A scenic sunset over a lake. The sky transitions from a deep blue at the top to a bright orange and yellow near the horizon. The sun is low, creating a long, shimmering reflection on the water's surface. A dark silhouette of a tree branch with light-colored leaves hangs from the top left corner. The water is calm, with a few small ripples and a dark buoy visible in the middle ground. The overall mood is peaceful and serene.

YARRIAMBIACK SHIRE COUNCIL

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# Tourism Strategy

2023-2027

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT *of Country*

Yarriambiack Sire Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land: the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjah, Wergaia and Jupagulk people.

We pay respect elders past, present and future and extend that respect to all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians within our region.

## Acknowledgements

Council thanks contributors and stakeholders consulted in the development of the Yarriambiack Tourism Strategy 2023-27.





# Contents

01

## Mayor's Message <sup>4</sup>

Shire Map

02

## Council's Role in Tourism <sup>6</sup>

Council's Commitment

03

## Overview & Summary <sup>7</sup>

Tourism strategy in context  
Tourism 2016-2022: from fringe to mainstream  
Tourism activity in Yarriambiack Shire  
Recent Tourism Trends  
Tourism Market Segments  
Tourism Market Targets

05

## Strategies <sup>20</sup>

- Strategy Theme 1: Evolving Tourist Friendly Towns.
- Strategy Theme 2: Enhancing Existing Attractions.
- Strategy Theme 3: Exploring the Next Wave of Visitor Attractions.
- Strategy Theme 4: A Council Who Values Tourism.
- Strategy Theme 5: Regional Tourism Collaboration –  
"Sharing a bigger Visitor Economy".

06

## Action Plan <sup>30</sup>



# MAYORS MESSAGE

The Councillors and I are pleased to adopt the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan for 2023-27. This document addresses the Council's future directions and activities in tourism to follow on from the last Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2015-2019

Reflecting on a transformational period since the 2015-2019 strategy, which has seen Yarriambiack Shire evolve from a 'stop over' location to a genuine tourism destination, we are looking to continue to build on the momentum that the Silo Art Trail has created and further establish Yarriambiack Shire in the Visitor Economy.

This strategy and action plan follows a five-year period in which partnerships and collaborations have been key to the achieving an exemplary listing of tourism achievements to date. The Strategy and Action Plan identifies a number of actionable items and the role that Council will undertake to address these barriers and proposes five key themes and associated actions that indicate Council's role and timeline for delivery to achieve.

Evolving Tourist Friendly Towns - we are looking to build reliable visitor statistics that can be provided to local visitor servicing businesses so that they can operate at times of high visitation. Noting the pressure put on small, family run businesses to operate throughout the weekend, while maintaining a service-orientated businesses that trade at times when visitors are in town. This document identifies a number of activities to maximise opportunities to support this initiative.

Enhancing Existing Attractions – this strategy identifies how the hero attraction of the Silo Art Trail can be utilised to provide benefit to the other visitor attractions that provide the rich experiences and stories and define Yarriambiack Shire's reputation. Continuing to be innovative in our approach by enhancing existing attractions and packaging experiences, we aim to extend visitor length of stay and disperse visitation further across our Shire.

Exploring the Next Wave of Visitor Attractions – having proven that as community we have the ability to be innovative in our approach to tourism, Council is committed to continuing this momentum and collaborating regionally to see what other visitor trends are emerging. The diverse calendar of events already being held in Yarriambiack Shire are proof that we have a unique offering and rich history that can be further developed through collaboration at a Shire, Regional, and State level.

A Council who Values Tourism – locally led business and community group enterprises are the key to visitor experiences. The grass roots initiatives, attractions, experiences, and events need continued support from Council in the forms of financial assistance through community grant programs, visitor statistics to de-risk decision making, and in-kind promotional support to reach their full potential. Several actions have been identified to highlight how Council can implement support and communication to local businesses and community groups.

Regional Tourism Collaboration – "Sharing a Bigger Visitor Economy" – following the announcement from Victoria state government introducing Visitor Economic Partnerships to the tourism sector, the document highlights Council's crucial role in regional collaboration and forming partnerships to ensure the Yarriambiack Shire businesses and community groups are receiving equitable opportunities on offer.

The strategy and action plan have been developed through a process of consultation and review and Council endorses its direction and roadmap.

Kylie Zanker

Mayor



# YARRIAMBIACK *Shire Map*





# COUNCILS ROLE IN *Tourism*

"To define Yarriambiack's tourism footprint within the visitor economy and sustainably increase economic yield within the municipality to strengthen national reputation".

## COUNCIL'S COMMITMENT

This strategy documents the commitment of Council to assign resources from its staff team and annual budget to facilitate:

- Regular input from the tourism community via the Advocacy Committee of Council.
- Utilise visitor statistics to determine when guests are visiting to support community and business enterprises.
- Identifying ways to enhance existing attractions through the creation of pre-booked trails.
- Understanding visitor trends that support innovative and sustainable tourism offerings.
- Streamlining of Council processes and work cooperatively with tourism development stakeholders.
- Collaboration at a regional level in implementing tourism initiatives which extend beyond local boundaries.



# OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY

## *Towards a National Tourism Reputation*

Tourism development in Yarriambiack Shire over the past five years has been transformational. It has taken the industry in Yarriambiack from fringe to mainstream. Visits to Yarriambiack have changed from a possible stopover en route (to the Murray, Melbourne or Adelaide) to a genuine destination.

The Shire's tourism achievements in the last seven years have been outstanding:

- Development and rollout of the iconic Silo Art Trail as Australia's largest outdoor gallery.
- Reached over \$35 million in annual tourism expenditure and around 160,000 in tourist visits, prior to the disruptions from the COVID pandemic.
- Recreational facility master plans and upgrades.
- Cabins and caravan park upgrades (Hopetoun, Murtoa, Minyip, Beulah, Warracknabeal).
- Redevelopment of Turkey Bottom Lake at Yaapeet.
- Boating, angling and swimming facility improvements at pipeline supported lakes in the Shire.
- Re-purposing of the former Hopetoun power house into an 'artist in residence' facility with boutique accommodation and the Warracknabeal old courthouse into an arts hub with a unique accommodation 'capsule'.
- Several tourism infrastructure investments.
- Development of new annual and occasional events.
- Increased operating times for historic attractions.

The next challenges are to build on the Shire's attractions, link the region's experiences, expand the target markets, and substantially increase the economic yield within the Shire. Additionally, the implementation of metrics to measure outcomes will be required to assess progress during the strategy period.

The 2023-27 vision is:

*"To define Yarriambiack's tourism footprint within the visitor economy and sustainably increase economic yield within the municipality to strengthen national reputation".*

To achieve the vision, Yarriambiack Shire Council will facilitate and support tourism initiatives which:

- Formalise the establishment of new tourism products.
- Add value to Yarriambiack's existing visitor experiences.
- Involve regional cooperation.
- Increase the economic and social yield from tourism metrics.
- Expand the market segments who are attracted to Yarriambiack's towns and attractions.

Strategies for tourism development during 2023-2027 are structured in five themes:

- Evolving tourist friendly towns.
- Enhancing existing attractions.
- Exploring the next wave of Yarriambiack visitor experiences
- "Sharing in a bigger visitor economy": Regional tourism collaboration.
- A Leading Tourism Council

### **Guided by Advice and Consultation**

Yarriambiack Shire Council, businesses, community, and regional organisations have contributed to this strategy through meetings and forums, including:

- Workshops and briefing sessions with Council.
- Workshops with Council's Tourism Advisory Committee (Yarriambiack Tourism).
- Meetings with Council staff.
- Individual discussions with relevant regional organisations (including Wimmera Mallee Tourism and Grampians Tourism), government agencies and adjoining local government areas.

