## 6.4 Accommodation in Loddon Shire

Loddon accommodation by type

Type of Establishment	Number of Establishments	Number of beds	% of total number of beds
Caravan park	6	365 (excludes camp sites) and un powered sites in caravan parks	67%
Motel	3	93	17%
Self contained	6	28	5%
Hotel	2	30	6%
Farm stay	2	22	4%
B&B	1	4	1%
Group accommodation	0	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>100%</b>

Loddon accommodation by town (bed spaces)

	Caravan park	Farm stay	Hotel	Motel	Self Contained	B&B	Total	% of total
Wedderburn	52	0	0	50		4	106	20%
Boort	76	10	15	0	22	0	123	23%
Laanecoorie	71	0	0	0		0	71	13%
Bridgewater	104	0	0	25	6	0	135	25%
Inglewood	40	0	0	18	0	0	58	11%
Pyramid Hill	22	0	15	0	0	0	37	7%
Tarnagulla	0	12	0	0	0	0	12	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>100%</b>

Free camping is also available at Bridgewater Recreation Reserve, Boort Show grounds, Hard Hill Tourist Reserve in Wedderburn, Laanecoorie Riverfront Camping, Newbridge River Reserve and Tarnagulla Recreation Reserve.

## 6.5 Support provided by Council

Loddon Shire employs a Tourism and Marketing Officer to undertake strategic planning for tourism and manage the Loddon Visitor Information Centre. It also employs two part-time staff to manage the daily operations at the Visitor Information Centre in Wedderburn, supported by 25 volunteers.

From a marketing perspective, Council funds the production of various promotional materials such as the Loddon Tourism Guide; provides information on Council's website and facebook page; helps to fund Loddon Discovery Tours; provides training and resources for local tourism business operators (e.g. regular networking dinners); and attends various expos and meetings to promote the Shire.

## **6.6 The role of Regional Tourism Boards**

Regional Tourism Boards (RTBs) are operational throughout Victoria and are charged with ensuring that regions deliver on the promise. They consist of various local government authorities, state government bodies and regional tourism industries in a designated region working together to undertake:

- Strategic planning
- Coordination
- Regional and cross regional marketing, product development and industry development
- Delivery of planning and research
- Identification of investment priorities
- Professional development
- Loddon Shire is part of the Bendigo Region Regional Tourism Board.

## **6.7 The role of state level tourism bodies**

Regional tourism boards report to Visit Victoria, which is responsible for creating the desire for travel within the state and providing statewide leadership in areas such as marketing and events. Visit Victoria is complemented by Tourism Australia at a national level. Sitting alongside Visit Victoria is Tourism Events and Visitor Economy (TEVE), which aims to support and enable visitor experiences. It assists in connecting with various state government departments such as Regional Development Victoria, Investment and Economic projects and Creative Victoria. Regional Tourism Boards also report to TEVE.

## 7 CONSULTATION

A range of different consultation methods were implemented in order to understand the views of tourism operators and key stakeholders in relation to tourism in Loddon in the future. A summary of these consultations follows, with full details available in the Appendix.

Type of consultation	Details
<b>Survey of existing tourism operators. 25 surveys returned.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number one source of promotion is via brochures.</li> <li>• 80% of local tourism businesses planning on growing their business.</li> <li>• The biggest barrier to growing tourism is the lack of experiences to grow visitor numbers to the region.</li> <li>• Tourism businesses believe that the biggest gap is in promoting visitor offerings – and most want assistance from Council with promotion.</li> </ul>
<b>Survey of potential tourism operators. 3 surveys returned.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Types of facilities likely to be developed include accommodation and a function centre.</li> <li>• Brochures and signage are the two most likely forms of promotion.</li> <li>• The main barrier is the concern over viability.</li> <li>• Key features to focus on include advertising, appealing streetscapes, and the establishment of bakeries / cafes.</li> <li>• Organisations want financial assistance from Council.</li> </ul>
<b>Workshop with tourism operators. 31 attendees.</b>	<p>Key areas to focus on include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accommodation</li> <li>• Nature based tourism – developing products</li> <li>• Agri tourism products</li> <li>• Cycling / walking trails</li> <li>• Streetscapes</li> <li>• Marketing / promotion</li> <li>• Signage</li> <li>• Developing more attractions</li> <li>• Increasing knowledge of local residents and volunteer staff</li> <li>• More support from Council</li> <li>• Funding</li> <li>• Visitor information centres</li> <li>• Public transport</li> <li>• Indigenous tourism</li> <li>• Events</li> <li>• Online presence</li> <li>• Understanding the market</li> <li>• Collaboration between towns.</li> </ul>
<b>Council officer workshop. 8 staff.</b>	<p>Key areas to focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marketing and promotion</li> <li>• Visitor market</li> <li>• Packages</li> <li>• Tourist Information</li> </ul>

Type of consultation	Details
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data</li> <li>• Nature-based tourism</li> <li>• Accommodation</li> <li>• Council's role</li> <li>• Attractions</li> <li>• Tourism businesses (e.g. opening hours)</li> <li>• Food and coffee</li> <li>• Economic development</li> <li>• Events</li> <li>• Accessibility</li> <li>• Climate</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other key stakeholder discussions. 3 participants.</b></p>	<p>Key areas to focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborations with neighbouring shires</li> <li>• Alliance with Bendigo Regional Tourism</li> <li>• Development of nature based tourism products</li> <li>• Economic benefits and the link with liveability</li> <li>• Branding and marketing</li> <li>• Determining the market</li> <li>• Accommodation</li> <li>• Focus on: walking / hiking, cycling, indigenous tourism, wineries, Melville Caves, historic streetscapes.</li> <li>• Build the capacity of the industry</li> <li>• Grants for indigenous tourism operators</li> <li>• Cross-marketing</li> <li>• Pricing policies</li> <li>• Development of indigenous bookings office and gallery in Boort.</li> </ul>

## 8 ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The following issues and opportunities have been identified from a combination of key stakeholder engagement activities and a review of relevant plans and documents:

Issue / opportunity	Details	Supported by
Visitor information services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and understand the way visitors are travelling across the region and the information sources they are engaging with.</li> <li>• Broaden the role of Visitor Information Centres (VICs) to focus on industry development as well as visitor information delivery.</li> <li>• Identify opportunities for additional revenue streams at VICs, e.g. event ticketing, visitor experience packages, local product sales.</li> <li>• Provide access to Wi-Fi in VIC locations.</li> <li>• Establish more creative means of on ground delivery of information for visitors throughout the Shire, e.g. mobile or pop up visitor information services.</li> <li>• Develop an integrated digital system of information provision and bookings at a regional level.</li> </ul>	<p>Bendigo Regional Tourism (2015) Bendigo Region Destination Management Plan</p> <p>Loddon Shire (2013) Loddon Visitor Information Centre Business Plan 2013-2016</p> <p>Key stakeholder interviews</p>
Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further enhance the accessible accommodation guide for the Shire and ensure that the document complies with accessibility guidelines.</li> <li>• Encourage the development of farm stays, B&amp;Bs and Airbnb in the Shire as well as accommodation that can cater for larger groups.</li> <li>• Work with Parks Victoria and GM Water to identify sites that could support eco-cabins. Sites on the edge of the State and National Parks and Loddon River may be suitable.</li> <li>• Reinvest funds into caravan park facilities to ensure that they are meeting visitor needs and investigate opportunities for more cabin accommodation.</li> </ul>	<p>Loddon Shire (2013) Council Plan 2013-2017</p> <p>Bendigo Regional Tourism (2015) Bendigo Region Destination Management Plan</p> <p>Loddon Shire (2013) Community Access and Inclusion Plan 2013-15</p> <p>Key stakeholder interviews</p> <p>Tourism operators survey</p> <p>Tourism operators workshop</p>
Township appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the layout and function of Inglewood township.</li> <li>• Improve the layout and function of Bridgewater and re-orient the township to the foreshore area.</li> <li>• Lake improve Boort frontage.</li> </ul>	<p>Bendigo Regional Tourism (2015) Bendigo Region Destination Management Plan</p>

Issue / opportunity	Details	Supported by
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to upgrade streetscapes throughout the Shire.</li> <li>Investigate opportunities for tourism with the South West Loddon Pipeline, for example the development of Skinners Flat for passive recreation.</li> </ul>	Key stakeholder interviews
Products and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore opportunities for adventure tourism operators (e.g. rock climbing, quad biking, sky diving).</li> <li>Work with Parks Victoria to improve visitor facilities within State and National Parks.</li> <li>Develop public arts trails featuring sculptures.</li> <li>Develop packages and itineraries for Loddon Shire, e.g. one night in each town, or top 10 'must dos'.</li> <li>Develop Captain Melville's Trail (from Bridgewater via Inglewood and Kingower to Melville Caves through Kooyoora State Park).</li> <li>Prepare a proof of concept/business case for the rollout of a food tourism route similar to "Discover the Back Roads Trail" in NSW and leveraging from existing tourism assets, including Indigenous heritage. The Backroads Trail weaves together the themes of heritage, environment, food, wine and culture in an informed and user-friendly way.</li> <li>Develop a prospectus outlining opportunities available for a range of sporting events in the municipality (e.g. on road and off road cycling, orienteering, triathlons, water skiing, canoeing, hockey, football, netball, tennis, bowls, cricket, etc) and actively distribute this prospectus to event organisers, clubs / organisations and state sporting organisations.</li> <li>Encourage, facilitate or bid for walking, running, orienteering, mountain biking, cycling, canoeing or horse riding events using existing or future trails.</li> <li>Work with competition operators to bring events to major water ways (e.g. Loddon River and Boort Lakes).</li> <li>Develop a major attraction or a unique event in the Shire.</li> <li>Develop indigenous cultural tourism opportunities in the Shire, particularly around Boort.</li> <li>Develop better inter-connections between the Pyramid Hill train timetable and the Boort bus timetable.</li> </ul>	<p>Bendigo Regional Tourism (2015) Bendigo Region Destination Management Plan</p> <p>Loddon Shire (2011) Nature Tourism Plan</p> <p>Bendigo Regional Tourism (2016) Regional Itineraries</p> <p>Loddon Mallee Regional Managers Group (2010) Loddon Mallee Regionally Significant Tracks and Trails Strategy</p> <p>Loddon Shire (2015) Economic Development Plan 2015-19</p> <p>Loddon Shire (2015) Recreation Strategy</p> <p>Loddon Shire (2009) Tracks and Trails Strategy</p> <p>Tourism operators workshop</p> <p>Key stakeholder interviews</p>

