



SHIRE OF
DENMARK

SUSTAINABLE
TOURISM
STRATEGY

2021-2025

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Shire of Denmark Sustainable Tourism Strategy

Disclaimer

August 2021

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Acknowledgement

Outdoors Great Southern acknowledges all those who have contributed their time and expertise towards the development of the Shire of Denmark Sustainable Tourism Strategy. We recognise and value the heritage, culture and spiritual connection of Noongar people with the lands and waterways in the Shire of Denmark. We pay our respects to their cultures, and to their Elders – past, present and emerging.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For many Western Australians, the Shire of Denmark is a well-loved, appealing coastal holiday destination. Tourism has contributed to economic growth, jobs creation, and an expanded array of lifestyle amenities for residents. It extends the scope and scale of built attractions and hospitality that would not normally be available if these services were solely reliant on local patronage. In effect, tourism makes the Shire of Denmark potentially more vibrant than would otherwise be the case; in other words, it makes the Shire an attractive place to live, work and visit.

While tourism brings many advantages, it also generates negative impacts such as peak period congestion, and additional load placed on waste management and essential services. Given the shire's unique natural environment and biodiversity, tourism can also lead to the potential overuse of sensitive landscapes and environments. For this reason, it is essential that tourism provides net benefits that are reflective of the values and needs of our community.

The purpose of this Sustainable Tourism Strategy is to guide the Shire of Denmark as an organisation to develop actions, policies and procedures that will enable and support the shire to become a sustainable tourism destination. The Council has a range of roles and responsibilities in relation to implementing this Strategy, including leadership, advocacy, developing partnerships, and service delivery.

In adopting this Strategy, the Shire is guided by *The Guide to Best Practice Destination Management* developed by the Australian Regional Tourism Network, plus criteria and principles established by Ecotourism Australia and the Green Destinations Standard for sustainable tourism.¹ This has enabled the development of a framework based on standard approaches to destination management planning, strengthened by inclusion of sustainability principles to reflect community aspirations.

This approach will assist the Shire to achieve an innovative, bold vision to become one of Australia's leading examples of a sustainable tourism destination.

For the purposes of this Strategy, the Shire adopts the following definition of sustainable tourism developed by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO):

Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.²

The Sustainable Tourism Strategy recognises that:

- The shire's natural environment, biodiversity and ecosystems require respectful, sensitive use and protection to ensure a sustainable resource. Nature is both the backdrop and the drawcard for residents and visitors. It has the capacity to generate a powerful connection between people and place. It is also a core component of the State's tourism brand.
- Tourism is an essential part of the local economy, supporting businesses that provide employment for a significant proportion of residents.
- The shire's tourism assets contribute to the vibrancy and amenity of the region and are critical factors in the region's attractiveness as a destination to live and work.
- The socio-cultural heritage and values of our community are respected and promoted.
- Visitors cherish memories of their visit and are often motivated to return to the region for holidays and sometimes to live.

In other words, sustainable tourism delivers benefits to residents, businesses, and visitors. To realise these benefits, this Strategy adopts an integrated, holistic approach to tourism planning that is premised on the creation of a strong partnership between Council, the community, businesses, and visitors, who must also be part of the solution. Ultimately, sustainable tourism is everyone's responsibility.

Given the current uncertainties associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, this Strategy focuses on the next four years only. Implementing the Strategy will ensure that the region's tourism industry is well placed to respond to these ongoing challenges.

A man and a woman are walking away from the camera on a metal walkway that winds through a dense forest. The woman is wearing a blue denim shirt and dark pants, and the man is wearing a green jacket. They are both looking towards the right. The walkway has a metal railing on the left side. The background is filled with tall trees and green foliage.

BACKGROUND

How and why the Sustainable Tourism Strategy was developed

WHY HAVE A TOURISM STRATEGY?

Notwithstanding the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on domestic and international visitation, tourism remains an important industry in Western Australia. In the year prior to March 2020, 11.7 million overnight (domestic and international) visitors came to or travelled within WA. Together these visitors spent \$10.7 billion, of which 48% was spent in regional WA.³

Approximately 744,000 of these overnight visitors travelled to the Great Southern, accounting for a total output of \$414.5 million.

Tourism in the Shire of Denmark

In 2019, 160,000 people made day trips to the Shire of Denmark and another 167,000 people made overnight visits, staying a total of 591,000 nights. Most visitor expenditure in the shire is generated by Australian citizens and residents (domestic visitors) who account for 91% of total visitors.⁴

Visitor numbers to the shire grew by 17.6% over the five years to June 2019. The four-year average annual visitor spend to 2019 was \$76 million per annum.

Tourism has broader impacts than just the economic activity of visitors (often referred to as the 'visitor economy'). It is an integral part of the social and cultural life of the community and influences a range of other sectors, including hospitality, retail, arts and culture, sport and recreation, and agriculture and agribusiness.

The Shire of Denmark Council recognises that successful tourism requires careful and strategic planning to balance visitor expectations against the needs of the community.

Tourism that is well planned and managed generates widespread benefits – local businesses benefit financially; the community benefits from improved services, facilities, infrastructure, and lifestyle; and the environment benefits through greater investment in sustainable development.

Conversely, tourism that is poorly planned and managed can generate negative impacts on the environment, on the health and wellbeing of communities, and on economic outcomes.

The Sustainable Tourism Strategy (hereafter the Strategy) provides a vision and strategic direction for the future of tourism in the Shire of Denmark. It examines how the value of the tourism industry can be grown while at the same time enhancing and maintaining community and environmental values.

It serves to communicate with and provide direction to all those involved in managing tourism including the Shire of Denmark, local and regional tourism organisations, and state government agencies.

HOW WAS THE STRATEGY DEVELOPED?

The Strategy was developed in the first half of 2021. It involved extensive input from industry, community, and local government. It is supported by eight background reports that address the role of local government in tourism, the Shire of Denmark's visitor economy, the Shire's investment in tourism, an experience audit, and a local government benchmarking report.

Community consultation process

- **Consultation** with industry stakeholders through three industry workshops, twenty interviews and a business survey completed by 122 business owners or managers.
- **Consultation** with the community via three community workshops and an online survey completed by 304 community members.
- **Consultation** with Shire staff, including via two staff workshops.
- Additional **consultation** and **invited feedback** regarding draft priorities from political representatives, industry representatives and representatives from local government and Western Australian government departments.
- Community **feedback** on the draft Strategy.

What did businesses say?

90% of respondents to the business survey consider themselves to be working in, or supporting, the tourism sector.

The majority are small businesses with less than 10 employees. Two-thirds have been in business for more than 5 years, and almost half have been in business for more than 10 years.

Business owners/managers have a strong understanding of tourism's role in the local economy.

Business owners are supportive of strategic planning for sustainable tourism development.

Most businesses want to see visitor numbers maintained at current levels during the peak season but grow in the shoulder and off-peak periods.

What did the community say?

The consultation process revealed shared views around the importance of tourism and the need to protect core environmental and community values.

Community members are aware of the economic benefits of tourism, including its contribution to jobs and enhanced quality-of-life elements such as the range of cafes and restaurants, cellar doors, retail, events and outdoor recreation.

When asked about visitor numbers, 60% of survey respondents want to see visitor numbers maintained at current levels during the peak season (Summer, Easter); and 70% want to see visitor numbers grow in the off-peak period.

Resident quality of life is of great interest. When asked what factors are most important, residents say conservation of natural areas, clean air and water, and the maintenance of the Denmark townsite's village character.

When asked which aspects of tourism they would like to see lessened, the most significant responses are about traffic management at peak periods, and a reduction in the number of un-hosted Holiday Homes.

Residents aspire to balanced tourism planning that respects people (community) and place (environment). They want the Shire of Denmark to remain an attractive, vibrant, creative community; and they want tourism to be eco-friendly and environmentally sustainable.

The Shire of Denmark's community, including business owners, support the vision of sustainable tourism.



SUSTAINABLE TOURISM FRAMEWORK

Approach and Methodology

PLANNING FRAMEWORK

This Strategy is broadly based on the principles articulated in *The Guide to Best Practice Destination Management* (2012) developed by the Australian Regional Tourism Network (ARTN) in association with the Federal Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism.¹

Best practice destination management integrates four key delivery areas: research and analysis, consultative planning, experience and product development, and marketing and promotion.

Destination management planning provides the tools to consider tourism in a holistic and integrated manner and as a significant contributor to the regional economy. This is not an occasional process but rather an ongoing cycle of planning, implementation, review, and assessment to ensure that a visitor destination remains competitive.

This approach is organised around three domains:

- **Destination Management** (strategies, policies and management practices);
- **Destination Development** (investment, infrastructure, products, services); and
- **Destination Marketing** (branding and promotion).

Each domain incorporates a range of priority areas. These vary given the scope, maturity, size, resources, capacity, and level of aspiration of a particular visitor destination.

This Strategy identifies eight priority areas, based on a detailed analysis of the Shire of Denmark's current tourism offering, planning environment, and industry and community feedback.

These priority areas are: Leadership & Management; Environmental Stewardship; Access & Dispersal; Product & Experience Development; Capacity & Capability Building; Visitor Servicing; Placemaking; and Marketing & Promotion.

In addition to the well documented components of destination management planning, this Strategy incorporates the principle of sustainable tourism, which acknowledges the social (community), economic, and environmental impacts of tourism, their respective relationships, and the way in which they can be successfully managed.

Sustainable tourism is:

Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.²

Sustainable tourism should:

- Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.
- Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
- Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.²

Integrating the principles of sustainable tourism into destination management planning ensures that this Strategy reflects the aspirations of the community that tourism respects, celebrates, and enhances the shire's culture, history and natural environment.

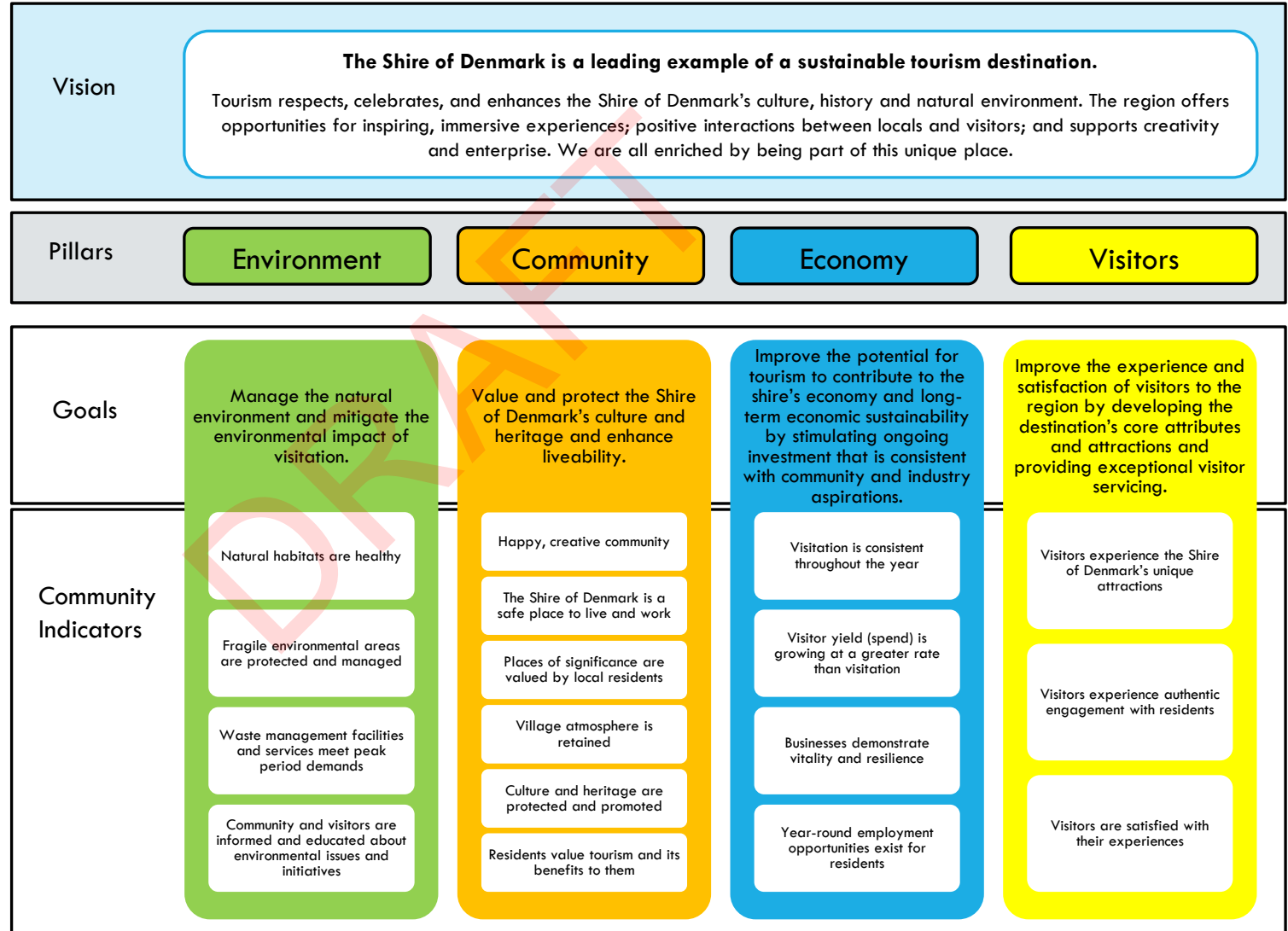
It also reflects that fact that the shire is not just a visitor destination, it is a place that many people call home. For this reason, the term 'destination' is generally avoided throughout this Strategy, unless specifically referring to the process of marketing and promotion.

STRATEGIC VISION

This diagram summarises the vision and goals of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy mapped against four sustainable tourism pillars – environment, community, economy and visitors.

Each of these pillars has an associated goal that reflects our community’s aspirations and values (as stated in the consultation process and the Strategic Community Plan).

This Vision – which was informed by the community consultation process in discussion with Council – provides the basis on which the success of the Strategy will be measured.



TOURISM FRAMEWORK

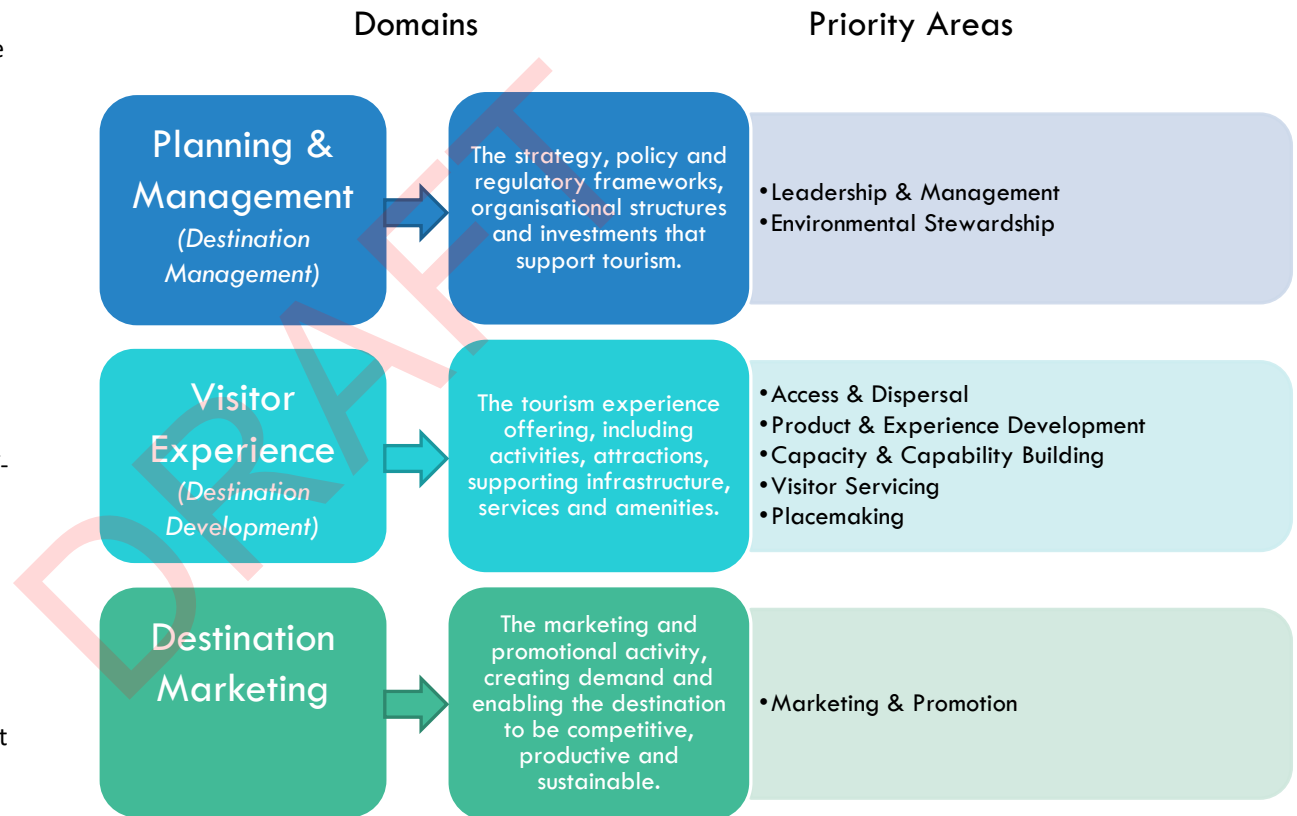
As outlined above, this Strategy is organised around three destination planning domains – management, development and marketing. The first two domains have been renamed to reflect the focus on balancing destination and community planning.

Each domain has at least one priority area. The next section of the Strategy describes the strategic priorities under each domain.

At the time of writing this Strategy, Australia’s tourism industry is still being impacted by the global COVID-19 pandemic. Domestic visitor behaviour has changed, with increasing numbers of Western Australians travelling to the shire in what have traditionally been shoulder and off-peak periods.

The long-term impact of the pandemic on visitor patterns is unknown. For this reason, the Strategy aligns with the Shire of Denmark’s Corporate Business Plan and focuses on a short timeframe of four years (2021-2025). The strategic priorities identified in the following pages are those that require the most urgent attention if our community is to manage tourism sustainably into the next decade.

These priorities should be reviewed annually to ensure that the Strategy responds to the changing international tourism landscape.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The following strategies provide the structure to manage and enhance the Shire of Denmark as both a visitor destination and a safe and healthy place to live. Their purpose is to ensure that the current visitor profile and experience delivers the outcomes sought by both industry and community.

Council’s role in relation to each strategy varies. These roles include leadership, advocacy, partnerships, and service delivery.

Action Plans will need to be developed for each of the priority areas in order to determine priorities, timeframes, resourcing and measures of success.

Council’s Roles

- ADVOCATE

We support our community and promote local interests to help them flourish
- LEAD

We lead projects in order to deliver strong outcomes and effectively use our networks with government, business and community, to deliver for the community
- PARTNER

We seek out new partnerships in addition to strengthening our current relationships on behalf of our community, in order to support the interests of the Shire of Denmark community
- DELIVER

We deliver and run an extensive range of services and programs to meet community needs, with a strong focus on supporting the local economy

Domain	Priority Areas	Desired Outcome	Strategies	Council’s role
Planning & Management	1. Leadership & Management	Industry and community aspirations inform tourism planning and decision-making.	1.1 Establish a governance model that enables Council, industry, stakeholders, visitors, and the community to work collaboratively to implement the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.	Lead
			1.2 Ensure alignment between the Shire’s planning and policy framework and the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.	Lead
			1.3 Establish a monitoring framework to assess the impacts of tourism.	Partner
			1.4 Implement the Shire of Denmark’s Sustainability Strategy and ensure that it incorporates sustainable tourism initiatives.	Lead
Visitor Experience	2. Environmental Stewardship	The Shire of Denmark’s landscapes and natural environment are protected for current and future generations to enjoy.	2.1 Establish partnerships with community organisations to develop a public education program that encourages residents and visitors to manage local resources sustainably.	Partner
			2.2 Establish partnerships with community organisations to develop a public education program that encourages residents and visitors to appreciate and protect natural environments.	Partner
Visitor Experience	3. Access & Dispersal	Visitors have access to and are dispersed across the shire to spread the benefits of tourism and reduce the impacts of seasonality.	3.1 Investigate opportunities for seasonal transport to key tourism nodes.	Advocate
			3.2 Develop and implement a wayfinding and signage strategy.	Lead
			3.3 Improve paths and trails network.	Deliver

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Domain	Priority Areas	Desired Outcome	Strategies	Council's Role
Visitor Experience	4. Product & Experience Development	Tourism experiences meet visitors' needs and expectations and are true to the brand promise.	4.1 Develop a tourism investment plan to address product and experience gaps. 4.2 Facilitate and support the delivery of events that attract visitors to the shire.	Partner Partner
	5. Capacity & Capability Building	Tourism operators are supported to deliver exceptional visitor experiences and embrace sustainability initiatives.	5.1 Assist tourism operators to develop and grow the region's product and experience offering. 5.2 Educate and engage businesses on sustainability initiatives.	Partner Advocate
	6. Visitor Servicing	Visitors receive accurate, quality, timely information at every stage of the visitor journey, and are made to feel welcome when they visit.	6.1 Ensure provision of face-to-face visitor servicing is cost-effective and returns benefit to visitors, tourism operators and the local community. 6.2 Engage industry and community in transitioning to a sustainable model of visitor servicing, using multiple channels to distribute visitor information across the shire.	Partner Partner
	7. Placemaking	Tourism and recreation infrastructure development is community-driven and reflects the culture, heritage, and biodiversity of the Shire of Denmark.	7.1 Develop and implement an interpretation strategy. 7.2 Develop a coastal open space precinct plan in partnership with the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) to guide future development and investment.	Partner Lead
Destination Marketing	8. Marketing & Promotion	Branding and marketing capture the essence of the Shire of Denmark and are supported by industry and community.	8.1 Refresh the destination brand. 8.2 Develop and resource a marketing strategy that positions the shire as a sustainable and responsible tourism destination.	Partner Partner

The rationale for these strategies is discussed in further detail in the next sections.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY

The Strategic Priorities identified in the table above provide the framework for achieving the vision of the Shire of Denmark becoming one of Australia's leading examples of a sustainable tourism destination. To be effective, however, the Strategy must be guided by the following Principles.

Guiding Principles

- **Resources must be committed**, including financial and human resources. The resourcing of enabling activities, such networks and partnerships, and building the capacity and capability of Council, industry and community, are just as critical as the funding of capital works for infrastructure.
- **Not all initiatives identified in the Strategy will be the sole responsibility of the Council** to implement or fund. However, notwithstanding probity considerations, the Council may be able to facilitate or encourage an outcome through its policy framework, in-kind support or other enabling function.
- **There is a need for collaboration** between Council, communities, businesses and other key stakeholders across the region and beyond. **Building and maintaining networks and ensuring ongoing communication with local communities and businesses is essential and requires a consistent and planned approach.**
- **Council's planning policies and processes** are essential to facilitate economic development, including incentives to attract the right type of investment. In a competitive environment in which many regions are actively working to attract new investment, Council will need to communicate its vision, articulate its long-term direction and ensure it is reflected in the Council's planning policies, development application processes and decision-making. It is essential that the Strategy is viewed as a **whole-of-Council plan**, which fosters collaboration and cooperation between all the Shire's service areas.
- **Partners are critical to long-term success.** There will be a need to work closely with Australia's South West, Tourism WA, the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA), the Great Southern Development Commission (GSDC), and other public and private sector organisations.

Critical Enablers

The Strategy can only be achieved by all stakeholders working together with common purpose.

1. **Communication** - The Strategy will only be successful if sustainable tourism becomes an active and continuous approach to destination management. Sustainable tourism needs to become part of the community's vocabulary and be included and referred to in regular communications about the shire and the tourism industry.
2. **Implementation** - Action Plans need to be developed to accompany the Strategy; these will provide guidance on how the strategic initiatives can be pursued. Not all initiatives are easily implemented and will require a strong commitment from Council, and community and industry support.
3. **Monitoring** - The success of the Strategy should also be subject to measurement and review. Measurement should occur via a Destination Scorecard that considers the Key Indicators against the objectives of the Strategy.
4. **Review** - the Strategy must evolve to remain relevant. Annual progress reviews will ensure that the principles of sustainable tourism maintain relevance as the destination evolves.

A hiker with a backpack and trekking poles is walking away from the camera on a dirt path. The path is surrounded by low-lying vegetation and shrubs. The background shows a vast, open landscape under a clear sky. The overall scene is in a natural, outdoor setting.

PLANNING & MANAGEMENT

“Best practice Destination Management is a holistic process that ensures tourism adds value to the economy, social fabric and ecology of our communities. Tourism can be an economic driver, generating jobs and contributing vibrant lifestyle benefits to our communities. But equally tourism needs to be managed to ensure that it leaves a positive legacy for current and future generations. Importantly the tourism sector needs to ensure that it is considered in the broader context of regional development and that it is recognised for its overall contribution and economic value to the region.” (ARTN)¹

1. LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

Current situation

The Shire of Denmark is home to a dynamic, vibrant community that attracts new residents and visitors each year. The shire’s history, heritage, culture, and environment are valued by the community who want to ensure that the area’s unique characteristics are enhanced and preserved.

Tourism planning and management is currently fragmented and poorly resourced. There are several organisations with responsibility for different aspects of tourism planning and management, including the Council, local and regional tourism organisations, state government agencies, and community organisations. They perform a variety of functions, including marketing, visitor servicing, product and experience development, business development, and strategic planning.

Tourism is not an isolated industry; it also has significant overlays and interdependencies with other sectors, including food and agriculture, arts and culture, and recreation. However, there are few mechanisms to integrate the insights, innovations, and aspirations of these industry sectors with tourism planning and development. Some aspects of commercial servicing are within the remit of local government to assist (e.g. zoning, density, use permissibility, property ratings and business operating hours), and require consideration through policy review.

Agreed direction

Effective tourism planning and management requires an approach that balances economic growth with social, cultural, and environmental factors to achieve sustainability. To be effective, tourism planning and management must take an integrated and holistic approach that involves Council, industry, stakeholders, community, and visitors.

Local governments perform many roles and have a range of responsibilities in relation to tourism. In some circumstances, Council will act as a leader, while in others it may be a supporter or advocate to ensure that the tourism sector is sustainable and operates in harmony with the community’s values.

Desired Outcome	Strategies	Council’s Role
Industry and community aspirations inform tourism planning and decision-making.	1.1 Establish a governance model that enables Council, industry, stakeholders, visitors, and the community to work collaboratively to implement the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.	Lead
	1.2 Ensure alignment between the Shire’s planning and policy framework and the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.	Lead
	1.3 Establish a monitoring framework to assess the impacts of tourism.	Partner
	1.4 Implement the Shire of Denmark’s Sustainability Strategy and ensure that it incorporates sustainable tourism initiatives.	Lead

An Action Plan for this priority area has been produced for Council and will guide implementation of the Strategy.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Current situation

The Shire of Denmark’s stunning natural landscapes and unique biodiversity and ecosystems are the primary reason why many people are drawn to visit – and in some cases settle down and reside – in the shire. Much land within the shire is classified as national parks and nature reserves, including the Walpole Wilderness area managed by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA), and twelve A-class reserves vested with the Shire for the purposes of conservation and public recreation.

The shire’s waterways include networks of rivers and inlets and approximately 84km of coastline. Some of these coastal areas – particularly William Bay National Park, Ocean Beach and Lights Beach - are under pressure from increasing visitor numbers at peak periods. While other coastal areas, particularly in the western part of the shire, receive fewer visitors; they too are facing negative environmental impacts due to a lack of planning and infrastructure.