The time, effort and suggestions provided through these consultation processes in helping to shape the strategy are gratefully acknowledged.

A second complementary Yarriambiack Economic Development Strategy 2023-27 has also been produced by Council and it is anticipated that the two strategies, and their associated action plans, together will maximise Council's resourcing of support for growth and investment across all industry sectors in the Shire.

### **Aligned with the Yarriambiack Shire Council Plan**

Council's plan for 2021-2025 outlines a 20 year vision for 'a connected rural community who values its land and wellbeing' which is guiding decision making. Four strategic objectives drive the vision:

- A vibrant and diversified economy.
- A healthy and inclusive community.
- A robust and thriving environment.
- A Council which serves its community.

The Tourism Strategy supports all four Council Plan strategic objectives through the five themes and related actions.

### **Aligned with regional strategy documents, such as the Wimmera Mallee Tourism (WMT) Strategy and the Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Economic Development Strategy.**

The WSM Regional Economic Development Strategy's (REDS) second strategic direction is supported by this Tourism Strategy. The relevant REDS direction is:

"Promote growth and development of the visitor economy, leveraging natural assets and Aboriginal heritage".

The WMT Strategy has five focus areas and three are closely linked to the strategies and actions in this document, namely:

- Investment in new tourism products.
- Adopting a tourism culture.
- Marketing and branding.





## TOURISM STRATEGY IN CONTEXT

Yarriambiack Shire and the broader tourism region has only recently become a destination for recreational or holiday visitation, although well informed travellers have long appreciated the area's subtle landscapes, history and culture, parks and reserves, lakes and wetlands, and uniquely Australian flora and fauna.

The relatively new prominence of tourism follows the success of the Yarriambiack's Silo Art Trail (Australia's largest outdoor gallery) which has helped to make the whole Wimmera Mallee region a genuine destination. Tourist trails in the Wimmera Mallee region generated almost 200,000 day and overnight visits in the 2018 and 2019 years and although this decreased by more than 40% in 2020-21, in the post-COVID 19 recovery period, the offering, a noticeable parallel to the metro experience is expected that the visitations will rise substantially in coming years. Overall tourism to Wimmera Mallee region was approximately 500,000 day and overnight visits in the pre-pandemic year of 2018-19. In Yarriambiack Shire, the COVID 19 pandemic in 2020-21:

- Reduced annual visitation to the Shire from 158,000 overnight visitors per annum and 229,000 visit nights to an estimated 38,000 overnight visitors and 104,000 visit nights in 2020-21. This represents a 103% reduction in overnight visitors and a 120% reduction in visit nights.
- Reduced regional tourist expenditure by overnight visitors from \$30 million per annum to an estimated \$13.5 million in 2020.

The region's tourist attractions include a range of emerging and further developing products such as:

- Silo Art Trail (initially comprising 6 sites, all in Yarriambiack Shire, but now expanded to 13 sites and to all four Wimmera Mallee Shires). A large number of visitors to the Wimmera Mallee specifically taking the Silo Art tour stay at one or more of the region's camping grounds and caravan parks.
- Recreational Lakes and Weirs. There are 15 recreational lakes and weir pools which have a good level of water security in the Wimmera Mallee, across three of the local government areas (Buloke, Hindmarsh and Yarriambiack) through Wimmera Mallee Pipeline arrangements with GWMWater. In Yarriambiack Shire these include Yarriambiack Creek weir pools at Warracknabeal, Brim and Beulah and lakes Lascelles, Marma and the newly improved Turkey Bottom Lake at Yaapeet.
- History, Heritage and Landscapes Trails. Yarriambiack has a rich agricultural and settlement history, as well as an Indigenous history which has not been developed into organised tourism activity to date. Other landscapes are associated with flora, fauna, national parks, desert environments and broadacre farming. The region's post colonial settlement history is especially strong in cropping and other farming practices, and innovations in agricultural machinery and equipment (often preserved at local museums). Other historic societies around the Shire have a wealth of material that could be used in new exhibitions and displays.

The role, scope and organisational relationships for Yarriambiack's tourism function are still emerging. As an organisation Yarriambiack Shire Council has evolved in recent years and the scope of the tourism function needs to be further defined, with a measurable action plan.

The action plan identified opportunities that Council have direct control over, and where this control sit outside of YSC, identified supporting initiatives to achieve or facilitate outcomes.



# TOURISM TRENDS, SEGMENTS AND MARKETS

## TOURISM 2016-2022: FROM FRINGE TO MAINSTREAM

Creation of the Yarriambiack Silo Art Trail (and its extension across the Wimmera Mallee region), large and sustained growth in recreational water visitation (enabled by water security from the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline) and the scaling up of operations at Murtoa's Stick Shed and Rupanyup's Woods Farming and Heritage Museum, have all contributed to the Shire's tourism industries shifting from a 'modest' part of the Shire economy to the mainstream. These are transformational changes since Yarriambiack's 2015-19 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy was prepared. The 2015 Strategy asserted:

*"Tourism in Yarriambiack is modest; being largely focused on events and heritage. There is potential to extend this range around farm, desert, waterways and other natural environment attractions"<sup>1</sup>.*

It went on to suggest:

*"Through collaboration with adjacent Shires, Yarriambiack can be part of a regional push to showcase the watercourses, colours, vegetation, and geological features of the outstanding parks in the region... A regional approach to tourism is needed to provide a compelling product offer, in order to enhance visitation levels to these, mostly natural, attractions across the Wimmera".*

In the intervening seven years, Yarriambiack has delivered 'in spades' on these suggestions. While the silo art trail and the introduction of Juddy Roller as silo art facilitator was not anticipated in 2015, the silo art outdoor gallery has been an outstanding innovation which, in many respects is an attraction which adds value to the region's colours, geological features, farm, and natural environments by attracting visitors to them and by featuring them in the silo artworks.

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<sup>1</sup> Street Ryan and Insight Communications (2015), Yarriambiack Shire Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, Yarriambiack Shire Council



## TOURISM ACTIVITY IN YARRIAMBIACK SHIRE

“Tourism” is not a discrete industry, because local residents consume products and services from the same businesses as visitors. However, five of the standard industries (within the three services sectors of tertiary, quaternary and quinary sectors) are classified as either ‘tourism characteristic’ or ‘tourism connected’ industries.

Tourism Characteristic Industries include businesses that are significantly reliant on income from visitors, such as accommodation, attractions, tours, cafes, pubs, buses, taxis, etc. The specific industries are:

- Accommodation and food services
- Transport, postal and warehousing
- Arts and recreation services

Tourism Connected Industries include businesses that provide some products and services to visitors. The specific industries are:

- Retail trade
- Education and training.