Issue / opportunity	Details	Supported by
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase a portable accessible toilet which can be hired by event organisers in the Shire.</li> </ul>	
Information technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build the capability of local tourism businesses to develop their online booking systems and social media presence.</li> <li>• Invest in Wi-Fi infrastructure (including signage) to provide and promote free Wi-Fi at community centres and travellers rest stops in towns.</li> <li>• Develop a Loddon Tourism facebook page and website.</li> <li>• Develop a mentoring program utilising the skills of secondary school students to assist tourism businesses with an online presence, e.g. facebook, instagram and blogs on websites.</li> <li>• Advocate to relevant government agencies to improve access to internet services and increase mobile phone coverage outside the main population centres of the Shire.</li> </ul>	<p>Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport &amp; Resources (2015) Regional Economic Development and services review</p> <p>Loddon Shire (2015) Economic Development Plan 2015-19</p> <p>Key stakeholder interviews</p>
Industry development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage tourism businesses to commit to open their venues / services at specific times.</li> <li>• Convene and host an annual business forum for Loddon businesses and prospective investors.</li> <li>• Encourage the establishment of more eateries that serve good quality local produce and coffee.</li> <li>• Provide local businesses with data about visitors to the area.</li> <li>• Provide local businesses with training in areas such as insurance, liability, social media, marketing, how to set up a business.</li> <li>• Further develop and improve existing accommodation businesses.</li> </ul>	<p>Loddon Shire (2015) Economic Development Plan 2015-19</p> <p>Tourism operator workshop</p> <p>Tourism operator survey</p> <p>Key stakeholder interviews</p>
Marketing and branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the range of experiences on offer in Loddon Shire, i.e. heritage, gold, natural environment, agricultural, events and Loddon Discovery Tours program.</li> <li>• Work in partnership with Bendigo Regional Tourism to develop regional marketing plans, PR and media program and social media program.</li> <li>• Continue to operate a visiting journalists program.</li> </ul>	<p>Loddon Shire (2011) Tourism Marketing Plan 2011-2016</p> <p>Tourism operators workshop</p> <p>Key stakeholder interviews</p>



Issue / opportunity	Details	Supported by
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare marketing plans for each of the larger towns (incorporating neighbouring smaller towns) – with buy-in from businesses.</li> <li>• Continue to provide familiarisation visits to volunteers who work in the Visitor information centre.</li> <li>• Continue to prepare an annual calendar of tourism related events for the Shire.</li> <li>• Continue to encourage event organisers to submit event details onto the Council website.</li> <li>• Market agri-tourism products such as honey, eucalyptus and wine products more effectively.</li> <li>• Ensure that Loddon is well promoted outside the Shire (e.g. Visit Victoria website and brochures at Federation Square Visitor Information Centre).</li> <li>• Source high quality photos and video content for website, facebook, You Tube, etc.</li> <li>• Encourage each town to link to social media and instagram to its town website as a means of promotion.</li> <li>• Encourage the organisation responsible for their town website to continuously provide current and relevant information.</li> </ul>	

## 9 COSTING AND FUNDING OF ACTIONS

A detailed action plan has been included in the Appendix. External funds will be sought wherever possible. Additional Council funds are required to deliver actions included in the following table.

The further upgrade of caravan parks and streetscapes are important activities in attracting more visitors, however, these actions have been identified in other Shire strategies and will be funded from other Council budgets (along with external funding).

Action	Cost of project	Total expected funding	Net cost to Council	Proposed funding source	Completion timeframe
Develop a series of regional self-drive itineraries around themes such as antiques and collectables, nature, and unique components of towns. Itineraries to be made available on tourism websites and on external websites such as Trip Advisor.	\$5,000	\$0	\$5,000	Council budget	2018
Develop a marketing plan for each of the major towns in the Shire: Bridgewater, Inglewood, Boort, Pyramid Hill, Tarnagulla and Wedderburn. Smaller towns to align themselves with larger towns.	\$7,000	\$3,000	\$7,000	Council budget	2017
Source high quality photographs and videos to be used to promote the towns of Loddon Shire in print and electronic media including You Tube, instagram and facebook.	\$3,000	\$0	\$3,000	Council budget	2017
Facilitate workshops to encourage local tourism businesses to develop online booking systems that can be accessed via computers, smart phones and tablets and to enable them to become more technologically savvy to promote their products and services through	\$3,000	\$0	\$3,000	Council budget	2017

Action	Cost of project	Total expected funding	Net cost to Council	Proposed funding source	Completion timeframe
Trip Advisor, Google Maps, instagram, facebook, Youtube, etc.					
Continue to operate the Networking Dinner for tourism operators and use this dinner to provide training opportunities for businesses in areas such as insurance, liability, social media, customer service skills, marketing, how to set up a tourism business, etc.	\$2,000	\$0	\$2,000	Council budget	Ongoing



# APPENDIX

## Action Plan

The following actions have been developed in order to further develop tourism in Loddon Shire in the next three years. The lead unit within Council or agency is highlighted in bold in the partners / resources column. Whilst the further upgrade of caravan parks and streetscapes are important activities in attracting more visitors, these actions have been identified in other Shire strategies.

No.	Focus area	Objective	Action	Partners / Resources	Priority	Budget
1	<b>Development of tourism products and services</b>	To develop an array of quality tourism products and services for visitors to the area.	Advocate for the development of a major event or attraction to our municipality.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Bendigo Regional Tourism Local tourism operators Potential tourism operators	Medium	Existing resources
2			Develop a series of regional self-drive itineraries around themes such as antiques and collectables, public art, nature, and unique components of towns. Itineraries to be made available on tourism websites and on external websites such as Trip Advisor.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Local tourism operators/ organisations	High	\$5,000
3			Facilitate the growth of indigenous cultural tourism opportunities in the Shire, particularly around Boort.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Indigenous tour operators Adventure tourism operators Boort Tourism/ Development Little Lake Boort Committee	High	Existing resources
4			Work with Parks Victoria to improve visitor facilities within State and National Parks.	<b>Parks Victoria</b> LSC Tourism Unit	Medium	Existing resources
5	<b>Development of tourism products and services</b>	To provide accessible experiences for visitors.	Advocate to Public Transport Victoria in relation to providing improved public transport opportunities to and within the region for	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Public Transport Victoria	Medium	Existing resources

No.	Focus area	Objective	Action	Partners / Resources	Priority	Budget
			visitors wishing to travel without a car - particularly better inter-connections between the Pyramid Hill train timetable and the Boort bus timetable			
6			Encourage, facilitate or bid for walking, running, orienteering, mountain biking, cycling, canoeing or horse riding events using existing or future trails.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Event organisers clubs / organisations State sporting organisations.	High	Existing resources
7			Work with competition operators to bring events to major water ways (e.g. Loddon River and Boort Lakes).	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Event organisers Clubs / organisations State Sporting organisations.	High	Existing resources
8	<b>Marketing and branding</b>	To promote towns in the region and their distinct personalities and offerings to potential visitors.	Develop a marketing plan for each of the main towns in the Shire: Bridgewater, Inglewood, Boort, Pyramid Hill, Tarnagulla and Wedderburn. Smaller towns to align themselves with larger towns.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Relevant Council departments Local tourism businesses / organisations	High	\$7,000
9		To promote greater awareness of tourism products and services in the region.	Conduct familiarisation trips for Councillors and Council staff and volunteers who work in the Visitor Information Centre to enable them to expand their knowledge of tourism products and services available locally.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Local tourism operators/ organisation	High	Existing resources
10			Continue to operate a visiting journalists program.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Media companies	High	Existing resources

No.	Focus area	Objective	Action	Partners / Resources	Priority	Budget
11			Encourage local businesses to cross-market other tourism businesses in the region.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Local tourism operators/ organisations	High	Existing resources
12			Promote the benefits of tourism to the region regularly through Council's newsletter and local media outlets.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Media outlets	High	Existing resources
13			Develop a more effective way of delivering visitor services throughout the Shire, e.g. current location of visitor services, mobile or pop up visitor information services (particularly in locations such as Bridgewater and Boort or in a town when a major event is being held there).	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Local tourism operators/ organisations	High	Existing resources
14			Revisit each business and location of each Loddon Tourist stand across the municipality and re-sign the Memorandum of Understanding.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Local tourism operators/ organisations	High	Existing resources
15			Further enhance the accessible accommodation guide for the Shire and ensure that the document complies with accessibility guidelines.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b>	High	Existing resources
16			Continue to prepare an annual calendar of tourism related events for the Shire and continue to encourage event organisers to submit event details onto the Council website.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b>	High	Existing resources

No.	Focus area	Objective	Action	Partners / Resources	Priority	Budget
17			Ensure that towns within Loddon Shire are promoted through regional visitor information centres, e.g. Federation Square.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Visit Victoria Federation Square Visitor Information Centre	High	Existing resources
18			Encourage local tourism businesses / organisations to become affiliated with Visit Victoria.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Local tourism operators/ organisations	Medium	Existing resources
19			Ensure that relevant assets of the Shire are promoted to potential visitors, including heritage, art, gold, natural environment, agricultural, local products, events and Loddon Discovery Tours program as part of marketing campaigns.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Loddon Visitor Centre Local tourism operators/ organisations	High	Existing resources
20			Source high quality photographs and videos to be used to promote the towns of Loddon Shire in print and electronic media including You Tube, instagram and facebook.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Media companies	High	\$3,000
21			Encourage the organisation responsible for their town website to continuously provide current and relevant information Link social media and instagram to town website.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Local tourism operators/ organisations	High	Existing resources
22	<b>Industry support and development</b>	To develop the capacity of the local tourism industry to be sustainable and successful.	Encourage accommodation venues to provide Wi-Fi (preferably free of charge) for their guests.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Local tourism operators/ organisations	High	Existing resources



No.	Focus area	Objective	Action	Partners / Resources	Priority	Budget
23			Encourage local businesses to gain access to EFTPOS for their businesses.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Local tourism operators/ organisations	High	Existing resources
24			Encourage businesses to open their businesses at regular hours and clearly advertise these hours.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Local tourism operators/ organisations	High	Existing resources
25		To develop effective partnerships and networking opportunities	Continue to operate the Networking Dinner for tourism operators and use this dinner to provide training opportunities for businesses in areas such as insurance, liability, social media, customer service skills, marketing, how to set up a tourism business, etc.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Local tourism operators/ organisations	High	\$2,000
26			Continue to build upon the relationships with local tourism and development committees to enable a collaborative approach to tourism development and promotion.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Local tourism groups Local development committees	High	Existing resources
27	<b>Research</b>	To undertake research that enables the tourism sector to grow and provide quality products and services that meet the needs of visitors to the area.	Establish templates for local tourism operators so that consistent data on visitors can be obtained.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Local tourism operators/ organisations	High	Existing resources
28			Provide local tourism operators with data related to tourism visitation in the region.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Local tourism operators/ organisations	High	Existing resources

A number of tourism actions have been identified through of the following sources:

- Loddon Shire Tourism Unit strategy consultation
- Loddon Shire Economic Development Strategy
- Loddon Shire Recreation Strategy
- Bendigo Regional Tourism Strategy.