Agriculture is an important industry and the second largest contributor to economic output behind construction. Agribusinesses, including wineries and breweries, contribute to tourism amenity. The shire’s rural landscapes and vistas are also an important part of the destination’s attractiveness to visitors, many of whom reside in urban settings and enjoy the opportunity to experience rural lifestyles.

Agreed direction

Council has recently adopted the Shire of Denmark *Sustainability Strategy 2021-2031*. The Sustainability Strategy is intended as a guide for sustainable management of internal Shire operations, as well as a broader guide for facilitating sustainable development initiatives within our community. While the Sustainability Strategy refers to the need for a community-centred Tourism Strategy, the accompanying action plan provides no other direct references to tourism. To achieve the vision outlined in this Sustainable Tourism Strategy, there must be closer alignment between the two strategies.

Desired Outcome	Strategies	Council’s Role
The Shire of Denmark’s landscapes and natural environment are protected for current and future generations to enjoy.	2.1 Establish partnerships with community organisations to develop a public education program that encourages residents and visitors to manage local resources sustainably. This could include resources such as food, water, travel and transport, materials and products, energy efficiency and waste.	Partner
	2.2 Establish partnerships with community organisations to develop a public education program that encourages residents and visitors to appreciate and protect natural environments.	Partner

An underwater photograph of two people swimming in clear blue water. The person in the foreground is wearing a blue and white patterned swimsuit and a diving mask. The person in the background is wearing a red and white patterned swimsuit. The text 'VISITOR EXPERIENCE' is overlaid in the center in a large, white, sans-serif font. A vertical white line is positioned to the right of the text.

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

“The ‘tourism product’ is what the customer buys; the ‘tourism experience’ is what they remember.”⁵

3. ACCESS & DISPERSAL

Current situation

The shire is primarily a self-drive destination with three main entry points – two on the South Coast Highway (Albany to the east and Walpole to the west) and the Denmark-Mount Barker Road. Although most major attractions are serviced by sealed roads, some tourism areas are still accessed by gravel roads. There is limited public transport to/from the shire, and inconsistent and limited commercial transport services.

While the paths and trails network in the Denmark townsite is well developed, there are some significant gaps or missing links that inhibit walking and cycling access between the town centre and tourism precincts in Weedon Hill, Ocean Beach, Lights Beach, Mt Shadforth and Scotsdale areas. There are few paths and trails in the villages of Peaceful Bay and Nornalup.

There is a lack of wayfinding and directional signage to major attractions and within the town centre, and gateway entry points lack tourism information.

Agreed direction

Improved signage, including the provision of information at key gateway locations and tourism precincts, will encourage visitor dispersal and longer stays, and will assist with congestion management at peak periods.

Improving the paths and trails network, particularly in key tourism precincts, will encourage visitors and residents to walk or ride, thereby reducing the use of vehicles in areas that receive large numbers of visitors. Investigating options to provide seasonal transport to key tourism nodes, will also assist in reducing congestion and improving visitor safety.

Desired Outcome	Strategies	Council's Role
Visitors have access to and are dispersed across the shire to spread the benefits of tourism and reduce the impacts of seasonality.	3.1 Investigate opportunities for seasonal transport to key tourism nodes.	Advocate
	3.2 Develop and implement a wayfinding and signage strategy.	Lead
	3.3 Improve paths and trails network.	Deliver

4. PRODUCT & EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Current situation

Visitor experiences represent the unique selling points of the region. Together, the tourism products, attractions and experiences drive a visitor’s decision to travel to and spend time in the destination. The Shire of Denmark’s biggest tourism drawcard is its natural environment and biodiversity, including beaches and national parks and reserves. These natural attractions are supported by a range of food and beverage experiences, arts and cultural attractions, and rural landscapes and vistas.

There is no demand-driver attraction located close to Denmark township. For many travellers, there is therefore no compelling reason to stay overnight in Denmark; it is seen as a sightseeing stop for travellers heading east-west along the south coast. There is a lack of all-weather tourism product and experiences particularly for those times of inclement weather. There are few opportunities to provide visitors with insights into the region’s history, culture and biodiversity; and the region’s Noongar culture and heritage is poorly communicated to visitors.

The Shire of Denmark’s accommodation offering is diverse. However, there is a lack of 4 star and above properties. A significant proportion of the accommodation supply is ageing and there has been little investment in refurbishment or new construction. There is a risk that the poor quality of some properties will negatively impact on destination reputation. There is only one nature-based campground, leaving few camping options outside of caravan parks. There is a high density of holiday homes in some areas/streets in Denmark, which impacts residential amenity and places pressure on housing affordability.

Agreed direction

Council has limited capacity to influence and attract private sector investment in tourism products, services and experiences; these are market-led decisions. However, the Council can encourage tourism investment that aligns with its tourism vision through business-friendly programs such as a concierge service, and via strategic tourism planning that enables development and reduces red tape.

Recognising that tourism depends on quality infrastructure to attract both visitors and investors, Council will continue to invest in recreational assets and infrastructure and community-based events to increase the attractiveness of the destination.

Desired Outcome	Strategies	Council’s Role
Tourism experiences meet visitors’ needs and expectations and are true to the brand promise.	4.1 Develop a tourism investment plan* to address product and experience gaps.	Partner
	4.2 Facilitate and support the delivery of events that attract visitors to the shire.	Partner

*A tourism investment plan is a document that identifies opportunities for new tourism development that aligns with the Sustainable Tourism Strategy. It is intended to encourage and assist the tourism industry to accelerate its investment in tourism products, services and experiences that support the vision for sustainable tourism. It should identify essential infrastructure requirements, experience development opportunities (e.g. accommodation, tours, attractions), and destination marketing and promotion needs.

5. CAPACITY & CAPABILITY BUILDING

Current situation

The Shire of Denmark’s tourism operators are passionate about their industry and their home. They are motivated by a desire to share the region’s unique environment, history, culture and heritage with visitors. They also want to ensure that the Shire of Denmark’s environment, history, heritage, and way of life are nurtured and protected.

Although a significant proportion of the shire’s business owners are members of the Denmark Chamber of Commerce, a considerably smaller number are members of local or regional tourism organisations. Many feel let down or are disillusioned with the merger of Denmark Tourism Incorporated (DTI) with the Amazing South Coast Tourism Incorporated (ASCTi).

The low level of membership to either ASCTi or Australia’s South West (ASW, the regional tourism organisation), means that many tourism businesses are disconnected from destination marketing campaigns, industry programs, and training and capacity building opportunities. ASW is currently developing a new free engagement level offering for all tourism businesses.

Although the shire has a diverse range of products and experiences, it lacks ‘trade-ready’ product (i.e. commissionable products that can be promoted and booked by retail and wholesale travel agents). This is one reason why the shire’s share of interstate and international visitors is low compared to neighbouring areas.

Agreed direction

Council will continue to support the business development and advocacy programs of the Denmark Chamber of Commerce and other organisations in order to grow the capacity and capability of the region’s business community.

Through the Sustainability Strategy, Council will work with community organisations to promote sustainability initiatives that encourage businesses and visitors to reduce their energy and water use, promote a circular economy, and minimise waste.

Desired Outcome	Strategies	Council’s Role
Tourism operators are supported to deliver exceptional visitor experiences and embrace sustainability initiatives.	5.1 Assist tourism operators to develop and grow the region’s product and experience offering.	Partner
	5.2 Educate and engage businesses on sustainability initiatives.	Advocate

6. VISITOR SERVICING

Current situation

Visitor servicing refers to the sum of visitor interactions with the destination and its products and experiences across the trip cycle. It includes providing visitors with accurate, impartial, high quality, timely information when and where they need it in order to value add to their experience.

High-quality, impactful visitor servicing occurs in a variety of locations – online and face-to-face. It occurs at different stages of a visitor’s journey, including the pre-arrival stage (dreaming, planning, booking, anticipating, en-route), during the visit, and after departure. It includes on the ground servicing in the destination to maximise stay and dispersal; assisting visitors online in their planning and bookings; and connecting with visitors post-experience to gain feedback and encourage them to share their experiences.

The shire’s online destination visitor servicing presence (i.e. website, social channels) is limited. The lack of online visitor information is compounded by the closure of the visitor information centre in 2020. Nationally, the issue of the financial viability of the traditional visitor centre model has been the subject of multiple reports. There is general agreement that the model employed by most destinations is “if not broken, then in serious need of a major overhaul. Primarily because of the amount of money invested in VICs [visitor information centres] and Visitor Guides and the very limited return from this investment”.⁶

The Denmark Visitor Centre was closed in 2020 by the Amazing South Coast Tourism Incorporated on the grounds that it was no longer financially viable. With funding support from the Shire, the Denmark Chamber of Commerce is providing a limited-hours, volunteer-based service as an interim measure until a more long-term solution is identified.

Agreed direction

Council commissioned a report into the future operations of the Denmark Visitor Centre. This report recommends that development of a multi-channel visitor servicing model that includes face-to-face services in the Denmark Visitor Centre.

Desired Outcome	Strategies	Council’s Role
Visitors receive accurate, quality, timely information at every stage of the visitor journey, and are made to feel welcome when they visit.	6.1 Ensure provision of face-to-face visitor servicing is cost-effective and returns benefit to visitors, tourism operators and the local community.	Partner
	6.2 Engage industry and community in transitioning to a sustainable model of visitor servicing, using multiple channels to distribute visitor information across the shire.	Partner

7. PLACEMAKING

Current situation

Placemaking refers to the process of planning, designing and managing public spaces to improve the environment and quality of life of communities.⁷ It involves working with communities to create places that are attractive to live, work, and visit.

The objective of placemaking in destination management planning is to create places that encourage visitation and increase the likelihood of return visits. For example, investing in infrastructure such as trails, recreation facilities, parks and gardens, events, and arts and cultural precincts. From a sustainable tourism perspective, placemaking needs to be community-driven. In other words, infrastructure development should be based on community aspirations and reflect local culture and heritage.

The Shire of Denmark Strategic Community Plan informs infrastructure planning and development. However, tourism attractions in National Parks are not Council owned or managed, leading to inconsistencies in interpretation, signage, and infrastructure provision across multiple land tenures.

Agreed direction

Interpretation and infrastructure development across the shire should be coherent, consistent and aligned with community values.

Desired Outcome	Strategies	Council's Role
Tourism and recreation infrastructure development is community-driven and reflects the culture, heritage, and biodiversity of the Shire of Denmark.	7.1 Develop and implement an interpretation strategy.	Partner
	7.2 Develop a coastal open space precinct plan in partnership with the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) to guide future development and investment.	Lead

A photograph of a man and a woman sitting on the ground in front of a large, hollowed-out tree trunk. They are both smiling and looking towards the right. The scene is outdoors with green foliage in the background. The image is overlaid with a dark semi-transparent layer.

DESTINATION MARKETING

“Marketing is no longer
about the stuff you make,
but the stories you tell.”
(Seth Godin)

8. MARKETING & PROMOTION

Current situation

Successful tourism destinations establish a clearly defined tourism brand and image to attract desired visitor markets. Tourism WA, the state government agency with responsibility for marketing and promoting Western Australia to interstate and international markets, recently adopted a new brand position statement for the state – *Spirit of Adventure*.

Australia’s South West (ASW) is funded by Tourism WA to promote the entire South West region (incorporating areas within the boundaries of both the South West and Great Southern Development Commissions). ASW works in partnership with local governments and local tourism organisations to build industry capacity and capability and undertake collaborative marketing campaigns focused primarily on WA audiences. Destination marketing is also undertaken by tourism businesses, the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA), and the Denmark Chamber of Commerce.

Consultation undertaken during the development of this strategy revealed that the ‘Discover Denmark’ brand has been lost with the creation of the ‘Amazing South Coast’ (ASC). There was a strong view that the ASC brand is not widely used, nor the benefits or positioning behind it understood. The community do not identify with the ASC brand identity and many tourism businesses are dissatisfied with the way that the Shire of Denmark is currently marketed as a tourism destination.

There is concern that the promotion of the shire’s iconic attractions – Greens Pool and Elephant Rocks – by destination marketing organisations and visitors (through social media channels), contributes to congestion, poor dispersal and may lead to environmental degradation and visitor dissatisfaction due to over-tourism.

Agreed direction

Council does not control the image or messaging associated with the way that the shire is marketed internationally or domestically. However, it would like to ensure that there is a coherent and consistent destination marketing presence, and that the messaging associated with marketing campaigns position the shire as a sustainable and environmentally responsible tourism destination of outstanding natural beauty. There is also significant opportunity for the shire to build its brand and position itself as a destination all year round, both in Summer and Winter.

Desired Outcome	Strategies	Council’s Role
Branding and marketing capture the essence of the shire and are supported by industry and community.	8.1 Refresh the destination brand.	Partner
	8.2 Develop and resource a marketing strategy that positions the shire as a sustainable and responsible tourism destination.	Partner

ENDNOTES

1. Australian Regional Tourism Network (2012) *The Guide to Best Practice Destination Management*; and Ecotourism Australia “What is Ecotourism Destination Certification?” [online], available at: <https://www.ecotourism.org.au/our-certification-programs/eco-destination-certification/>
2. United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) *Sustainable Development* [online], available at: <https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development>
3. Tourism WA (2020) *Visitation to Western Australia: Overview year ending March 2020*. Release date: March 2020.
4. Tourism WA (2020) *Shire of Denmark Overnight Visitor Factsheet 2017/18/19*. Release date: September 2020.
5. Nancy Arsenaault, Celes Davar and Todd Lucier (2011) cited in Tourism and Events Queensland (TEQ) *Experience Development: Delivering world-class experiences*.
6. Destination Marketing Store (2019) “Eurobodalla Visitor Servicing Review: Final Report”.
7. Project for Public Places (nd) *What is Placemaking?* [online], available at: <https://www.pps.org/article/what-is-placemaking>

APPENDICES

Background reports that have informed the development of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

Appendix	Content	Status
A	<u>Understanding the Role of Local Government in Tourism</u> Includes: types of roles performed by local government in tourism, tourism policy and planning, sustainable tourism, destination management, the WA context, role of tourism organisations, local government benchmarking.	Public
B	<u>Denmark's Visitor Economy</u> Includes: tourism output, visitor expenditure, local tourism business overview, impact of Covid-19 pandemic, visitor statistics and trends, seasonality, market research.	Public
C	<u>Shire of Denmark's Investment in Tourism</u> Includes: financial reports for the Denmark Visitor Centre, public amenities, Parry Beach Campground and the caravan park rental income.	Confidential
D	<u>Opportunities and Challenges</u> Includes: An experience audit and evaluation, tourism trends, strengths and opportunities, a competitor analysis, target markets (domestic and international).	Some content is confidential. Redacted version available
E	<u>Amazing South Coast Tourism Incorporated Sentiment Report</u> A sentiment report on the Amazing South Coast Tourism Incorporated drawn from the consultation process, including online surveys, industry workshops and stakeholder interviews.	Confidential
F	<u>LGA Benchmarking Report</u> A report that evaluates benchmarking interviews with 12 LGAs across Australia – discussion focused on strategic tourism planning, tourism organisations, destination marketing, visitor servicing, Council's role and investment in tourism, short-stay accommodation, seasonality and community attitudes to tourism.	Confidential
G	<u>Business Survey Report</u> Provides a summary of the results from the Business Operator survey conducted as part of the community consultation.	Public
H	<u>Community Survey Report</u> Provides a summary of the results from the community survey conducted as part of the community consultation.	Public

SHIRE OF DENMARK SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STRATEGY

Redacted version –
subject to non-
disclosure agreement

VISITOR SERVICING REPORT

BACKGROUND &
RECOMMENDATIONS

21 Sept 2021 - Attachment 9.3.1b



GSCORE
Great Southern Centre for
Outdoor Recreation Excellence

Shire of Denmark Sustainable Tourism Strategy

Visitor Servicing Report: Background & Recommendations

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Image credit: Cover image: Tourism WA.

Acknowledgement

GSCORE acknowledges all those who have contributed their time and expertise towards the development of the Shire of Denmark Tourism Strategy. We recognise and value the heritage, culture and spiritual connection of Noongar people with the lands and waterways in the Shire of Denmark. We pay our respects to their cultures, and to their Elders – past, present and emerging.



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INTRODUCTION

Overview

This report examines the role of 'Visitor Servicing' in the visitor economy. It examines trends in visitor servicing, including the role of bricks and mortar Visitor Information Centres (VICs), and examples of visitor servicing models.

The second part of the report provides a brief history of the Denmark Visitor Centre, including visitation trends and financial analysis.

The third part of the report provides an analysis of industry and community feedback on the future of visitor servicing in the Shire of Denmark based on interviews, workshops and an online survey conducted in February 2021.

The final part of the report provides a series of recommendations related to the future of visitor servicing in the Shire of Denmark, including the provision of face-to-face services.

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Image: David Bomba

VISITOR SERVICING

Background & Trends

KEY DEFINITIONS

Visitor Servicing

The term “visitor servicing” refers to the sum of visitor interactions with the destination and its products and experiences across the trip cycle.

It includes providing visitors with accurate, impartial, high quality, timely information when and where they need it in order to value add to their experience.

Providing information is one piece of the puzzle:

- **Basic information** - is information that is timely, accurate and impartial
- **Exceptional customer service** - goes beyond simply information provision, to encouraging visitors to stay longer, do more, and return in the future
- **Enhancing the visitor experience** – creates a genuine connection with local people and local landscapes

The visitor experience is so important because your most satisfied visitors are your best marketers. They are the engine that powers word of mouth recommendations which is by far and away the most efficient and influential form of marketing that a destination has in its toolbox. When done well, visitor servicing attracts new visitors and builds the destination’s reputation as a great place to visit.

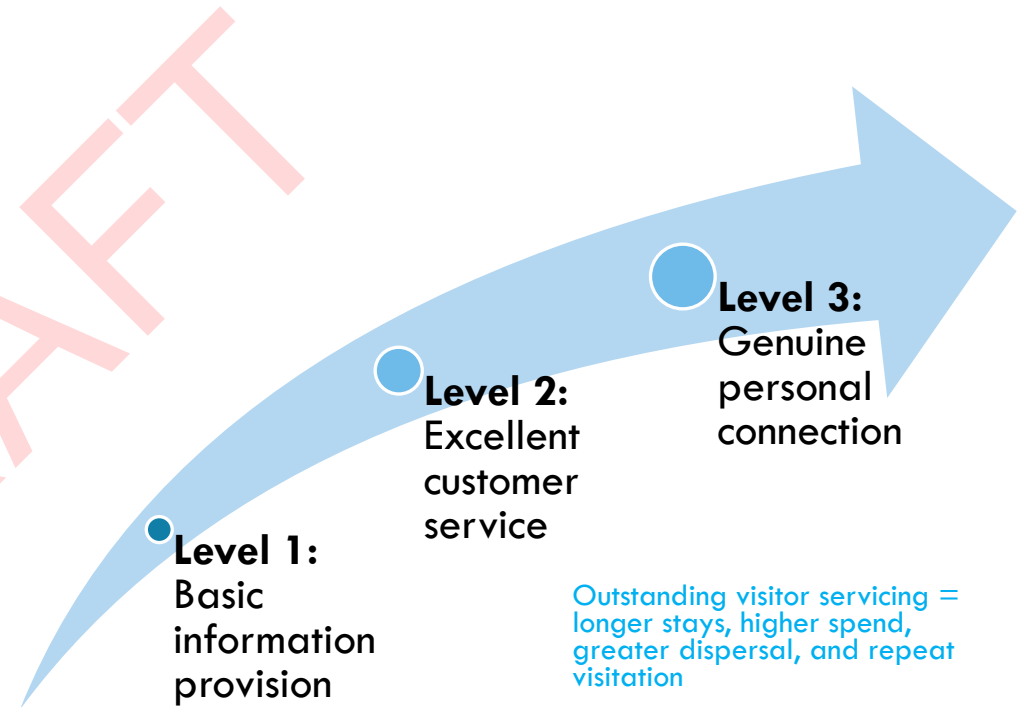


Figure 1: Levels of visitor servicing

WHERE DOES IT OCCUR?

Visitor servicing occurs in a variety of locations – online and face-to-face (see Figure 2).



Figure 2: Examples of places where visitor servicing occurs¹

And it occurs at different stages of a visitor’s journey, including the pre-arrival stage (dreaming, planning, booking, anticipating, en-route), during the visit, and after departure.¹

It includes on the ground servicing in the destination to maximize stay and dispersal, assisting visitors online in their planning and bookings, and connecting with visitors post-experience to gain feedback and encourage them to share their experiences.



Figure 3: Examples of stages in a traveler’s journey where visitor servicing occurs¹

1. A National Perspective on Visitor Information Servicing (nd).

PERSON-TO-PERSON SERVICES

Traditional channels

Traditional sources of in-destination information include brochures, maps, and signs. These can be provided in Visitor Centres or a multitude of other visitor “touchpoints” such as accommodation and hospitality venues and transport services.

The graph below shows data collected from visitors to the City of Melbourne showing the most common sources of in-destination information.

Mobile Visitor Kiosks

These can include vehicles or trailers staffed by visitor information staff and stocked with maps and brochures. Some also incorporate interactive touchscreens or iPads.

For example, the City of Albany has a trailer that it uses for events and during peak visitation periods such as cruise ship visits.

Ambassador programs

These can be trained volunteers who act as roaming ambassadors at key locations (e.g. airports, events, CBD); or trained frontline staff in tourism attractions and accommodation venues.

For example, Bendigo Visitor Centre has dedicated trained ambassadors at the train station, city centre and at events.

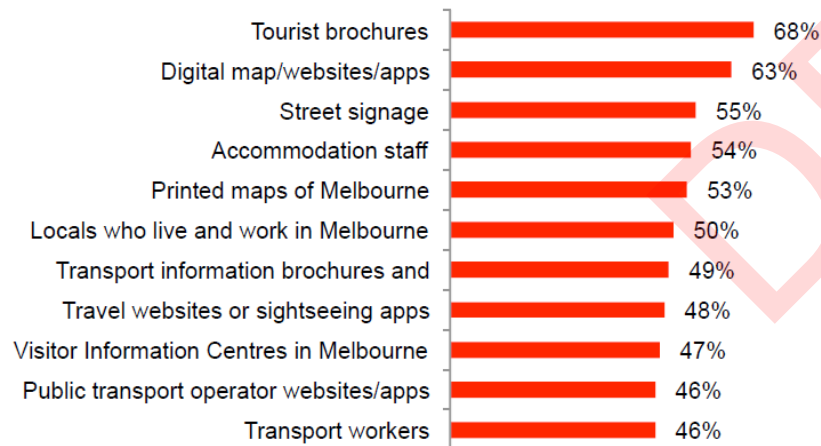


Figure 4: Most common sources of in-destination information, City of Melbourne (2013)¹

1. City of Melbourne (2013) “Victorian VIC Futures Project”, December 2013.

DIGITAL SERVICES

Pre-arrival

Websites

Destination websites, blogs, review sites, and social media are the primary channels through which visitors plan and book their holidays.

Amongst Tourism WA's key domestic target markets¹, the internet is the main source of information for planning and booking:

- Escape and Connect – 60%
- Off the Beaten Track – 57%
- Family fun – 67%
- Relax and Rewind – 57%

Other important planning enablers include:

- Family and friends
- TV programs
- Travel magazines

In-destination

Digital applications

Mobile apps are one of the most popular sources of information for travellers visiting new destinations.

However, these are more likely to be generic resources (e.g. Google Maps, weather app, restaurant review site) and less likely to be destination specific (i.e. an app created for the destination).

Digital Kiosks

Digital kiosks are interactive touchscreens with/without print maps and brochures. These can be located outside Visitor Centres to provide afterhours information, or co-located with other government or private buildings.

For example, in Augusta, two digital kiosks have replaced the physical VIC. One is in the newsagent, and the other in a café.



1. Tourism WA's New Domestic Segmentation Model. Available online.



Image: David Bomba

VISITOR CENTRES

A changing model

VISITOR CENTRE MODELS

Definition

The terms “visitor centre”, “visitor information centre (VIC)”, “tourist information centre”, “tourist office”, and “tourist bureau” are used interchangeably by visitors, community members and tourism operators to refer to a physical building where visitor servicing occurs.

The term “Visitor Centre” or “VIC” is used in this report.

Management Models

There are four main management models of visitor centres in WA. The Haeberlin Report¹ found that in 2014:

- 47% were operated by Local government
- 32% were operated by a Tourism Association
- 13.5% were operated by a Community Resource Centre
- 7.5% were privately operated

Just under half of all VICs had membership structures; and one half took bookings for accommodation and tours.

Accreditation

There is a national accreditation system for visitor centres. In WA this is managed by the Tourism Council of WA (TCWA). There is an initial fee to undertake the accreditation process (\$528) and an annual accreditation review and fee (\$450) and marketing levy (\$350).

- Level 1 accredited visitor centres must be open for a minimum number of hours (9am-5pm, M-F; 3 hours per day weekend), 7 days per week.
- Level 2 accredited visitors centres operate in areas with lower levels of visitation with less stringent requirements

A study of WA visitor centres in 2014 (the Haeberlin Report) found that while most visitor centre managers or staff believed that the accreditation model lacked any relevance to their operations; most operators believed it was very important to critical.¹



Only accredited visitor centres can display the yellow italic “i”



All other visitor centres display the white/blue roman “i”

However, a 2000 study found that most visitor were unaware of the difference between the two signs.²

1. Haeberlin Consulting (2014) “The future of visitor centres in WA”, August 2014.
2. Millward Brown (2000) “Visitor Satisfaction Study: tourist, services and direction signing”, May 2000.

VISITOR PERCEPTIONS OF VISITOR CENTRES

Declining Visitor Numbers

Many visitor centres are reporting a decline in their annual door counts. The National and International Visitor Surveys show a 20% decline in visitor centre usage between 2007-2011.¹ **Tourism Research Australia data indicates that over 92% of visitors to a region do not visit a VIC.**⁴

The most recent study of WA Visitor Centres was completed in 2015.² When compared to recent national data, the figures show a clear decline in visitor centre usage over the last 5 years:

Table 1: Percentage of travellers attending visitor centres (2015 and 2019)²

Visitor segment	WA ²	National ³
Year	2015	2019
International	39%	18.6%
Interstate	17%	8.7%
Intrastate	9%	6.1%

There is considerable variation in usage patterns across WA. In 2014, the percentage of visitors who used a visitor centre was higher in remote areas:

- 32% Australia's North West
- 22% Australia's Coral Coast
- 21% Australia's Golden Outback
- 17% Australia's South West
- 8% Experience Perth

Motivations

Usage is driven by situation not visitor type. The 2015 study of WA visitor centres² found that tourists most often use a visitor centre:

- On their first visit to a location
- When they have had insufficient access to information before arrival
- When they are staying more than one night

The most common motivators for stopping at a visitor centre are to access information on attractions (62%), obtain maps (53%), and find information on activities (22%).

Visitor Profiles

Baby Boomers (1946-1964) followed by Generation X (1965-1980) are the most frequent users of visitor centres.

Millennials (1981-1995) are a new generation of travellers that will soon replace Baby Boomers to become the largest travel market segment. They have a distinct approach to travel – they are hyper-connected and digitally driven; their preference is for personal experiences and local connections and they engage in the sharing economy. They want access to information instantly and will not waste time or go out of their way to obtain it.³

1. Urban Enterprise (2013) "Victorian Visitor Information Centres Futures Project", December 2013.
2. Tourism Research Australia (2015) "The influence of Western Australian visitor centres on tourism behaviour", September 2015.
3. A National Visitor Information Servicing Strategy (nd).
4. Destination Marketing Store (2019) "Eurobodalla Visitor Servicing Review: Final Report".