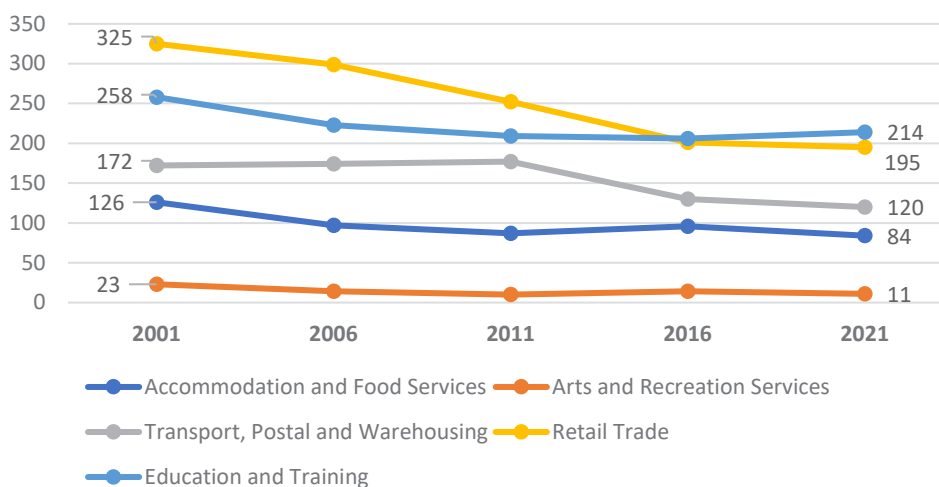
Surprisingly, at a time tourism was becoming recognised in the Shire and when the overall number of jobs in the Shire have been increasing, jobs in the tourism characteristic and tourism connected industries have continued to decrease. Moreover, jobs in the most direct tourism characteristic industries of Accommodation and Food Services and Art and Recreation Services have not only decreased in recent years, but the rate of decrease between 2016-2021 exceeded the average rate of decrease over the past 20 years. Table 1 and Figure 1 present details of jobs in tourism characteristic and connected industries during 2001-2021.

Figure 1 - Employment in Tourism Related Industries, Yarriambiack 2001-2021

Industry	2001	2011	2016	2021	% pa 2001-21	% pa 2016-21
Accommodation and Food Services	126	87	96	84	-2.01%	-2.64%
Arts and Recreation Services	23	10	14	11	-3.62%	-4.71%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	172	177	130	120	-1.78%	-1.59%
Retail Trade	325	252	201	195	-2.52%	-0.60%
Education and Training	258	209	206	214	-0.93%	0.76%
<b>Total Tourism Characteristic and Connected</b>	<b>904</b>	<b>735</b>	<b>647</b>	<b>624</b>	<b>-1.84%</b>	<b>-0.72%</b>
Total All Jobs	3,328	2,848	2,628	2,670	-1.10%	0.32%

SOURCE: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Censuses of Population and Housing 2001 to 2021

Figure 2 - Employment Trends in Tourism Related Industries, Yarriambiack <sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> SOURCE: ABS Censuses of Population and Housing 2001 to 2021

Observations from the 2001-2021 and 2016-2021 tourism related job trends are insightful:

- Employment in tourism related industries makes up 23.4% of all jobs in the Shire in 2021. However, when school education, freight transport and the fact that most retail jobs are servicing the resident community, are all taken into account, the actual number of jobs deriving substantial support from tourist visitation is likely to be under 10%.

- The most direct tourism related industries have performed poorly in the Shire over 20 years and the loss of jobs between 2016 and 2021 has been alarming.

~ Accommodation and food services employment has dropped by 2.64% per annum on average over the five-year period and only makes up 3.15% of the employed workforce. It must be noted that there is unmet demand from employers, with many unfilled jobs in this industry. Despite this labour market shortage, the Shire compares poorly with the Victorian average of 1.24% growth per annum in accommodation and food service jobs between 2016 and 2021, and the industry contributes 6.21% of all jobs; almost double the relative size of the industry in Yarriambiack.

It is well known that the Shire has a limited range of accommodation. Camping, caravanning and, more recently, cabin style accommodation provides

the bulk of visitor options. Only a few locations offer hotel, motel or bed and breakfast accommodation. The range of accommodation must be addressed if Yarriambiack is to improve the economic yield from tourism.

Many new food services businesses have commenced, relocated, changed ownership and closed in Yarriambiack over the past five years. Most recently there has been a trend in the start-up of mobile van food service outlets in the Shire. Unfortunately, with all this activity there has nonetheless been a net loss of food service businesses in Yarriambiack towns over recent years.

~ Yarriambiack Shire is dramatically under-represented in employment in Arts and Recreation Services, not because the region has a dearth of arts and recreational enterprises, services and facilities, but largely a reflection of the high level of volunteers in managing these activities.

Arts and recreation services employment has dropped by 4.71% per annum over the five-year period 2016-2021, from a very small base, to be just 0.41% of the employed workforce. This compares with a Victorian average increase of 0.68% per annum and 1.73% of the employed Victorian workforce: More than four times the size of the industry in Yarriambiack Shire. This would be an impossible situation in which to achieve growth in tourism attractions if it were not for the fact that most visitor attractions in Yarriambiack in this industry are run by volunteers (museums, clubs and societies, historical associations, etc). This important tourism attraction industry includes the key current and likely future Yarriambiack visitor attractions:

- Art galleries, museums, and historic buildings
  - Parks and gardens (including national and state parks and conservation reserves)
  - Creative and performing arts
  - All sport and recreation activities.
- Employment in transport, postal and warehousing has declined consistently by 1.6% to 1.8% per annum on average throughout 2001 to 2021, but the proportion of total jobs in the industry servicing passengers is small. A resumption of passenger rail services would be most helpful, even if these were limited to occasional tourism events.
- Employment in the tourism connected industries has been more positive in the 2016-2021 period:

~ Education and training is the 'tourist connected' industry with least impact on current visitation to Yarriambiack. While the industry does attract visitors to the Shire (such as medical and allied health students on placement, a small number of seminars/workshops, tailored courses/programs and short courses), the majority of education and





training provision is preschool and school education. Education and training was the only tourism related industry to record an increase in employment between 2016 and 2021, at the average annual rate of 0.76%.

~ Employment in Yarriambiack retailing has declined at 2.52% per annum over the 2001-2021 period, but this rate of decline has slowed to just 0.60% per annum in the five years to 2021. Indeed Yarriambiack (and Warracknabeal most notably) is developing somewhat of a reputation as a place to visit for ‘opp shops’ or second-hand shops and curio shops in the past couple of years. This has become a tourist attraction in its own right.



## RECENT TOURISM TRENDS

The most recently available Tourism Research Australia (TRA) profile for Yarriambiack Shire covers the average annual results for 2016-2019, the period prior to COVID impacts. The profile is summarised in Table 2, revealing 158,000 total tourist visits per annum, of which:

- 77,000 were domestic overnight visitors (staying 222,000 nights implying 2.88 nights length of stay).
- 81,000 were day visitors.
- Overnight visitors spent \$30 million per annum.
- Day visitors spent \$5.7 million.

*Table 2 - Yarriambiack Tourist Profile 2016-19*

<b>Estimates for 2016-19 (Averages)</b>	
<b>Domestic Tourism: Overnight</b>	
Interstate visitors	28,000
Interstate nights	102,000
Intrastate visitors	49,000
Intrastate nights	120,000
Trip length (intra)	2.45
Trip length (interstate)	3.64
Trip length (intra and inter)	2.88
Dom O'night Visitors	77,000
Nights	222,000
Total tourist visits O'night (dom and international) and Day	158,000
Total nights	229,000
Day visitors	81,000
Estimated average day visitor expenditure (\$70)	\$5,670,000
Expenditure: Dom O'night:	\$30 million
Expenditure per trip	\$383
Expenditure per night	\$133
Expenditure/night (commercial)	\$63
Est. Expenditure Day visitors	\$5,670,000
Expenditure Overnight	\$30,000,000
Holiday: Dom O'night	32,000
Holiday: total	71,000

SOURCE: Tourism Research Australia (TRA) Local Government Area Profile

Further useful visitor statistics are available through the latitudinal assessment of the social and economic contribution of recreational waterbodies in the Wimmera Southern Mallee, of which 5 have been in Yarriambiack Shire <sup>3</sup> (waterways at Lake Lascelles, Lake Marma, Warracknabeal, Brim and Beulah) the assessment has been conducted since 2016. Results provide intelligence on the characteristics of visitors to the Shire. The annual assessment has shown that the growing tourism reputation of Yarriambiack Shire has had a clear flow-on impact to the lakes and weirs. People touring the region to view the silo art trail and other nature and heritage attractions were frequently found staying and recreating at the waterbodies. It has also led to off-season participation (winter and early spring) becoming more significant as the years unfolded.