Whilst the Loddon Shire Tourism Unit will be a partner in delivering these actions, the reporting of these actions will be the responsibility of the following units / organisations; hence they are listed in the following three tables:

### Bendigo Region Tourism Destination Management Plan

No.	Focus area	Objective	Action	Partners / resources
1	<b>Development of tourism products and services</b>	To develop an array of quality tourism products and services for visitors to the area.	Explore opportunities to attract adventure tourism operators (e.g. rock climbing, quad biking, sky diving) to the area.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Adventure tourism operators Boort Tourism/Development
2		To facilitate the development of a variety of different accommodation options for visitors to the area.	Encourage the development of additional accommodation options in Loddon Shire such as farm stays, B&Bs, yurts (portable tent-like facilities) and Airbnb, as well as accommodation that can cater for larger groups, particularly in areas where there is a current under-supply of accommodation such as Boort.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Local residents Potential accommodation providers
3			Work with Parks Victoria and Goulburn Murray Water to identify sites that could support eco-cabins. Sites on the edge of the State and National Parks and Loddon River may be suitable.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Parks Victoria Goulburn Murray Water
4	<b>Marketing and branding</b>	To promote towns in the region and their distinct personalities and offerings to potential visitors.	Work in partnership with Bendigo Regional Tourism to develop regional marketing plans, a shared website, PR and media program and social media program.	<b>Bendigo Regional Tourism</b> LSC Tourism Unit
5	<b>Industry support and development</b>	To develop the capacity of the local tourism industry to be sustainable and successful.	Facilitate workshops to encourage local tourism businesses to develop online booking systems that can be accessed via computers, smart phones and tablets and to enable them to become more technologically savvy to	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Local tourism operators/organisations Small Business Victoria

No.	Focus area	Objective	Action	Partners / resources
			promote their products and services through Trip Advisor, Google Maps, instagram, facebook, Youtube, etc.	
6	<b>Research</b>	To undertake research that enables the tourism sector to grow and provide quality products and services that meet the needs of visitors to the area.	Research and understand the way visitors are travelling across the region and the information sources they are engaging with via surveys and interviews.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Loddon Tourist Stands Local tourism operators/organisations

### Loddon Shire Council Economic Development Strategy

No.	Focus area	Objective	Action	Partners / resources
1	<b>Development of tourism products and services</b>	To develop an array of quality tourism products and services for visitors to the area.	Prepare a proof of concept for the rollout of a food tourism route similar to the back roads trail and leveraging from existing tourism assets, including indigenous heritage.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Local agri-businesses Local tourism operators/organisations Bendigo Regional Tourism
2	<b>Industry support and development</b>	To develop the capacity of the local tourism industry to be sustainable and successful.	Investigate the installation of Wi-Fi infrastructure (including signage) to provide and promote free Wi-Fi at community centres and travellers rest stops in towns, e.g. Bridgewater foreshore, Boort main street and Wedderburn main street.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Telstra Local tourism operators/organisations

## Loddon Shire Council Recreation Strategy

No.	Focus area	Objective	Action	Partners / resources
1	<b>Development of tourism products and services</b>	To develop an array of quality tourism products and services for visitors to the area.	Develop Captain Melville's Trail (from Bridgewater via Inglewood and Kingower to Melville's Caves through Kooyoora State Park.	<b>LSC Recreation Unit</b> Regional Development Victoria Parks Victoria Department of Environment Land Water and Planning
2	<b>Development of tourism products and services</b>	To facilitate a variety of events in the Shire.	Develop a prospectus outlining opportunities available for a range of sporting events in the municipality (e.g. on road and off road cycling, orienteering, geocaching, triathlons, water skiing, canoeing, hockey, football, netball, tennis, bowls, cricket, etc) and actively distribute this prospectus to event organisers, clubs / organisations and state sporting organisations.	<b>LSC Tourism Unit</b> Event organisers Clubs / organisations State sporting organisations

## Policy Review

The following 19 documents were reviewed in order to gain an understanding of the context in which tourism industry operates at a local, regional and state level.

Document	Relevance
Loddon Shire (2013) Council Plan 2013-2017	<p>Council's vision is:</p> <p>Strong communities proud of their individual identities.</p> <p>The most relevant strategic platforms and objectives identified in the plan are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Champion our Agrifood enterprises - Be an advocate for our agrifood sector and ensure it is adequately resourced to remain the backbone of our shire's economy.</li> <li>• Make our towns more liveable and memorable - Improve the liveability of our main townships by making them attractive to existing residents, prospective residents and tourists.</li> <li>• Grow and diversify our economy – Attract investment that introduces new industries, presents opportunity for existing businesses and grows our working population.</li> </ul> <p>Specific tourism related projects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver local accommodation guide and promote through website.</li> <li>• Establish Loddon as an RV Friendly Shire and install dump points and three strategic locations across the Shire.</li> <li>• Complete foreshore redevelopment plans for the Boort Lakes and the Loddon River at Bridgewater.</li> <li>• Complete construction of the Bridgewater Public Caravan Park.</li> <li>• List suitable accommodation venues on website.</li> <li>• Encourage investment in tourism accommodation.</li> </ul>
Bendigo Regional Tourism (2015) Bendigo Region Destination Management Plan	<p>This document aims to grow tourism in the Bendigo Region over the next five years and incorporates the following LGA areas: Loddon Shire, City of Greater Bendigo, Central Goldfields Shire and Mt Alexander Shire.</p> <p>Specifically in relation to Loddon Shire it notes that the primary product strength is nature based tourism and adventure (Loddon River, lakes, reservoirs, National Parks and State Parks), followed by emerging product strengths of history and heritage (indigenous interpretation opportunities) and food and dining (agri-tourism and farm gate sales).</p> <p>The plan notes that visitor information services need to research and understand the way visitors are travelling across the region and the information sources they are engaging with; investigate physical and non-physical information services; broaden the role of visitor information services to focus on industry development as well as visitor information delivery; identify opportunities for additional revenue streams; provide access to Wi-Fi in VIC locations.</p>

Document	Relevance
	<p>The tier one priority project for the municipality is to improve the layout and function of Bridgewater and Inglewood township and to re-orient Bridgewater to the foreshore area. The plan recommends an amount of \$40,000 be sourced to undertake detailed design and planning and that approximately \$1m will be required to undertake works.</p> <p>Tier two projects are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature based accommodation - Work with Parks Victoria and GM Water to identify sites that could support eco-cabins. Sites on the edge of the State and National Parks and Loddon River may be suitable.</li> <li>• Loddon River canoe trails - Extend existing canoe trails along the Loddon River to develop a long paddle experience which may be completed in stages with overnight stops. This may include routes from Laanecoorie to Loddon Weir (bypassing Newbridge and Bridgewater). This could be done either independently or with a private tour operator. A master plan will be required to confirm the route, infrastructure needs, and address varying land ownership issues.</li> <li>• Lake Boort tourism development project - Improvement of Lake Boort frontage and commercial tourism opportunities. Improve interpretation of indigenous heritage sites and investigate opportunities of guided tours.</li> <li>• Caravan park reinvestment - Reinvestment into facilities should be encouraged to ensure that they are meeting visitor needs and investigate opportunities for more cabin accommodation.</li> <li>• National and State Park infrastructure improvements - Work with Parks Victoria to improve visitor facilities within State and National Parks.</li> <li>• Main street presentation - Main street presentation and development program (Living main streets plan).</li> </ul> <p>Tier three projects area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adventure tourism opportunities - Explore opportunities for adventure tourism operators (e.g. rock climbing, quad biking, sky diving).</li> <li>• Bridgewater –Inglewood cycling trail - Develop cycling trail between Bridgewater and Inglewood.</li> <li>• Open air public art spaces - Increasing sculptures in public arts trail.</li> <li>• Events on major waterways - Work with competition operators to bring events to major water ways (e.g. Loddon River and Boort Lakes)</li> <li>• Farm-stay accommodation - Farm-stay accommodation leveraging from the regions agricultural strengths.</li> </ul> <p>Other relevant priority projects (which impact the whole Bendigo Region) include winery tourism product development and marketing; food fossickers network development (develop touring routes and</p>

Document	Relevance
	<p>develop packages with attractions); village touring and branding; and Ride Goldfields.</p> <p>Retail and hospitality opportunities identified for Loddon Shire are: encourage primary producers to join the Food Fossickers Network and grow farm gate opportunities in the region; encourage local restaurants to highlight local produce; improved dining offer (e.g. gastropub); and floating restaurant and function space on the Loddon River.</p> <p>More generally this document states that projects will be prioritised according to the following assessment criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aligns with existing regional and state policy</li> <li>• Will assist in converting daytrip to overnight</li> <li>• Align with key target markets</li> <li>• Local economic and community benefit</li> <li>• Regional approach.</li> </ul> <p>It also articulates the need to establish a regional tourism website that has a platform shared across all LGAs in the Bendigo Region. The plan rated Loddon Shire's digital resources as poor across all areas, stating that it generally doesn't meet user needs, has low strategic value and requires significant attention.</p> <p>In terms of visitor information and VICs, the plan notes that improved visitor information should be available in Bridgewater and that the focus of visitor information services should be on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-skilled staff (e.g. can assist in developing live digital content and experienced in industry development)</li> <li>• Focus on yield (disperse visitors, sell product and increase length of stay)</li> <li>• Integrated digital, content management and bookings (at a regional level)</li> <li>• Creative on ground delivery (touch screens, portable / temporary visitor information booths)</li> <li>• Consistent regional approach (collaborate, share ideas, learn from one another, conduct famils, networking sessions, etc.)</li> <li>• Broader role of visitor information services (industry development, social media content development, training, sales).</li> </ul>
<p>Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport &amp; Resources (2015) Regional Economic Development and services review</p>	<p>Some key points noted in this strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 55 per cent of Victoria's total tourism employment is located in rural and regional Victoria</li> <li>• The tourism sector in rural and regional Victoria is highly dependent on healthy natural environments</li> <li>• People are attracted to nature- based activities such as walking and skiing; food and wine; cultural experiences; Aboriginal art and cultural experiences; and friendly communities in regional Victoria.</li> <li>• Major events such as horse racing drives visitation to regional Victoria</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The intrastate tourism market has not grown over the past five years</li> <li>• International visitation to regional Victoria is currently low and to grow it will be challenging as only a small proportion of Chinese, Indonesian, Singaporean and Indian visitors stay outside Melbourne (5-7%).</li> <li>• Victorian is behind other states in delivering signature regional projects of the scale needed to attract both visitors and private sector investment.</li> <li>• Strengthening the role of Regional Tourism Boards (RTBs) should be a future priority for how the Government delivers new initiatives.</li> <li>• Regulations that state how public land can and cannot be used is discouraging the development of significant tourism projects</li> <li>• There are a lack of iconic accommodation developments to attract visitors adjacent to national parks and to encourage them to stay longer</li> <li>• Approval processes for new developments can be off-putting to potential investors</li> <li>• It is sometimes difficult to attract investment to tourism due to the high level of risk in terms of a financial return.</li> <li>• Need to enable DEDJTR, through Statutory Ministerial powers, to actively facilitate projects right through the project development lifecycle.</li> <li>• Across the world, the trend is for resorts and similar tourism developments to be located outside national parks, although some investors worry that such developments are subject to the same regulation as any developed within the park.</li> <li>• Need to develop better data for prospective investors on the demand potential for tourism projects and on consumer preferences and expectations.</li> <li>• A greater focus on overnight visitors, especially those from Melbourne is important as most visitors to rural and regional areas are from Melbourne</li> <li>• Consider more targeted approach to marketing</li> <li>• DEDJTR needs to work more closely with Regional Tourism Boards to identify a number of unique regional tourism segments</li> <li>• DEDJTR need to collaborate with Regional Tourism Boards to improve the quality and consistency of Destination Management Plans.</li> <li>• Visitors expect up-to-date online information and digital booking systems for their tourism experiences.</li> <li>• Need to build the capability of regional Victorian businesses to develop their online booking systems and social media presence</li> <li>• Need to utilise the state government's website: <a href="http://www.visitvictoria.com">www.visitvictoria.com</a>; to further increase the availability of information on regional events, shows, cultural options, attractions, accommodation and locations</li> <li>• Need to support regional firms to build online booking capability with targeted information and 'how to' guides.</li> </ul>
Loddon Shire (2015) Economic Development Plan 2015-19	The Loddon Economic Development Strategy aims to guide the Shire's efforts, in collaboration with stakeholders, to support the growth and diversification of the Shire's economy.