VISITOR PERCEPTIONS OF VISITOR CENTRES

The role of visitor centres in increasing length of stay

There is a widespread view amongst tourism operators and stakeholders that visitor centres play a role in increasing visitor stay and spend in an area. The 2014 Haeblerin Report¹ found, for example, that there was a correlation between visitor centre users and length of stay. The report found that those who used a VIC were likely to stay twice as long as those who didn't use a visitor centre.

However, a 2015 study of WA Visitor Centres found that there was only a modest positive impact on the length of stay and spend for visitor centre users. The impact was most notable in remote regional locations.²

Constraints on extending length of stay:

- Tourists who are employed are increasingly “time poor” and plan and book their holidays well in advance of departure. The opportunity to extend their length of stay is determined by annual leave constraints and pre-arranged accommodation and tour bookings.
- While some retirees have the flexibility to modify their travel plans, this is not always the case. Childcare responsibilities, volunteering, and part-time employment limit their ability to extend length of stay.
- For interstate and international travellers who arrive in WA by air, flight departure essentially “bookends” travel plans.

The role of visitor centres in increasing visitor spend

While VICs play a limited role in encouraging longer stays, they can play a role in encouraging visitor dispersal and increasing visitor spend. However, to be effective in increasing visitor spend, staff/volunteers must be proactive in encouraging visitors to purchase tour products, visit paid attractions, or purchase local products.³

What do visitors want from a Visitor Centre?

The National Visitor Information Servicing Strategy (nd)³ identifies the top five features that visitors look for in a visitor centre:

1. Welcoming experience
2. Knowledgeable, professional staff, skilled in customer service
3. Unbiased, authoritative and tailored information (on and offline)
4. Validation of research found before and during the trip
5. Local stories and insights

In a 2015 study of WA VICs⁴ found that tourists who visited a visitor centre valued it. The results showed that:

- 95% reported that the VIC was important part of their overall experience;
- 87% said they learnt more about what to see and do
- 84% indicated that the VIC had a positive influence on their perception of the destination
- 74% heard about an activity through their stop at the VIC
- 73% were very satisfied with the service provided

1. Haeblerin Consulting (2014) “The future of visitor centres in WA”, August 2014.
2. Tourism Research Australia (2015) “The influence of Western Australian visitor centres on tourism behaviour”, September 2015.
3. National Visitor Information Servicing Strategy (nd)
4. Urban Enterprise (2013) “Victorian Visitor Information Centres Futures Project”, December 2013

TOURISM OPERATOR PERCEPTIONS

What does the tourism industry want?

In the 2014 Haeberlin Report¹, tourism operators described the most important functions of visitor centres as:

1. Having knowledgeable staff that provide information about the region, product offered and upcoming events;
2. Offering a web presence to educate and attract visitors to the local area;
3. Providing brochures and flyers; and
4. Providing leads and referrals to local businesses.

Many tourism operators saw the visitor centre playing a critical role in marketing and sales for their business and were critical of visitor centre staff that provided information (e.g. brochures, maps), rather than sales conversion.

Proportion of sales/bookings through Visitor Centres

The Haeberlin Report found that although 81% of all tourism operators reported some sales/bookings via visitor centres, the average proportion was 13% of sales/bookings. However, just under half said that visitor centres provided referrals that would be unlikely to come through another channel.



Figure 5: Average percentage of sales through each channel, Western Australia 2014¹

1. Haeberlin Consulting (2014) "The future of visitor centres in WA", August 2014

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Economic impact of Visitor Centres

In 2014, the Tourism Council of WA (TCWA) commissioned a report into the economic contribution of visitor centres in WA.¹ The report concluded that:

Table 2: Economic contribution of WA Visitor Centres

Number of people who attend a visitor centre	1,117,700
Additional expenditure of visitor centre users per trip	\$104
Additional impact on the WA economy	\$117 million
Total employment generated	900

TCWA concluded that the return on investment, however, cannot just be measured in economic terms. It is easier to encourage repeat visitation when more visitors feel remembered, known and understood – in other words, when the destination has a reputation for having a “customer focus”. This helps to grow the economy, create new jobs and attract new residents in the years ahead.

Social Benefits

Visitor Centres can perform a range of functions in addition to the provision of visitor information, promotions/marketing, and bookings. Other functions include:

- Present the ‘shop front’ for the town and region, providing a warm welcome on behalf of businesses and residents
- Build positive relationships between visitors and community members
- Communicate the benefits of tourism to the broader business sector
- Liaise between local operators, Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs) and local government
- Provide volunteering opportunities
- Perform a role in crisis management, particularly natural disasters such as bush fires and up-to-date information on road conditions
- Support local producers and artisans where they are showcased and sold through VIC
- Provide local services that are not met by the private sector (e.g. book exchange, walking tours, dump points)

1. AECGroup (2015) “Economic contribution of Visitor Centres in Western Australia”, September 2015.

FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

Local government support

Local governments are a major stakeholders in the financial operation of visitor centres. The Haerberlin Report¹ states that approximately 40% of the total operating income of WA VICs came from LGAs. The median level of funding in 2014 was \$93,000.

In Victoria in 2018, the average amount of external funding required to operate a Visitor Centre (i.e. excluding revenue generated through sales, commissions and memberships), was \$250,000, with 77% of funding coming from local governments.²

Staff costs are the largest expense for visitor centres. The Haerberlin Report estimated that staffing was 68% of total costs in Western Australian visitor centres in 2014. This compares to 66% for Victorian visitor centres in 2013.

The following table shows the average amount that local governments in Victoria spent on visitor servicing by population size and receiving entity in 2018.

Table 3: Average spend on visitor centres in Victoria by recipient organization (2018)²

Average spend on external tourism related organisations or committees						
Population	Regional Tourism Assoc.	Local Tourism Assoc.	Visitor Information Centre	Regional Tourism Board	Chamber of Commerce	Business Tourism Assoc.
Group 1 - < 25,000	\$13,667	\$8,200	\$208,101	\$49,277	\$35,813	\$11,667
Group 2 - 25,001 - 50,000	\$77,333	\$82,143	\$258,607	\$143,834	\$12,500	\$20,000
Group 3 - 50,001 - 100,000	\$20,000	\$30,000	\$230,000	\$51,832	\$141,667	\$183,333
Group 4 - >100,001	\$18,600	\$916,667	\$323,950	\$253,343	\$119,375	\$5,000
Aggregate	\$28,467	\$163,667	\$243,973	\$111,259	\$71,412	\$68,333
Aggregate (excluding outlier)		\$36,850				\$11,250

Other income sources

Other non-government income comes from:

1. Membership fees
2. Visitor servicing income
 - Booking commissions
 - Merchandise
3. Non-visitor servicing income:
 - Managing attractions, café, shop
 - Ticketing
 - Conference room bookings
 - Events
 - Grants
 - Corporate sponsorship and donations
 - Production of a local directory
 - Licensing services

However, very few visitor centres generate revenue, and a small number have no revenue streams at all.

Many VICs have reported financial pressure due to the loss of booking commissions due to an increase in competition from online booking portals. The Haerberlin Report noted a 50% decline in booking revenue in 2014, and this trend has continued.

1. Haerberlin Consulting (2014) "The future of visitor centres in WA", August 2014.
2. Komosion (2019) Grampians Visitor Servicing Report.

BENCHMARKING REPORT - FINANCIALS

GSCORE conducted a benchmarking study of twelve local governments to inform the Shire of Denmark's Sustainable Tourism Strategy. The report revealed that:

- Almost all LGAs provide financial support to Visitor Information Centres
- There is considerable variation in the level of financial support provided to VICs (varies from \$300,000 to \$19,000 per annum)
- Very few LGAs provide financial support to Local Tourism Organisations, and for those that do, it is considerably less than the amount provided to VICs
- The level of financial contribution provided by LGAs is not correlated to the number of visitors or population size. The Shire of Denmark ranked ninth out of 11 for the total value of the current cash contribution to the operation of the VIC.

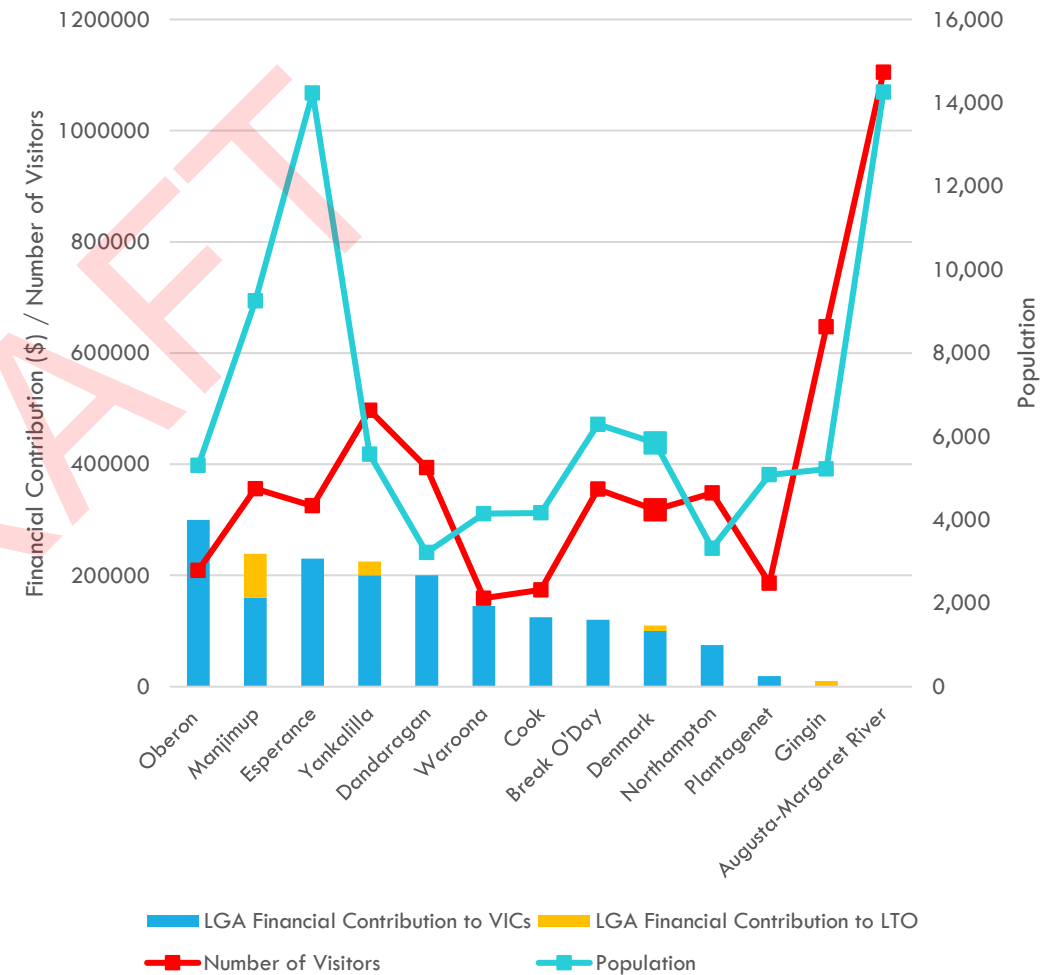


Figure 6: Benchmarking sample of local government financial contributions to Visitor Centres and Local Tourism Organisations (2019)

CHALLENGES FACING VISITOR CENTRES

The Shire of Denmark is not alone in trying to find an effective, cost-efficient solution to visitor servicing. The Statewide Review of Visitor Servicing in Victoria (2018) noted that “There has been anxiety about the role of Visitor Information Centres - how much money they cost to run and how many visitors they actually service ...Some regions have worked out that the fragmentation of resources is leaving everyone behind.”¹


A review of visitor servicing in Eurobodalla Shire in NSW in 2019 concluded that: “the current visitor services model, employed by most destinations, is, if not broken, then in serious need of a major overhaul. Primarily because of the amount of money invested in VICs and Visitor Guides and the very limited return from this investment”.²


The Statewide Review of Visitor Servicing in Victoria (2018) concluded there was a clear need to pool visitor servicing resources and run them to an “Omnichannel Strategy” - a multichannel approach to sales that seeks to provide customers with a seamless shopping experience, whether they're shopping online from a desktop or mobile device, by telephone, or in a brick-and-mortar store.¹



1. Komosion (2019) Grampians Visitor Servicing Report.
2. Destination Marketing Store (2019) “Eurobodalla Visitor Servicing Review: Final Report”.


THE DECLINE OF THE VISITOR CENTRE?


2014  “While there is no available evidence nor precedent for technology completely removing the role of quality, impartial face to face visitor information, the challenge for a sustainable future will lie in optimising the footprint, resourcing levels and the delivery models across different regions”¹

2019  “VICs are transforming from being information centres to experience centres that reflect the local culture, are attractive places for visitors to gather and give visitors a taste of what the destination offers through interactive displays and immersive activities.

There is no single formula for a successful VIC as the dynamics of each destination and the location of individual VICs all play a role.

VICs must leverage the strengths of the destination and present a visitor-centric approach where the VIC is a ‘must-see’ place to visit, to learn, to book, to buy, to download, to recharge, and to talk with a welcoming and informative local”.²

2021  The traditional VIC experience is: “Cluttered, Institutional, Redundant, and Pre-Internet”³

2025  Victorian Statewide Strategy recommended rethinking how visitor servicing is delivered by creating inviting, inspiring environments with cross-sell opportunities to increase spend, extend a stay and/or encourage return and positive referral for what the region has to offer.

Using a retailing model, they recommended the establishment of new [Inspiration Hubs](#) (physical presence) and online networks to replace the traditional bricks and mortar VIC.³

2030  “VICs will become highly interactive, digital centres where trip profiles and requirements can be curated and updated. There will be a move toward satellite visitor services, primarily mobile kiosks. Virtual reality technology will provide visitors with sensory experiences about attractions and activities in the region.

Interactive and intuitive mobile kiosk screen displays, offering apps for download and online concierge advice, will be located in higher visitor traffic areas (e.g., rest areas, historic sites and museums, retail centres, convention centres, etc).

Travellers will use their devices to call up real-time advice based on pre-set profiles, past travel patterns, peer group preferences and emerging behaviour while in the destination”.⁴

1. Haeberlin Consulting (2014) “The future of visitor centres in WA”, August 2014.
2. Tourism Central Australia (2019) “Visitor Servicing Recommendations Report”
3. Komosion (2019) Grampians Visitor Servicing Report.
4. A National Visitor Information Servicing Strategy (nd).



Image: David Bomba

DENMARK VISITOR CENTRE

Key Statistics

DOOR COUNT

Door count data for the Denmark Visitor Centre confirms the national trend in the decline in usage of visitor centres.

The door count reveals a steady decline in numbers since 2015, from a peak of 88,341 to a low of 55,237 in 2019 (-38%). During the same period, the total number of overnight visitors to the Shire of Denmark has grown.

The estimated number of day visitors over the same period is approximately the same as the total number of overnight visitors. In 2019, there were 160,000 day visitors.

Thus:

- **In 2015** – 29% of all visitors to the Shire of Denmark used the Visitor Centre
- **In 2019** – 17% of all visitors to the Shire of Denmark used the Visitor Centre

Chart redacted for public distribution –subject to non-disclosure agreement

Figure 7: Denmark Visitor Centre door count compared to average annual overnight visitors (2007-2019)¹

1. Tourism WA (2020) Shire of Denmark Overnight Visitor Factsheet 2017/18/19. Release date: September 2020; Tourism Research Australia, (2021), *Local Government Area Profiles 2019*, [online], available at <https://www.tra.gov.au/Regional/local-government-area-profiles>.

REGIONAL COMPARISON

GSCORE conducted a door count comparison of data from the Albany Visitor Centre, Walpole Visitor Centre and Denmark Visitor Centre for the period 2015-2019. It showed that from a low in 2017, numbers in Albany and Walpole have steadily increased.

The new Albany Visitor Centre was opened in York Street in 2018, providing visitors and residents with a information in a high-traffic area co-located with the library. This period also coincided with the Field of Lights festival which ran from October 2018-April 2019 and attracted large numbers of visitors to the City.

The increase in visitor traffic through the Walpole Visitor Centre is unexplained, although the Tree Top Walk also witnessed an increase in numbers in 2018 and 2019 after a period of stagnation during the previous five years.

These numbers suggest that face-to-face visitor centres continue to perform an important function and are most effective when located in high-traffic areas.

Chart redacted for public distribution –subject to non-disclosure agreement

Figure 8: Door counts for Albany, Denmark and Walpole Visitor Centres (2007-2019)

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Denmark Tourism Incorporated

In March 2009, the Shire entered into an agreement with Denmark Tourism Incorporated (DTI) to lease the DVC. DTI moved into the building in 2007 but there was no lease agreement until 2009.

The latest lease agreement with DTI was dated 1 May 2017 for a five year term. Under the Shire of Denmark's standard community group lease, the Shire takes responsibility for structural maintenance and insurance on buildings that are on Shire owned or managed land.

Both parties also entered in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (2009 and 2017). The most recent MOU outlines the purpose of the building and the relationship between the Shire and DTI. This MOU is now voided.

Under the terms of its lease agreement, DTI was permitted to enter into sub-leases with the approval of the Shire.

Relevant clauses from 2017 MOU between Shire and DTI:

Clause 4

During the term of this agreement and in consideration of the financial assistance of the Shire, DTI agrees that:

- a) It will operate the DVC to promote tourism and tourist facilities and services throughout the Shire and for the benefit of the people of and visitors to the Shire and those persons and organizations providing facilities and services for visitors to the Shire;
- b) It will use its best endeavours to maintain its Level 1 tourism accreditation;
- c) It will operate the DVC in such a manner as shall be consistent with its obligations hereunder and in compliance with the terms of the Lease and shall make its operations as nearly as possible financially self-sustaining;
- d) It will annually present to the Shire a strategy and operating budget for the following three years, incorporating its plans for that period and all anticipated expenses of such plans, Key Performance Indicators for that period and a proposal for financial assistance by the Shire.

Clause 5

During the term of this agreement and in consideration of the covenants of DTI herein contained the Shire agrees:

- a) To provide such financial assistance for DTI as in the reasonable opinion of the Shire may be required to enable DTI to perform its obligations under this agreement and the Lease.
- b) Upon receipt of each annual strategy and operating budget from DTI pursuant to clause 4(d) hereof, to meet with DTI to consider DTI's proposal for financial assistance and thereafter to determine whether it will grant financial assistance to DTI in accordance with the proposal and, if not, what financial assistance it will provide.

OPERATING COSTS

The Amazing South Coast Tourism Incorporated has provided operating income and expenditure for the Denmark Visitor Centre (DVC) for FY 2017, 2018 and 2019. Data have not been provided for FY2020 due to the early closure of the DVC in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Special notes:

- FY2019 – no explanation has been provided for higher costs associated with VC expenses compared to previous years
- Operating grant includes Shire of Denmark grant (see next page)

Analysis:

- Operating grants are approximately 30% of income; in other words, approximately two-thirds of income is generated through sales
- Employment costs are the largest expense and have been growing: FY2019 = 73%; FY2018 = 70%; FY2017 = 61%
- Except for FY2019 (see note above), the cost of operating the Visitor Centre building is approximately \$50,000 per annum, excluding insurance, depreciation and merchant fees (combined additional \$10,000pa)

Table redacted for public distribution –subject to non-disclosure agreement

SHIRE OF DENMARK GRANT

The Shire of Denmark has contributed financially to the operational overheads of the Denmark Visitor Centre since the establishment of Denmark Tourism Incorporated (DTI) in 2007. This contribution continued in 2018/19 when DTI merged with the Amazing South Coast Tourism Incorporated (ASCTi).

When DTI was established, there was an expectation that the amount of funding support would be reduced over time as the Visitor Centre diversified its revenue base.

Up until at least 2014, there was an agreed understanding amongst DTI Board members that a portion of the grant (between \$20,000-\$30,000) was apportioned to “marketing expenses” and the balance for visitor centre operations. This understanding was reflected in the Board’s annual report to Council. However, Shire staff have been unable to confirm the existence of such an agreement for the period 2010-2019.

As the total number of visitors through the door has declined, so to has the Shire’s Return on Investment (ROI). In short, most of the Shire’s investment into the visitor economy is impacting a smaller and smaller number of visitors. Consequently, investment that could be meeting the needs of a wider segment of visitors is not occurring.

The proportion of Shire grant funding to total DTI/ASCTi revenue ranges from 20%-30%.

Note: ASCTi was unable to provide copies of DTI financial records for the period 2009-2015.

Table 5: Shire of Denmark financial grant to Denmark Tourism Incorporated 2007-2016 and Amazing South Coast Tourism Incorporated 2017-2019

Year	Grant amount	As a percentage of total revenue*	% of visitors serviced**
2007/08	\$ 120,000	27%	46%
2008/09	\$ 100,000	21%	43%
2009/10	\$ 100,000		42%
2010/11	\$ 80,000		40%
2011/12	\$ 80,000		31%
2012/13	\$ 70,000		35%
2013/14	\$ 80,000		35%
2014/15	\$ 85,000		29%
2015/16	\$ 85,000		24%
2016/17	\$ 95,000	20%	25%
2017/18	\$ 95,000	25%	22%
2018/19	\$ 95,000	30%	17%

*Based on available data to hand.

**Door count as a percentage of all visitors (overnight and day)

VISITOR CENTRE EXPENSES

In addition to an annual grant, the Shire of Denmark contributes to the upkeep of the DVC as outlined in the chart below. Expenditure is broken down by category in a table on the following page.

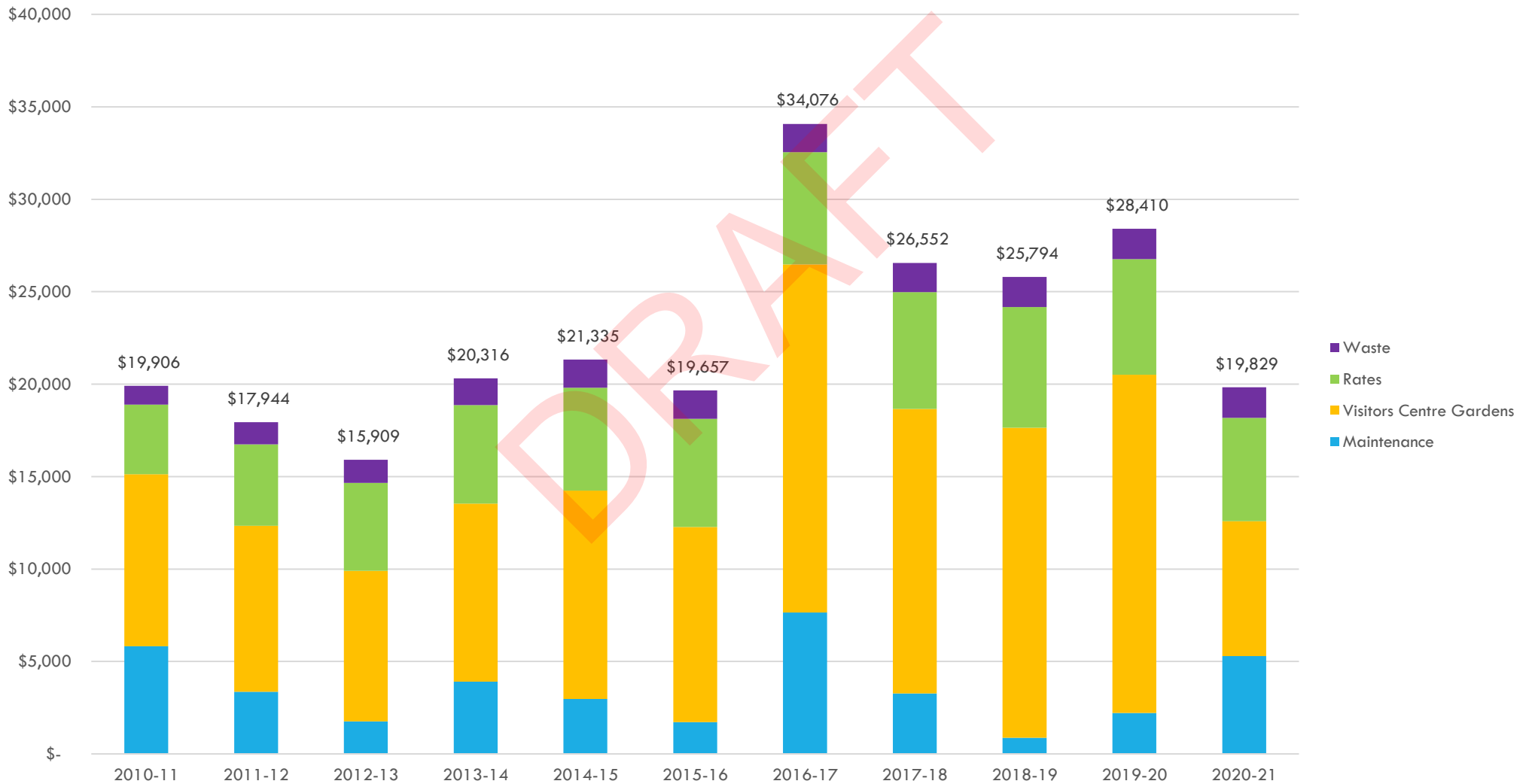


Figure 9: Shire of Denmark spend on Denmark Visitor Centre overheads 2010-2021

VISITOR CENTRE EXPENSES

Table 6: Shire of Denmark spend on Denmark Visitor Centre overheads 2006-2021

Expenses	Maintenance	Visitors Centre Gardens	Rates	Waste	Total Expenses
2006-07	\$ 852	\$ 115	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 967
2007-08	\$ 1,350	\$ 11,276	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 12,626
2008-09	\$ 8,801	\$ 6,728	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 15,529
2009-10	\$ 7,054	\$ 8,158	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 15,211
2010-11	\$ 5,831	\$ 9,302	\$ 3,765	\$ 1,008	\$ 19,906
2011-12	\$ 3,364	\$ 8,982	\$ 4,403	\$ 1,195	\$ 17,944
2012-13	\$ 1,766	\$ 8,132	\$ 4,756	\$ 1,255	\$ 15,909
2013-14	\$ 3,908	\$ 9,627	\$ 5,330	\$ 1,451	\$ 20,316
2014-15	\$ 2,973	\$ 11,268	\$ 5,569	\$ 1,525	\$ 21,335
2015-16	\$ 1,725	\$ 10,547	\$ 5,860	\$ 1,525	\$ 19,657
2016-17	\$ 7,647	\$ 18,830	\$ 6,074	\$ 1,525	\$ 34,076
2017-18	\$ 3,272	\$ 15,391	\$ 6,319	\$ 1,570	\$ 26,552
2018-19	\$ 880	\$ 16,759	\$ 6,525	\$ 1,630	\$ 25,794
2019-20	\$ 2,223	\$ 18,288	\$ 6,249	\$ 1,650	\$ 28,410
2020-21	\$ 5,295	\$ 7,296	\$ 5,588	\$ 1,650	\$ 19,829

TOTAL VISITOR CENTRE EXPENDITURE

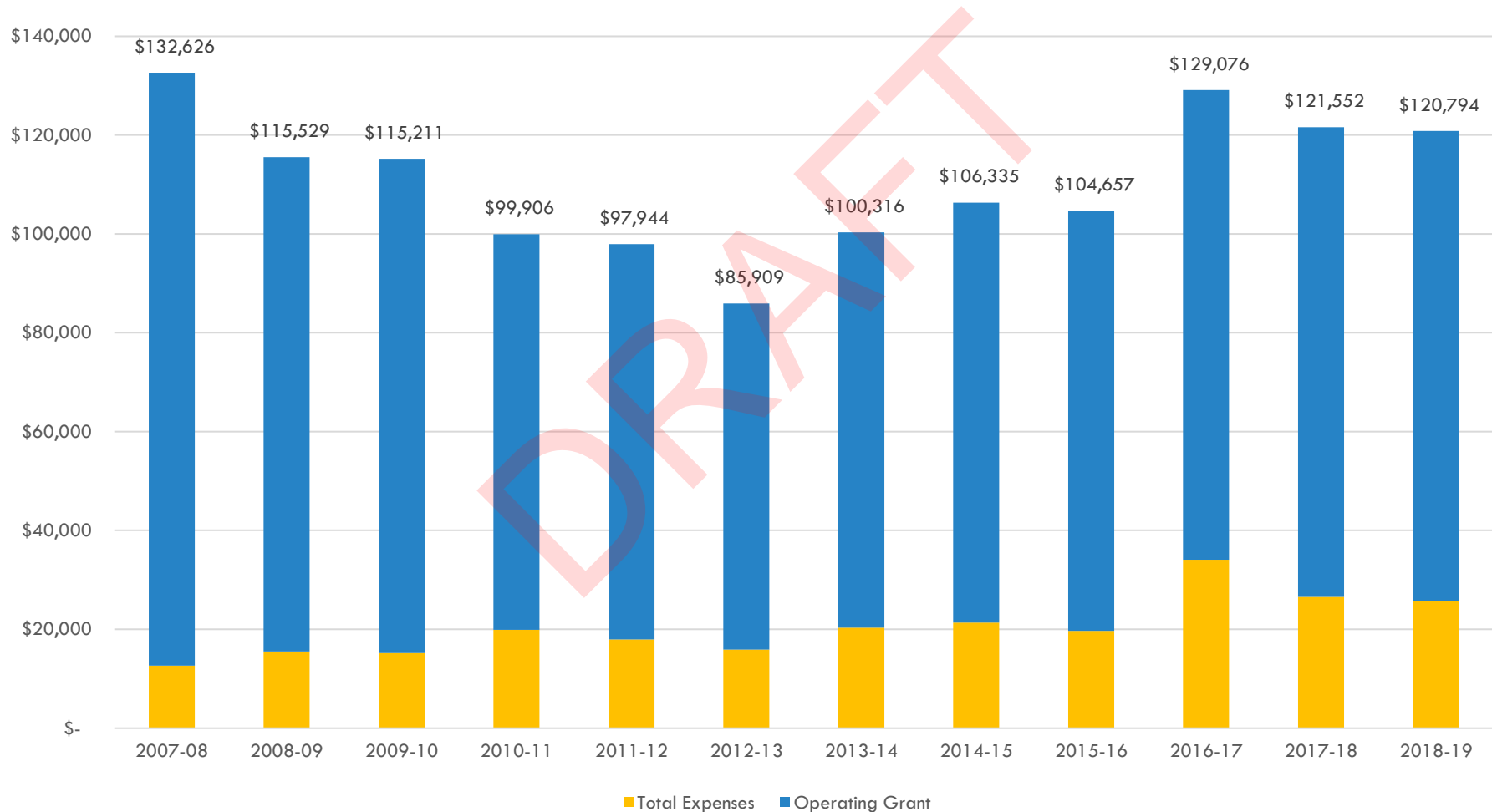


Figure 10: Shire of Denmark spend on Denmark Visitor Centre grant and expenses 2007-2021

LEGAL STATUS OF BUILDING

The Land

The Shire is the manager of the land comprising the whole of Reserve 48198, whole of Lot 501 on Deposited Plan 61023, Certificate of Title Volume LR3157 Folio 222, corner of South Coast Highway and Ocean Beach Road, Denmark.