Figure 2 shows the origin of non-local participants at Yarriambiack’s recreational waterbodies in 2019-20, which was unaffected by the COVID pandemic until late-March 2020 and again in 2020-21 when COVID restrictions were in place for large parts of the year. The high level of visitors from Melbourne and interstate in 2019-20 strongly reflects the drawing power of the Silo Art Trail and the water security at the waterways from the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline.

Over the past seven years, visitors to Yarriambiack’s recreational waterbodies peaked in 2018-19 (the last year unaffected by the COVID pandemic) when, the waterbodies had:

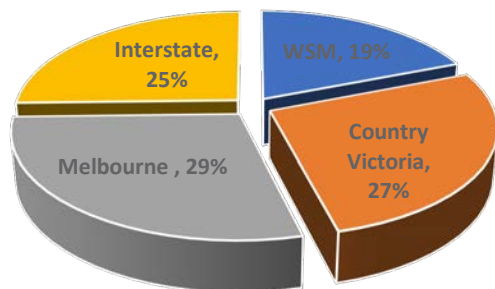
- 9,338 overnight visitors staying 37,056 nights. This is 12% of all overnight visitors to the Shire and 17% of all visit nights.
- A further 19,150 active day visitors.
- The total economic contribution of Yarriambiack’s recreational waterbodies in 2018-19 was \$6.119 million.

<sup>3</sup> A sixth Yarriambiack lake, Turkey Bottom at Yaapeet has been added in 2022-23

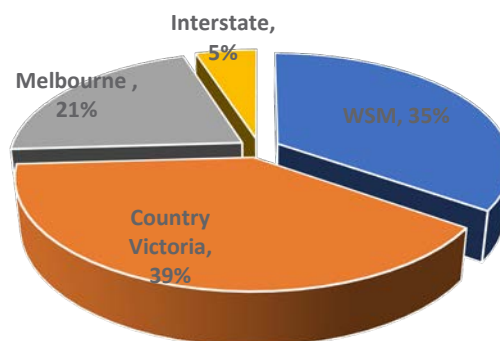


Figure 2 - Residential Location of Non-Local Visitors to Yarriambiack's Recreational Lakes, 2019-20 and 2020-21

2019-20 (largely pre-COVID)



2020-21 – mid-COVID



The age-structure of recreational water users belies the belief that Yarriambiack tourism is dependent on 'grey nomads'/retirees and instead highlights that young families, 'visiting friends and family', and 'empty nesters' need further investment. In 2018-19 the age structure of recreational water visitors was<sup>4</sup>:

- Less than 15 years 19.8%
- 15-24 years 9.1%
- 25-44 years 31.1%
- 45-64 years 23.9%
- 65+ years 16.1%.

WSM means Wimmera Southern Mallee region excluding Yarriambiack Shire

SOURCE: Street Ryan, Wimmera Southern Mallee Recreational and Environmental Water: Socio-Economic Value 2019-20 and 2020-21

<sup>4</sup>The recreational waterbodies assessments data collection is undertaken during November and April each year which does tend to encompass key long weekends and school holiday periods. It is likely that 65+ years visitors are more significant outside this period.



## TOURISM MARKET SEGMENTS

Yarriambiack tourism market drivers are touring, outdoor recreation, social and family connections, and events, and the main features of interest for visitors are:

- Silo art trail
- Recreational waterways
- Museums and heritage buildings
- Natural environment (parks, reserves and broadacre agricultural environs)
- Sporting facilities, tournaments and competitions
- Annual and occasional events.

The current market drivers by purpose of visit, and the features which make Yarriambiack an appealing location are presented in Table 2. The table indicates some potential extensions to tourism facilities and arrangements which would broaden the appeal to new market segments.

There are many ways to profile travellers, and it is important to understand the purpose of why we segment the market to achieve the above benefits, while maintaining a consistent approach to allow for accurate comparisons when analysing visitor trends. Each market segment can serve a different purpose (how travellers like to travel, why they travel, what they like to see, when they will travel, etc) Segments can be done in a variety of ways and are made up of either one or a combination of:

- Age/life stage.
- Motive.
- Socio economic status.
- Geography.
- Type of travel (Business, leisure, extended stay).

Understanding who is travelling to Yarriambiack Shire and putting importance on identifying market segments / traveller profiles will:

- Helps local businesses and community lead enterprises understand their customers.
- Allows for targeted marketing.
- Increases customer satisfaction.
- Boosts Revenue.

It also helps to understand what success looks like when trialling new products / marketing efforts when understanding the different types of travellers and the behaviours associated with each traveller profile.

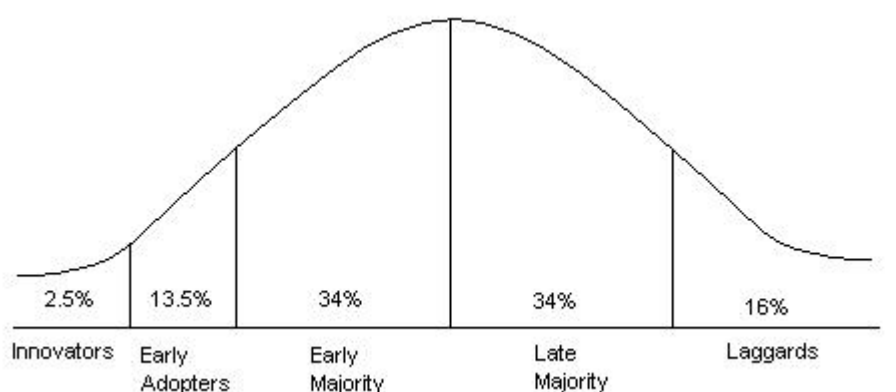




Table 2 - Current Tourism Market Segments for Yarriambiack Shire and Potential Extensions

Purpose of Visit	Market Segments	Why Yarriambiack is Appealing	Comment on Economic Benefit from Market Segment	Potential Extensions
<p>Touring: Usually in caravans and recreational vehicles (RVs), with an increasing number using self-contained cabins).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retirees (year-round and predominant in Winter and Spring months)</li> <li>Couples and families (Summer and Autumn holiday periods)</li> <li>Small organised/ packaged groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Silo Art self-drive tours (and a small percentage guided tours).</li> <li>Museums and historic buildings as add-ons to the silo art trail.</li> <li>Uncrowded, clean environment, changing colours by time of day and season.</li> <li>Low-cost tours, friendly towns, good stopover tour en route to an onward destination (such as Grampians, Murray or Limestone Coast).</li> <li>Largely quiet touring roads, also traversed by highways.</li> <li>Quirky curio shops.</li> <li>Parks and reserves (especially Wyperfeld)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Touring visitors have somewhat lower lengths of stay than outdoor recreational groups but, due to their older age profile average, the trip expenditure is often greater (per person).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eclectic and other self-contained accommodation</li> <li>Curating of museums and historic buildings to provide for themed displays and exhibitions</li> <li>Extension of silo art to formally include historic and cultural attractions on a more extensive trail (or trails)</li> <li>Indigenous cultural tours</li> <li>Increase paid experiences</li> </ul>
<p>Outdoor recreation:                      - Waterways: Fishing, swimming, water skiing, jetboating, paddleboarding, canoe/kayaking.                      - Other activities in parks and reserves and around farming areas eg. automotive clubs, photography, field naturalists, bird watchers, walking and hiking.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families (including family reunions meeting and staying at a waterway)</li> <li>Special interest groups</li> <li>Clubs and societies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attractive waterways</li> <li>Walking, biking and canoe trails</li> <li>Overwhelmingly rural environment</li> <li>Choice of secluded/ uncrowded waterways or those in the heart of Yarriambiack towns.</li> <li>Heritage assets and museums</li> <li>Wyperfeld National Park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The average length of visit by overnight recreational waterway visitors to Yarriambiack, pre-COVID was 3.9 days with a trip local expenditure of \$127 per person per trip<sup>5</sup>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Waterways trails (across the Shire and region)</li> <li>Trips built around visiting golf or bowls clubs in the Shire.</li> <li>Additional accommodation and food service options.</li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup> Street Ryan, WSM Recreational and Environmental Water Socio-Economic Value, 2018-19. WDA