Document	Relevance
	<p>The vision identified in the plan:</p> <p>“By 2019, Loddon’s population will be steady and new jobs will exist in agribusiness, tourism and local services. We will be an important part of Greater Bendigo’s economy with strong, daily links to our towns, with commuters moving in both directions. Our lifestyle will have attracted new residents and a thriving tourism sector focusing on food and heritage experiences. Our towns will have started seeing the benefits of streetscape improvements that have encouraged new investment. We will recognise our three distinct regions and no one will be more than 45 minutes from the services and facilities they seek. Amongst tourists, we will be known as one of regional Victoria’s NBN and Wi-Fi hotspots and, more generally, for excellence in food production.”</p> <p>The planning principles identified in the plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leading, not lagging</li> <li>• Adaptable</li> <li>• Future-focussed</li> <li>• Diverse</li> <li>• Regional.</li> </ul> <p>Some of the key actions contained within this plan of relevance to tourism are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare a proof of concept/business case for the rollout of a food tourism route similar to the back roads trail and leveraging from existing tourism assets, including Indigenous heritage (medium priority).</li> <li>• Convene and host an annual business forum for Loddon businesses and prospective investors. Ensure there is a sufficiently informed and/or high profile guest speaker. Forums need representatives from the agribusiness sector as well as tourism, residential development and major employers. Consider partnering with the Central Victorian Agribusiness Forum in this work (high priority).</li> <li>• Invest in Wi-Fi infrastructure (including signage) to provide and promote free Wi-Fi for passing self-drive and coach traffic. Trial in Wedderburn and Bridgewater and seek local business contribution to tourism facilities operational costs (high priority).</li> <li>• Ensure Council-owned tourism assets (e.g. caravan parks) are maintained to the highest standard. Undertake an audit of existing facilities and prioritise upgrades (medium priority).</li> </ul>
Loddon Shire (2015) Recreation Strategy	<p>In relation to tourism, Council’s Recreation Strategy identifies the need to develop a prospectus outlining opportunities available for a range of sporting events in the municipality (e.g. on road and off road cycling, orienteering, triathlons, water skiing, canoeing, hockey, football, netball, tennis, bowls, cricket, etc) and actively distribute this prospectus to event organisers, clubs / organisations and State Sporting organisations.</p> <p>The strategy notes that in order for events to be successful, they need a suitable location and access to facilities for the specific</p>

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	<p>activity (such as roadways, trails, sports grounds, rivers, lakes, etc) as well as appropriate supporting infrastructure such as accommodation, catering, toilets and access to transportation.</p> <p>It also identifies some sport and recreation related events that have provided an economic contribution to the community in recent years, e.g. Great Victorian Bike Ride, Bridgewater Triathlon, the annual football / netball competition and tennis tournaments.</p> <p>The strategy acknowledges that accommodation in the Shire is currently limited; hence recreation reserves may need to be used as camp sites. It states that other initiatives such as Air B&amp;B, farm stays, bed and breakfasts, conversion of unused farm houses, etc could all be considered as alternative forms of accommodation for events.</p>
<p>Loddon Shire (2013) Community Access and Inclusion Plan 2013-15</p>	<p>The Community Access and Inclusion Plan 2013-2015 reflects Loddon Shire Council's commitment to continue to reduce barriers experienced by people with a disability. The Plan is based on four objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing barriers to persons with a disability accessing goods, services and facilities;</li> <li>• Reducing barriers to persons with a disability obtaining and maintaining employment;</li> <li>• Promoting inclusion and participation in the community of persons with a disability; and</li> <li>• Achieving tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against persons with a disability.</li> </ul> <p>Some specific recommendations that do or may relate to tourism include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake audits on Loddon Shire Council's buildings and facilities for accessibility (e.g. caravan parks and VICs).</li> <li>• When any publications, documents and media prepared by the Loddon Shire Council are reviewed, ensure they comply with accessibility guidelines.</li> <li>• Continue to advocate for improved and accessible public transport systems.</li> <li>• Continue to provide and promote Loddon Shire Council's accessible website that features tools such as BrowseAloud.</li> <li>• Prepare an Accessible Accommodation Listing Guide.</li> <li>• Promote the Accessible Accommodation Listing Guide through the Loddon Visitor Information Centre and Loddon Shire Council Website.</li> <li>• Promote and encourage the use of the Companion Card and Victorian Carers Card throughout Loddon Shire.</li> </ul>
<p>Loddon Shire (2013) Environmental Sustainability Plan 2013-2016</p>	<p>This plan provides a mechanism by which Loddon Shire Council can identify and monitor progress towards achieving a more environmentally sustainable future. It notes the impact of droughts and floods on visitor numbers and identifies the demand for sustainable tourism in the Shire.</p>

Document	Relevance
Loddon Shire (2013) Loddon Visitor Information Centre Business Plan 2013-2016	<p>The purpose of the plan is to provide direction for the Loddon Visitor Information Centre over the next 3 years by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing annual visitor enquires by 10% (walk in, telephone or email)</li> <li>• Ability to establish sales online through event ticketing, visitor experience packages and local product</li> <li>• Investigate accommodation bookings online</li> <li>• Counter sales.</li> </ul>
Loddon Shire (2011) Nature Tourism Plan	<p>The objectives of this plan are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To promote existing nature tourism venues in the Shire (via maps, brochures visitor guide, annual tourism calendar, website, etc).</li> <li>• To identify areas in Loddon Shire that demonstrates potential for nature tourism (5 key locations identified).</li> <li>• To assist in the improvement, where practical, of existing facilities (e.g. tracks and trails).</li> <li>• To identify potential new/expanded business opportunities in nature tourism (guided walking tours, accommodation and Loddon Nature Discovery Tours).</li> </ul> <p>The five areas identified with the most potential for nature based tourism are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loddon River (divided into 5 sections)</li> <li>• State and National Parks (Terrick Terrick National Park, Kooyoora Park, and Leaghur State Park)</li> <li>• Boort area lakes and wetlands</li> <li>• Hills and Granite Outcrops (including Pyramid Hill and Mount Hope)</li> <li>• Box Iron Bark Forest system.</li> </ul>
Loddon Shire (2010) Parks Asset Management Plan	<p>This plan focuses on capital investment in park assets in Council owned and controlled parks with playgrounds or major parks structures.</p>
Loddon Shire (2013) Social Media Strategy	<p>This strategy recommended that Council adopts a single facebook page for all of Loddon Shire's social media interactions, as an initial step. It essentially sets out the process for establishing, maintaining and managing the site. Tourism information is provided to potential visitors via this generic site.</p>
Loddon Shire (2011) Tourism Marketing Plan 2011-2016	<p>The vision contained within this strategy is:</p> <p>Loddon Shire will provide a range of quality and sustainable visitor experiences that deliver economic benefit to our local communities, specially focused on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• nature-based tourism</li> <li>• culture and heritage</li> <li>• food and wine</li> <li>• agri-tourism</li> </ul>

Document	Relevance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• festivals and events.</li> </ul> <p>The objectives of the strategy are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To promote Heritage Experiences – historic infrastructure, Inglewood Eucalyptus Museum and historical societies in East Loddon and Pyramid Hill.</li> <li>• To promote Gold Experiences – gold prospecting, Hard Hill Tourist Reserve and Eucalyptus Stew Pot and Fossicker’s Drive Route</li> <li>• To promote Natural Environment Experiences - Loddon River, Terrick Terrick NP, Kooyoora State Park, Pyramid Hill Major’s Vision, Mt Hope, Leaghur State Park, Little Lake Boort and Lake Boort.</li> <li>• To promote Agricultural Experiences – wineries, Loddon farm experiences and agribusiness northern touring route</li> <li>• To promote major events conduct through Loddon – Naturally Loddon A Wonderland in Spring Festival and major events such as the Boort Show</li> <li>• To promote group tours through the Loddon Discovery Tours program – local attractions that can cater for the group market.</li> </ul>
<p>Loddon Shire (2011) Tourism Strategy 2011-2016</p>	<p>The aim of this strategy is to enhance the visitor experience and to increase visitor yield.</p> <p>The vision as stated in this plan is:</p> <p>“Loddon Shire will provide a range of quality and sustainable visitor experiences that deliver economic benefit to our local communities, specifically focused on nature based tourism; culture and heritage; food and wine; agri-tourism; and festivals and events.”</p> <p>The tourism strengths of the Shire are identified as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Nature based” – including bushwalking, cycling, mountain bike riding, canoeing, horse riding, orienteering, fishing, bird watching, photography, camping, etc in our State and National Parks and on our rivers and lakes</li> <li>• Culture and heritage – including historic towns, Aboriginal heritage sites, gold rush relics, museums</li> <li>• Food and wine agri-tourism – including local wines and produce such as olives</li> <li>• Festivals and events – including Detector Jamboree, Boort Agricultural Show, Pyramid Hill Christmas Event, Bridgewater Jumbuck, Wedderburn Engine Rally, Kooyoora Wildflower Show and Rheola Carnival</li> </ul> <p>Six key focus areas have been identified, each with a series of actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of tourism products and services</li> <li>• Customer service</li> <li>• Marketing and promotion</li> <li>• Partnerships</li> <li>• Industry support</li> </ul>