The Building

The Shire owns the buildings and improvements on the Reserve including the building known as the Denmark Visitor Centre (“DVC”).

The building was constructed in 2006 using a combination of state government grants (\$298,000), \$67,500 Shire contribution, and a local government loan (\$350,000); i.e. a total of \$715,500.

According to the Shire of Denmark Chief Executive Officer Mr David Schober:

Any grant funding from Tourism WA/State does not mention any caveats over the building. Thus Council could re-purpose subject to purchasing the land and freeholding the site without any ties to previous funding commitments.

The total capital cost (construction and siteworks) was \$815,423. The balance of \$99,923 is under-determined in the financial records, and possibly provided in the previous year’s annual budget.

The 15-year loan will be fully paid on the 28 June 2022. The total interest paid on the loan over the 15-year term is \$219,260, equating to a total amount (principal and interest) of \$569,260. The total depreciation to 2020 for the visitor centre and street pole banners is \$410,190.

Improvements

A dump point was installed in 2015, total cost of \$51,416 (including signage and installation).

Current lease arrangements

In December 2020, the Shire executed a new lease to the Denmark Chamber of Commerce (DCC) for the occupation of the DVC for the purpose of visitor servicing (annual rent \$1pa). The term of the initial lease was 7 December 2020 to 30 April 2021. The Shire also allocated \$40,000 to DCC for the purpose of supporting the delivery of visitor servicing; and \$8,000 for cleaning of the DVC toilets.

At its meeting on 20 April 2021, Council agreed to extend the term of the DCC lease to 31 August 2021 and allocated \$8,500 for the purpose of supporting visitor servicing in July and August 2021; and \$8,000 for cleaning of the DVC toilets.

The “Woodturner’s Shed”

In October 2020, the Shire entered into a short-term lease agreement with the Denmark Woodturners Incorporated to remain in the premises that they occupy in the Denmark Visitor Centre until 30 June 2021. It is the preference of the Woodturners that they remain at the current premises.

The Denmark Woodturners Incorporated constructed a shed on Council land behind the DVC in 2008. A portion of the shed was used by DTI for storage purposes.

At its meeting on 16 February 2021, Council reviewed a request from the Woodturners to define the ownership of the storage shed in the lease such that the lessee is responsible for maintenance, repair and insurance; and authorise the lessee to remove the shed at any time and/or upon termination of the lease, whichever comes first.



Image: David Bomba

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

Results from industry and
community surveys

DENMARK STAKEHOLDER INSIGHTS

In February 2021, tourism operators were invited to participate in workshops held in Nornalup and Denmark to discuss visitor servicing.

Participants provided an assessment of how well the Shire of Denmark is doing with regards to visitor servicing across a range of online and in-destination channels. These comments are supplemented with insights from interviews with key stakeholders.

Table 7: Stakeholder comments on mobile and digital visitor servicing in the Shire of Denmark

Insights	Implications	Possible response
Mobile and Digital Visitor Servicing		
Most visitors are arriving with plans in place, limiting ability to change bookings and travel plans to extend stay or dispersal and spend in region	Need for itineraries and marketing that better promotes the region's experience to consumers in the Dream and Plan phases (i.e. before they arrive)	Update online content to increase destination awareness and compel consumers to visit for longer; need more compelling local stories and content
Greens Pool and the Tree Top Walk are bucket list destinations	Visitor need to be encouraged to explore other destinations	Online content to provide visitors with more options
Location of key attractions in the western part of the Shire is not well known	Visitors can arrive unprepared which can impact on the quality of their experience	Increase destination awareness online and through enhanced maps and itineraries
Millennials have usually sourced information online	Need to provide information to visitors in their planning stages	Increase online content; consider a pre-planning bespoke VIC service; LiveChat rather than email
Branding online and onsite inconsistent	A single brand needs to be carried across everything	Update branding strategy
Multiple destination websites (Amazing South Coast, DenmarkShire, DiscoverDenmark, denmark.com.au, DenmarkWesternAustralia, Rainbowcoast); lack of destination-specific information; out-of-date information	Need to inspire visitors through the website	Redevelop website content, need Denmark specific content
Booking engines and review sites vary in quality of information	Third-party sites are difficult to manage or influence	Industry training to encourage better engagement with these sites
Consumer facing social media channels not utilized for destination, tourism operators have own social media presence	Destination is not visible in dedicated social channels, some tourism operators more engaged than others	Engage with consumer social media as a destination to provide consistent approach, training support for operators
No dedicated consumer newsletters or email distribution lists	Difficult to engage past visitors and encourage repeat visitation or word-of-mouth recommendations	Establish a consumer-focused e-newsletter, local industry to contribute content

Table 8: Stakeholder comments on in-destination visitor servicing in Denmark

Insights	Implications	Possible response
In-destination Visitor Servicing		
Tourism operators are frontline ambassadors and do a great job	Hard to measure, sometimes subjective/biased, difficult to deliver well in peak times	Needs to be supported by a dedicated VIC, training for frontline staff
Entire business community provides a visitor service without knowing it	Good customer service = good visitor servicing; and the opposite is also true	Engage the entire business community in visitor servicing, training for frontline staff
Location of key attractions in the western part of the Shire is not well known	Visitors can arrive unprepared which can impact on the quality of their experience	Increase destination awareness online and through enhanced maps and itineraries
Visitors are coming to experience the region's coastal attractions and national parks	National Parks are a key element of the visitor experience but have limited connection to VIC, LTO or LGA	Enhance partnerships with DBCA
Visitors are looking for practical information about where to take their dogs, what to do with kids	There is currently limited information addressing key questions	Increase online content to relevant niche markets
Strong seasonality, with most visitors in summer	Peak season staffing pressure	Enhance online content to improve management of visitor enquiries; consider Live Chat; consider use of mobile booths at key locations (e.g. Greens Pool); use trained roaming ambassadors
Technology is not being optimized as a strategic supporting tool for VICs in meeting information needs	Quality technology experience needs to be consistent across all visitor touch points to engage tech savvy visitors	Introduce an omnichannel approach to visitor servicing where consistency in content and quality of service is provided across multiple channels and touch points
Branding online and onsite inconsistent	A single brand needs to be carried across everything	Update branding strategy
Financial sustainability is a key driver of decision making with relation to the Visitor Centre	A risk that destination does not maximize the visitor experience and loss of reputation and yield	Expand focus to visitor servicing not just Visitor Centre
Industry value having a VIC and want to see it continue, current model is doing the best it can	There is no substitute for face-to-face engagement and that the VIC needs to be resourced	Current Tourism Strategy will make recommendations regarding the future of VIC
Poor signage in town and navigating to VIC carpark	Visitor not aware of VIC or find it difficult to access	Improve signage
Lack of local government support for VIC when majority of VICs across Australia are supported by LGAs	Disconnection between Shire and local tourism operators	Active engagement with industry
Not optimizing rest areas or other locations where visitors stop	Opportunity to capitalize on visitors stopping at these points with information to encourage them to visit towns and attractions	Improve signage and amenity at rest areas and other locations; consider use of electronic kiosk in main street (high traffic areas, e.g. IGA)

STAKEHOLDER ASPIRATIONS

“If Denmark is a tourist town, then it needs to start behaving like one”

This comment sums up the overwhelming sentiment of stakeholders who participated in the community and industry consultation process. In relation to visitor servicing, this means:

- Consistent, coordinated, visitor-focused online presence
- Physical visitor information centre
- Entrance statements, signage, noticeboards
- Vibrant events, mobile pop-up information kiosks
- Welcoming, friendly locals (businesses, staff and residents)

“Council sets the culture of what Denmark is and how it is seen by locals and visitors”

This comment sums up how stakeholders see the role of Council in relation to supporting the Shire of Denmark’s entire visitor economy.

There is a strongly held and widespread view amongst many stakeholders that the Shire doesn’t understand the importance of tourism to the local economy and that Councillors consider visitor servicing to be “industry’s problem” to solve.

Stakeholders want:

- To be seen as partners in finding solutions to issues facing the Shire of Denmark community but believe that the Shire is dismissive of their knowledge, expertise, and skills
- The Shire to take a leadership role in bringing the community together to build a resilient, sustainable, visitor-focused destination
- The Shire to make a financial contribution to visitor servicing; they are not looking for a “handout” but an “investment” in the Shire of Denmark’s future

Table 9: Stakeholder aspirations for visitor servicing

Visitors say	Tourism operators say	Community members say
Visitor servicing must have the needs of visitors and the visitor experience at the core of operations	Visitor servicing requires an industry-wide approach and must generate increasing spend in the visitor economy and value for tourism businesses	Visitors are welcome in our community. We want opportunities to connect with visitors to share stories about the area’s history, culture, environment, and people

BUSINESS OPERATOR SURVEY RESULTS

In February 2021, GSCORE conducted a survey of business operators. 122 businesses responded to the survey.

- 93% were based in the Shire of Denmark
- 90% provide tourism services or sold products to tourists. The majority of these were accommodation providers (63%); followed by retail (19%); food and beverage (14.6%), attractions (13.4%); and tour and activity providers (13.5%)
- **52% of respondents attributed 80% or more of their annual turnover to the sale of products and services to tourists**
- A large number used the services offered by the DVC, particularly bookings (34%), brochure display (44%) and website listings (37%)
- However, most attributed less than 10% of their sales (61.8%) and visitor numbers (52.1%) to the Visitor Centre

Table 10: In 2018-19, on average, what percentage of your sales and visitor numbers were generated through the Denmark Visitor Centre?

Area	None	<10%	10-15%	16-20%	21-40%	>40%	Unsure
Sales	38.2%	23.6%	7.87%	5.62%	3.37%	7.87%	13.48%
Visitor numbers	31.46%	21.35%	6.74%	4.49%	4.49%	6.74%	24.72%

Table 11: In the last two years (2018-2020) which of the following Denmark Visitor Centre services did you use?

Services	Percentage of respondents	Number
None	37.08%	33
Accommodation booking service	33.71%	30
Tours and attractions booking service	3.3%	3
Brochure display	43.82%	39
Advertising and signage	14.61%	13
Website listing	37.08%	33
Holiday guide listing	17.98%	16
Holiday guide advert	7.87%	7
Product sales	4.49%	4
Other	10.11%	9

BUSINESS OPERATOR SURVEY RESULT

The majority of business respondents stated that it was important to very important for their business that a Visitor Centre operated in Denmark (n=58%).

- Almost half of those who responded stated that the Shire had a high level of financial responsibility for providing visitor servicing (48%).
- 9% felt that the Shire had no responsibility, and 9% felt that the Shire had limited responsibility.

Table 12: How important is it to your business that people have access to a Visitor Centre in Denmark?

Not important	Slightly important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
19%	13%	10%	21%	37%

Respondents were asked to rank a variety of Visitor Centre models in order of preference. The highest ranked options were:

- Visitor Centre run by not-for-profit (weighted score 6.51)
- Visitor Centre run by Shire (weighted score 5.69)

Table 13: Preferred Visitor Centre models

Model	Rank
Not for profit runs Visitor Centre (existing Visitor Centre operated by a tourism or community organization with paid and/or volunteer staff)	1
Shire runs Visitor Centre (existing Visitor Centre operated by Shire staff)	2
Lease building to community group (community organization leases building and must provide face-to-face visitor information as a condition of lease)	3
Co-locate with CRC (brochure racking and information service provided by CRC staff)	4
Relocate to Shire Office (brochure racking and information service moved to Shire Offices and provided by Shire staff)	5
Lease to commercial business (business leases building and must provide visitor information as a condition of lease)	6
Relocate to library (brochure racking and information service moved to library and provided by Shire staff)	7
No physical Visitor Centre (decentralized model)	8

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

In February 2021, GSCORE conducted a survey community members. 304 people responded to the survey.

- 85% lived in the Shire of Denmark, the majority as full-time residents
- 5.6% were holiday homeowners or seasonal residents
- One third had lived in the Shire of Denmark for less than five years (31%); 27% had lived in the Shire of Denmark 11-20 years; and 22% had lived in the Shire of Denmark for more than 20 years
- 47% were aged between 45-64 years; and 28% were 65+
- Two-thirds of respondents were female
- 15 respondents (5%) were volunteers at the DVC
- 15% worked in tourism

When asked about the Shire’s level of financial responsibility for tourism,

- 51% stated that the Shire had a high level of responsibility for providing visitor servicing
- 7.25% felt that the Shire had no responsibility, and 5% felt that the Shire had limited responsibility.

Two-thirds felt that it is very important for the Shire of Denmark to have a Visitor Centre. Almost 80% stated that it was important to very important.

Table 14: How important is that people have access to a Visitor Centre in the Shire of Denmark?

Not important	Slightly important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
4%	8%	9%	20%	59%

VOLUNTEER SURVEYS

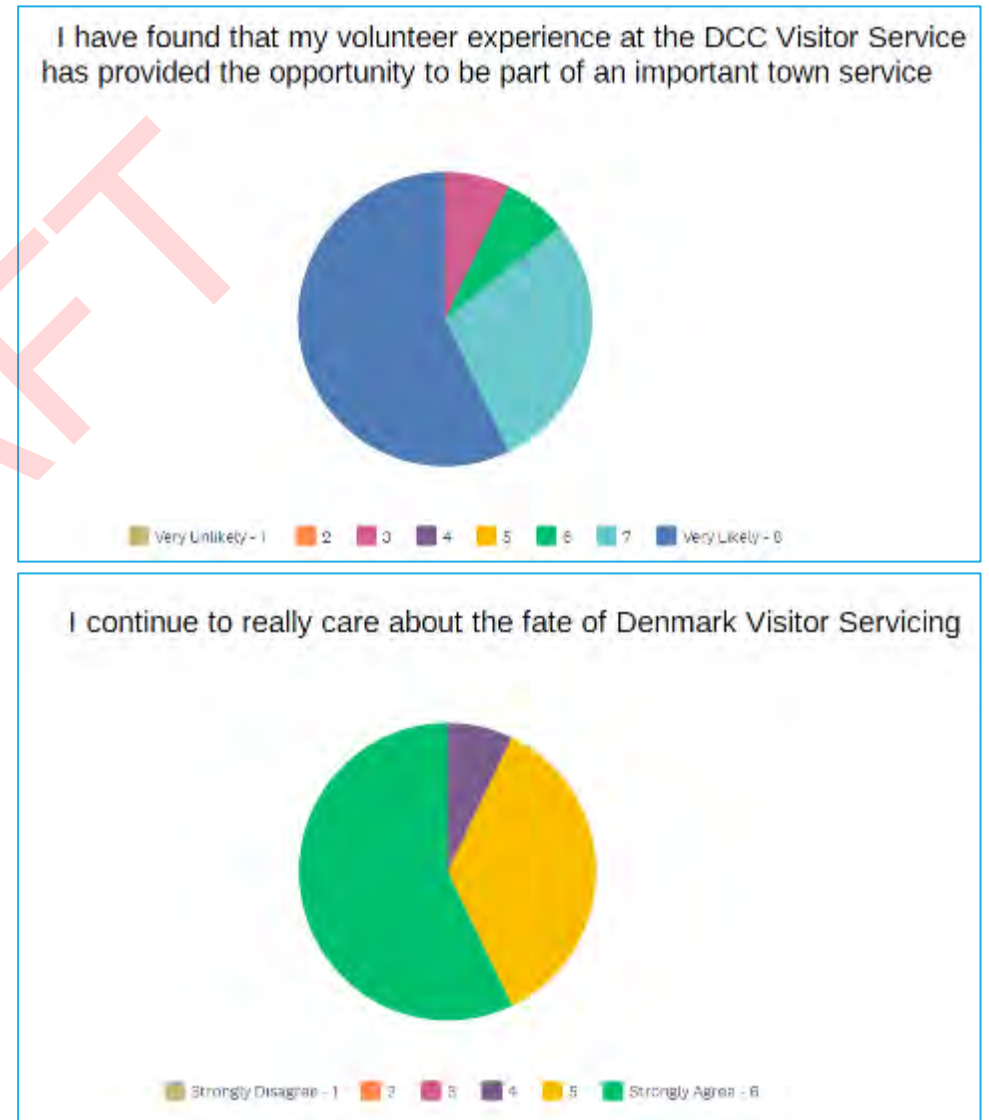
Volunteers of the Denmark Visitor Centre have been subject to regular surveys by the Denmark Chamber of Commerce since the beginning of 2021, in order to gauge volunteer sentiment and assess the existing volunteer-based model.

The featured graphs are excerpts from the May 2021 survey and reflect current sentiment from the existing volunteers of the Denmark Visitor Centre. Generally, participation as a volunteer is seen as a positive experience that provides an opportunity for residents to be a part of the town's tourism service.

Survey participants were also asked to reflect on whether they see the volunteer model for visitor servicing as a successful ongoing model. Overwhelmingly, the feedback was positive for the current volunteer model. However, there was some concern raised about the volunteer model, particularly:

- Retaining existing volunteers and attracting new volunteers
- Ongoing training and upskilling needs to be delivered for existing and new volunteers
- The current model does not include a visitor phone contact, bookings assistance or retail (souvenirs)
- Improved exposure and signage is required
- Concern over the amount of funding available and lack of Shire involvement

Figure 11: Denmark Visitor Centre volunteer sentiment (2021)



VISITOR SURVEY

The Denmark Chamber of Commerce conducted ad hoc visitor surveys throughout 2021.

An analysis of 240 responses revealed a spread of ages, 34% were aged over 60 years (Baby Boomers); and 44% were aged between 40-60 years of age (Generation X). This data is consistent with national visitor reports which suggest that Boomers and Gen X are the most frequent users of visitor centres.

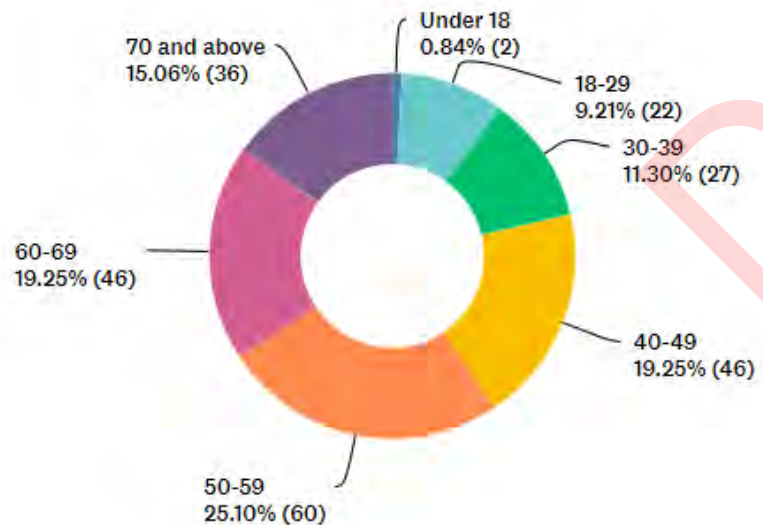


Figure 12: Age profile of Visitor Centre users (2021), Denmark Chamber of Commerce

The majority of visitors to the DVC had previously visited the Shire of Denmark (63%), with one-third first time visitors.

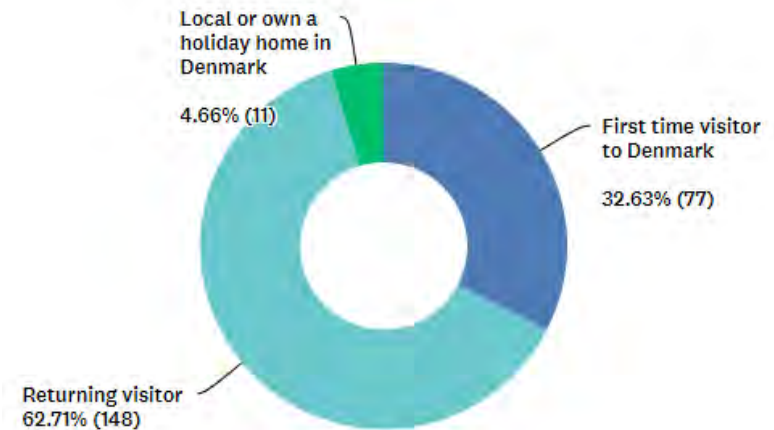


Figure 13: Visitor Centre users by previous visit (2021), Denmark Chamber of Commerce

VISITOR SURVEY

The Denmark Chamber of Commerce survey also asked visitors about their reasons for coming to the DVC. Respondents could provide more than one response.

- The most common response was to “Find out general information about Denmark” (64%).
- Followed by “Find out information about activities/attractions” (56%).
- Half of the respondents also cited “Get a map of the area” as a reason for attending the visitor centre.
- One-third stated “Get a visitor guide”.

These results support the 2015 study of WA visitor centres which found that accessing information about attractions and activities, and obtaining a map were the most common motivators for stopping at a visitor centre.

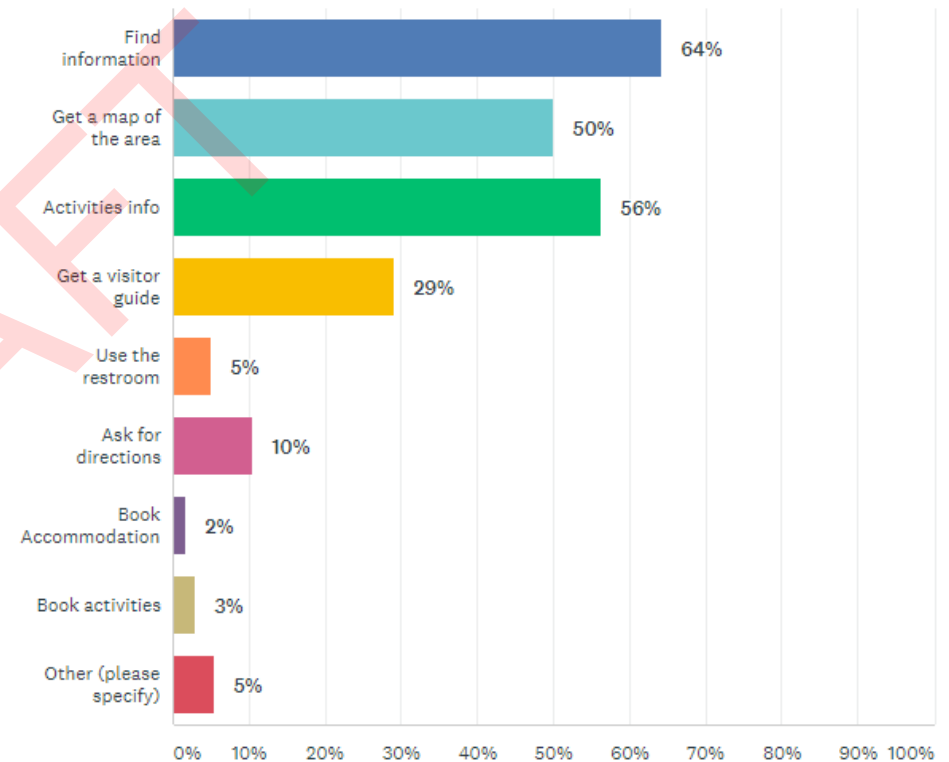


Figure 14: Reasons visitors attend the Visitor Centre (2021), Denmark Chamber of Commerce



Image: May Carter

RECOMMENDATIONS

Assessment

A VISITOR-FOCUSED APPROACH

Assessment

The State government will invest \$16 million in ecotourism and trail assets in the region over the next four years. Much of this investment will occur within the Shire. At the same time, the Shire of Denmark is also investing in significant tourism and recreation assets at Ocean Beach and Lights Beach. The return on investment is premised on high-quality visitor servicing.

Changing consumer habits and new technologies have fundamentally altered the way that visitor servicing occurs and is likely to occur into the future. To respond to these changes, all tourism stakeholders need to redefine how they engage with visitors and meet and exceed their expectations.

The Denmark Visitor Centre is one part of complex visitor servicing ecosystem that includes multiple digital and face-to-face touchpoints. The number of people attending the Denmark Visitor Centre has declined significantly in the last decade; the simple fact is that most tourists don't visit the Denmark Visitor Centre.

And yet, visitor servicing in the Shire of Denmark is largely based on a pre-internet model of engagement. The lack of an integrated destination-specific digital presence (e.g. website and social channels) means that the many tourists who do not attend the DVC lack opportunities to obtain information that is timely, targeted, and of high-quality.