Table 2 - Current Tourism Market Segments for Yarriambiack Shire and Potential Extensions

Purpose of Visit	Market Segments	Why Yarriambiack is Appealing	Benefit from Market Segment	Potential Extensions
Social and family connections.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Usually) younger generations returning to visit friends and family</li> <li>• Family reunions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uncrowded, familiar, clean environment, offering a quiet escape from metropolitan or provincial cities.</li> <li>• Museums and historic buildings as add-ons to the stay.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Almost by definition, people visiting friends and relatives have lower expenditure than those staying in commercial accommodation. However, this can be understated since it often encourages the friends and relatives who they are visiting to spend more in catering for their visitors and in participating in these activities with their visitors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional accommodation and food service options</li> </ul>
Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special interest groups</li> <li>• Enthusiasts of the specific type of event (music, art, collectibles, sport, vehicles, etc)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A selection of annual and occasional events which appeal to special interest groups (music, field days, hobbies)</li> <li>• Regular program of sporting competitions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The nature of each event determines both the length of stay and the level of expenditure, although event entry costs/fees tend to add to the total expenditure.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evening and night skies events at selected Silo Art sites encourage over night</li> <li>• Events at waterways and across multiple waterways</li> <li>• Events at historic asset sites</li> <li>• Additional accommodation and food service options</li> </ul>





## TOURISM MARKET TARGETS

Tourism Research Australia (TRA) publishes forecasts on domestic and international travel. In the latest TRA forecasts it was noted that domestic overnight trip and day trip expenditure is moving higher than their pre-pandemic peaks in 2023 and are expected to increase by 11% on the 2019 visit nights by 2027. TRA expects international tourism to take some time to recover. Overall, TRA forecasts that visitor arrivals will move higher than pre-pandemic levels in 2025.

The turnaround for domestic travel is progressing more quickly. Overnight and day trip expenditure this year are already above pre-pandemic levels. We forecast the number of visitor nights to surpass pre-pandemic levels in 2023.

Wimmera Mallee Tourism (WMT) has set targets for COVID recovery and growth to 2027<sup>6</sup> which reflect WMT's objective to increase the economic yield from visitors. The targets imply:

- 14.6% per annum increase in overnight visitors (on the COVID affected low in 2021) to 2027.
- 17.1% per annum increase in visit nights to 2027.
- 12.7% per annum increase in day visitors to 2027.
- 17.9% per annum increase in visitor expenditure to 2027.

Cognisant of the TRA forecasts and the WMT targets, Yarriambiack Tourism Advisory Committee and Council have agreed to a target of \$50 million in tourist expenditure by 2027.

- Estimated 2019 tourism expenditure was \$35.7 million.
- Estimated 2021 COVID impacted tourism expenditure was \$15.7 million.
- The \$50 million target therefore demands 21.3% per annum growth on 2021 and 5.8% per annum growth on 2019.

To achieve this target, Yarriambiack communities, businesses and Council must be prepared to take advantage of the opportunities by implementing a substantial proportion of the strategic actions in this document. Suitable accommodation, responsive food service and retail businesses, and well-targeted marketing initiatives will help to capitalise on COVID recovery opportunities and growth.

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<sup>6</sup> Street Ryan, Wimmera Mallee Tourism Strategic Plan 2022-27

# STRATEGIES

*Five themes*



*The 2023-27  
Yarriambiack  
Tourism Strategy  
is structured  
around five  
themes:*

- STRATEGY THEME 1: EVOLVING TOURIST FRIENDLY TOWNS.
- STRATEGY THEME 2: ENHANCING EXISTING ATTRACTIONS.
- STRATEGY THEME 3: EXPLORING THE NEXT WAVE OF VISITOR ATTRACTIONS.
- STRATEGY THEME 4: A COUNCIL WHO VALUES TOURISM.
- STRATEGY THEME 5: REGIONAL TOURISM COLLABORATION – “SHARING A BIGGER VISITOR ECONOMY”.

These themes and the related strategies, are consistent with the directions of Yarriambiack’s Council Plan, the Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Economic Development Strategy, and Wimmera Mallee Tourism’s 2022-27 Strategy.

The following sections discuss the strategy themes and underlying logic and present the strategic actions within each theme. These strategic actions are the basis of Council’s Tourism Action Plan for 2023-27.





# THEME 1.

## *Evolving Tourist Friendly Towns*

### DISCUSSION AND LOGIC

Being able to enjoy quality coffee, snacks and meals has become synonymous with good visitor experiences in the twenty first century. It is important that the service-oriented cafés, bakeries, pubs, takeaway outlets and restaurants, trade at times when visitors are in

town. To assist local business owners evaluate operating at times of high visitation (noting a rise of visitation on weekends), capability building through visitor statistics needs to be prioritised to overcome the financial risk of opening longer/change of operating hours. With many small, family run businesses, opening throughout the weekend places pressure on already restrictive staffing resources. Focussing on building a reliable database of visitor statistics will create a compelling discussion to promote businesses to open at times when visitors are in town.

New food service operators have commenced in Yarriambiack Shire in the past five years and, in some cases other retailers have diversified to encompass food service (such as Café Pharmacino in the Warracknabeal Pharmacy, and Café Brim in McPhersons Farm and Rural Supplies store). But, overall, there has been a net loss of food service businesses in Yarriambiack towns over recent years, especially cafés and pubs, and the rate of turnover among operators has been quite high.

In Yarriambiack's smaller towns, a decline in population impacts on the viability of retail and food service businesses and as a result, there have been notable business closures in town centres. Diversification of remaining or core businesses and a creation of community enterprises (to offset the inability to attract interest from private sector operators) are both part of the potential solution.

In larger towns, the town centres are changing with less retail offerings and include more personal and business services (and where they are retail, it is often combined with a service or 'customer experience').

Town centres around Australia, previously dominated by retailing, have transformed in the past 15-20 years with a change in focus from 'product retailing' to commercial services (especially food service, health and wellbeing, beauty and other personal services). Even businesses which continue to have a retail focus have, in many cases, adopted a 'product with service' offer or some other form of value adding to their product, such as the above examples of diversifying retailers. Growth in online retail (strengthened during the COVID years), social media marketing and information diffusion has contributed to, and even forced, these trends.