Document	Relevance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research</li> </ul> <p>Some of the key priorities of the strategy are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• re-build the Public Caravan Park at Bridgewater</li> <li>• provide a higher profile tourist information stand at Bridgewater that is more visible to visitors</li> <li>• redevelop the Loddon Visitor Information Centre at Wedderburn</li> <li>• establish Loddon as Recreational Vehicle friendly Shire or location.</li> </ul>
<p>Loddon Shire (2009) Tracks and Trails Strategy</p>	<p>This strategy notes the economic benefits that can be achieved as a result of visitors enjoying tracks and trails in the Shire, e.g. an increase in demand for accommodation, food and supplies such as bicycles, walking shoes, saddles, canoes, additional employment and business opportunities such as tour guiding, bed and breakfasts, cafes, etc. It states that the availability of interesting tracks and trails may also encourage visitors to stay for a longer period of time in the Shire, as has been evidenced in other locations around the state.</p> <p>Some specific trails that were identified in this strategy are: Inglewood to Mt Kooyoora and a canoe trail along the Loddon River and Serpentine Creek.</p> <p>Other specific tourism related recommendations are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To develop marketing materials so that both local residents and visitors to the area are aware of existing trails and are encouraged to use them. Promotional tools may include a link on or from Loddon Shire Council's website with downloadable maps and information, as well as hard copy brochures and a number of other tools</li> <li>• To improve people's understanding and appreciation of the natural environment and local history by providing interpretive information on trail head signage and on promotional material such as brochures and website.</li> <li>• To provide opportunities for increased physical activity participation by visitors and motorists by instigating a "Stop and Walk" campaign, whereby every recognised rest stop along highways becomes a trail head for a local walk, or at least provides directional signage and information about local walks.</li> <li>• To develop guided or self-guided packaged tours. These tours could incorporate options such as public transport, accommodation, dining and discounts to local attractions.</li> <li>• To develop, facilitate or bid for walking, running, orienteering, mountain biking, cycling, canoeing or horse riding events using existing or future trails. These events could form part of a local festival or be an event in their own right, e.g. World Orienteering Competition.</li> </ul>
<p>Loddon Mallee Regional Managers Group (2010) Loddon Mallee Regionally</p>	<p>The aim of this strategy was to identify trails within the Loddon Mallee region that could be developed as regionally significant trails that attract visitors from intrastate, interstate and internationally. This plan identifies the proposed Captain Melville's Trail (from</p>

Document	Relevance
Significant Tracks and Trails Strategy	Bridgewater via Inglewood and Kingower to Melville's Caves through Kooyoora State Park) as a regionally significant trail with significant tourism potential.
Loddon Mallee (2015) Regional Strategic Plan 2015-2018	One of the key priority areas listed under 'Foster our comparative advantages in agriculture, food processing and other regionally significant industries' is 'Invest in tourism product, assets and related infrastructure'. The strategy states that the rationale for investing in tourism in the region is to 'improve the quality of assets and customer satisfaction thereby leading to increased tourism, more jobs and ultimately, protection of our culture, heritage and natural assets.' The strategy does not specifically mention any projects in Loddon Shire, but does identify Aboriginal cultural tourism and other iconic natural and cultural heritage assets such as the Goldfields.
Victorian Goldfields Tourism Executive (2015) Tourism Plan	<p>The seven key priorities for the Goldfields Tourism region for 2015/16 are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete the suite of Destination Management Plans within the wider Goldfields geographic region</li> <li>2. Develop a Goldfields Marketing and Promotion Strategy through Ballarat and Bendigo Regional Tourism through marketing plans, PR and media program and social media program</li> <li>3. Evolve the digital strategy for the Goldfields region through Ballarat and Bendigo Regional Tourism which includes a responsive website for Bendigo and full integration of all marketing activities including social media, a booking engine and campaign integration.</li> <li>4. Continue to develop and refine the Goldfields as Australia's premier heritage region through the development of history and heritage themed tracks, trails and touring routes, etc</li> <li>5. Develop a product development strategy for the Goldfields through Ballarat and Bendigo Regional Tourism through tracks and trails and touring; food and wine; and history, heritage, arts, culture, festivals and events.</li> <li>6. Develop a content management strategy for the Goldfields region through Ballarat and Bendigo Regional Tourism which includes visitor services program; regional mapping program; a regional staff and volunteer training program; and regional approach to research and data gathering.</li> <li>7. Continue to strengthen the region's industry capability through the implementation of the Tourism Excellence program for Ballarat Regional Tourism and Bendigo Regional Tourism.</li> </ol>
Bendigo Regional Tourism (2016) Regional Itineraries	<p>Bendigo Regional Tourism has received funding to boost visitation throughout the region by developing regional itineraries, using the hub (Bendigo) and spoke (Loddon Shire, Mt Alexander Shire and Central Goldfields Shire) model. Although still being developed, the document outlines a potential top 10 'must do's' for visitors to Loddon Shire. These are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Launch your ski or fishing boat in the Loddon River at Bridgewater</li> <li>2. Lose time in Inglewood's antique and collectable shops</li> </ol>

Document	Relevance
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. See the amazing collection at Wedderburn's community-run General Store Museum</li> <li>4. Buy pure eucalyptus oil from a local distillery</li> <li>5. Visit the Simply Tomatoes farm gate in Boort for great food and country hospitality</li> <li>6. Explore, hike and picnic at Melville's Caves; natural wonder and bushranger hideout</li> <li>7. Visit renowned Australia winery Water Wheel Vineyard at Bridgewater</li> <li>8. Buy traditional dry aged beef at Inglewood's Meats on Brooke Street</li> <li>9. Meet the olive oil makers at Boort's stunning Salute Oliva farm gate</li> <li>10. Stop off at the Bridgewater Bakehouse for traditional country favourites.</li> </ol>
<p>Australian Government Austrade and Tourism Research Australia (2015) <i>Growing Cycling Tourism in Victoria</i></p>	<p>The key messages from this research are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cycle tourism market is relatively small, but those involved often take multiple trips per year and are highly engaged.</li> <li>• Cycle tourists mostly visit Melbourne and Sydney, but often travel to regional areas</li> <li>• Cycle tourists engage in a broad range of activities</li> <li>• Victoria rates highly in the following areas for cycle tourists: facilities, accommodation, variety of cycling options and quality of tracks and trails</li> <li>• The knowledge of cycle tourism by those who do not participate is low</li> <li>• Online information can generate awareness and educate the market on Victoria as a cycling destination.</li> </ul> <p>Of those people interviewed as part of this research who take part in cycle tourism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 41% undertake day trips</li> <li>• 40% spend 1-3 nights on their trip</li> <li>• 18% spend 4+ nights on their trip</li> <li>• 45% of cycle tourists undertake a cycling holiday at least 3 times per year</li> <li>• 41% enjoy sightseeing on the trip</li> <li>• 35% cycle on the foreshore or a river or lake</li> <li>• 38% want downloadable maps</li> <li>• 37% want accessible online information</li> <li>• 37% want extensive cycle paths and trails</li> <li>• 36% want websites that provide comprehensive information for planning a trip.</li> </ul> <p>The report notes the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give a reason to go</li> <li>• Give an online experience that provides simple information</li> <li>• Ensure safety and conveniences</li> <li>• Augment experiences that highlight natural surroundings</li> <li>• Promote the dedicated paths and facilities</li> <li>• Persuade potential travellers of the benefits</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remind potential participants of the beauty of Victoria's regional areas</li> <li>• Engage image-based communications via regional tourism channels</li> <li>• Encourage packaged tours</li> <li>• Create tours that align with specific events, times or destinations</li> <li>• Build and promote dedicated cycling tourism facilities.</li> </ul>

### Survey of existing and potential tourism operators

A survey was distributed to all existing tourism operators in the Shire during mid January 2016 to identify their key directions, the tools they use, any barriers they may have and the type of support that they require in order to improve or grow their business. A media release was widely distributed at the same time to create awareness of the survey. Individuals in the community who have identified their interest in providing products or services to the tourist market were also sent the survey. A different set of questions was provided for existing operators and potential operators. Results of the surveys are as follows:

#### Existing operators

A total of 25 surveys were returned. The results of this survey are as follows:

#### Survey respondents

	Business	Product
1	Nuggetty Creek Olives Pty Ltd	Olive Oil, Vinegars, and hand-made chocolates, hand-made sauces and farm made hampers
2	Eucalyptus Distillery Museum	Eucalyptus Museum, including tour of old distillery and demonstration of eucalyptus distilling and sales of eucalyptus oil
3	FGB Natural Products	Bosisto's Eucalyptus Oil - involved with the Eucalyptus Museum in Inglewood
4	Simply Tomatoes	Green tomato products, farm tours, light lunches / morning tea / afternoon tea, RV farm stay for self contained travellers and sales of wool bedding, pillows, under blanket, doona style quilts and therapeutic heat pads.
5	Rostrata Country House	Accommodation
6	Salute Oliva	Extra virgin olive oil, table olives, preserves, olive oil soap, farm tours and a farm shop
7	Merlana Leather	Leather goods manufacturer and repairs
8	Inglewood Blue Eucy Miniature Railway Inc.	The Blue Eucy Museum, history of blue eucy, miniature train rides, BBQ and toilets
9	Gulpill's Australia	Aboriginal Eco-Tours
10	Pyramid Hill & District Historical Society	Family history research
11	Billie Brooke's Pty Ltd	Giftware and personalised embroidery
12	Victoria Hotel Pyramid Hill	Hospitality
13	Wedderburn Newsagency & General Store	Newspapers, magazines, daily convenience foods, local produce from within Loddon Shire
14	Newbridge General Store & Riverside Cafe	Convenience store, café, with sit down and takeaway dining, private dining room, function room, post office with Bank@ Post and ATM
15	B & B Rodwell Wireworkers Pty Ltd	Wire lampshade frame etc



	<b>Business</b>	<b>Product</b>
16	Wedderburn Community House	Centrelink, VicRoads, training, community courses, bingo, community lunches, farmers market, local produce for sale, social events and workshops.
17	Graylee Cottage	Accommodation
18	Septembre Vintage	Vintage store and cafe
19	Loddon Arts Inc	Access to an art exhibition gallery and a museum, comprising old general store and livery stable.
20	Steel's Butchers	Meat
21	Wedderburn Motel	Accommodation
22	Camp Kooyoora	Private camping, undercover, full stainless steel kitchen with all utensils, crockery etc. Toilet, shower, fresh water, under cover wood heater, spare tents.
23	Wedderburn Facebook Page	Information and news
24	Wedderburn Tourism	Have a tourist attraction at Hard Hill Tourist Reserve a working eucalyptus stew pot
25	Fusspots at Inglewood	Old wares for sale, Nixon's Grocery Museum (free of charge)

### **Marketing tools used to attract visitors or to sell products / services**

The three main types of marketing used by local tourism businesses are brochures, signage and facebook. The following table shows the variety of tools used and their level of uptake:

<b>Promotional tool</b>	<b>Percentage of businesses</b>	<b>Number of businesses</b>
Brochures	70.37%	19
Signage	66.67%	18
Facebook	62.96%	17
My company website	51.85%	14
Other (please specify)	29.63%	8
Newspapers	25.93%	7
Websites of other businesses	25.93%	7
Tourism magazine advertisements	22.22%	6
Radio	18.52%	5
TV	14.81%	4
Blogs	11.11%	3
Twitter	11.11%	3
Youtube	11.11%	3
Online forums, e.g. Trip advisor	7.41%	2
Apps	3.70%	1

Promotional tool	Percentage of businesses	Number of businesses
Travel expos	3.70%	1

Other promotional tools used by local businesses include:

- Fine food magazines
- Tourism websites
- Shire events calendar
- Word of mouth
- Community newsletter monthly and posters in all local shops.
- Event Minelab Wedderburn Detector Jamboree
- Tourism Victoria webpage
- Tiny Towns brochure

### **Collaboration with other tourism businesses / tourism bodies**

Two thirds of respondents (66.67%) collaborate with other tourism businesses or tourism bodies. These organisations include:

- Loddon Tourism (4)
- Loddon Shire (3)
- Loddon Spanner Man / Piccoli Spanners (2)
- Tourism Victoria (2)
- Bendigo Tourism
- Southern region tourism group
- Goldfields Regional Tourism Visitor Information Centres
- Boort Tourism Group
- Wedderburn Tourism
- Loddon Shire Discovery Tours
- Dunolly & District Inc
- Salute Oliva
- Caravan magazines
- Other historical groups
- Inglewood and Dunolly antique stores
- Camping businesses
- Simply Tomatoes
- Caravan park
- Local pubs
- Neighbouring Community Houses
- Wedderburn Lions Club
- Wedderburn Development
- Local businesses

### **Loddon Valley Network Dinner**

Almost one third of all respondents (29.63%) attend the Loddon Valley Network Dinners on a regular basis. Of those who don't attend, the key reasons listed are:

- Too busy / don't have time / am usually working (9)
- Distance / based elsewhere (3)
- Didn't think that it applied to us (2)
- Have other commitments (2)
- Do attend occasionally (1)
- Haven't been invited (1)
- Will attend the next one now that I know about it (1)

### Plans to grow business

Twenty of the organisations surveyed intend to grow their business in some way. One is not sure and three don't wish to grow their business as they are retiring or have reached their business goals. Some of the ways in which organisations intend to expand are:

- Not specified (6)
- Improve marketing / advertising / websites (3)
- Expand facilities (2)
- Expand product range (2)
- Increase operating hours (2)
- Open an outlet / shop front (2)
- Add accommodation to the business, e.g. a B&B (1)
- Add additional exhibition space in town (1)
- Adding further attractions / things of interest (1)
- Continue to promote to locals (1)
- Employ staff (1)
- Improve customer service (1)
- Target more groups (1)

### Barriers to further grow or improve tourism businesses

The key barriers identified by survey respondents in terms of growing or improving tourism businesses varied considerably with lack of visitor numbers to the region as the number one barrier. Barriers identified include:

Barriers	Percentage of businesses	Number of businesses
Other	38.46%	10
Visitor numbers	38.46%	10
Lack of funds	30.77%	8
Not sure of viability	26.92%	7
Still developing product / service	23.08%	6
Location of my business	19.23%	5
Competition from others	11.54%	3
Lack of time	11.54%	3
Nothing	11.54%	3
Lack of business skills	7.69%	2
Lack of qualified staff	7.69%	2
Lack of tourist accommodation	7.69%	2
Timing is not yet right	7.69%	2

Barriers identified under the heading 'other' include:

- Lack of space at business premises to display more products
- Community apathy
- Lack of regional marketing plan
- Location of business – gravel roads, no NBN, poor internet, poor mobile phone coverage
- Lack of events to draw people to the town (Wedderburn)
- Lack of signage to direct people to Newbridge as a stop-over on their way to Adelaide or Portland
- Red tape – too many restrictions, too much paperwork, too many rules and regulations (especially in relation to OH&S and food handling)
- Lack of funding for business operators
- Need to employ staff – can't rely just on volunteers
- Competition from online businesses

### **Gaps in tourism products or services**

Respondents identified the major gaps in tourism products or services in Loddon Shire as promotion, food outlets, support from Council and lack of accommodation. Specific answers to this question include:

- Better promotion of products, attractions and transport; advertising of accommodation and tourism products on the websites of individual towns; tourist information centre at Bridgewater (or unmanned interactive facility) (5)
- Food outlets – quality, more, open on summer evenings (4)
- More support from the Shire – educate operators about tourism in the Shire; drive initiatives that work; provide clear directions and a consistent approach; educate Shire workers about local tourism products so that they can promote these to the general public; more funding to implement the ideas of the tourism department (4)
- Accommodation – more, for larger groups, in Boort (3)
- Would prefer to align with Central Goldfields tourism marketing due to location
- Too much focus on Bendigo in the region and not enough on promoting regional day tours
- Activities for children
- Improved customer service
- Businesses committed to opening their venues on a regular basis
- Packages aimed at the backpacker market
- A comprehensive cycle train and bike hire throughout the Shire and linking to neighbouring Shires
- Nature based tourism businesses
- Rest areas – comfortable and clean
- Development grant for indigenous Aboriginal tourism
- Water from natural rainfall

### **The one thing that would help to improve or grow the tourism industry in Loddon Shire**

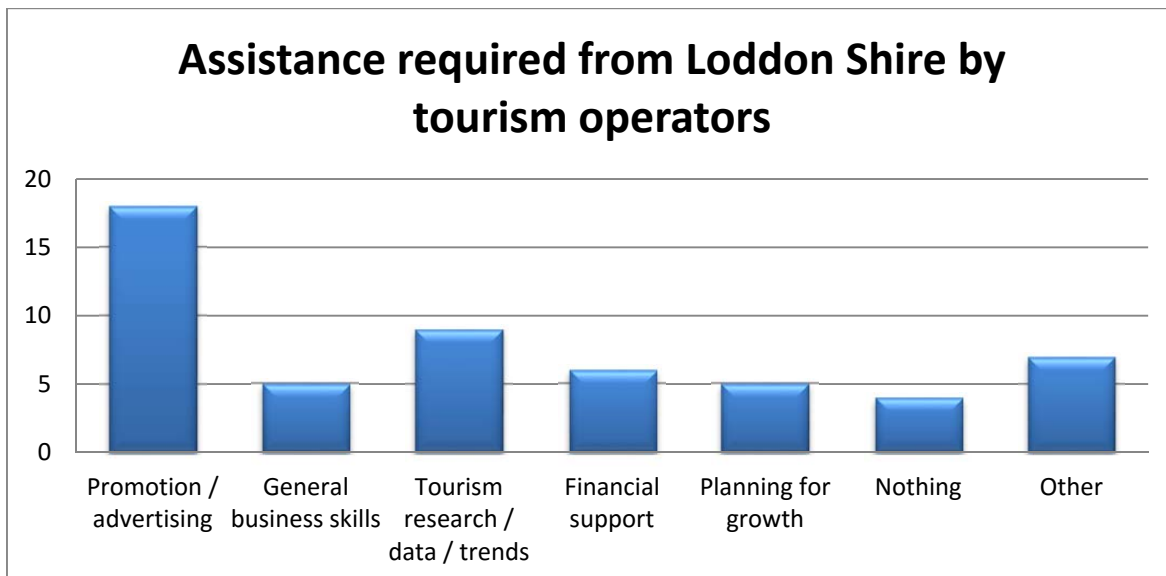
Respondents listed a wide variety of different things that would help them to improve or grow their business:

- A greater diversity of attractions – bird watching, bushwalking, walking track in Wedderburn, farm stays, art and craft trails, nature tourism (2)
- More collaboration and partnerships of businesses and towns (2)
- More funding for tourism (2)
- More promotion - promotion of all towns, advertising in the media (2)
- More water in reservoirs and creeks / more rain (2)
- Signage for visitors (2)
- Inclusion of the Loddon Tourism booklet in the Melbourne Tourist Information Centre (1)
- Bakery in Inglewood (1)
- Establish set days that businesses will be open (1)
- Greater exposure in Bendigo and Ballarat (1)
- Greater power to those who make decisions about tourism in the Shire (1)
- Improved roads (1)
- Improved streetscapes for southern towns (1)
- Indigenous Aboriginal tourism – improvements to infrastructure and product development (1)
- Large tourist attraction with cafe and shop in Boort (1)
- One big attraction (1)
- More businesses / niche businesses such as artisans and professional services in empty shops in Brooke St, Inglewood (1)
- Overall improvement (1)
- Packages for short and long stays (1)

- Small amphitheatres in small towns detailing the town's history (1)
- Tourism manager to work solely for business operators (1)

### Assistance required from Council

When asked what type of assistance they require from Council, three quarters (75%) of respondents stated that they want more help with promotion / advertising. Other areas of assistance include:



Other areas of assistance requested include:

- Development of displays
- Continued support for regional marketing – align with big event marketing
- Funding for signage
- Maintenance
- Attracting an operator to Hard Hill
- Business mentoring (previous program was very worthwhile)
- More personal approach by Council and small meetings to discuss local issues – not emails.

### Other thoughts / comments

Other thoughts and comments identified by respondents include:

- Happy with the service provided by Loddon Shire in relation to tourism (5)
- Develop packages for visitors throughout the Shire and into neighbouring Shires (2)
- Enjoy the network dinner meetings (2)
- Pyramid Hill Caravan Park has been improved and has been well patronised this summer (1)
- Loddon Shire needs more resources to improve communications in relation to tourism (1)
- Critical to support tourism into the future (1)
- Wedderburn needs a draw card to attract more visitors (1)
- Need a brochure that promotes all of the attractions in Loddon Shire (1)
- More funding for promotion of small towns (1)
- Nature tourism has potential (1)
- An art grant for Boort would be good (1)
- Selection of suitable people at the township level to greet visitors. Some operators are extremely unfriendly or gossipy in a negative manner (1)
- Need improvements to public rest areas and playgrounds (1)

- Accommodation is limited (1)
- Clearer advertising of hours of operation of various attractions (1)

#### Potential operators

A total of three surveys were returned. The results of this survey are as follows:

#### **Types of proposed businesses**

- Farm visits and viewing of food production at Laanecoorie
- Replica Stonehenge with a labyrinth for functions at Salisbury West
- Farm homestay or Airbnb at Kurraca

#### **Types of marketing and promotional tools proposed to be used**

Brochures (66.7%) and signage (66.7%) are the two most likely forms of promotion that potential tourism business operators will use. One response (33.3%) was also received for company website, facebook, not sure, tourism magazines, websites of other businesses, newspapers, TV, radio, blogs and twitter. No interest was expressed in travel expos, apps, Youtube, online forums such as Trip advisor.