The question of whether to keep the Denmark Visitor Centre open therefore cannot be dealt with in isolation from other parts of the entire visitor servicing ecosystem. To deliver an exceptional visitor service and encourage higher yield (i.e. higher spend per visitor), all stakeholders need to stop thinking about visitor servicing as an anonymous transaction that happens in a Visitor Centre, and instead think about it as the sum total of a visitor's interactions with the Shire of Denmark community, businesses and the natural environment.

Community Sentiment

Amongst the Denmark community, there is a strongly held view that if Denmark is a tourism town, then it must have a physical Visitor Centre.

- This sentiment is tied to a sense of community pride (they want the Shire of Denmark to be seen as a welcoming destination); and
- Widely-held conventional view about how visitor servicing is best delivered (i.e. a physical Visitor Centre is an essential means of welcoming visitors).

Most tourism operators value the Visitor Centre for the service it provides to visitors rather than for any direct financial benefit.

- Almost 40% of operators who responded to the Business Survey conducted as part of the consultation process for the Sustainable Tourism Strategy did not use any Visitor Centre services; and
- Almost 60% received no sales and/or no customers from the Visitor Centre.

Most participants in the community and industry consultation process expressed the view that the Shire has a high level of financial responsibility for providing visitor servicing.

- Their preference is that a not-for-profit organisation runs the Visitor Centre with financial support from the Shire.

VISITOR SERVICING OBJECTIVE

Desired Outcome

The goal of the *Shire of Denmark Sustainable Tourism Strategy* is for **the Shire of Denmark to become a leading example of a sustainable tourism destination.**

Achieving this vision requires a strong focus on visitor servicing in order to ensure that:

Visitors receive accurate, quality, timely information at every stage of the visitor journey, and are made to feel welcome when they visit.

Council commissioned this report into the future operations of the Denmark Visitor Centre in order to better inform decision-making with regards to the Shire's ongoing financial contribution to the running costs of the Visitor Centre.

Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles have shaped the recommendations contained in this report:

- The provision of high-quality, customer-focused visitor servicing is an essential pillar of sustainable tourism.
- All tourism stakeholders have a role to play in visitor servicing, including Council, business operators, industry bodies, community organisations, and residents.
- Building the Shire of Denmark's reputation for having a "customer focus" will help grow the economy, create new jobs and attract new residents in the years ahead.

Agreed Direction

The Sustainable Tourism Strategy outlines two recommendations in relation to visitor servicing:

- (1) Ensure provision of face-to-face visitor servicing is cost-effective and returns benefit to visitors, tourism operators and the local community.
- (2) Engage industry and community in transitioning to a sustainable model of visitor servicing, using multiple channels to distribute visitor information across the Shire.

In formulating these recommendations, GSCORE considered a range of options. These are described in the Appendix.

(1) FACE-TO-FACE VISITOR SERVICING

Ensure provision of face-to-face visitor servicing is cost-effective and returns benefit to visitors, tourism operators and the local community.

Recommendation:

The Shire of Denmark supports the retention of a face-to-face visitor servicing model in the Denmark Visitor Centre:

- The Shire provides financial support to enable face-to-face visitor servicing to be delivered in the Denmark Visitor Centre over the short-term (2021-2024).

Rationale

Face-to-face visitor servicing is an important part of the in-destination visitor experience. It is important to note that face-to-face visitor servicing can occur in a range of locations, including a 'bricks and mortar' visitor centre, mobile visitor kiosks, by businesses, via events, and through 'local ambassadors'.

Although most face-to-face visitor servicing occurs away from the Denmark Visitor Centre, the DVC is still visited by a significant number of tourists each year. The DVC is therefore an important part of the Shire of Denmark's visitor experience offering.

However, the current financial model is ineffective and unsustainable:

- The DVC services a small percentage of the Shire of Denmark's visitors.
- The majority of the Shire of Denmark's visitors are poorly served by the other visitor servicing channels.
- The large Visitor Centre building is under-utilized and expensive to maintain.

The recommendation is that the Shire provides financial support for the delivery of a face-to-face visitor service in the Denmark Visitor Centre for a three-year period in order to address community and industry concerns, and to assist in the transition to a more sustainable model (see Recommendation 2).

This approach would ensure that the existing building – an important community asset – is retained and continues to support the community, industry and visitors.

(2) LONG-TERM MODEL

Engage industry and community in transitioning to a sustainable model of visitor servicing, using multiple channels to distribute visitor information across the Shire.

Recommendation:

The Shire of Denmark supports the development of a sustainable, multi-channel visitor servicing model.

- The model is progressively introduced, with the aim of being fully developed by 2025.
- The Shire provides financial support for the development and implementation of this model.

Rationale

The number of people attending the Denmark Visitor Centre has declined significantly in the last decade; most tourists don't visit the Denmark Visitor Centre. Consumer habits and expectations are changing as technology affords new ways of delivering visitor servicing.

Nationally, the issue of the financial viability of the traditional visitor centre model has been the subject of multiple reports. There is general agreement that the model employed by most destinations is "if not broken, then in serious need of a major overhaul. Primarily because of the amount of money invested in VICs [visitor information centres] and Visitor Guides and the very limited return from this investment".

And yet, visitor servicing – that is, the provision of accurate, impartial, high quality, timely information to visitors – is a critical part of the visitor economy. To respond to these changes, visitor centres are evolving and changing the way they engage with visitors. A truly effective visitor servicing model needs to employ multiple channels to distribute visitor information across the Shire. This approach is focused on addressing the following questions:

- Are we providing services where and when they are required?
- Have we thought about where and when visitors need information and how they can access it?
- Do we have systems in place to get the right information to our target visitors at the right time?

The recommendation is that a new multi-channel visitor servicing model be developed and implemented with funding support from the Shire. This model would be introduced progressively, with the aim to transition to the new model by 2025.

Face-to-face visitor servicing in a physical Visitor Centre may remain part of the mix after this date.

WHAT IS A MULTI-CHANNEL MODEL?

A multi-channel visitor servicing model is based on the idea that instead of making visitors go to where the information is housed (a passive approach, which is usually the VIC), deliver the information to where the visitors are via mobile or pop-up visitor information stands and digital technologies. This does not mean that traditional 'bricks and mortar' visitor centres are no longer important, but that information needs to be distributed via multiple methods (channels) to ensure that **all visitors obtain the information they need, when and where they need it**. This includes provision of information at multiple locations throughout the Shire.

Multiple Channels

This approach incorporates multiple visitor information sites at locations in Denmark, Nornalup and Peaceful Bay, including key visitor nodes (e.g national parks, attractions) and tourism precincts, and includes:

- Visitor Information Centre or hubs.
- 'Pop-up' centres with a small footprint in high visitation areas at peak periods.
- Establishing small satellite centres using touchscreens or digital kiosks that are co-located with businesses.
- Developing interpretive content, including signage and mobile apps, to introduce Denmark's story at different touchpoints.

Destination Marketing

Destination marketing and in-destination visitor services are part of a continuum of activity but are, in the main, managed separately and therefore disjointed, inconsistent and at times overlap. To be effective, a multi-channel model will require a common brand and common digital channel for the Shire.

Content is just as important as where it is distributed. Therefore, there should be a more focused and co-ordinated effort at creating, curating, consolidating and serving entertaining, interpretive and utility content. Such content should feature local stories, experiences and activities and be made available via digital and physical channels.

Partnerships

Partnerships can provide visitors with the right information, at the right time, in the right way. The benefits of which are likely to include:

- Wider visitor dispersal further
- Greater visitor yield as they spend more and, if they have a flexible travel itinerary, stay longer
- A more positive visitor experience. Something that is more likely to persuade visitors to visit again, or, at the very least, recommend the Shire of Denmark to others.

Community Engagement

A multi-channel approach also involves strong community engagement:

- Implement a community awareness strategy prior to making any changes in order to increase understanding and alleviate concern.
- Create tourism partners/local business education opportunities to increase awareness of tourism attractions and points of interest for visitors (and reinforce community pride).
- Create a local ambassador program for the Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) market so residents champion visitor points of interest.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Governance model

Assuming a multi-channel strategy is implemented, it needs an agreed Governance and Business Model that is adequately resourced.

Although the Council could conceivably be responsible for implementing a multi-channel model, it would require a significant level of investment in new staff positions and an organisational willingness to play a proactive role in destination management, including visitor servicing, marketing, and product development.

A community organisation with expertise in tourism would be better placed to take on this role. It should be resourced to develop and implement the model and play a co-ordination role between various tourism partners.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

To measure its return on investment, Council should establish clear KPIs to monitor the success of this new model. These KPIs should include:

- Development of multiple delivery channels (milestones linked to type and location over a three-year timeframe)
- Number of visitors serviced via each channel
- Industry satisfaction survey
- Visitor satisfaction survey
- Number of partnerships developed (e.g. events, joint projects)

Recommendation

GSCORE undertook extensive community, industry and stakeholder consultation in February and March 2021. Through that process, two organisations signalled their interest in providing an ongoing visitor servicing presence in the Shire of Denmark – the Denmark Chamber of Commerce (DCC) and Green Skills.

Other organisations were canvassed, including the Community Resource Centre and Denmark Arts. They expressed an interest in supporting any future model but were not interested in playing a lead role. Denmark Tourism Incorporated (DTI), which had expressed interest in 2020, has subsequently dissolved.

GSCORE facilitated three meetings between the DCC and Green Skills to identify opportunities for the two organisations to work together on a visitor servicing model. They have agreed to work together on a business proposal, with DCC as the lead organisation and Green Skills as a supporting partner.

Both organisations acknowledge that the Denmark Visitor Centre is an important community asset that should be retained for use as a tourism and community hub.



Image: May Carter

APPENDIX

Options considered in
developing
recommendations

OPTIONS - DVC BUILDING CLOSES

The following options are premised on the current Denmark Visitor Centre building closing and being re-purposed.

Table 10: Options if Denmark Visitor Centre building closes

#	Description	Council Funding	Building	Immediate Outcome	Medium-term Outcome
1	Council does not support any form of visitor servicing.	No Council funding for visitor servicing.	Building expenses may be offset by sale or lease of the asset.	Community backlash; negative press; reputational damage.	Damage to destination brand; decline in visitor numbers and/or spend.
2	Council funds a multi-channel visitor servicing model that does not include face-to-face service.	Council funding required for new multi-channel visitor servicing model.			New visitor servicing model is developed that responds to changing visitor habits and needs.
3	Council funds a face-to-face visitor service in another location in the town centre.	Council funding is required for new face-to-face visitor centre. This service could be run by an organisation, business or the Shire.		Community aspiration for a face-to-face service is met.	Council continues to fund face-to-face visitor servicing.
4	Council provides a face-to-face visitor service through the Shire Office on weekdays.	Council funding is used to refurbish the Shire foyer and employ staff to deliver a visitor service.		Community desire to see face-to-face service is met; hours of service are reduced (particularly at peak times – weekends and public holidays).	Council takes on primary responsibility for visitor servicing.

ASSESSMENT OF OPTIONS 1-4

#	Description	Assessment
1	The building is re-purposed. In this model, Council no longer provides funding support for the operation of visitor servicing. The building is re-purposed via sale or lease.	This option is unlikely to be supported by the community or industry. It will negatively impact the Shire of Denmark's reputation as a tourism destination. In the absence of a strong and viable digital visitor servicing presence, visitors to the Shire will have few avenues to obtain quality and timely information about the region. This option is counter-intuitive to the intent and purpose of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy, which is to create a welcoming destination.
2	The building is re-purposed. Council funds a multi-channel visitor servicing model.	While this option is unlikely to be supported by the community or industry, if executed well, it will result in a strong distributed (multi-channel) visitor servicing model. Such a model will require ongoing Council funding support to be successful.
3	The building is re-purposed. Council provides a face-to-face visitor service through the Shire Office on weekdays.	While this option may appease community and industry by providing a limited face-to-face visitor servicing presence, it will be more costly and resource intensive.
4	The building is re-purposed and Council funds a face-to-face visitor service in another location in the town centre.	This option would provide a more central location for visitor servicing, with a smaller physical footprint. It would require ongoing Council funding.

OPTIONS – DVC BUILDING REMAINS OPEN

The following options are premised on the current building continuing to be used as a Visitor Centre.

Table 11: Options if Denmark Visitor Centre remains open

#	Description	Council Funding	Building	Immediate Outcome	Medium-term Outcome
5	Entire building is leased to an organisation or business that provides face-to-face visitor service.	Council funding is used to support face-to-face visitor servicing. Building is provided for a peppercorn rent [Status Quo]	Building expenses remain Council responsibility.	Community aspiration for a face-to-face service is met.	Council continues to fund face-to-face visitor servicing.
6	Portion of the building is leased to an organisation or business to provide a face-to-face visitor service. The remaining portion of the building is re-purposed.	As above, but a commercial lease may be offered in a portion of the building.	Some building expenses may be offset by a partial lease.		A commercial lease in part of the building will offset Council costs.
7	Entire building is leased to an organisation or business. As a condition of the lease, the lessee must develop a multi-channel visitor servicing model that incorporates a face-to-face visitor service.	Council funding is used to support face-to-face visitor servicing. The lessee must develop a sustainable transition model as a condition of funding. The model must be in place within three (3) years.	Building expenses remain Council responsibility.	Community aspiration is met; long-term strategy is clearly communicated to moderate expectations.	Council funding for face-to-face visitor servicing has a time limit; there is a risk that an alternative model is not developed or is not viable.
8	Portion of the building is leased to an organisation or business. As a condition of the lease, the lessee must develop a multi-channel visitor servicing model that incorporates a face-to-face visitor service.	As above, but a commercial lease may be offered in a portion of the building.	Some building expenses may be offset by a partial lease.		

ASSESSMENT OF OPTIONS 5-8

#	Description	Assessment
5	Building is leased to an organisation or business that provides face-to-face visitor service.	This is the status quo option. Council continues to fund an organisation to provide visitor servicing in the Denmark Visitor Centre. This service will reach a limited number of visitors and the return on investment to Council will continue to diminish. This option is unsustainable in the medium to long-term.
6	A portion of the building is leased to an organisation or business to provide a face-to-face visitor service. The remaining portion of the building is re-purposed.	Under this option, Council continues to fund an organisation to provide visitor servicing in the Denmark Visitor Centre. This service will reach a limited number of visitors and the return on investment to Council will continue to diminish. However, the funding will be offset by a partial lease in the remaining portion of the building.
7	Building is leased to an organisation or business to provide a face-to-face visitor service as a temporary (3 year) measure.	Under this option, Council will continue to provide funding for the operation of a face-to-face visitor service, thus addressing community and industry concerns. However, as a condition of funding, the successful lessee must develop a new sustainable visitor servicing model that utilises multi-channel methods of delivery. A three-year timeframe will provide the lessee with the opportunity to test different delivery methods and identify alternative income streams. It will also allow the Shire to develop a communication strategy to inform community and industry about the new model. The medium to long-term strategy may include face-to-face visitor servicing but this will not be the only delivery method. The aim is not to reduce or replace Council funding support but to enable a more effective visitor servicing model to emerge. It is therefore anticipated that Council's funding support will continue beyond the three year timeframe.
8	A portion of the building is leased to an organisation or business to provide a face-to-face visitor service as a temporary (3 year) measure. The remaining portion of the building is re-purposed.	Like Option 7, however, only a small portion of the building is leased for visitor servicing. While the Shire may generate revenue from leasing the remaining floorspace, this option places constraints on the visitor servicing lessee's ability to develop a new model that might incorporate additional floorspace.

FINANCIAL MODELS

To develop a more effective model of visitor servicing, more rather than less investment will be required as new expertise, technologies and ways of working are required. All the options considered – with the exception of Option 1 (close the Denmark Visitor Centre and provide no Council funding for visitor servicing) – assume that Council will continue to provide funding support for the delivery of visitor servicing.

This assumption is based on the substantial body of research described in the first part of this report which concludes that the delivery of visitor servicing requires ongoing investment. There are very few examples of Visitor Centres that operate without some financial support from local government.

The alternative financial models are:

1. **Visitor Centre that operates within an attraction** (or nearby an attraction) where entrance fees, merchandising and other sales (e.g. café) provide the main revenue stream.

In the case of the Shire of Denmark, this would require a multi-million dollar investment to create an attraction with the capacity to generate sufficient revenue. This long-term strategy would require a financial contribution from Council to leverage competitive grant funding. This approach also carries high risk from an operational perspective.

For example, the Ningaloo Centre (Exmouth), which cost \$32 million to construct, was established as a not-for-profit volunteer run centre. The not-for-profit was not financially viable and handed operation of the Centre to the local government which is now responsible for operating costs.

2. **Visitor Centre is operated by a business** that generates revenue through sales (e.g. service fees, retail, etc). There are two possible models:

- **Tourism business** – for example, provision of a bookings service (e.g. commission from the sale of accommodation and tours). This model is unlikely to be successful as commissions have been undermined by online booking platforms.

For example, the Albany Visitor Centre was operated by a private business but was returned to the City of Albany due to lack of financial viability.

- **Tourism-related business** – for example, a retail business provides visitor information as an ‘add-on’ service. There is a risk with this model that visitor servicing becomes a low-order priority for the business because it fails to provide any tangible income.

This model operates at the Williams Woolshed where visitor servicing is provided via a brochure rack located within the retail area adjacent to the café.



SHIRE OF DENMARK

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STRATEGY

LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT
ACTION PLAN

21 Sept 2021 - Attachment 9.3.1c

Shire of Denmark Sustainable Tourism Strategy

Leadership & Management Action Plan

Disclaimer

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Image credit: Cover image: May Carter

Acknowledgement

GSCORE acknowledges all those who have contributed their time and expertise towards the development of the Shire of Denmark Sustainable Tourism Strategy. We recognise and value the heritage, culture and spiritual connection of Noongar people with the lands and waterways in the Shire of Denmark. We pay our respects to their cultures, and to their Elders – past, present and emerging.



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DRAFT

A man and a woman are walking on a metal walkway through a forest. The woman is in the foreground, wearing a blue shirt, and the man is behind her, wearing a green shirt. They are both looking towards the right. The walkway is made of metal grating and has a metal railing. The forest is lush with green trees and foliage.

BACKGROUND

How and why the Sustainable Tourism Strategy was developed

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STRATEGY

The *Shire of Denmark Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2021-2025* adopts an integrated, holistic approach to tourism planning that is premised on the creation of a strong partnership between Council, the community, businesses, and visitors.

The Strategy is based on the principles of sustainable tourism, that is,

Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.¹

The Strategy outlines a vision statement mapped against four tourism pillars:

- **Environment** - The Shire of Denmark's natural environment, biodiversity and ecosystems require respectful, sensitive use and protection to ensure a sustainable resource. Nature is both the backdrop and the drawcard for residents and visitors. It has the capacity to generate a powerful connection between people and place. It is also a core component of the State's tourism brand.
- **Community** - The Shire of Denmark's tourism assets contribute to the vibrancy and amenity of the region and are critical factors in the region's attractiveness as a destination to live and work.
- **Economy** - Tourism is an essential part of the local economy, supporting businesses that provide employment for a significant proportion of residents.
- **Visitors** - Cherish memories of their visit and are often motivated to return to the

Vision for Tourism

The Shire of Denmark is a leading example of a sustainable tourism destination. Tourism respects, celebrates, and enhances the Shire of Denmark's culture, history and natural environment. The region offers opportunities for inspiring, immersive experiences; positive interactions between locals and visitors; and supports creativity and enterprise. We are all enriched by being part of this unique place.

To achieve this vision, the Sustainable Tourism Strategy must be part of an ongoing cycle of planning, implementation, review, and assessment.

To assist in the implementation process, the Strategy recommends the development of action plans for each of the three planning domains:

- **Planning & Management** (strategies, policies and management practices);
- **Visitor Experience** (investment, infrastructure, products, services); and
- **Destination Marketing** (branding and promotion).

This Action Plan – Leadership & Management – is the most important. It outlines the strategies and tactics to ensure effective implementation of the Strategy.

1. United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) *Sustainable Development* [online], available at: <https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development>

1. LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

Current situation

The Shire of Denmark is home to a dynamic, vibrant community that attracts new residents and visitors each year. The shire’s history, heritage, culture, and environment are valued by the community who want to ensure that the region’s unique characteristics are enhanced and preserved.

Tourism planning and management is currently fragmented and poorly resourced. There are several organisations with responsibility for different aspects of tourism planning and management, including the Council, local and regional tourism organisations, state government agencies, and community organisations. They perform a variety of functions, including marketing, visitor servicing, product and experience development, business development, and strategic planning.

Tourism is not an isolated industry; it also has significant overlays and interdependencies with other sectors, including food and agriculture, arts and culture, and recreation. However, there are few mechanisms to integrate the insights, innovations, and aspirations of these industry sectors with tourism planning and development.

Agreed direction

Effective tourism planning and management requires an approach that balances economic growth with social, cultural, and environmental factors to achieve sustainability. To be effective, tourism planning and management must take an integrated and holistic approach that involves Council, industry, stakeholders, community, and visitors.

Local governments perform many roles and have a range of responsibilities in relation to tourism. In some circumstances, Council will act as a leader, while in others it may be a supporter or advocate to ensure that the tourism sector is sustainable and operates in harmony with the community’s values.

Action Plan

The following section contains the action plan for each of these strategies.

Desired Outcome	Strategies	Council's Role	Priority	Timeframe	Measure of success
Industry and community aspirations inform tourism planning and decision-making.	1.1 Establish a governance model that enables Council, industry, stakeholders, visitors, and the community to work collaboratively to implement the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.	Lead	Very High	Immediate	Model is established and implemented.
	1.2 Ensure alignment between the Shire’s planning and policy framework and the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.	Lead	High	2022	Strategy is integrated into Corporate Business Plan.
	1.3 Establish a monitoring framework to assess the impacts of tourism.	Partner	Medium	2022	Monitoring framework is established and reporting forms part of annual Strategy review.
	1.4 Implement the Shire of Denmark’s Sustainability Strategy and ensure that it incorporates sustainable tourism initiatives.	Lead	Medium	2023	Strong alignment between two strategies.



ACTION PLAN

Goal Statement:

Industry and community aspirations inform tourism planning and decision-making.

1.1 GOVERNANCE MODEL

1.1 Establish a governance model that enables Council, industry, stakeholders, visitors, and the community to work collaboratively to implement the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

Recommendation:

The Shire of Denmark establishes a sub-committee of Council – the Sustainable Tourism Committee – the purpose of which is to provide oversight to the implementation of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

- This sub-committee will have representation from a range of industry and community organisations with an interest in tourism.
- The sub-committee will develop an annual workplan containing initiatives based on the priorities identified in the Strategy.
- The workplan will identify which organisations are responsible for implementing each initiative, and any resourcing needs.
- The sub-committee will provide regular reports to Council and the community on the progress towards achieving key outcomes.

Rationale

The Sustainable Tourism Strategy is a Shire of Denmark planning document, and therefore Council is the entity responsible for ensuring it is achieved.

However, implementation of the Strategy must be a shared responsibility. The Shire does not have the resources, nor the technical expertise, to implement all the strategies. For this reason, a collaborative, partnership-based model, is required.

By creating a sub-committee of Council, the Shire will have greater influence on progress towards achieving the Strategy, but it will also have greater accountability. The challenge will be to balance industry and community expectations and aspirations, with what can be realistically achieved given current resources.

One alternative is to establish a community-based Advisory Group that sits outside of the Council committee structure. The Shire would have representation on the Advisory Group but would not lead nor be accountable for actions and initiatives. While this model may prove more effective in demonstrating the limits of Council's responsibility, there is a danger that it may result in uneven progress in achieving key strategic objectives. In the initial stages, at least, Council may need to chair the Advisory Group to establish an effective governance framework.

The proposed sub-committee is not a substitute for a local tourism organisation (LTO). Industry representative groups play a range of important roles, including advocacy and capacity building for their members. The tourism industry will need to be represented on the Sustainable Tourism Committee. This may be via a local tourism organisation, the Denmark Chamber of Commerce, and/or other industry bodies.

1.1 GOVERNANCE MODEL - ACTIONS

1.1 Establish a governance model that enables Council, industry, stakeholders, visitors, and the community to work collaboratively to implement the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

Action Number	Action	Responsibility	Priority	Timeframe
1.1.1	Appoint a part-time Tourism Officer (TO) within the Shire.	CEO	High	October 2021
1.1.2	Establish the Terms of Reference for the Sustainable Tourism Committee.	TO	High	October 2021
1.1.3	Establish the Sustainable Tourism Committee as a sub-committee of Council via a formal Council resolution. Nominate a Councillor as Chairperson.	Shire President	High	November 2021
1.1.5	Call for industry and community representatives; confirm state government agency representative/s; confirm ex-officio appointments; identify Shire officer to provide sub-committee secretariat support.	TO	High	November 2021
1.1.5	Hold first meeting of the Sustainable Tourism Committee; develop first year Workplan (2022); confirm roles and responsibilities; schedule annual meetings.	TO	High	December 2021

1.1 GOVERNANCE MODEL – CASE STUDIES

There are numerous examples of tourism advisory groups established as committees of Council. They are established and administered by the local government, with representation from the tourism industry and other key stakeholders.

Shoalhaven Sustainable Tourism Advisory Group (STAG)

Shoalhaven City Council (NSW) operates a service unit – Shoalhaven Tourism – within the Finance, Corporate and Community Services Group. This unit undertakes destination marketing, events development and management, and visitor servicing (including two Visitor Centres).

Council established and administers a Sustainable Tourism Advisory Group (STAG) as a committee of Council. STAG's membership includes a maximum of nine (9) industry representatives, a representative from NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service, a representative from the Shoalhaven Sports Board, two Councillors and the Mayor. Council manages the application and appointment process.

Role and Purpose:

- Inform the development, implementation and review of council priorities from the Shoalhaven Tourism Master Plan and Council's corporate plan;
- Represent the tourism industry and advise and make recommendations to Council on matters relating to tourism, the development of tourism and the future of tourism in the Shoalhaven;
- Promote the direct and in-direct value and benefits of tourism within the Shoalhaven and on a regional, state and national basis.

Kalamunda Tourism Advisory Committee (KTAC)

The City of Kalamunda Tourism Advisory Committee provides advice and makes recommendations to Council on strategic issues which will help implement the City's Tourism Development Strategy.

It is made up of 10 members, comprising two Councillors; two community members with demonstrated experience and an interest in seeing tourism grow in the City; two community members who have experience in tourism development (not necessarily in Kalamunda); one member from a recognized tourism industry board (e.g. Tourism WA, TCWA, Destination Perth); one business consultant with expertise in tourism; and two tourism operators, representing different perspectives on tourism, operating with the City.

Objectives:

- Promote the Tourism Vision to establish the City as a major tourist destination with a sustainable and vibrant future.
- Assist the City to foster strong relationships with tourism stakeholders, including peak bodies and government agencies.
- Provide advice on current initiatives, opportunities or gaps in the promotion of tourism.
- Provide advice that leverages community expectations in promoting the strengths and opportunities in Tourism.
- Provides a forum for sharing information relating to tourism opportunities within the City.
- Provide advice and give consideration of how tourism can be integrated and aligned in other key informing City Strategies and Plans.

1.2 SHIRE POLICY & PLANNING

1.2 Ensure alignment between the Shire's planning and policy framework and the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

Recommendation:

The Sustainable Tourism Strategy is integrated into the Shire's policy and planning framework, including:

- The review of the Strategic Community Plan;
- The development of the rolling four-year Corporate Business Plan; and
- The review of the Local Planning Strategy (LPS).

In practical terms, the Sustainable Tourism Strategy should assist the Shire, industry and community to identify and analyse the relative benefits and costs of tourism development opportunities.