Yarriambiack towns can benefit from 'hero businesses' or 'visitor experience champion' businesses. A single hero business can be a positive influence on a whole town centre and can change the perception of a town. Identifying 'hero' businesses is a worthwhile strategy, either with existing business operators or investment packages for new operators and/or community enterprises. Wimmera Southern Mallee has a few businesses which demonstrate hero status. Examples already in Yarriambiack is the Creekside Hotel Warracknabeal, and McPhersons Brim. Others in the broader region are Sharp's Bakery, Birchip, The Imaginarium, Dimboola, The Puppet Shop, Kaniva, Bakery on Broadway, Wycheproof, Mr Le Vietnamese Street Food, Nhill, and the Royal Hotel, Sea Lake.

These facts underline a need for more revitalisation and vibrancy in Yarriambiack's towns to provide a platform for building further tourism visitation prior to consideration of major further investment in unsupported new visitor attractions.

### STRATEGY 1.1:

Develop a procedure to capture visitor statistics in Yarriambiack to support community and business enterprises that operate in the visitor servicing sector.

### STRATEGY 1.2:

Implement the findings of Wimmera Mallee Tourism's feasibility project on redeveloping more eclectic accommodation (adding to the example set by Hopetoun's Powerhouse artist-in-residence and self-contained apartment) including the delivery of the Warracknabeal Courthouse Project. Proactively search for funding opportunities to support identified projects, including historic railway stations and pub hotels.

### STRATEGY 1.3:

Encourage and support all visitor servicing businesses within Yarriambiack to adopt a service culture of giving visitors a positive experience and structuring their operations to take account of visitor's expectations. Mentoring, industry forums, workshops and short-courses for new staff are possible mechanisms for implementation.



## THEME 2. *Enhancing Existing Attractions*

#### DISCUSSION AND LOGIC

Tourism in Yarriambiack has moved from being a series of wayside stops to a genuine destination. The silo art trail has been the prime foundation on which this tourism transformation has been founded.

Yarriambiack has several unique and rich visitor attractions to supplement the hero attraction that is the Silo Art Trail. This includes numerous waterways, historical and heritage attractions, and local sporting facilities. Their prominence has been heightened by visitors travelling around the Silo Art Trail who are keen to see and do other things along the way. Connecting and packaging the assortment of visitor attractions and trails follows similar logic utilised for the Silo Trail and aims to extend visitor spend and length of stay.

There are several other worthy museums in the region which could be marketed as a combined visitor experience trail. Features of most of these attractions is they have massive collections which are always relatively static and on display. The collections are overwhelming and there is a need to have varying displays (temporary/time limited displays), themed around differing industries, historic periods, and/or lifestyle eras.

On the flip side, there are some museums that celebrate the building itself. Nothing is on display except the building itself. The building is remarkable and has an amazing aura, but there could be more to the story that could be told through interpretative signage or other channels.

If the attractions are to become a trail or a formal adjunct to other trails, there is also a need to connect, cross-promote and to provide some interpretive links to the other museums. A collaborative and deeper understanding of visitor statistics and trends between organisations and venues is worthy of investigation. This information may help inform curation of displays and programming to develop shire wide themes or temporary displays.

As tourism assets, Yarriambiack's (and the Wimmera Mallee) recreational waterbodies are underdeveloped. Lake Lascelles in Hopetoun is perhaps the exception, and the benchmark for other recreational lakes, not only in the Shire but across the Wimmera Mallee. A large proportion of non-regional visitors to these significant tourism assets are friends or family members of regional residents, former residents, or people who are

returning to the waterbody after having a good experience from a previous visit. Interviewees from Melbourne and interstate<sup>7</sup> often express their pleasant surprise in discovering a caravan park or camping site at one or more of the region's lakes when staying to see the silo art or en route to a destination further afield.

The growing tourism reputation of the Wimmera Mallee Tourism region has had a clear flow-on impact to the lakes and weirs. People touring the region to view the silo art trail and other nature and heritage attractions are frequently found staying and recreating. This has also led to off-season participation (winter and early spring) in recreational water becoming more significant.

Traditional sporting-based tourism activities have continued to facilitate and stimulate visitation and spend in the Shire. These include but are not limited to regional bowls, football, netball, basketball, and golf tournaments. The opportunity exists to further leverage the visitation that these scheduled and regular events create, and work to identify other emerging sporting opportunities that can bring the same levels of visitation.

Anecdotal responses captured by visitors suggest that developing and formalising links, creating themes and cross-promoting has potential to increase participation and socio-economic contribution, and to use tour routes or trails of visitor attractions as an important part of Yarriambiack's, Wimmera Mallee's, and The Grampians' growing reputation as a tourism destination.

It will be difficult for the coming 2023-27 five-year period to emulate the successes of the past 5-7 years which have been outstanding, even with disruptions caused by the COVID pandemic. Adding value to existing tourism products and thereby appealing to new market segments and improving the economic yield is now important to consolidate the gains of recent years. This enhancement is best achieved by:

- Packaging attractions and trails to help in their promotion (and to commit visitors to an extended stay)
- Providing a consistent experience (through interpretive materials, on-site stories and visitor facilities)
- Ensuring the longevity of volunteer managed attractions and considering ways in which their commercial viability can be enhanced.

### **STRATEGY 2.1:**

Develop packages of Yarriambiack attractions in a way that enables visitors to pre-plan and book by type of experience and by tour routes. Utilise existing hero attractions including, but not limited to Silo Art, Waterways, Historical and Heritage Attractions and local Sporting Facilities to form anchor points of trails to celebrate Yarriambiack's tourism potential.

### **STRATEGY 2.2:**

Enhancing historic and heritage attractions across the Shire by facilitating connection between organisations and venues. Provide these groups with data and statistics to inform a collaborative approach.

### **STRATEGY 2.3:**

Work with regional tourism boards and visitor economy partnership bodies to promote identified trails and attractions outside of the municipality with the aim of increasing visitor expenditure and length of stay within Yarriambiack. This initiative includes aligning to region wide promotions, leveraging the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse and having increased digital exposure on a regional level for local businesses, events and community groups.

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<sup>7</sup>Street Ryan, WSM Recreational and Environmental Water: Socio-Economic Values 2016-17 to 2021-23, WDA



# THEME 3.

## Exploring the next wave of visitor attractions



### DISCUSSION AND LOGIC

The last 5 years have proven that, irrespective of available attractions and services, the tourism economy can be volatile and unpredictable. In the same way that

there are climatic, market and other external factors affecting the fortunes of agriculture, tourism can be equally variable. Tourism has been affected by drought, floods, fires and the COVID pandemic in all or part of regional Victoria in recent years. Increasing the range and the critical-mass of visitor attractions is an ongoing task to hedge against reliance on just a few key visitor experiences.

It would be unsurprising if Yarriambiack led the way for further regional innovation in new visitor experiences, given its formative role in silo art. A proposal for strategic consideration is a new experience which complements the silo art trail and the Shire's noted commitment to developing and supporting events across the Shire. It is notionally called 'Australia's Largest Outdoor Performing Arts Stage' and it would be an annual program of outdoor performing arts events (some perennial and some changing from year to year) whereby community groups in each town collaborate to hold an event at varying times of the year. As the Shire which pioneered the silo art trail as 'Australia's largest outdoor gallery', this annual program of performing arts is an entirely new innovation, matching the visual art trail with a performing arts trail (or, more accurately, program). Venues could include silo art sites, the banks of waterbodies, and the grounds of historic and cultural sites. The venues will take advantage of the night skies and the remoteness of the landscapes; clear points of difference from existing regional outdoor performing arts venues such as Hanging Rock and Mount Duneed, and with more predictable weather).

Performances could include opera (already trialled by the Warracknabeal Rotary Club with support from Council), Shakespeare in the fields, other plays, concerts, and First Nations interpretive presentations. Some of the Shire's existing major events could be embraced by, and become part of, the Outdoor Performing Arts Stage, with the diverse nature of the performing arts events explicitly broadening the visitor market segments for Yarriambiack.