#### **Collaborations and networking**

Of the three respondents, only one currently collaborates with other tourism businesses / industry bodies, i.e. Loddon Shire Council Tourism and Marketing Officer. None of the respondents attend the Loddon Valley Network Dinner. Two potential businesses were unaware of the dinner and the other didn't think that it was relevant.

#### **Barriers**

The main barriers identified by the three respondents to establishing their business are:

- Not sure of viability (3)
- Lack of business skills (2)
- Lack of funds to establish it (1)
- Nothing (1)
- Still developing product / service (1)
- Other issues such as making a living (1)

#### **Gaps in tourism products or services**

One respondent noted that need for rail trails in the Shire, e.g. Wedderburn to Wedderburn Junction or Wedderburn to Melville Caves.

#### **The one thing that would help to improve or grow tourism in Loddon Shire**

- National advertising on TV and radio
- Appealing streetscapes
- Good services such as bakeries, cafes, toilets and parks
- Provide encouragement and incentives for people to establish eateries

#### **Type of support required from Council or other government agencies and organisations**

- Financial support (3)
- Promotion / advertising (2)
- Tourism research / data trends (2)
- Planning for growth (1)
- Faster receipt of building permits (1)

#### **Other thoughts or comments**

Respondents indicated that they are very happy with the outcomes achieved by Loddon Tourism but they believe that more support and a thorough needs analysis is required for the region to fully achieve its potential.

### Workshop with tourism operators

A meeting was held with existing and potential tourism operators on Tuesday 16 February as part of the Loddon Valley Business Network in Wedderburn to workshop ideas on how Loddon Shire can be further developed and enhanced as a key visitor destination. 31 individuals from the following organisations were in attendance:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Alana Newbold	Dingee Progress
David Newbold	Dingee Progress
Ian Lanyon	Simply Tomatoes
Marilyn Lanyon	Simply Tomatoes
Ian Collie	Camp Kooyoora
Meryl Watters	Nuggetty Creek Oils
Graham Watters	Nuggetty Creek Oils
Tony Holt	Wedderburn resident
Alex Holt	Wedderburn resident
Peter Eicher	Salute Oliva
Marlies Eicher	Salute Oliva
Barry Barnes	President Boort Development Committee
Michelle Hargreaves	KurracaBurN Heights
Bruce Hargreaves	KurracaBurN Heights
Cr Collen Condliffe	Loddon Shire Council
Dot Silke	Rostrata
Jenny Hosking	Hat manufacturer
Paul Haw	Boort Tourism
Ken Pattison	Boort Tourism
Sheila Gaines	Loddon Arts
Denise	Loddon Arts
Jill	Mitiamo Store
Rob Scholes	Mulwarrie Studio
Roberta Foster	Mulwarrie Studio
Murray Baud	Blue Eucy Museum
Jude Raftis	Wedderburn Community House
Greg Deimos	Wedderburn Devt Association
Robbie Collins	Wedderburn Tourism
Sandra Steel	Loddon Shire Council
Robyn Vella	Loddon Shire Council

Participants were asked what Council or what tourism businesses do well. Their answers predominantly focussed on:

- Promotion – good quality maps, DVDs and information brochures; Loddon is well promoted in other regions (e.g. City of Greater Bendigo and Mt Alexander); use of TV to promote attractions; improved Council website, app and online presence.
- Council Support – support of tourism by Shire of Loddon; support from Visitor Information Centre staff; good level of communication, guidance and support from Council's tourism officer through various activities including tourism network meetings; promotion of tourism on Council's website is positive.
- Town presentation – parks look great; streets are clean; maintenance levels are good; streetscape projects currently underway will continue to provide attractive townships.
- Support by residents – local residents are knowledgeable of the tourism products on offer; locals are willing to chat to visitors.
- Events – a range of small and large events; signature events e.g. Rheola and Wedderburn events.

- Local products – good range of local products available.
- Customer service – high level of customer service by businesses.
- Attractions - diversity of towns and attractions; good quality tourist attractions; unique tourist attractions; nature based tourism attractions; RV Friendly Town.

Participants were asked what Council and businesses do not do so well in relation to tourism. Their answers included:

- Accommodation – lack of accommodation; uneven distribution of accommodation across the Shire; lack of accommodation for larger groups / international visitors
- Nature based tourism - don't really promote the natural assets so well such as the Loddon River, Pyramid Hill, Mt Hope, Terrick Terrick, Melville Caves
- Agri-tourism products – don't effectively market honey, eucalyptus and wine products as well as possible
- Volunteers – lack of knowledge by some volunteers of tourism products
- Tracks and trails – missing links
- Council support – lack of support from some departments within Council; Council too slow to pay tourism businesses; need to attract larger businesses; too much red tape; need more consultation or community meetings with local Councillors; lack of communication; could offer rent free building for new businesses for a period of 12 months; need better communication between Council and VicRoads re signage; need more information about grants
- Town presentation – poor presentation of some of the towns in the Shire
- Signage – signage is not always accurate or up to date
- Marketing and promotion – no collective advertising; lack of promotion outside the Shire (e.g. Visit Victoria website); need to better market each town's website
- Funds – not sufficient funding available to support tourism businesses
- Local residents – need to increase their knowledge of tourism benefits and products / services
- Visitor Information Centres – need more Visitor Information Centres in the Shire
- Attractions – need to have some form of attraction / packages that will bring people to the Shire; need to improve bus tours and establish new routes
- Transport – more transport required; better inter-connections between the Pyramid Hill train timetable and the Boort bus timetable
- Indigenous tourism – lack of indigenous tourism learning opportunities particularly in relation to art and culture
- Events – need to produce a calendar of events or a local shire notice board so that everyone is aware of what events are forthcoming; lack of unique events
- Creativity – need to think more outside the square and do things differently
- Tourism market – don't attract the younger market; don't know who the ideal target market of the Shire is; lack of data provided about tourism in the region
- Collaboration – lack of collaboration between towns
- Online presence – businesses need to be more proactive to create an online presence

Participants were asked to identify the gaps in the tourism product or barriers that prevent tourism from growing. Their answers included:

- Visitors – low visitor numbers; not attracting many international visitors
- Transport – lack of public transport in the region; need a small airport with connecting day tours; need more bus tours in the region
- Accommodation – lack of quality accommodation; lack of accommodation suitable for large groups; more beds in Bridgewater (cabins)
- Cafes – lack of cafes / restaurants that provide quality food and coffee
- Business operations – inconsistent opening hours of businesses; lack of information about opening hours; businesses are not utilising all of the available resources, e.g.



Food / Wine Fossickers Guide; businesses need IT education; need more collaboration to maximise tourism potential; not enough work opportunities.

- Events – no significant arts events; need to encourage and promote festivals
- Water – lack of water impacts on activities available and appearance of landscapes
- Regulations – red tape strangles business growth and innovation; OH&S; food handlers regulations; permits for accommodation venues;
- Information technology /communications – poor coverage of internet and mobile phones across parts of the Shire impacts business operations and tourism
- Groups – lack of infrastructure to cater for large groups, e.g. accommodation, eateries, rest rooms, etc
- Signage – lack of quality signage; need signs to encourage people to visit new areas
- Marketing and promotion – need more promotion
- Tourism officer – tourism officer needs more support
- Council – staff need to be more informed of tourism products and services
- Distance – distance from metropolitan area and other cities is a barrier
- Town presentation – some local residents are not proud of their environment; need to attract visitors to stop by providing appealing streetscapes; Wedderburn Skinners Flat, Wedderburn Caravan Park and Wedderburn Reservoir need work undertaken.

Participants were asked to identify any opportunities that need to be explored in relation to tourism products and services. Their answers included:

- Streetscapes – towns need to be attractive in order for people to want to stop; create eye-catching thematic art works to promote towns; rest rooms need to be clean
- Business operations – need to be open at regular and convenient times; need 7 days per week trading by all operators; more education re business development.
- Marketing and promotion – need broad coverage with good quality promotional tools; create linkages on websites to other tourism businesses; encourage businesses to advertise events/attractions on their websites (cross market); increase the number of tourism ambassadors for the Shire; continue to promote Loddon Shire in Melbourne and Bendigo; share Loddon Tourism News fortnightly with whole Shire; prepare a tourism calendar of events
- Young people – involve young people in tourism and inform them of tourism products and services
- Assets - identify best assets in the region and develop and market these assets effectively; build on Inglewood second hand antique shops as a product offering
- Research – find out what potential visitors to the area want; research best practice elsewhere
- Cafes / restaurants – develop good, clean and well advertised eateries
- Accommodation – expand the diversity of accommodation offerings
- New activities – develop and promote activities such as bird watching and grass weaving; encourage the development of a tour guiding business
- New infrastructure – develop more look-outs
- Market – need to attract a younger demographic
- Packages – develop packages for the Shire – one night in each town
- Attractions – need a unique attraction for the Shire; need something for all age groups
- Walking / cycling – connect towns along disused train lines; develop more bicycle and nature trails
- Events – need more festivals across the Shire; need large events to attract visitors
- Accessibility – ensure that tourist attractions are accessible
- New businesses – need a bakery and cafes / eateries in Wedderburn
- Visitor Information Centre – consider mobile or pop up Visitor Information Centres
- Signage – promote the tourism products of the Shire on each of the three highways; place signs in paddocks 2km from each town to promote key features (using quick reference symbols)

- Information technology / communications – opportunity to link websites e.g. individual businesses and LSC; more education re social media; develop a Tourism Loddon app
- Trails – further develop food and wine trail with Bendigo
- Aboriginal heritage – provide opportunities for Aboriginal heritage tours
- Creativity – need to think outside the square – what else can we offer?
- Financial support – provide towns with financial support to create and maintain township website
- Asian market – market Loddon Shire internationally to capitalise on growth of Asian tourism market
- Transport – promote use of small air-strips
- Location – capitalise on passing traffic
- Local produce - get local stores to stock and promote local produce and sell on consignment
- Communications – improve level of communication between visitors, tourism operators, information centres and local organisations.

Participants were asked to identify what type of support they require from Council or other organisations to help them to continue to improve or grow their tourism products or services. Their answers included:

- Marketing and Promotion – ensure that promotional material reflects all of the attractions available; ensure that promotional materials are available at Federation Square in Melbourne; produce an annual calendar of events; conduct familiarisation visits for Councillors and staff; continue to operate a visiting journalists program; prepare marketing plans for each of the larger towns (incorporating neighbouring smaller towns) – with buy-in from businesses
- Packages – develop packages for visitors to the area – self-guided or with transportation included
- Business development – encourage new tourism businesses / businesses that attract or serve visitors to establish themselves in the Shire
- Training – provide training in areas such as insurance, liability, social media, marketing, how to set up a business; consider developing a mentoring program; tourism markets and their needs
- Water – secure water for Wedderburn and Inglewood
- Product development – continue to develop cycling and walking trails.