For example, if a proposal was put forward to develop a visitor attraction which involved the degradation of the shire's environmental values, such a proposal is unlikely to fit with the Strategy's agreed framework. The benefit/cost return would be viewed as a negative – i.e. the negative environmental impact would outweigh the economic impact. The Sustainable Tourism Strategy is designed to encourage stakeholders to consider the values of both the community and the visitor in determining the decision parameters for investment and development.

Rationale

The Sustainable Tourism Strategy is an informing strategy in the local government Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework. It aims to assist Council and the local government administration to deliver the services, assets and projects required by the community.

The Strategy will help the Shire to set its priorities in relation to tourism within its resourcing capability and deliver short-medium term community and industry priorities and aspirations.

As articulated in the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework, all informing strategies have an interdependent nature. In other words, they can inform other strategies, be informed by other components, and be continually developed after other components are finalised. It is therefore important that the Sustainable Tourism Strategy is cross-referenced against other key informing strategies and plans.

Although informing strategies are managed separately to the Corporate Business Plan, it is important that the priorities and objectives are aligned with the planning process and resourcing decision-making.

The Shire of Denmark Local Planning Strategy (LPS) is currently under review to reflect the changes that have occurred since 2011, including changes to State and regional planning policies, and the finalisation of the Strategic Community Plan (Denmark 2027).

The consultation process undertaken to develop the Sustainable Tourism Strategy has identified a range of community aspirations that have bearing on the LPS review. While many of these are already captured in the Strategic Community Plan, others reflect new challenges facing the community. These should be considered as part of the LPS review.

1.2 SHIRE POLICY & PLANNING - ACTIONS

1.2 Ensure alignment between the Shire's planning and policy framework and the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

Action Number	Action	Responsibility	Priority	Timeframe
1.2.1	Review the Shire of Denmark's entire planning framework, ensuring alignment with the Shire's Sustainable Tourism Strategy.	Assets & Sustainable Development Directorate	High	July 2023
1.2.2	Review planning controls to protect high-value landscapes.	Assets & Sustainable Development Directorate	High	December 2022
1.2.3	Investigate opportunities for tourism-related businesses and visitors to contribute to ongoing costs of services and infrastructure for visitors.	Corporate & Community Services Directorate	High	July 2022
1.2.4	Investigate opportunities to maintain a sustainable number of short-stay accommodation properties (holiday homes).	Corporate & Community Services Directorate	High	September 2021
1.2.5	Facilitate/assist a working group to investigate opportunities and solutions for affordable housing for tourism workers.	Corporate & Community Services Directorate	High	Ongoing
1.2.6	Review and improve the tourism development application process to reduce red tape and streamline planning services.	Assets & Sustainable Development Directorate	Medium	December 2022
1.2.7	Undertake a public education process on the Shire's planning framework and processes and specifically, tourism planning.	Assets & Sustainable Development Directorate	Medium	July 2022
1.2.8	Review the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan [DAIP] (2018-2023), ensuring alignment with the Sustainable Tourism Strategy; it is integral that the DAIP considers the local community as well as visitors to the Shire.	Corporate & Community Services Directorate	Medium	July 2024

1.2.1 ANALYSIS

1.2.1 Review the Shire of Denmark's entire planning framework.

Shire of Denmark Planning Framework

Since the endorsement of the Shire of Denmark's Town Planning Scheme No. 3 (TPS3) in 1994 and the Local Planning Strategy (LPS) in 2011, there have been a significant number of strategy and policy changes at a State and local level. To ensure best-practice principles, improved processes and informed decision-making, it is important that the local planning framework reflects the community sentiment and is aligned with the State and local policy framework.

Since the endorsement of the LPS and TPS3, the following significant State and local planning policies have been endorsed and require consideration through a review of the Shire of Denmark's entire planning framework:

State:

- The *Planning and Development Act 2005* and the *Planning Regulation Amendment Regulations 2020*, introducing significant amendments to the *Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015*.
- The State Bushfire Framework Review 2019, which included a new State Planning Policy 3.7 Planning in Bushfire Prone Areas (SPP 3.7) and the accompanying guidelines which provide information to interpret the policy, Guidelines for Planning in Bushfire Prone Areas.

Local:

- In December 2017, the Shire of Denmark endorsed the Strategic Community Plan, Denmark 2027.
- In March 2021, the Shire of Denmark endorsed the Sustainability Strategy 2021-2031.

Local Planning Framework Review

The review of the Shire's LPS and TPS3 should consider:

- Tourism precincts and tourism sites.
- Tourism land use permissibility.
- Development requirements for tourism land uses and specific sites.
- Short-stay accommodation permissibility and requirements with regard to the recommendations of the 2019 Parliamentary Inquiry, *Levelling the Playing Field - Managing the impact of the rapid increase of Short-Term Rentals in Western Australia*.
- Incentives to encourage and facilitate sustainable tourism development that meets the objectives of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.
- Consider and apply *State Planning Policy – Planning in Bushfire Prone Areas*, review broad Bushfire Hazard Level assessment and consider bushfire protection criteria. Tourism land uses are considered a 'vulnerable' land uses as they involve people who are unaware of their surroundings and who may require assistance or direction in the event of a bushfire.

1.2.1 ANALYSIS & CASE STUDY

1.2.1 Review the Shire of Denmark's entire planning framework.

Identification of 'Tourism Precincts'

One mechanism for ensuring that the guidelines principles and vision contained in the Sustainable Tourism Strategy are integrated into the Local Planning Strategy is through the identification of "tourism precincts". These are areas with a demonstrated high-level of existing or potential attributes that contribute towards the development of viable and sustainable tourism.

The designation of a Tourism Precinct in the Draft LPS may be accompanied by objectives, principles and planning directions to support the desired outcomes in the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

Examples of potential tourism precincts are:

- Denmark Town Centre
- Denmark River Mouth
- Mt Shadforth
- Ocean Beach
- William Bay
- Parry Beach
- Peaceful Bay
- Valley of the Giants/ Nornalup

Next Generation Tourism Planning

Next Generation Tourism Planning: A guideline for planners in Queensland provides a best-practice approach to local government tourism planning. It recognizes that tourism development is not 'one size fits all' and nor is it a 'free for all' where any type of tourism development can go anywhere. A fundamental planning principle is that tourism development must be sustainable and appropriate to the local context and character of a place and designed and operated in a way that does not compromise the values or qualities underpinning the attractiveness of a place for tourism purposes.

Tourism precincts identify specific tourism accommodation sites, complementary supporting land uses and tourism infrastructure (which can be planned for in an integrated manner). Areas flagged as suitable for ecotourism or key supporting facilities for drive tourism could be identified in this way. They can identify opportunities for the clustering of activities to take advantage of synergies between various uses.

For example, a precinct in the rural zone could assist in streamlining the development of nature-based tourism, including ecotourism activities and rural tourism. Precincts could also be useful to identify suitable locations for specific types of accommodation or other large-scale developments.

1.2.2 ANALYSIS & CASE STUDY

1.2.2 Review planning controls to protect high-value landscapes.

Tourism Impacts on Landscapes and Local Character

A significant amount of the community and industry feedback received in developing the Sustainable Tourism Strategy related to concerns about:

- Increased impacts of tourism on the local landscapes and character.
- Losing what makes the Shire of Denmark special.
- Retention of natural environment, rural atmosphere and coastal wilderness.
- Becoming the next Margaret River or Byron Bay.
- Overdevelopment.
- Not having sufficient infrastructure and services to accommodate the number of visitors.

Consultation participants were particularly concerned with the impact of development on significant landscape areas. Without sustainable tourism development and management enshrined through planning controls, there is the potential for the tourism industry to negatively affect the charm that brought visitors and tourists to the Shire of Denmark in the first place.

City of Busselton - Caves Road Visual Management

In 1995, the City of Busselton commissioned a Caves Road Visual Management Study to be undertaken on the City's behalf by Bill James Landscape Architect. The study was prepared in recognition that Caves Road holds significant value to tourists and community alike and is also under considerable development pressure. The study was designed to assist and provide guidance on the future planning and management of the Caves Road Viewshed.

In turn, the Caves Road Visual Management Study informed the development of Local Planning Policy No. 4.6 Caves Road Visual Management (LPP4.6). LPP4.6 provides guidance for development along Caves Road within the Shire of Busselton to maintain, enhance and protect the natural and rural landscape, cultural and tourist values of Caves Road and its environs. Some of the provisions within LPP4.6 include:

- Development to be set back a minimum of 100m from the Caves Road Reserve.
- Development shall have no impact on view corridors, major landscape elements or skyline.
- All buildings shall generally be below the crown/canopy height of remnant vegetation in the immediate vicinity.
- All development shall adopt low impact design, reflect local values and be constructed of materials compatible with the natural characteristics and traditional settlement patterns of the area.
- Development shall be where possible in clusters of separate, smaller buildings, rather than in singular, bulkier forms.
- All required landscaping shall be of species indigenous to the area.

1.2.3 ANALYSIS & CASE STUDIES

1.2.3 Investigate opportunities for tourism-related businesses and visitors to contribute to ongoing costs of services and infrastructure for visitors.

Financial burden of tourism destinations

Increased visitor numbers to a destination increases the pressure placed on local infrastructure and services. The ongoing investment required is generally higher at major tourism destinations. Given the direct impact that visitors have on a destination's infrastructure and services, some destinations have introduced methods to ensure that tourism-related businesses and visitors contribute to the ongoing costs related to tourism infrastructure and services.

Rates

The Shire of Denmark has only four differential rating categories in the 2020/2021 financial year:

Gross Rental Valuations (GRV)

1. Non-Rural Improved
2. Holiday Purposes
3. Vacant

Unimproved Valuations (UV)

4. Rural

However, this system does not allow flexibility to apply split or spot ratings for rural properties that utilised for multiple purposes (for example tourism accommodation or tourism attractions). The Shire may wish to investigate the feasibility of split or spot ratings for rural properties. Alternative methods, include levies and parking fees (see case studies).

Paid Parking – Byron Shire Council

In December 2015, the Byron Shire Council introduced paid parking to derive revenue from visitors to the area and facilitate an expanded infrastructure renewal program in Byron Bay and across the shire. Over the four financial years since the program's inception, paid parking has generated \$8,962,600 (after costs of operating the scheme have been paid). In February 2018, Council resolved that:

- 50% of the income (after costs) is to be spent on projects in Byron Bay.
- 50% of the income (after costs) is to be used to equitably fund shire-wide projects, to address impacts on infrastructure from tourism.

Council often uses the income from paid parking to try to access more funding by matching funding through grant programs (commonly 50% of the project cost). Residents receive a free permit to park on their street and can pay for an annual resident's permit to park anywhere in the Shire for \$55.

Tourism Levy

In 2009, the Sunshine Coast Council introduced a tourism levy, to assist with economic development, tourism infrastructure, major events of economic significance, research and destination marketing. A tourism levy was considered a preferable model to a bed tax, as the tourism levy would apply to all short-term accommodation, commercial and industrial property rather than just residential properties. The amount each business pays will be calculated according to the property's use, its location and unimproved capital value (minimum \$50 per year).

1.2.4 ANALYSIS

1.2.4 Investigate opportunities to maintain a sustainable number of short-stay accommodation properties (holiday homes).

The rise of holiday homes

In 2012, Airbnb launched in Australia paving the way for a new era of short-stay accommodation by providing an easy online booking portal. Since then, numerous other platforms have joined Airbnb, and short stay accommodation listings have skyrocketed, throughout Australia.

In the Shire of Denmark, registered holiday homes have almost doubled over the last 10 years; increasing from 61 registered holiday homes in 2010, to 114 in 2020. Currently, under Local Planning Policy 19.5 Holiday Homes, owners are required to submit an Application for Development Approval (Change of Use). Aside from commercial and industrial zoned land, holiday accommodation is permitted anywhere in the Shire, subject to Council approval.

Holiday Homes receive frequent criticism regarding the impact on neighbourhood amenity. With a number of the holiday homes being unhosted (i.e. no one lives permanently onsite), this can create a frequent turnover of guests, a reduced relationship between neighbours and a perceived reduction in safety and security.

There has also been criticism of the impact that the increase in holiday homes has had on available and affordable long-term accommodation in the Shire of Denmark. With currently only one rental listed on REIWA.com at \$400 per week in the Shire of Denmark (May 2021), there are currently very few long-term rental options for residents.

Given the relatively low number of registered holiday homes to total unoccupied residences (n=900 in 2016 Census) in the Shire, holiday homes are only one part of a complex housing challenge.

State parliamentary inquiry

In 2019, the State Parliament conducted an inquiry into short-stay accommodation called *Levelling the Playing Field - Managing the impact of the rapid increase of Short-Term Rentals in Western Australia*, aimed at introducing better management of the industry at a community level.

The inquiry report includes 10 recommendations. These recommendations should be reviewed by the Shire and implemented where appropriate.

1.2.4 ANALYSIS & CASE STUDIES

1.2.4 Investigate opportunities to maintain a sustainable number of short-stay accommodation properties (holiday homes).

Review tourism land uses permissibility

A review of the planning framework (Recommendation 1.2.1) should consider the appropriateness of all land uses, through the lens of sustainable tourism. This will assist in addressing community concerns regarding short-stay accommodation, and ensure that the Shire's planning framework enables the number of holiday homes to be maintained at a sustainable level.

The case studies provide examples of ways that this issue has been addressed in other jurisdictions.

Bed Tax

In 2017, the Auckland Council introduced a 'bed tax'; a new initiative aimed at funding half of the city's tourism promotion costs and holding major events. The tax applies to hotels, motels, serviced apartments and holiday homes, if they're rented for more than 28 nights per year. The bed tax rating raises \$14.5 million annually. The rating initiative has been met with some backlash, with an unsuccessful High Court challenge by four major hotel owners.

Bed taxes are contentious and are not recommended for the Shire of Denmark. This example is included here as one method of moderating accommodation supply, including holiday homes.

Prescribed locations for holiday homes

The City of Bunbury, via Local Planning Policy 2.9 (LPP2.9), only permits short-stay accommodation to be located in "strategic tourism locations". The strategic tourism locations are defined in a map within LPP2.9 and identify locations such as residential areas in close proximity to the coastline and CBD.

Should the Shire of Denmark wish to consider a similar position, historic short-stay accommodation approvals would be carried over as non-conforming uses. An education process could be delivered to home-owners of the proposed changes, enabling a grace period for existing home-owners.

1.2.5 ANALYSIS & CASE STUDIES

1.2.5 Facilitate/assist a working group to investigate opportunities and solutions for affordable housing for tourism workers.

Lack of Affordable and Long-Term Housing for Tourism Workers

During the community consultation for the Sustainable Tourism Strategy, there was strong feedback around the lack of available and affordable long-term housing options for locals and transient tourism workers.

Some of the feedback received from the community in regard to this matter:

- There is a shortage of long-term rentals for the local community and workforce and some of the community attribute this to the rise in short-stay accommodation.
- Lack of affordable housing is a significant barrier to staff recruitment, leading some tourism businesses to reduce their hours of operation or reduce services offered.
- New short-stay accommodation development should be favoured in place of converting permanent accommodation to short-stay accommodation.

Shire of Esperance – Blue Waters Lodge

The Shire of Esperance, with assistance from the Goldfields Esperance Development Commission, has converted the Blue Waters Lodge to a short-term workers accommodation facility. Previously a functioning backpackers lodge, the Blue Waters Lodge has been leased by the Shire of Esperance to provide a facility to ensure that businesses are able to continue to recruit employees as they are needed at present.

This facility is being made available due to both the shortage in rental properties currently being experienced within the Shire of Esperance and the many local businesses that have advised they are actively needing additional employees. It is intended to meet the needs of those people that may be working in town for a relatively short period of time and those that require a place to reside while waiting to access a permanent residential property (either through rental or purchase) in town. Rooms are available from \$150 per week.

Shire of Augusta-Margaret River

At the Shire of AMR's Council Meeting on 11 November 2020, Council adopted a number of urgent incentives to deal with the shortage of worker's accommodation and expected exacerbation of this issue over the Summer months. Some of the incentives and positions adopted were to promote the use of latent capacity in existing dwellings for seasonal workers accommodation, an intent to progress planning applications for rural worker accommodation as a priority and permitting caravan parks/nature-based camping as temporary seasonal workers accommodation.

1.2.6 ANALYSIS & CASE STUDIES

1.2.6 Review and improve the tourism development application process to reduce red tape and streamline planning services.

Some business owners expressed concerns about 'red tape' and confusing or complicated planning processes. Issues raised included:

- Lack of understanding of the planning process, including which Shire Officer to speak to and/or which forms to complete at different stages of the development application process
- The Shire imposes unnecessary or burdensome processes on business owners ('red tape')
- Shire Officers are not open to new ideas or business innovations and apply rigid interpretations of planning policies/guidelines that stifle entrepreneurialism
- Signage policies are outdated and inhibit rather than support businesses
- Waste management fees in rural and remote areas do not take into account seasonal fluctuations in visitor numbers (particularly for accommodation properties)

Concierge

A concierge service can provide a helpful service within a local government administration building to assist visitors. In 2018, the City of Bunbury established a concierge service in the customer service area of the administration building. The role of the concierge service is to help guide community and business to the right staff within the City of Bunbury, relieving the pressure from the customer services team who often have to provide assistance to finance, rangers, rates, planning and building. The concierge can provide aid to ensure people are speaking to the right staff, but also provide specialist knowledge on local government processes.

Economic Development and Business Engagement

The City of Cockburn employs a Business Engagement Officer, whose central role is to facilitate opportunities for business and ensure 'best practice' in engaging with the small business community. The Business Engagement Officer engages with Cockburn's businesses and new start-ups, provides information and advice, guides businesses through City processes and advocates to the City on their behalf. The Business Engagement Officer advocates for innovation, diversity, sustainability and growth for local business.

Review planning exemptions

The City of Melville has reviewed its planning system to eliminate the need for development applications (DAs) for many types of 'routine' processes, including for advertising and signage.

1.2.7 ANALYSIS & CASE STUDY

1.2.7 Undertake a public education process on the Shire’s planning framework and processes and specifically, tourism planning.

One of the common themes to emerge from the community consultation process was a lack of understanding of local planning policies and processes, including the extent of Council’s discretionary role in approving different types of tourism development applications.

A public education campaign for residents would assist in improving understanding of tourism planning policies and processes. Such a campaign should include discussion of opportunities for the community to provide feedback on development applications.

The “Your Denmark” website could be utilised for this purpose, providing video and infographic content that helps to explain the Shire’s planning framework.

Duty Planner

A Duty Planner is a planning officer that is specifically assigned during the day to be on duty to answer calls and meet at the front counter with the public and industry. The Duty Planner can provide general and specific information and guidance on the planning process, policies, development application processes and specific property requirements and issues.

Video Tools

Bayside City Council (Victoria) has developed a series of videos that explain the role of landowners, applicants, Council and the community in the planning process.

The World Café

The World Café methodology is a simple, effective, and flexible format for hosting group dialogue. It provides a format where everyone gets a chance to speak as it is a structured conversational process for knowledge sharing in which groups of people discuss a topic at several small tables like those in a café. It can also be applied in a virtual setting with breakout rooms for conversational rounds. Discussion is held in multiple rounds of 20-30 minutes, and each round is initiated with a specific question relation to the overall purpose of the event.

1.2.8 ANALYSIS AND CASE STUDY

1.2.8 Review the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan [DAIP] (2018-2023), ensuring alignment with the Sustainable Tourism Strategy; it is integral that the DAIP considers the local community as well as visitors to the Shire.

Accessible tourism is the ongoing endeavour to ensure tourist destinations, products and services are accessible to all people, regardless of their physical limitations, disabilities or age.

People with access requirements include those with young children in prams, seniors with mobility requirements and people with permanent or temporary disabilities. Their access requirements may include: Physical/mobility; Hearing; Vision; Cognitive.¹

- Australia's population is ageing and there is a growing market for travellers with accessibility needs.
- Almost one in five people has a disability of which nearly 90 percent take a holiday each year.
- People with a disability account for some 8.2 million overnight trips and spend \$8 billion or 11 percent of Australia's overall tourism expenditure.²

1. Tourism Australia (2021) "Accessible Tourism", available at: <https://www.tourism.australia.com/en/events-and-tools/industry-resources/building-your-tourism-business/accessible-tourism.html>
2. Inclusive Tourism, available at: <https://inclusivetourism.com.au/>

Changing Places Toilets

Standard accessible toilets do not meet the needs of all people with a disability; people with profound and multiple learning disabilities, as well as spinal injuries, spina bifida, MND, MS or an acquired brain injury, often need extra facilities to allow them to use the toilets comfortably.

Changing Places toilets are different to standard accessible toilets in that they have extra features and more space to meet these needs. Each Changing Places toilet provides:

- a height adjustable adult-sized changing bench
- a tracking hoist system
- enough space
- safe and clean environment

<https://changingplaces.org.au> provides a GIS system which shows where Changing Places toilets are located. Currently, there are only two Changing Places toilets within the entire Great Southern Region; one in Albany and one in Katanning.

Something as seemingly mundane as toilet facilities can have significant impacts on whether people with a disability choose to travel to a destination. It is important that the LGAs consider visitors as well as the local community in disability access and inclusion planning.

1.3 MONITORING FRAMEWORK

1.3 Establish a monitoring framework to assess the impacts of tourism.

Recommendation:

The Sustainable Tourism Committee develops a monitoring framework to measure the positive and negative impacts of tourism on the Shire of Denmark.

- This monitoring framework will measure a range of indicators across the four pillars of sustainable tourism (Environment, Community, Economy and Visitors).
- Responsibility for collecting and collating data for each of these indicators is to be shared by a range of community organisations.
- An annual Sustainable Tourism scorecard will be developed that summarises progress against each of these indicators.

Rationale

Monitoring is critical to measuring the success of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy. Without a monitoring framework it will be difficult to know whether the Strategy is achieving the four objectives outlined in the Strategic Vision:

- **Environment** – Manage the natural environment and mitigate the environmental impact of visitation.
- **Community** – Value and protect the Shire Denmark’s culture and heritage and enhance liveability.
- **Economy** – Improve the potential for tourism to contribute to the Shire’s economy and long-term economic sustainability by stimulating ongoing investment that is consistent with community and industry aspirations.
- **Visitors** – Improve the experience and satisfaction of visitors to the region by developing the destination’s core attributes and attractions and providing exceptional visitor servicing.

Many tourism stakeholders – Council, businesses, industry bodies, State government agencies, and community organisations – already collect information that can inform the monitoring process. New initiatives such as Citizen Science projects could assist in filling any gaps.

The monitoring framework will describe what needs to be measured, how it will be measured (indicators), the unit of measurement, the method of calculation, and the source of information. It will also identify what data already exists and who will be responsible for collecting and collating it.

A scorecard (or dashboard) will provide a snapshot of whether the community’s aspirations for sustainable tourism are being met.

1.3 MONITORING FRAMEWORK- ACTIONS

1.3 Establish a monitoring framework to assess the impacts of tourism.

Action Number	Action	Responsibility	Priority	Timeframe
1.3.1	Investigate the opportunity to become certified under Ecotourism Australia’s Eco-Destination accreditation program.	Sustainable Tourism Committee (STC)	Medium	April 2022
1.3.2	Develop a project brief to develop a Sustainable Tourism Monitoring Framework.	STC	Medium	June 2022
1.3.3	Secure funding to develop the Sustainable Tourism Monitoring Framework.	STC	Medium	December 2022
1.3.4	Collect and collate baseline data	STC	Medium	June 2023
1.3.5	Collect and collate first Sustainable Tourism scorecard	STC	Medium	December 2023

Explanation

1.3.2 – Members of the STC may have the expertise and time to develop a monitoring framework. However, it may be more expedient to contract an expert consultant to develop the framework for the Committee. While the Ecotourism accreditation program provides the broad structure for the Monitoring Framework, a local-level analysis of data sets, gaps, and roles and responsibilities will still be required.

1.3.3 – While the Shire may be a funding partner, additional funds will need to be secured to engage an expert consultant.

1.3 ACCREDITATION FRAMEWORK - EXAMPLE

1.3.1 Investigate the opportunity to become certified under Ecotourism Australia's Eco-Destination accreditation program.

Ecotourism Australia Eco-Destination Accreditation Program



Australian-developed program that combines Ecotourism Australia's ecotourism criteria with the Green Destinations Standard for sustainable tourism.

The Green Destinations Standard is accredited by the peak international sustainable tourism certification body, the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC). The Standard covers six themes:

- **Destination Management** (Commitment and Organisation, Planning and Development, Monitoring and Reporting, Legal and Ethical Compliance)
- **Nature and Scenery** (Nature and Conservation, Nature Experience, Landscape and Scenery)
- **Environment and Climate** (Land Use and Pollution, Water Management, Sustainable Mobility, Waste and Recycling, Energy and Climate Change, and Climate Change Adaptation)
- **Culture and Tradition** (Cultural Heritage, and People and Tradition)
- **Social Wellbeing** (Human Respect, Community Participation, Local Economy, Social Impact Management, and Health and Safety)
- **Business and Hospitality** (Business Involvement, Information and Marketing, and Hospitality and Satisfaction)

The Eco-Destination program is a framework for the region to:

- Build a business environment in which ecotourism thrives.
- Ensure internal and external destination management practices are in line with international best practice sustainability standards.
- Encourage high yield visitation by offering visitors an easy way of determining where genuine and authentic ecotourism experiences are found.
- Join an established global network of like-minded destinations striving for ecotourism excellence and learn from each other's best practice examples of sustainable tourism management.
- Demonstrate that their sustainable and ecotourism credentials have been verified by a third-party independent auditor.

The program allows for progression through three logical levels of certification: nature tourism destination, ecotourism destination, advanced ecotourism destination.

The Port Douglas and Daintree area is the first destination to achieve ecotourism destination certification. Seventeen other destinations are currently undergoing the certification process.

More information is available at: <https://www.ecotourism.org.au/our-certification-programs/eco-destination-certification/>

1.3 MONITORING FRAMEWORK - EXAMPLES

1.3.2 Develop a project brief to develop a Sustainable Tourism Monitoring Framework.

Tourism Optimisation Management Model (TOMM)

Kangaroo Island

The Tourism Optimisation Management Model (TOMM) was developed to monitor the effect of tourism on Kangaroo Island from a variety of perspectives in the interests of both residents and visitors.

The model is a community-based initiative responsible for monitoring and managing the long-term sustainability of tourism on the Island. The initiative is overseen by a Management Committee with support and representatives from the community, industry and Government agencies.

At the core of TOMM is a practical set of indicators that monitor tourism on Kangaroo Island. These indicators measure changes in the economic, environmental, socio-cultural and experiential environments.

It is administered by the Kangaroo Island Tourism Alliance (a tourism peak body). TOMM was developed in 1997/98 and has undergone several changes over time.

More information is available at:

<https://www.tourkangarooisland.com.au/tourism-optimisation-management>

Visitor Survey

TOMM includes a Visitor Exit Survey. The survey has been administered since 2002. The specific objectives of the Visitor Exit Survey are to assess:

Profiles of origin and seasonality of visitors to the island; Travel behaviour and experiences on the island; Reasons for visiting Kangaroo Island; Expectations and important factors influencing the decision to visit Kangaroo Island; Valued aspects and visitor satisfaction with those aspects; Overall satisfaction with Kangaroo Island experience; Transportation; Expenditure on Kangaroo Island; Awareness of Kangaroo Island's quarantine regulations; and Demographic profile of visitors.