Events are a definite 'value add' to all towns where they are held. The annual assessment of socio-economic value of recreational water found that, with respect to events at lakes in the region "in the main, events do not drive other participation at the waterways: Event participants who live locally tend to use the lake/weir pool throughout the year anyway, and most visitors attend only for the event. However, hosting major events opens participation to people who have never visited the area and they do provide very significant (tourism) economic contributions to the local areas. In some cases, events at lakes and weir pools are among the major activities in the community calendar for their respective towns or district (eg Lake Wallace Fishing Competition, Charlegrark Music Festival, Dimboola Rowing Regatta, Horsham Fishing Competition, Jeparit Easter Fishing Competition). Apart from a few fishing/angling clubs holding competitions for members at different lakes and weir pools across the region, there are no linked events at the recreational waterbodies in the Wimmera Southern Mallee. There is potential to coordinate series of events across the region for staged competitions or social activities (eg in open water swimming, bi and triathlons, fishing, rowing/kayaking, fun runs, festivals, etc)<sup>8</sup>.

Of course, events take considerable effort in planning and delivering. Communities must be aware of the workload and volunteer input associated with creating and continuing to host annual, or more frequent, events even with financial support from a Council, other government agency or private sector sponsors.

<sup>8</sup>Street Ryan, Trends and Insights: WSM Recreational and Environmental Water, 2020, WDA

### STRATEGY 3.1:

Support all events that are held in Yarriambiack so that event organisers meet required compliance obligations, such as traffic management plans, signage, local laws permits, planning permits and Place of Public Entertainment requirements.

Provide additional support for registered events through undertaking radio advertising, newspaper and social media advertising and additional waste services.

### STRATEGY 3.2:

Meet with traditional owner organisations, at times that suit their development plans, to consider ways in which First Nations culture, history and interpretive information can be added to visitor experiences in Yarriambiack and the potential for Aboriginal enterprises or partnerships in developing new attractions.

### STRATEGY 3.3:

Develop Australia's largest 'outdoor performing arts stage'. Facilitate a calendar of events that connect organisations in each town across Yarriambiack, where their Progress Associations, Committees of Management, Historic Societies or Service Clubs are responsible for holding one event per year.

### STRATEGY 3.4:

Pursue the potential to work with Seymour Heritage Rail to schedule rail trips to Yarriambiack Shire, with itineraries that include linking visitor servicing activities and initiatives across the shire. Identify optimal timing based on existing Yarriambiack event calendar.



## THEME 4.

*A Council who values tourism*

### DISCUSSION AND LOGIC

The Victoria Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) recently released the findings of the 2022 Local Government Tourism Health Check. VTIC advises that this health check is used by several Victorian Councils to support the allocation of funds, staffing and application of initiatives that sustain and grow tourism. Without being specific to Yarriambiack, the 2022 health check found that:

- 88% of the respondents confirmed that their Council holds tourism as a focus.
- The level of tourism capacity among Victorian Councils has either increased or remained stable since 2018.
- 33% of respondents agreed that Council allocates sufficient money to tourism management.
- The average budget allocated to tourism was \$889,570 (including staffing and staff oncosts which made up an average of 45% of the budget). The budget also includes expenditures from grants received for capital and operational tourism projects.
- 57% of Councils have a tourism strategy plan.
- Councils appear to be rationalising their support for external tourism-related organisations in the 2022 study, with a decline in support for all organisations except Regional Tourism Boards (66% of Councils support their Regional Tourism Board).

Yarriambiack Shire has proven credentials as a leader in tourism development through its auspicing and rollout of silo art and overseeing the early (until 2022) administrative and contract management functions for Wimmera Mallee Tourism. Council has established an advisory committee on tourism matters, Yarriambiack Tourism, which is comprised of tourism stakeholder representatives from each Yarriambiack town. The role of the advisory committee is to increase communication between the Council and residents to support future development and operational activities related to tourism, provide feedback relating tourism initiatives identified and provide advice regarding opportunities and hindrances impacting on visitation and dollar spend of visitors within and from outside the region.

Resources allocated by the Shire to tourism functions and initiatives has increased largely over the last 5-7 years, with the service embedded within the Community Strengthening and Engagement Department. To support limited staffing resources, tourism activities may be augmented from time to time by staff concierge service providers in the planning and building functions. The objectives of tourism concierge services would be relationship building, referrals, representations to Council and other agency staff, fast-tracking of processes and approvals (ensuring planning/building developments are fit-for-purpose).

Council currently supports visitation and promotion of Yarriambiack towns with tailored printed brochures and booklets. Online and digital marketing is rapidly replacing traditional media and printed materials in most tourism applications (and in other industries). There is still a place for printed brochures and guides in Yarriambiack, particularly for the older generations market segments, but it is time to review the return on investment from production of materials for each town and each product type compared with a more streamlined approach to printed materials and more investment in digital/electronic promotions. The review should include assessing the potential for QR codes on boards (and windows) at tourist attractions.

Community led events provide opportunities for increased social connection and cohesion. Through its SHARE Grant program, Yarriambiack Shire provides financial assistance to community groups through the Events stream of the program. The Event stream of the program funds inclusive events that attract visitors to the Shire bringing social and economic benefits to the community. Over the prior four financial years, the Event stream of the funding has been well subscribed with over forty individual applications being submitted.

#### **STRATEGY 4.1:**

Appointment of an in-house staff team as tourism concierges. These staff will be from the community strengthening and engagement team, with occasional support from building and planning areas of Council (when land use and/or construction is involved).

#### **STRATEGY 4.2:**

Provide executive support to the Yarriambiack Tourism Advisory Committee (agenda, meeting minutes, correspondence, letters of support, briefing papers)

#### **STRATEGY 4.3:**

Represent Yarriambiack Shire where relevant on regional working parties and steering groups.

#### **STRATEGY 4.4:**

Review the cost-effectiveness of promotional and marketing materials provided by Council with a view to more streamlining of printed materials and a move towards digital options. The review should include potential use of QR boards at Yarriambiack attractions.

#### **STRATEGY 4.5:**

Continue with Council's program of streetscape and signage improvements, focusing on: consistency and theming in signage and main streets beautification native vegetation.

#### **STRATEGY 4.6:**

Support community led events that attract visitors through the allocation of a specific events stream of funding through Council's community funding program – Share Grants.



# THEME 5. Regional Tourism Collaboration - Sharing in a bigger Visitor Economy

## DISCUSSION AND LOGIC

Yarriambiack Shire has already established its credentials as a collaborator, having instigated the silo art trail as 'Australia's largest outdoor gallery' and then sharing it with other local government areas in the Wimmera Mallee.

The recent announcement from Victorian State Government, stating that after a review of Regional Tourism, there will be a transition to Visitor Economic Partnerships (VEP) and a change in the way state government engage with Regional Tourism Bodies. It appears somewhat inevitable that Wimmera Mallee will not continue to be recognised as a tourism region in its own right; because it does not have a visitor economy of sufficient critical mass to justify ongoing resourcing. With the decision to move towards a VEP structure,

The State Government is currently developing a destination management plan for the whole of Victoria using the newly formed Visitor Economic Partnerships to group LGA's. Key pillars of this plan are understood to be nature-based tourism and First Nations led tourism. By understanding what priorities are identified at a State level, regional tourism and LGA tourism efforts can be aligned to maximise success.