#### Council officer workshop

The following Loddon Shire Council staff attended a workshop on Tuesday 16 February to discuss tourism opportunities in the Shire:

- |                   |                                      |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Allan Stobaus   | Recreation and Community Development |
| • Leigh Jardine   | IT                                   |
| • Deanne Caserta  | Finance                              |
| • Tim Jenkyn      | Community Planning                   |
| • Helen Tonkin    | Customer Service                     |
| • Sandra Steel    | Tourism                              |
| • Jolie Middleton | Accessibility                        |
| • Robyn Vella     | Tourism                              |

Key issues and opportunities identified through the Council officer workshop include:

<b>Issue / Opportunity</b>	<b>Details</b>
Marketing and promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loddon Tourism does a good job of promoting tourist attractions both within and outside the region.</li> </ul>

Issue / Opportunity	Details
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tools used include Council's facebook page, brochures, advertisements in caravan magazines and seniors magazines, mail outs to organisations, guest speaking, DVD.</li> <li>• Should market on a town by town basis rather than a whole of Shire basis. Each major town to have a marketing plan</li> <li>• Marketing plan to include gaps in business, and opportunity to grow the population</li> <li>• Establish the marketing plan around seasonality, for example, what can you do in Boort in Winter</li> <li>• Collaborate with operators work on what can be best marketed in each season: Summer/Autumn/Winter/Spring.</li> <li>• Need industry buy-in of advertising and promotions.</li> <li>• Tourism attractions and accommodation need to be able to be sourced by potential visitors via smart phones, tablets and computers.</li> <li>• Tourism businesses need to be utilising and watching Trip Advisor.</li> <li>• Loddon Tourism needs its own facebook page and website, separate from the general Council sites.</li> <li>• Should run familiarisation trips for Councillors and staff of local tourist attractions.</li> <li>• Need to provide high quality photos and video content on website, facebook, You Tube, etc.</li> <li>• Each town has its own website – they are starting to link to social media and instagram.</li> <li>• Local businesses and organisations need to be more proactive about other tourism offerings in the Shire than just relying on Council</li> <li>• Council to coordinate training to have businesses listed on Google maps and Trip advisor</li> </ul>
Visitor market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loddon Shire attracts a lot of seniors and grey nomads.</li> <li>• Operators and Council need to work collaboratively to attract a high yield visitor.</li> </ul>
Packages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loddon Tourism has developed packages through Loddon District Tours.</li> <li>• Develop regional itineraries, e.g. antiques and collectables – doesn't have to stay within Loddon Shire's boundaries.</li> <li>• Set up suggested itineraries on Trip Advisor.</li> <li>• Need to develop an itinerary about journeying from the south to the north of the Shire via the Loddon River</li> <li>• Need to develop a package called 'A Day in Boort' outlining all of the attractions available, e.g. Spanner Man, tomatoes, olives, lake, indigenous history, etc.</li> </ul>
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loddon Shire is well positioned as it's located between Melbourne and Mildura and Bendigo and Adelaide.</li> </ul>
Tourist Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourist stands are located in most small towns across the Shire, with the major centre located in Wedderburn.</li> <li>• Ideally a larger visitor information centre would exist in Bridgewater.</li> <li>• Pop up visitor services is an option whereby one staff goes to a location for a specific period of time – will reduce the need for so many volunteers.</li> </ul>

Issue / Opportunity	Details
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could place visitor information in the foyer at Council's Wedderburn office.</li> <li>• There is likely to be a review of visitor information centres across the region in the near future.</li> <li>• Operators need to know more about tourism product and provide information at their attraction/ food outlet.</li> </ul>
Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data re tourism in Loddon Shire is a little misleading as statistics are only taken from people who visit the Visitor Information Centre.</li> <li>• Operators need to be more open to supplying Council with visitor data which would then assist with more accurate data.</li> <li>• There is a need for local data.</li> </ul>
Nature based tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature based tourism is a strength of the Shire.</li> </ul>
Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a lack of quality accommodation.</li> <li>• There is no motel in Boort.</li> <li>• Wedderburn Motel isn't large enough to cater for tour groups.</li> <li>• Many accommodation venues don't have electronic booking systems.</li> <li>• Many businesses don't have EFTPOS.</li> <li>• One motel does not have internet.</li> <li>• Council needs to decide whether or not it is in the business of managing caravan parks.</li> <li>• There are a lot of complaints received about the standard of the Wedderburn Caravan Park.</li> <li>• The Shire needs to focus on B&amp;B's, farm stays and Airbnb as forms of accommodation.</li> </ul>
Council's role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council needs to distinguish between what it does and doesn't do in relation to tourism.</li> <li>• Need to establish a more formal relationship between Tourism and Parks and Gardens.</li> <li>• All Council staff need to be aware of their contribution to tourism.</li> <li>• Need to direct sufficient funds to tourism.</li> <li>• Need to be more involved in project management from the beginning to the end, e.g. canoe trails – determining the location right through to identifying how it will be marketed.</li> <li>• Need to continue to work with Bendigo Regional Tourism.</li> <li>• Need a stronger relationship with Tourism and Development Committees to promote a collaborative working relationship; it is currently disjointed in some areas.</li> </ul>
Attractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loddon Shire needs an iconic attraction.</li> <li>• Local operators need to be prepared to market their own business and not be so reliant on Council.</li> <li>• New streetscapes will hopefully encourage more visitors to stop in towns and buy local products or to stay.</li> <li>• Need nice parks and playgrounds to encourage people to stop in towns.</li> <li>• Good quality rest stops can encourage motorists to stop in towns.</li> </ul>

Issue / Opportunity	Details
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service stations can encourage people to stop in towns, but they need to see or be made aware of attractions from that location.</li> <li>• Quality customer service is critical.</li> <li>• Towns need to be made to be more visually appealing and facades of shops and general appearance of properties need improving, but resources are limited.</li> <li>• Need to engage the community with tourism so that they understand the benefit of having an attractive town.</li> </ul>
Tourism businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The opening hours of some businesses are sporadic – making it difficult for visitors to know when they can visit.</li> <li>• Ongoing training of businesses is important.</li> <li>• Need to train local operators in how to develop a sustainable business.</li> </ul>
Gaps in the market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need more tourism businesses, particularly those that offer good quality food and coffee.</li> <li>• Need a bakery in Wedderburn – the question is how does this information provided to potential bakery owners and what role does Council’s economic development unit have in attracting such businesses?</li> </ul>
Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to have a greater focus on linking tourism and economic development in the Shire.</li> </ul>
Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loddon Tourism and the Shire do a good job with events.</li> <li>• Would be ideal for Council to own a set of portable, accessible toilets to be used for all events.</li> <li>• A good level of support is provided to event volunteers.</li> <li>• Events need to be driven by the local community in order to be most successful.</li> <li>• Towns need to not just duplicate what their neighbours do; instead they need to hold an event that characterises their town.</li> </ul>
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An Inclusive Towns Guide is currently being prepared by Loddon Shire and City of Greater Bendigo, focusing on tourism businesses initially. Victoria Tourism and Loddon Shire (<a href="http://www.loddon.vic.gov.au/Invest/Supporting-business/Accessible-Accommodation-Guide">http://www.loddon.vic.gov.au/Invest/Supporting-business/Accessible-Accommodation-Guide</a>) both have accommodation accessibility guides.</li> <li>• People with disabilities need information about accessibility in advance so that they can make informed decisions.</li> <li>• Accessibility features of accommodation and attractions needs to be advertised.</li> <li>• Accessible toilets need to be made more available.</li> <li>• Support should be provided to events organisers to help them to make events more accessible.</li> <li>• There should be maps in each town showing accessible routes of travel.</li> <li>• Signage to and within towns should meet Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and Universal Design requirements.</li> <li>• 20% of the population has some form of disability – potentially missing this market if accessibility is not addressed.</li> </ul>

Issue / Opportunity	Details
Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We need to recognise in marketing that particular places in the Shire are best suited to a particular season, e.g. Kooyoora is best visited in spring and Boort is best visited in summer.</li> </ul>

#### Other key stakeholder discussions

Telephone discussions were also held with the following people:

- Kathryn McKenzie – Bendigo Tourism
- David Leathem– Mt Alexander Tourism
- Jida Gulpilil - Gulpilil Australia

Key outcomes of these discussions include:

- Importance of collaborations between Loddon Shire, City of Greater Bendigo, Mt Alexander Shire and Central Goldfields Shire in areas such as a shared website.
- Alliance with Bendigo Regional Tourism will assist with visitor dispersal to towns within Loddon Shire, i.e. the hub (City of Greater Bendigo) and spoke (Loddon, Mt Alexander and Central Goldfields Shires).
- Nature based tourism (NBT) is clearly a strength of Loddon Shire, but to date development of any products around NBT is very limited. Need one to two quality products that can interlink.
- There is a strong relationship between attractive areas and streetscapes, a sense of liveability and the potential to attract new residents to an area. Economic development of this nature is important to Loddon.
- Towns in Loddon Shire need to be branded and marketed. Start with a concept and then build your brand around that. Some of the key brands in the Shire are Bridgewater Bakery, Salute Olives, Inglewood Dry Aged Beef and Simply Tomatoes. Opportunities exist for these suppliers to work with restaurants in Bendigo or the Food Fossicker's Tours to help strengthen and increase awareness of brands in Loddon Shire.
- Visitors to areas want products and packages; they want something to buy.
- Loddon needs to focus on higher yield visitors such as the Lifestyle Leader group. This group spends more than grey nomads and gold fossickers, and often has children travelling with them. Bus tours are low yield, as are events such as Great Victorian Bike Ride.
- Focus of Loddon Tourism needs to be on building the capacity of the industry, building the brand and developing products.
- Lack of accommodation is an issue in Loddon Shire.
- Key features to promote in Loddon Shire include: walking / hiking; cycling; indigenous tourism; wineries; Melville Caves; historic streetscapes.
- Need to develop a quality gastropub; farm stays (marketed towards Chinese tourists who are interested in viewing the night skies and patting animals); horse drawn wagon holidays, yurts (a portable, circular tent similar to those used by nomadic Mongolians) with bicycle hire.
- Grants would be beneficial to help indigenous tourism operators start up (i.e. support with feasibility studies and business plans, websites, banners / signs, small capital purchases); and continue to operate and expand businesses (assistance with shop fit-outs, purchase of small capital items, marketing, website positioning).
- Understanding that the local market cannot necessarily pay the same rates as high end visitors to Melbourne for activities such as indigenous educational tourism.
- Cross-marketing between local businesses is important.
- Potential to develop an indigenous shop front in Boort that can be used as a bookings office and as a gallery. Major opportunity to link Bendigo's arts and cultural visitors to indigenous arts and culture.

Public feedback from draft report:

- To investigate opportunities for tourism with the South West Loddon Pipeline. Example the development of Skinners Flat for passive recreation.
- Advocate to relevant Government agencies to improve access to internet services and increase mobile phone coverage outside the main population centres of the Shire.
- To grow the partnership with Murray Regional Tourism particular with Mildura, Swan Hill Echuca and Kerang.