Residents Survey

TOMM also includes an annual survey of residents (aged 16 years and over) to assess:

Reasons for choosing to live on Kangaroo Island; Nature and number of trips from Kangaroo Island each year; Potential reasons for leaving Kangaroo Island; Degree to which residents feel they can influence tourism related decisions and how it influences their quality of life; Satisfaction with organisations and agencies on Kangaroo Island; Awareness and perceptions towards a number of specific stakeholder issues, responsibilities and projects; Measurement of local employment derived from tourism; and TOMM awareness and perceived purpose.

1.3 MONITORING FRAMEWORK - EXAMPLES

1.3.2 Develop a project brief to develop a Sustainable Tourism Monitoring Framework.

Shoalhaven 360

Shoalhaven 360 is a sustainable tourism model designed for the Shoalhaven region. It has three parts:

1. Simple statements of what healthy tourism in Shoalhaven should be based on (referred to as optimal conditions)
2. A way to measure how close reality is to the desired optimal conditions (monitoring)
3. What could be done if reality is outside the desired situation (adaptive management)

Shoalhaven 360 operates on a web platform, so that all stakeholders can view it and understand how tourism in Shoalhaven is performing against the optimal conditions. It contains reports on optimal conditions against four pillars:

- Visitor experience
- Economy
- Environment
- Community

More information is available at: <http://shoalhaven360.com/>

Australia's South West Tourism Observatory

The ASW Tourism Observatory is part of the UNTWO International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO). It is the first tourism observatory in Australia and is hosted by the Tourism Research Cluster of Curtin University. It is currently monitoring the Margaret River Region only.

INSTO Observatories are required to monitor eleven core issue areas:

- Tourism seasonality
- Employment
- Destination Economic Benefits
- Governance
- Local Satisfaction
- Energy Management
- Water Management
- Waste Water Management
- Solid Waste Management
- Accessibility
- Climate Action

More information is available at: <http://insto.unwto.org/observatories/southwest-australia/>

1.4 SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

1.4 Implement the Shire of Denmark's Sustainability Strategy and ensure that it incorporates sustainable tourism initiatives.

Recommendation:

The Shire reviews the Sustainability Strategy Action Plan and identifies opportunities for closer alignment and/or cross-referencing of actions and initiatives between the two documents.

Rationale

Council has recently adopted the Shire of Denmark *Sustainability Strategy 2021-2031*. The Sustainability Strategy is intended as a guide for sustainable management of internal Shire operations, as well as a broader guide for facilitating sustainable development initiatives within the community.

While the Sustainability Strategy refers to the need for a community-centred Tourism Strategy, the accompanying action plan provides no other direct references to tourism. To achieve the vision outlined in this Sustainable Tourism Strategy, there must be closer alignment between the two strategies.

Public Submissions and Response

Shire of Denmark Sustainable Tourism Strategy

The draft Sustainable Tourism Strategy Report was advertised for public comment from Wednesday 23 June 2021 until Friday 6 August 2021 (6 weeks). In addition to this, the supporting Visitor Servicing Report and Visitor Servicing Fact Sheet were also released for public comment.

The following analysis has been provided from the Your Denmark page:

- 1.5k page views
- 169 downloads of the Draft Sustainable Tourism Strategy
- 27 downloads of the Visitor Servicing Fact Sheet
- 15 downloads of the Visitor Servicing Report

Fourteen (14) submissions were received.

- Six (6) via the Your Denmark website
- Two (2) via email to Outdoors Great Southern
- Six (6) via email to Shire officers

Summary of submissions

#	Submission Summary
1	Provides suggestions for tourism products and services.
2	Supports the strategy with amendments.
3	Supports the strategy.
4	Supports the strategy.
5	Comment on Visitor Centre.
6	Provides suggestions for tourism products and events.
7	Supports the strategy but disappointed there is no implementation plan.
8	Supports the strategy.
9	Supports the strategy.
10	Provides suggestions for tourism products and events.
11	Supports the recommendations on visitor servicing.
12	Comment on Visitor Centre.
13	Supports the strategy.
14	Unclear if strategy is supported; raises questions about methodology and conclusions reached.

21 Sept 2021 - Attachment 9.3.1d

Based on the feedback provided during the public consultation period, and in consultation with the Shire of Denmark Council, the following table provides the recommended modifications.

Proposed Modifications

Page	Tracked Change	Justification
<i>Sustainable Tourism Strategy Report</i>		
4	<p>Modify the Executive Summary as follows:</p> <p>“...The Sustainable Tourism Strategy recognises that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Shire’s natural environment, biodiversity and ecosystems require respectful, sensitive use and protection to ensure a sustainable resource. Nature is both the backdrop and the drawcard for residents and visitors. It has the capacity to generate a powerful connection between people and place. It is also a core component of the State’s tourism brand. • Tourism is an essential part of the local economy, supporting businesses that provide employment for a significant proportion of residents. • The Shire’s tourism assets contribute to the vibrancy and amenity of the region and are critical factors in the region’s attractiveness as a destination to live and work. • <u>The socio-cultural heritage and values of the Denmark community are respected and promoted.</u> • Visitors cherish memories of their visit and are often motivated to return to the region for holidays and sometimes to live. <p>In other words, sustainable tourism delivers benefits to residents, businesses, and visitors.”</p>	<p>Submission #2 recognises that one Denmark’s tourism asset is the authenticity, culture, values and heritage of the local community and this should be captured in the Executive Summary.</p>
12	<p>Move Strategy 2.1 under the “Environmental Stewardship” pillar to 1.4 under the “Leadership and Management” pillar.</p> <p><i>“2.1 Implement the Shire of Denmark’s Sustainability Strategy and ensure that it incorporates sustainable tourism initiatives.”</i></p>	<p>As raised by Submission #2, the Shire of Denmark’s Sustainability Strategy defines sustainability as:</p> <p><i>“...the integration of environmental health, social equity and economic vitality in order to create thriving, healthy, diverse and resilient communities...”</i></p> <p>Recognising that the definition of sustainability is broader than just the environmental pillar, it is recommended that Strategy 2.1 be moved to the “Leadership and Management” pillar.</p>

12	<p>Add new Strategy 2.1 under the “Environmental Stewardship” pillar as follows:</p> <p><i>“2.1 Establish partnerships with community organisations to develop a public education program that encourages residents and visitors to manage local resources sustainably”</i></p> <p>Council’s role: Partner.</p>	<p>As raised by Submission #2, the Shire of Denmark’s Sustainability Strategy raise sustainable resource-use as an important principle of sustainability, requiring community commitment and advocacy.</p> <p>It is recommended that proposed new strategy 2.1 be added to address this and ensure consistency between the Sustainability Strategy and the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.</p>
<i>Visitor Servicing Report</i>		
40	<p>Modify the text as follows:</p> <p><i>“Widely-held conventional view about how visitor servicing is best delivered (i.e. a physical Visitor Centre is an essential means of welcoming visitors).”</i></p>	<p>Submission 14, item 27 raised concern with the wording of “perceived wisdom”; it is therefore recommended that the text be modified to “widely-held conventional view”.</p>
44	<p>Insert into sentence at end of first paragraph:</p> <p><i>“This includes provision of information at multiple locations throughout the Shire.”</i></p> <p>And edit first line under “Multiple Channels”</p> <p><i>“This approach incorporates multiple visitor information sites at locations in Denmark, Nornalup, Peaceful Bay, including key visitor nodes (e.g national parks, attractions) and tourism precincts”</i></p>	<p>Submission 14, item 24 raised concern with where Nornalup and Peaceful Bay fit in the multi-channel model.</p>

Summary Table – Submissions and Consultant’s Response

#	Method	Submission	Response
1	Submission via Your Denmark	<p>Engage an experienced Architect to develop a much more empathetic Channel to Ocean Precinct Plan. Tourist do not come to Denmark to see concrete BBQ plinths, bitumen car parks and concrete curbing.</p> <p>Historical society needs to be much more valued and supported ie financially, by the Shire and could be a great tourism drawcard for the town.</p> <p>I understand those who live in the small pockets of residential areas where there are some private accommodation providers, may feel disconnected from their neighbours. However single private accommodation providers fill a niche in the tourism market. Tourist like to live in "family homes" and often traditional providers such as the motel and hotel can not provide for their groups numbers. The Shire needs to step up and register ALL holiday homes that advertise on accommodation providers, not just the 120 homes that have already payed their registration. The increased rates from ALL of these properties could be used to assist with tourism promotion/infrastructure.</p> <p>"dog friendly tourism" needs to be accommodated. Pet ownership since the start of Covid has increased dramatically and more tourist are traveling with their pets. The Shire has no information on this section of tourism and has no future projections on how to provide for this market. If anything the Shires dog policy is detrimental to this potentially lucrative market as they have recently decreased exercise areas and restricted even more areas where dogs can be on leash.</p> <p>Need a Visitors Centre that provides face to face contact.</p>	<p>The writer makes several suggestions for improvements to tourism products and services and supports the continuation of the Visitor Centre. <i>Comments noted.</i></p>

2	Submission via Your Denmark	<p>In this response, to the call for comment on the Sustainable Tourism Strategy, I am focusing on Sustaining Community, a principal I find undersold in this document, which I find baffling. [near the end there is also a case made for Sustaining Community Assets / Infrastructure]</p> <p>The Shire's Sustainability Strategy (SSS) refers to the need for a 'community-centred' Tourism Strategy. And most of the concerns I hear about the need for sustainable tourism stem from the social/cultural impacts.</p> <p>Under the heading Planning Framework on page 9 the Sustainable Tourism Strategy (STS) does indeed state:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>'Sustainable tourism should:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.'</i> <p>[As an aside, I would say that while respecting 'traditional values' is community-affirming, in Denmark just as importantly is respecting its 'progressive' values - creative expression, alternate lifestyles, sustainable practices, non-violence, activism in ecology, participatory democracy, social justice - from which arises the communities contribution to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.]</p> <p>Sustaining Community is then followed up in the STS under the heading Strategic Vision on page 10 with the 'Pillar' Community, and it's goal - Value and protect Denmark's culture and heritage and enhance liveability.</p> <p>All good.</p> <p>But...</p> <p>While there is, under the heading STS Executive Summary on page 3, the UNWTO definition:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>...has an equal focus on the community... 'Tourism that takes full account of ... social ... addressing the needs of ... host communities'...</i></p>	<p>The writer would like to see reference to Community (which is identified as a key Pillar in the Strategy, pp.9-10) given greater prominence in the Executive Summary. <i>This is a sound recommendation and will be adopted.</i></p> <p>The writer suggests inclusion of a ninth priority area: "Sustaining Community" (also referred to as "Community Stewardship"). The writer defines this as: "Denmark's socio-cultural authenticity, built and living cultural heritage, both traditional and progressive values, and inter-cultural tolerance are conserved and enhanced for current and future generations". <i>Principles of 'Sustaining Community' are integrated across multiple priority areas throughout the strategy, therefore a ninth priority area is not required.</i></p> <p>The writer recommends the inclusion of a new initiative under this proposed "Sustaining Community" priority area: "Establish partnerships with community organisations to develop a public education program that encourages residents and visitors to appreciate and enhance its diverse social /cultural richness." <i>Strategy 4.2 [support and delivery of events] and Strategy 7.1 [development of an interpretation plan] provide strategies for promoting respect for the socio-cultural authenticity, heritage, and values of the local community.</i></p>
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	<p>... in the next paragraph - probably the crux of the summary, reference to community-based tourism is lost:</p> <p><i>'The Sustainable Tourism Strategy recognises that:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Shire's natural environment, (a lengthy clause)</i> • <i>Tourism is an essential part of the local economy,</i> • <i>The Shire's tourism ... vibrancy and amenity ... and ... attractiveness</i> • <i>Visitors cherish memories ...</i> <p>?????</p> <p>[Attractiveness does not equal sustaining a community - it can be argued that Las Vegas is 'attractive'.]</p> <p>Yes, the community is given value on paged 9 and 10, but summaries at the start of publications are impactful and often the only part of the document people read.</p> <p>And in the same vein, most concerning... Under the heading Planning Framework on page 9 the STS states:</p> <p><i>'This Strategy identifies eight priority areas, based on a detailed analysis of Denmark's current tourism offering, planning environment, and industry and community feedback. These priority areas are:</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Leadership & Management; Environmental Stewardship; Access & Dispersal; Product & Experience Development; Capacity & Capability Building; Visitor Servicing; Placemaking; and Marketing & Promotion.'</i></p> <p>There is nothing about Sustaining Community in this. Why is it not a priority?</p> <p>The prioritising of the environment as a tourism driver in the STS is laudable but my experience with visitors is that those that come back most often (and don't just 'hide away' in the bush block) are those that rave about the community, its friendliness, its quirkiness and its activism. [And as I said earlier - most of the concerns I hear about the need for sustainable tourism stem from the social/cultural impacts.]</p>	<p>The writers asserts that the Shire of Denmark's Sustainability Strategy (SSS) "overarches" the Sustainable Tourism Strategy (STS) and therefore the STS should incorporate the SSS vision, goals and values. <i>Under the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework both the SSS and STS are "informing strategies" and as such have an interdependent nature. It is therefore important that the SSS and STS cross-reference each other as well as other key informing strategies and plans. This is the intent of 2.1. We do not support this suggestion.</i></p> <p>The writer suggests the need for tenth priority area referred to as "Infrastructure Stewardship". <i>We do not believe it is necessary to introduce an "Infrastructure Stewardship" priority area. These principles and associated initiatives are articulated in detail in the SSS. It is thus the primary informing strategy, with the STS to cross-reference and support these initiatives. For example, the writer's suggestion regarding the 'beat-the-peak' campaign is an example of an activity that could be developed under STS Initiative 2.2. However, it is recommended that an additional Strategy [new 2.1] be added to include reference to resource sustainability, e.g., waste, energy, food, water etc.</i></p>
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	<p>This absence in the STS is obvious when the priority areas are given definition under Strategic Priorities on page 12, and then expanded on in the Planning and Management Section page 15-17</p> <p>Under the STS Strategic Priorities on page 12, placed under the 'Domain' - Planning and Management, are priority area 1 - Leadership and Management and 2. Environmental Stewardship –</p> <p><i>Denmark’s landscapes and natural environment are protected for current and future generations to enjoy [I do think to 'protect' just to 'enjoy' is a little shallow].</i></p> <p>So, the missing priority area is Community Stewardship –</p> <p>e.g., Denmark’s socio-cultural authenticity, built and living cultural heritage, both traditional and progressive values, and inter-cultural tolerance are conserved and enhanced for current and future generations.</p> <p>And looking a bit deeper in the Planning and Management Section of the STS, under the heading 2. Environmental Stewardship on page 17, there are 2 strategies:</p> <p><i>2.1 Implement the Shire of Denmark’s Sustainability Strategy and ensure that it incorporates sustainable tourism initiatives.</i></p> <p><i>2.2 Establish partnerships with community organisations to develop a public education program that encourages residents and visitors to appreciate and protect natural environments.</i></p> <p>Taking the second strategy (2.2), consistent with the absence of 'Community Stewardship' there is a need for a paralleling strategy - X.X Establish partnerships with community organisations to develop a public education program that encourages residents and visitors to appreciate and enhance its diverse social /cultural richness.</p> <p>The first of these strategies (2.1) needs more critique.</p> <p>Firstly: At the bottom of page 17 the STS states:</p>	
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While the Sustainability Strategy refers to the need for a community-centred Tourism Strategy, the accompanying action plan provides no other direct references to tourism. To achieve the vision outlined in this Sustainable Tourism Strategy, there must be closer alignment between the two strategies.

Thus the strategy (2.1) is derived from perspective.

But rather than seeing, in the first instance, the SSS as being deficient in its dearth of tourism-related actions, it might be more effective to first identify the limited focus on sustainability principals from the SSS that the STS includes.

This is to say, there is missing the much more important strategy that reciprocates the strategy 2.1. Given that Shire's Sustainability Strategy rightly overarches the Sustainable Tourism Strategy (not the other way around), the strategy to take precedence should be –

2.0 Ensure that Sustainable Tourism Strategy incorporates the Shire of Denmark's Sustainability Strategy vision, goals and values.

Once that is addressed, then sustainability-related actions that arise in the STS based on these principals can then be transcribed to the SSS.

Secondly, the only place a strategy citing the Sustainability Strategy appears is in the STS against Environmental Stewardship. This implies to the less knowledgeable that the only relevance of this strategy is to the environment. And yes, Principal 4 of the SSS should inform Environmental Stewardship within Sustainable Tourism.

Thirdly: from the same approach, SSS Principals 1 Health & Happiness, 2 Equity & Local Economy and 3 Culture & Community should inform Community Stewardship within Sustainable Tourism. [and Denmark community's commitment to and activism about 9 Zero Waste, and 10 Zero Carbon Energy are part of it's values needing stewarding].

Fourthly: referencing the Principals of the SSS brings out another whole area of strategic need for Sustainable Tourism - it might be called the Community Assets, or Urban Resources or just 'Infrastructure Stewardship'. These relate to the

		<p>Principals 5 Sustainable Water, 6 Local & Sustainable Food, 7 Sustainable Travel & Transport, 8 Sustainable Materials & Products, 9 Zero Waste and 10 Zero Carbon Energy.</p> <p>[I would rate infrastructure impact the second main area of concern for Denmark residents, after community impact and above environmental impact.]</p> <p>Denmark has experienced a strong example of the link between Infrastructure and Tourism with the Green Town 'beat-the-peak' campaign encouraging tourists to be more energy efficient.</p> <p>To conclude;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It seems that the Sustainable Tourism Strategy does not set priorities that adequately cover the breadth of sustainability principals in the Shire's overarching Sustainability Strategy that are needed to address residents' concerns, values and aspirations. 2. And this is especially evident in Community Stewardship not being a priority area in the STS. 	
3	Submission via Your Denmark	<p>I read through the draft and thought it was captured the essence of the issues faced very well. Well done! My additional comments are:</p> <p>Environmental: I feel people come to visit (and live) in Denmark because of the 'tree and sea' factor and anything that negatively impacts that, devalues the tourism offering we make. Eg burning & clearing.</p> <p>Community: regarding the comment 'Tourism is an essential part of the local economy, supporting businesses that provide employment for a significant proportion of residents'; the employment provided is mostly menial, minimum wage jobs. As we all bear the cost of visitors, so should we all enjoy a bit more than 'scraps' and inconvenience. I love Bhutan's tourist levy that goes to the community.</p>	<p>Writer highlights the need to value and protect the environment and community.</p> <p><i>Support noted.</i></p>

4	Submission via Your Denmark	<p>As a new resident to your beautiful town (and outdoor enthusiast) I feel blessed to live here. I don't mind sharing with visitors during the peak times and consider myself lucky that I have access to the shire all year long. I have read the strategy and I think it's great.</p> <p>The only comment I would make is I do have concerns around affordable housing. I have noticed since moving here that there appears to be many vacant homes. This obviously puts pressure on existing demand. Rentals prices and homes for purchase seem quite high and I do wonder where everyone is housed. especially those who we ask to fill entry level positions in our tourism venues. It's all well and good to plan for tourism growth but if we are struggling to house our current residents; where will our temporary residents/workers live?</p>	<p><i>Support noted.</i></p> <p>Writer raises concern about affordable housing. <i>This has been raised in the accompanying Leadership and Management Action Plan.</i></p>
5	Submission via Your Denmark	<p>The Visitor Center (VC) must remain open. There has been no real transparency with the processes at the Shire / Council in regards to the VC; in fact, it feels as much was developed in almost in secrecy. We need an independent facilitator, with Shire and community participation, to finalise what will be the way forward. Plain LGA decisions would not be acceptable.</p>	<p>The writer supports the recommendation to retain face-to-face visitor servicing in the visitor centre.</p> <p>The writer raises concerns about the process by which decisions are/will be made regarding the future of the Visitor Centre and argues that this should be a joint decision by the Shire and the community rather than Council alone. <i>Comments noted.</i></p>
6	Submission via Your Denmark	<p>This is my personal submission, without authority from or liability to any of the groups mentioned below. I'm simply addressing the strategy's points about events and attractions, from my point of view. I'm the Chair of the Great Southern Classic Car Show (GSCCS) committee, current Secretary of the Denmark Machinery Restoration Group (DMRG), occasional member of the Scotsdale Shadforth Volunteer Bushfire Brigade (SSVBFB), admin for the Mt Shadforth local area Bushfire Ready group (BFR), and a "sometimes" maintenance volunteer with the Munda Biddi Trail Foundation (MBTF) - enough to keep me engaged with</p>	<p>The writer supports the development of tourism events and identifies opportunities for new product development. <i>Comments noted.</i></p>

Denmark's volunteer population, but sadly also away from the rural property pursuits I mostly get my kicks from!

I am working with the GSCCS to establish an enduring annual event in the town main street, to attract visitors who will mostly patronise the Strickland St core businesses, as they did for the inaugural 2019 event - but also the region's wider area accommodation and food and beverage outlets. This very successful event in its inaugural 2019 year has already attracted solid sponsorship for the 2021 event, and we wish for fine weather and a Covid free weekend on Sunday 26 Sept - to help stimulate out-of-region shoulder season tourism. We also foresee the GSCCS future involves becoming a car club to attract members who will assist to enrich the volunteer brigade currently shouldering the load. The Shire has been a solid supporter in this quest, and we are very grateful for this. The logistical and administrative hoops and hurdles facing us are not insignificant, but so far we have them covered. I see the GSCCS as tying closely with the strategy to develop events to attract visitors.

The DMRG aims to establish a short length of narrow gauge rail parallel to the Rail Trail, on which to demonstrate its restored track inspection trolleys. Given my professional engineering railway background, I've been liaising with the Office of National Rail Safety Regulator(ONRSR) to seek exemption from the ONRSR regulations, but my time to complete this has been starved by the GSCCS event – however, together with the Denmark Mens Shed the DMRG sees it can eventually create a tourist attraction from the original Denmark Rail Precinct, showcasing the various pieces of rail history, including the original rolling stock turntable still in place. Several other forms of rail attraction might be possible once we get the ONRSR exemption, but first things first. This rail project can establish another tourist attraction for Denmark.

I'm a sweep oar rower from way back (Life Member of the West Australian Rowing Club (WARC) on the Swan at Riverside Drive), so keen to participate in the newly-formed Denmark Community Rowing Association (DCRA) – I see that the Denmark River between the old rail bridge and the Berridge Park jetty can be a future course

		<p>for a Henley-style match racing event for oar-powered craft of all sorts. There is room for a (winding) 1,000 metre course, starting just upstream of the old rail bridge, and finishing very near the Berridge Park jetty, which would suit all sorts of craft, including the St Ayles skiffs the DCRA is now raising funds to build, but also sweep oared shells, canoes and kayaks, dragon boats, surf boats, surf skis etc. The WARC for many years held a Lord Mayors Cup event to raise funds by teaching novices to row, and then inflicting short course racing on them! Many corporate and organisational crews entered, and the Club gained new members from this annual event. The DCRA President David Cliff has received my suggestion but I lack any time to be involved at this stage, of which they are aware – however, once freed of some of the event & attraction activities mentioned above (i.e. handballed to others), I'd like to become involved. All of the above requires mostly volunteer time, of which there is not really a shortage in Denmark – but I see that more of the types of help with & skills training for volunteering that the Shire and others have started to provide will encourage and foster input from a wider range of citizens.</p> <p>I've left my submission far too late to be any more specific about the draft strategy – I'm just very positive about the Shire's intent, and very grateful for their help with the GSCCS to date!</p>	
7	Email to Shire [17 July]	<p>The draft Tourism Strategy is professional, thorough, competent and well-presented. It clearly documents the issues which most of us who have thought much about Denmark's tourism needs could have listed ourselves. It is the kind of document that many people in the community with some planning experience could have produced after some research. It doesn't tell us much that we didn't already know; it merely gathers all that knowledge neatly together and organises it appropriately. And I suspect that much of the document is based on a standard template for sustainable tourism strategies, with some entries specific to Denmark.</p> <p>My first reaction to the draft was therefore one of disappointment that the Shire had spent \$45,000 on a draft strategy that merely clarifies for us what our goals</p>	<p>The writer notes that the Strategy does not provide recommended actions to achieve its goals and would like to know what steps will be taken to apply the strategy. <i>The Sustainable Tourism Strategy recommends the development of Action Plans for each of the eight priority areas. These plans will determine priorities, timeframes, resourcing and measures of success. The most important of these action plans – Leadership and Management – has been provided to Council.</i></p>

		<p>are, but gives us no real suggestions on how those goals can be realised. But of course that is what a strategy is about – it’s the ‘What are our goals?’ question. The next question – ‘How do we achieve them?’ is dealt with in the next stage of planning – the tactics stage. I think many people will be disappointed with the draft simply because it is just a first stage of planning and does not make any concrete suggestions about how we can achieve our goals. \$45,000 seems a large expenditure for the first stage of the planning process, when the tactical stage is probably the most critical – and the most difficult -stage in this particular exercise. Most people will be looking for answers to questions like “How have other small towns in Australia attracted visitors in the off-season?” and of course they won’t find those answers in this document. So the next question is what the Shire plans to do in relation to the tactical application of the strategy. Assistance from those with a deep knowledge of what is being done in communities comparable to Denmark, both Australia-wide and world-wide, would seem to be essential.</p> <p>I understand that there is to be a separate report on the future of the Visitor Centre conducted by the Chamber of Commerce. Given the very strong demand for the re-opening of the Centre, and the large variety of views on how visitor needs can best be met, I believe that any report on this issue should be undertaken by an independent body with no prior involvement in the matter. We need advice without any potential to be seen as biased.</p>	<p><i>It provides the overarching approach to implementation.</i></p> <p>The writer also raises a query about the fee paid to the consultants. <i>We make no comment in relation to the consultancy fee except to note that all deliverables outlined in the RFQ and service contract have been delivered.</i></p>
8	Email to GSCORE [24 June]	<p>Your Report for the Shire of Denmark is excellent and should be a blueprint to re-ignite the movers and shakers in Denmark tourism to bigger and better things.</p> <p>One can only hope that it is properly implemented and supported.</p>	<i>Support noted.</i>
9	Email to GSCORE [25 June]	<p>Congratulations on a well written report, here’s hoping the implementation is of the same standard and the Shire of Denmark can come to appreciate the value of tourism to the Town.</p>	<i>Support noted.</i>
10	Email to Shire [6 August]	<p>I would like to add one aspect that seems to have been overlooked in the report, in regards to one form of tourism that could greatly benefit Denmark:</p>	The writer recommends the development of aquaculture tourism products, services and

The tourism sector around an aquaculture industry, of which Denmark is well positioned to benefit from, thanks to a very particular asset: Wilson inlet.

1) Providing fresh local seafood.

Denmark currently does not provide any fresh local seafood, a common complain from visitors. This is despite a long stretch of coastline and an estuary that has been identified in many reports as having much greater potential for the development of aquaculture than Oyster Harbour for example. (South Coast Aquaculture Development Zone- 27 April 2018)

2) Aquaculture tours.

This has proven to be extremely popular in every aquaculture centre, whether with the pearl farming industry, or the seafood aquaculture industry. (example: Willie creek pearl farm, Eyre peninsula oyster tours, etc..)

3) Events related to aquaculture products.