The form and structure of Wimmera Mallee Tourism as an organisation beyond 2023 is not yet determined, although it is reasonably widely agreed that, if the Wimmera Mallee region Shire's formally become members of Grampians Tourism, the large region would benefit by being recognised as "one region with two distinct tourism product ranges" to accommodate for the differences in unique offerings. There are some commonalities and complementarities across the region (such as the network of interlinked waterways, which Grampians Tourism is considering promoting as the Great Lakes of Victoria) but the high peaks within Gariwerd/ Grampians, and broadacre environs of Wimmera Mallee are vastly different.

During 2022-23 Wimmera Mallee Tourism secured additional resourcing. The organisation has also been successful in applying for funding for several projects, many which stemmed from the development and rollout of the Silo Art Trail. Several of these are works-in-progress which will be ready for action in the next five years.

Informal discussions with Grampians Tourism suggest that the operational model for a combined Grampians/ Wimmera Mallee region would be likely to entail:

- An expanding Grampians Tourism Board with the Council CEOs of Yarriambiack, Buloke, Hindmarsh and West Wimmera joining the incumbent Board members (CEOs of Horsham, Ararat, Northern Grampians and Southern Grampians). This would make Grampians Tourism the largest Regional Tourism Board in the State. So, there is potential for sub-committees of the Board to be created.



- Grampians Tourism would remain a conduit to tourism, with a mandate to market and bring visitors to the region. Implementation of investment in projects and workforce attraction is entirely handled by the member Councils.
- Consider at least one staff member of Grampians Tourism being physically based in the Wimmera Mallee.

### **STRATEGY 5.1:**

Participate with the state government direction of the Visitor Economy Partnership Framework, including transitioning Wimmera Mallee Tourism to the new Visitor Economy Partnership.

### **STRATEGY 5.2:**

Actively participate in regional tourism projects, including appointment of a staff member, councillor or Yarriambiack Tourism member to reference groups, development of regional destination management plans and associated local area action plans.

*Figure 4: Tourism Facilitation Hierarchy*



# Council's Role

<i>Role</i>	<i>Examples of Activities</i>
Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal and written lobbying</li> <li>• Letters of support</li> <li>• Provision of supporting information</li> </ul>
Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participating in reference groups, steering committees, regional/State/Commonwealth organisations</li> </ul>
Facilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convening meetings.</li> <li>• Establishing, supporting, and overseeing advisory committees and working groups.</li> <li>• Providing referrals and introductions.</li> <li>• Assisting in project development through terms of reference, briefs or calls for quotations.</li> </ul>
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applying for grants and loans and entering into associated agreements.</li> <li>• Commissioning consultants, contractors, and other suppliers.</li> <li>• Managing project reference groups and steering committees.</li> <li>• Project reporting.</li> </ul>
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertaking capital works and/or operational projects using in-house Council resources</li> </ul>



# ACTION PLAN

HOW WE PLAN TO GET  
THERE...







# 1. Evolving Tourist Friendly Towns

Initiatives	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Council Role
<p><b>1.1</b> Develop a procedure to capture visitor statistics in Yarriambiack to support community and business enterprises that operate in the visitor servicing sector.</p>						Management
<p><b>1.2</b> Implement the findings of Wimmera Mallee Tourism’s feasibility project on redeveloping more eclectic accommodation (adding to the example set by Hopetoun’s Powerhouse artist-in-residence and self-contained apartment) including the delivery of the Warracknabeal Courthouse Project. Proactively search for funding opportunities to support identified projects, including historic railway stations and pub hotels.</p>						Delivery Management
<p><b>1.3</b> Encourage and support all visitor servicing businesses within Yarriambiack to adopt a service culture of giving visitors a positive experience and structuring their operations to take account of visitor’s expectations. Mentoring, industry forums, workshops and short-courses for new staff are possible mechanisms for implementation.</p>						Facilitation





## 2. Enhancing Existing Attractions

Initiatives	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Council Role
<p><b>2.1</b> Develop packages of Yarriambiack attractions in a way that enables visitors to pre-plan and book by type of experience and by tour routes. Utilise existing hero attractions including, but not limited to Silo Art, Waterways, Historical and Heritage Attractions and local Sporting Facilities to form anchor points of trails to celebrate Yarriambiack’s tourism potential.</p>						Management
<p><b>2.2</b> Enhancing historic and heritage attractions across the Shire by facilitating connection between organisations and venues. Provide these groups with data and statistics to inform a collaborative approach.</p>						Facilitation
<p><b>2.3</b> Work with regional tourism boards and visitor economy partnership bodies to promote identified trails and attractions outside of the municipality with the aim of increasing visitor expenditure and length of stay within Yarriambiack. This initiatives includes aligning to region wide promotions, leveraging the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse and having increased digital exposure on a regional level for local businesses, events and community groups.</p>						Management

# 3. Exploring the Next Wave of Visitor Attractions

Initiatives	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Council Role
<p><b>3.1</b> Support all events that are held in Yarriambiack so that event organisers meet required compliance obligations, such as traffic management plans, signage, local laws permits, planning permits and Place of Public Entertainment requirements. Provide additional support for registered events through undertaking radio advertising, newspaper and social media advertising and additional waste services.</p>						Management
<p><b>3.2</b> Meet with traditional owner organisations, at times that suit their development plans, to consider ways in which First Nations culture, history and interpretive information can be added to visitor experiences in Yarriambiack and the potential for Aboriginal enterprises or partnerships in developing new attractions.</p>						Facilitation
<p><b>3.3</b> Develop Australia’s biggest ‘outdoor performing arts stage’. Facilitate a calendar of events that connect organisations in each town across Yarriambiack, where their Progress Associations, Committees of Management, Historic Societies or Service Clubs are responsible for holding one event per year.</p>						Management
<p><b>3.4</b> Pursue the potential to work with Seymour Heritage Rail to schedule rail trips to Yarriambiack Shire, with itineraries that include linking visitor servicing activities and initiatives across the shire. Identify optimal timing based on existing Yarriambiack event calendar.</p>						Management



# 4. A Council Who Values Tourism

<i>Initiatives</i>	<i>Year 1</i>	<i>Year 2</i>	<i>Year 3</i>	<i>Year 4</i>	<i>Year 5</i>	<i>Council Role</i>
<b>4.1</b> Appointment of an in-house staff team as tourism concierges. These staff will be from the community strengthening and engagement team, with occasional support from building and planning areas of Council (if and when land use and/or construction is involved).						Facilitation
<b>4.2</b> Provide executive support to the Yarriambiack Tourism Advisory Committee (agenda, meeting minutes, correspondence, letters of support, briefing papers)						Facilitation
<b>4.3</b> Represent Yarriambiack Shire where relevant on regional working parties and steering groups.						Representation
<b>4.4</b> Review the cost-effectiveness of promotional and marketing materials provided by Council with a view to more streamlining of printed materials and a move towards digital options. The review should include potential use of QR boards at Yarriambiack attractions.						Delivery
<b>4.5</b> Continue with Council's program of streetscape and signage improvements, focusing on: consistency and theming in signage and main streets beautification native vegetation.						Delivery
<b>4.6</b> Support community led events that attract visitors through the allocation of a specific events stream of funding through Council's community funding program – Share Grants.						Management





# 5. Regional Tourism Collaboration - *"Sharing a bigger Visitor Economy"*

Initiatives		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Council Role
<b>5.1</b>	Participate with the state government direction of the Visitor Economy Partnership Framework, including transitioning Wimmera Mallee Tourism to the new Visitor Economy Partnership.						Representation
<b>5.2</b>	Actively participate in regional tourism projects, including appointment of a staff member, councillor or Yarriambiack Tourism member to reference groups, development of regional destination management plans and associated local area action plans.	As new projects arise					Representation



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