These are events that can attract considerable interest as a tourism drawcard. These events give the town a vibrant and dynamic aspect that often partner with other aspect of the food and wine industry as well as the artistic sector. (example: Denmark Oyster fest, Jazz Mussel and wine etc...)

events; and protection of Wilson Inlet’s environmental values. *Comments noted. The submission supports Priority Area 2: Environmental Stewardship; and Initiative 4.2: Facilitate and support the delivery of events that attract visitors to the Shire.*



		<p>Of course, the benefits of a tourism industry based on an aquaculture industry can only exist if there is support for an aquaculture industry in the first place. Such an industry was unable to develop in the past due to a stream of vested interests who viewed the aquaculture industry as directly opposite to their own personal benefits. Time have now changed, and the public is just starting to realise how they were duped and manipulated for the benefit of a few, who managed to create a narrative that is opposite to science. A perfect example is the Non opening fraud - aka: the drainage review- which is now going to be exposed for what it is: a fraud. Such a scheme as not only been detrimental to all the environmental aspects it originally claimed to protect, it has been detrimental to the development of an aquaculture industry and its indirect tourism outcomes, as well as another important tourism asset for the community: Prawn Rock Channel, which does not function during years of non opening.</p> <p>Wilson Inlet has the potential to become a world class aquaculture centre bringing an array of benefits to the town, in terms of tourism, as well as social and environmental aspects, providing the natural channel is reinstalled.</p>	
11	Email to CEO [6 August]	<p>My comments have been integrated into the response from the Denmark Rate Payers.</p> <p>I did indicate to Jan [Councillor Lewis] that I am supportive of the DCC moving into the VC. The Chamber has been developing Discover Denmark for years now as a backup plan should ASCTi not succeed and the option of working in the VC to provide a welcome to Denmark for visitors, residents, businesses and investors, supported by the solid foundation of the Chamber and providing greater linkage and engagement with our community, was the original plan back in 2006.</p> <p>I am aware that both DTI and GreenSkills had ideas, energy and potential resources that were offered up as solutions to our community and harnessing this energy or at least allowing it to be released, could be quite cathartic. At least it would provide us to have a shared pathway forward.</p>	<p>The writer supports the recommendation that the Denmark Chamber of Commerce (DCC) relocate to the Denmark Visitor Centre. <i>Comments noted.</i></p> <p>The writer offers her services to facilitate a meeting to discuss the DCC proposal. <i>This would be a matter for the DCC. We encourage Council to implement the visitor servicing recommendations as soon as possible to ensure an effective face-to-face visitor servicing option in the Denmark Visitor Centre during the peak tourism period. The tourism industry has expressed its view that delays will negatively impact the local visitor</i></p>

		<p>In discussions with Jan and Ian Osborne, I am willing to facilitate a meeting where we can iron out the facts, the myths, the current way forward (DCC proposal) and what ideas / opportunities from other sectors could be integrated.</p> <p>We have two parts at play here. The visitor servicing offering and VC occupation (A) and (B) a tourism framework that provides some direction as to the long term management of tourism but which also needs plumping up with more detail. Whilst these two are connected, they are quite different in terms of process, resourcing and driving.</p> <p>If I can be of any support David, please call on me, as an interested community member who wishes to see a solution that respects all opportunities and moves us forward. I still feel that if we could bring people around a table to acknowledge the past and find a solution to the future, this shared collective discussion (facilitated) may be useful, as per the homeless forum.</p>	<p><i>economy. We are confident that the proposed DCC model will address both industry and visitor needs.</i></p>
12	Email to Shire [6 August)	<p>Dear Mr Schober</p> <p>I trust that, during their deliberations on the Strategy, including the fate of the Visitor Centre, the council will acknowledge the excellent efforts made by the Denmark Chamber of Commerce in establishing the Denmark Visitor Service at extremely short notice, by Boxing Day 2020, and to a high standard.</p>	<p><i>Comment noted.</i></p>
13	Green Skills Denmark	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>Green Skills has been an active participant in the consultation phase of developing both the Draft Tourism Strategy and Visitor Servicing Report.</p> <p>Green Skills staff have participated in one on one Consultation with GSCOR staff and participated in an open stakeholder workshop concerning the overall strategy.</p> <p>As mentioned in the Visitor Servicing Report Green Skills has participated in a number of meeting facilitated by GSCOR with the Denmark Chamber of Commerce and expressed our interest in being a partner to the development of the current Visitor Centre as an inspiration hub and in the development of Visitor servicing through multiple mechanisms.</p>	<p>Green Skills supports the intent of the Strategy and commits to an ongoing role in its implementation.</p> <p>Green Skills commits its support to partner with the Denmark Chamber of Commerce in the proposed implementation of the visitor servicing model. It recommends a minimum 5 year lease.</p> <p><i>Comments noted.</i></p>

	<p>The comments in this submission are a brief summary of our response to the documents and do not represent the depth of our interest.</p> <p><u>Draft Sustainable Tourism Strategy</u></p> <p>The Strategy is based on strong community consultation. It confirms previous community consultations that articulated community aspiration to retain Denmark’s village community and outstanding natural environment.</p> <p>“Residents aspire to balanced tourism planning that respects people (community) and place (environment). They want Denmark to remain an attractive, vibrant, creative community; and they want tourism to be eco-friendly and environmentally sustainable.” (p 7)</p> <p>Green Skills fully supports the development of a marketing strategy that seeks tourism that values our community values, that engages in the community, where people stays longer and contribute to environmental management. Green Skills endorsed the decision to avoid the term destination and the sentiment that “...the Shire is not just a visitor destination, it is a place that many people call home. “ (9)</p> <p>The Draft Strategy provides an excellent framework for the Shire with the Community to develop tourism in alignment with the Shire’s recently endorsed Sustainability Strategy. It is important that they are developed in parallel.</p> <p>The Strategy identifies that tourism servicing and marketing has changed and will continue to do so. The lack of a Sustainable Tourism Strategy to this point has been a contributor to a crisis response to delivery of tourism services and in particular the future of the bricks and tiles Visitor Centre that should not be repeated with a clear strategy in conjunction with the Visitor Servicing Report now in hand</p> <p>The two documents together make a strong case for the ongoing involvement of the Shire is steering implementation of the Strategy and in providing funding support at least to the level provided in the past three years to see key recommendations of the Strategy enacted and to support the development of the</p>	
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Visitor Centre as an inspiration hub and a key element of the future model of multi channel visitor servicing.

Green Skills in the past has run environmental tourism courses, trialled ecotours, developed interpretive signage and been a participant in the group effort to develop an Interpretive Manual (2002). It is very pleasing to see key recommendations under the Strategic Priorities – Visitor Experience to increase capacity of tourism operations, provide face to face servicing, and to develop and implement an interpretive strategy. It feels like it has been a long time coming!

Like all Strategies it is only as good as the implementation commitment. Green Skills is keen to be an ongoing player in developing and implementing key aspects of the Strategy.

Visitor Centre Report

It is a pleasure to read this report which provides a summary of visitor servicing data and changes to tourist needs and mechanisms for seeking information and servicing. It also provides the background on the Visitor Centre ownership, lease arrangement and previous funding necessary in choosing the option to pursue.

Some of the data however, is not as relevant to our local, regional, small town experience as you would hope for. This speaks to a lack of suitable data in this sector. The City of Melbourne visitor needs and experiences does not easily equate to ours. The increase in visitor numbers through Albany and Walpole also deserves further investigation.

Green Skills endorses the overall recommendation for the Denmark Visitor Centre that

‘...the Denmark Visitor Centre is run by a Not-For-Profit organization, with financial support from the Shire and other organizations. The Visitor Centre building would operate as a “hub” of business and tourism activity, with opportunities for other entities to value-add to the experience offering.’

Green Skills confirms its commitment to partner with the Chamber of Commerce and the Shire of Denmark to develop the Visitor Centre as an inspiration hub and

		<p>for Denmark as a whole as an ecotourism destination driven by an interpretive strategy that shares our story of place all year round. This would be done with the community and visitors as partners ensuring their engagement in retaining the feel of our community and the quality of our environment with the experience for residents and visitors enhanced.</p> <p>Green Skills has knowledge and capacity in this regard.</p> <p>It is important that if the Chamber of Commerce and the Shire come to a mutual agreement to pursue an option for the continuation of the Visitor Centre for face to face servicing that the lease period is of sufficient duration to attract substantial outside funding. Three years is a bare minimum and Green Skills would recommend at least 5 years with a further five years based on review and success in achieving agreed outcomes.</p>	
14	Denmark Ratepayers and Residents Association	<p>Please find the feedback from the Denmark Ratepayers and Residents Association (DRRA), regarding the Denmark Tourism Strategy.</p> <p>Our response has been collated through consultation with local operators, local tourism specialists and our individual members. Our objective in providing feedback is to ensure the Strategy is in the interest of; and presents value for money; for all ratepayers and residents.</p> <p>This submission is submitted in three parts because, regrettably, the Strategy documents were not provided as a completed project, rather in three stages. Overall, the DRRA does not believe that the Shire has been provided with good “value for money” and the report lacks imagination, detail and depth.</p> <p>Our comments are provided below:</p>	<p>The Denmark Ratepayers and Residents Association (DRRA) assert that “the report lacks imagination, detail and depth”. <i>It is difficult to address this criticism because the DRRA provides no substantive commentary on the strategic vision, goals, initiatives or KPIs. Therefore, we have restricted our response to the numbered comments.</i></p>
		<p>Submission to Shire of Denmark on the ‘Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2021-2025’, a 26-page document.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The Report provides excellent links and reference to the Denmark Strategic Community Plan, which underpins all of our respective activities. 	<p>1 – <i>noted</i> 2 – <i>noted</i> 3 – lack of detail on actions to achieve strategies. <i>The Sustainable Tourism Strategy recommends the development of Action Plans</i></p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. The research and data related to visitor servicing, whilst dated (2014) would provide even starker detail post COVID and offers a sound platform as to why Denmark needs to be creative in its delivery of visitor servicing. 3. The Report is educational in defining the current trends and definitions of sustainable tourism; however, lacks detail, data and strategic direction as to how our Shire is to achieve this, particularly given the economic and resource base from which we operate. 4. The Shire is undertaking a number of complementing strategies such as the TPS and LPS; however, these are not referenced within the document despite the fact that the relationship to developing tourism, is so intimately connected to these other documents. 5. The document provided to the community is referenced by the author as a framework, despite it being presented as a strategy when put out to tender. At what point did the Shire shift the tender brief from Strategy to Framework and the associated strategies get diluted down to generic statements? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. We believe this brings into question the investment value i.e., \$45,000 is a substantial amount of ratepayer funds for a 'framework'. 6. The Churchill Report; commissioned for a significant amount of money; provided a comprehensive tourism Strategy that, if the reference to "region" was replaced with "Shire of Denmark", would provide a much more adoptive strategy than this 'framework'. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. It is extremely disappointing to see that the Churchill Consulting 2017 report is not even referenced, much of it is very relevant today, and provides direction, eg Ref Section 5.6.4 dealing with Air BnB. b. One could ask why was the advice provided in the Churchill Report was not acted on by the Shire, in respect of the proliferation of unregistered Air BnB properties and un-hosted holiday homes? 7. DRRA believe there is too much of a conflict of interest with the appointed consultant. They were nominated in the Tender document, as a key stakeholder and within the framework, the development of trails is 	<p><i>for each of the eight priority areas. These plans will determine priorities, timeframes, resourcing and measures of success. The most important of these action plans – Leadership and Management – has been provided to Council. It provides the overarching approach to implementation.</i></p> <p>4 – no reference to TPS and LPS. <i>These have been addressed in the Leadership and Management Action Plan.</i></p> <p>5 – the document is a framework not a strategy. <i>DRRA conflates the framework (i.e. methodology) with the strategy (i.e. vision, pillars, goals, indicators and initiatives). The planning framework underpins the strategy, but they are not the same thing.</i></p> <p>5a – consultancy fee. <i>We make no comment in relation to the consultancy fee except to note that all deliverables outlined in the RFQ and service contract have been delivered.</i></p> <p>6 –DRRA suggests that the <i>Tourism Development Strategy for the Lower Great Southern</i> (October 2016) (often referred to as the 'Churchill Report') provides a more suitable tourism strategy for the Shire, and could be utilised with the replacement of the term 'region' with the term 'Shire of Denmark'. <i>We are surprised that the DRRA would suggest using an historical document written for a different purpose and apply it to the current situation in the Shire of Denmark. Churchill Consulting did not undertake community consultation in formulating the</i></p>
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	<p>consistently highlighted without reference to other experiential opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Where are the other ideas and suggestions that the community may have put forward as development ideas? ○ If we are focusing our investment efforts into being a trail town, then let us state that in our Strategy. ○ In canvassing opinions from our membership one member submitted the following: “Our aim should be to target and promote the tourism we “want to have”. While iconic destinations such as Greens Pool, the Valley of the Giants, etc., need no particular promotion, it would be wise to diversify and be able to offer a wider range of interests. Our imagination is our limit.” We are, after all, living in one of the World’s few Biodiversity Hotspots. <p>8. What does Lead, Partner, Advocate actually mean?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Who does the Shire lead? b. To whom are the Shire advocating to and for? c. With whom is the Shire partnering? These are not pathways to achieve goals they are fundamentally ‘motherhood’ statements. <p>9. The document does not appear to investigate the fragmentation that currently exists between the various organizations within our community, who could contribute to a sustainable VC and a sustainable overall strategy. Who / what community organization will take the lead?</p> <p>10. At a local level the identification of drivers (lead) is required to provide the community with a sense of confidence that action will take place. If this is the Denmark Chamber of Commerce, then why are they not identified?</p> <p>11. The Amazing South Coast Tourism Inc (ASCTI) may be wound up; however, this could give rise to specific opportunities for Denmark. There is; however, limited reference to ASCTI.</p> <p>12. The document contains no reference to -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Any road hierarchy, priority roads, tourism roads. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The framework only references trails, signage strategy and seasonal transport. The CRC did a lot of research on local 	<p><i>strategy and consulted only a small number of tourism stakeholders. We are confident that the strength of the STS is its grounding in community and industry engagement.</i></p> <p><i>6a – The ‘Churchill Report’ is an informing document and has been consulted.</i></p> <p><i>6b – We provide no comment in relation to the Shire’s actions in relation to AirBnB property management.</i></p> <p><i>7 – conflict of interest. No comment.</i></p> <p><i>7 – trails are highlighted without reference to other experiential opportunities. Trails are mentioned twice in the Strategy: Access & Dispersal [3.3 Improve the paths and trails network to encourage non-vehicular access to key tourism sites]; and Placemaking [developing and managing public assets for recreation, arts, culture, and events].</i></p> <p><i>8 – definition of Lead, Partner, Advocate. Definitions are provided on page 12 and follow the convention used in other Shire planning documents.</i></p> <p><i>9 – no analysis of the fragmentation between community organisations that could contribute to a sustainable Visitor Centre. We are not sure what ‘fragmentation’ the DRRA is referring to here. We consulted a wide range of community organisations on their potential role in relation to the ongoing operation of the Visitor Centre. While a number indicated their interest in supporting the VIC, only two – the Denmark Chamber of Commerce and Green Skills – expressed an</i></p>
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	<p>transport; however, even this does not appear to have been referenced.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. The impact of additional traffic from tourists on roads such as Walter, Turner, Lights (last rough section) and Redman to name a few, needs consideration, iii. Increased traffic on roads from a bushfire perspective requires consideration, as does access to evacuation areas, particularly during periods of peak visitation. <p>13. Wine and Food tourism that has received considerable support in the past through Taste Great Southern and forms a huge basis of our local economy, barely rates a mention, nor the very important area of accommodation provision including holiday homes and the well versed and adverse impact on the community, see Point 6.</p> <p>14. The document references precincts; however, there is no additional information on the proposed precincts within the Shire and the investment priority they may have.</p> <p>15. Both industry and the Community are happy to see the current level of visitor numbers maintained during the peak season and an increase during the off-peak season. How can this be achieved?</p> <p>16. The question of capacity is also absent from the Report’s narrative.</p> <p>17. How many visitors can Denmark afford, before it loses its small-town identity with further pressure on its roads, parking areas and power supply, etc.</p> <p>18. If there are action plans, contextual research and clear directions on how we achieve the stated vision, where are they and how are they to be enunciated and enacted, and how can a community comment without them?</p> <p>19. The document lacks detail given the allocated budget. The brief has obviously changed with no notification and expected expenditure to achieve a Strategy, it is yet to be provided.</p>	<p><i>interest in operating the VIC. Green Skills supports the DCC taking the lead.</i></p> <p>9 & 10 – what community organisation will take the lead in implementing the strategy? <i>The Strategy is a Council document, hence the Council is identified as the Lead agency.</i></p> <p>11 – limited reference to ASCTI. <i>Industry advised us that the ASCTI was ineffective; it has since ceased operation.</i></p> <p>12 – road systems, including traffic management. <i>This issue is dealt with in the Leadership & Management Action Plan.</i></p> <p>13 – no reference to wine and food tourism or accommodation. <i>Tourism products and experiences are mentioned under 4. Product and Experience Development.</i></p> <p>14 – precincts. <i>This issue is dealt with in the Leadership and Management Action Plan.</i></p> <p>15 – how can visitor numbers be managed? <i>The Strategy outlines a range of initiatives to address visitor numbers and dispersal.</i></p> <p>16 – the question of capacity is absent. <i>We are unclear about the meaning of capacity here. It may refer to visitor numbers (as in item 17) or knowledge and ability (as in capacity to respond to visitor numbers).</i></p> <p>17 – how many visitors can Denmark afford? <i>Managing visitor load is a complex issue. The Strategy outlines a range of initiatives to better manage the impact of tourism numbers on Denmark’s environment, community and economy. This includes specific provisions related to town planning,</i></p>
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			<p><i>environmental management and education, access and dispersal, product development, interpretation, and marketing.</i></p> <p>18 – requests access to action plans and other background documents. <i>This is a matter for Council to determine, noting that some information is confidential and cannot be released publicly.</i></p> <p>19 – budget for work completed. <i>Expenditure related to this project is commercial in confidence.</i></p>
		<p>Submission to the Shire of Denmark on the “Visitor Servicing Report – Background & Recommendations”, a 50-page document.</p> <p>20. The analysis of visitor trends, visitor servicing trends and the summary of the views of both the community and industry is both thorough and illuminating. It confirms several important issues:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> that both the community and industry strongly advocate for a VC; however, the community feel it more important than industry 79% v 58%; that a VC is an essential means of welcoming visitors and provides a sense of community pride; that the majority of tourism operators do not benefit financially or use the VC; that the collective preference for operating a VC is through a Not-For-Profit organization, of which three local community groups have already expressed an interest. All of this is good information; and that the visitor experience is changing, and communities are best to start revising traditional models. <p>21. The Introduction states that the final part of this Report provides a series of recommendations. This is not correct; the final part provides a series of Options.</p>	<p>20 – <i>noted</i>.</p> <p>21 – states that the final part of the document provides Options not Recommendations. <i>This is incorrect – the Recommendations begin on page 29; the Options are contained in the Appendix.</i></p> <p>22 – <i>noted</i>.</p> <p>23 – <i>noted</i>.</p> <p>24 – where do other tourism nodes (e.g. Nornalup, Peaceful Bay) fit? <i>As outlined in the Strategy, these should be incorporated into the multi-channel model. This will be clarified in the Visitor Servicing Report.</i></p> <p>25 – raises a series of questions about the ‘return on investment’ (ROI) associated with government investment in infrastructure that is used by both community and visitors. <i>This is a matter for Council’s consideration.</i></p> <p>26 – ROI. <i>While ROI may be difficult to measure, we encourage the Shire to develop an appropriate set of indicators to monitor its investment.</i></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The two-page precis; however, does provide a recommendation: that the VC is run by a Not-For-Profit organisation. DRRA supports this recommendation; however, it should be part of an analysis that comes to that conclusion. <p>22. The lack of acknowledgement of the Churchill Consulting Report has already been noted.</p> <p>23. The use of the City of Melbourne and the City of Bendigo as evidence of changing visitor patterns provides relevance in broad terms and certainly points to the need for a creative collective solution to visitor servicing; however, the data also needs to be considered in light of the disparity of population, investment capacity and visitation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bendigo has very recently embarked on a \$7M Central Hub/Visitor Centre of which \$1m is provided by the city itself. ○ One of the four Bendigo Directors has specific responsibilities for the Bendigo Art Gallery and Tourism events. ○ A new Visitor Centre, clearly, they are not disappearing. Bendigo has a population of 120,000, and its VC has 75+ volunteers and special event Ambassadors. ○ A comparison with Visitor Centres in the South West might be more appropriate than the cities of Bendigo and Melbourne. Denmark doesn't have a train station, a domestic airport, or indeed a port. What it does have, is that it is at the centroid of three other tourist destinations, each with its own Visitor Centre, that it is at the centroid of National Parks: William Bay, Mount Lindesay, Walpole Nornalup, Stirling Range, Porongurup and Mount Frankland, and that it sits on an awe-inspiring coastline with stunning beaches all within a Biodiversity Hotspot. <p>24. The Report does not adequately reference the diverse nature of Denmark including Peaceful Bay, Nornalup and Frankland. Where do these nodes fit into the tourism system and destination?</p> <p>25. The assessment of a visitor focused approach to tourism development, states that State and local government funding is being heavily invested in the Shire. The return on this investment is expected to be matched with</p>	<p>27 – DRRA believe that the term ‘perceived wisdom’ is condescending. <i>It is not our intent to cause offence; the term will be replaced.</i></p> <p>28 – reword Option 7. <i>We do not support this change.</i></p>
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		<p>high quality visitor servicing; however, there is limited discussion and strategies to highlight how the capacity of the small business sector or Shire will meet this return.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Where does a “return on investment” come into the analysis when the facilities are being upgraded for the Community because they badly need to be made safer, modernized and provided with toilets? ○ They do, of course, enhance the experience for our visitors who come to enjoy both our beaches and our wild coastline, but how does one evaluate the “return on investment” and what happens to the other development requirements within the Shire, that do not meet the criteria of the state government? ○ How do we pay for all of this and maintain it when grants have dried up? <p>26. The Report acknowledges that “return on investment” cannot be properly or accurately measured and is not simply an economic product. If this is the case, a more detailed ROI analysis is required for all our funded projects or it should be discarded as not achievable, wherever it appears in the documents – a good example of empty words.</p> <p>27. The Community Sentiment section states “Amongst the Denmark community, there is a strongly held view that if Denmark is a tourism town, then it must have a physical Visitor Centre. This sentiment is tied to a sense of community pride; and Perceived wisdom about how visitor servicing is best delivered”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Not only is perceived wisdom slightly condescending, it also negates the importance of community pride. The “perceived” wisdom of our community has been tested for decades and has always evolved to meet customer needs. If our community states that face to face is important in a physical centre as a focal point for driving and leading tourism, this should not be diminished. <p>28. Options 1-8. Accepting that the 2-page precis discards Options 1-4, and that it proposes a Not-For-Profit organisation to manage and operate the VC we thus focus on Options 5-8.</p>	
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does the Shire have aspirations to redevelop the visitor centre as a commercial lease option? If so, Options 6 and 8 need more investigation, otherwise they can be discarded. ○ Option 6 can be discarded as it is stated to be “unsustainable”. ○ That leaves Option 7. Under this Option it states that “The medium to long term strategy may include face to face visitor servicing...”. We recommend that “may” be changed to “shall”. ○ Option 7 is similar to the proposal submitted by the Interim Board of Denmark Tourism Inc (DTI), which failed to obtain Council approval, refer to the Council Meeting Minutes for 20th October 2020; however, whereas Option 7 states a 3-year lease, Council offered an 8-month lease to DTI. ○ GSCORE clearly see the lack of equitability and logic in an 8-month lease, it would not fit the “sustainable” criteria. 	
		<p>Submission to the Shire of Denmark on the 2-page precis “The Future of Visitor Servicing in Denmark / Why is this model being recommended”.</p> <p>29. This document provides the recommendation that requires a three-year period to reach maturity. It is broad enough to enable the Operator to introduce activities and other entities that would value-add to both the Visitor’s experience and the financial bottom line. It is seen as not being too prescriptive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The reference to the Eurobodalla experience is relevant in that there is hardly an organisation in the World that does not need to review its raison d’etre and modus operandi in the light of the incredible changes to the internet, advances in technology, and importantly, social interaction. The decline in the number of visitors to VCs in general could, to a large degree, be attributable to the failure in VCs not moving “with the times”, and in poor overall management. ○ Importantly, the Denmark Visitor Centre was funded for one thing and one thing only, TOURISM. 	<p>29 – <i>comments noted.</i></p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It is not there to be farmed out as a Distillery, or in competition to existing businesses, to provide funds to the Shire to offset additional expenditure that it is experiencing. If that is an option being considered, then tell us. <p>The asset belongs to the Community, full stop. The future of the VC has been damaged, not dented, by the failure of the Shire/Council to clearly outline and offer a sensible, pragmatic lease option for tender by the three interested Not- For-Profit groups.</p>	
		<p>Where to from here?</p> <p>DRRA submit the following actions following the Shire’s receipt of both Industry and Community submissions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. The Shire rename the document as a framework. B. The Shire convenes a Workshop where those who have provided feedback can meet and discuss the Draft Reports, with a view to agreeing on several Action plans, that enable the Sustainable Tourism Framework to provide specific direction and strategic relevance. C. That the Shire prepares an open Tender for Not-For-Profit organisations to tender to operate the VC on a 3-year lease arrangement, with measures put in place that meet the Shire’s requirements in terms overall performance. 	<p><i>A – as outlined above, the DRRA have confused the methodology (framework) with the Strategy.</i></p> <p><i>B – The Leadership & Management Action Plan outlines the recommended steps to begin implementing the Strategy.</i></p> <p><i>C – as outlined in the Visitor Servicing Report, we do not believe an open tender is required.</i></p>

TOURISM POLICY**Objectives**

- A. To recognise tourism as a social and economic force and as a major or potential major employer within the Shire of Denmark.
- B. To foster and create a community awareness of the benefits of tourism within the Shire of Denmark.
- C. To ensure that Council will guide and influence the development of tourism in the Shire of Denmark.
- D. To provide the basic facilities and infrastructure sufficient to encourage development.
- E. To ensure that facilities within the Shire are adequate to cater for visitors and residents.
- F. To ensure that the attributes of the natural environment within the Shire are managed sustainably so as to maintain and enhance the resource base on which the tourism industry relies.

Guidelines

1. Council will work closely with the Denmark Tourism Inc, Tourism WA, Australia's South West and regional industry associations in all aspects of tourism development.
2. Council will endeavour to provide an adequate budget allocation for tourism expenditure.
3. Council will endeavour to assist (financially and by other means) tourist organisations or events which have the potential to develop tourism in the Great Southern region.
4. Council will seek active representation locally, through the organisation Denmark Tourism Inc. and regionally, through relevant tourism associations.
5. In the formulation of its planning regulations, Council will have regard to the requirements of tourism development.
6. Council, in its review of planning instruments, ie Strategic Plans, Town Plans and Development Central Plans, will take into consideration policies on tourism and other leisure related issues.
7. In the preparation of local laws and regulations, Council will have regard to their impact on tourism and balanced development within the Shire.
8. Council will encourage tourism product development and investment throughout the area and will facilitate the development application process.
9. Council will encourage a high standard of design and aesthetics in all forms of tourism development.
10. Council will ensure the welfare of the whole community when supporting tourism development and the provision of facilities.
11. When considering tourism developments, Council will consider the social, cultural, economic and environmental impact of the proposal within the area.
12. Council will ensure that where sensitive environmental, historic or cultural areas exist, these areas will be adequately protected in relation to development or usage.
13. Council will initiate the provision of facilities or lobby for the provision of facilities sufficient to cater for destination and day trip visitors to appropriate areas within the Shire boundaries.
14. Council will seek financial involvement from other sources wherever possible in the provision of tourism facilities.

15. Council will encourage the landscaping of residential and commercial centres within the Shire.
16. Council will, where practicable, support the establishment of National Parks, enhancement of specific natural features, conservation areas of outstanding beauty, and recognise items of heritage significance.
17. Council will support a World Heritage nomination of the Walpole Wilderness Area and participate and assist in the community consultation process in the development of a nomination.

AMENDED by Res: 220708 / 22 JULY 2008