

APOLLO BAY

Destination Action Plan 2018-2020

February 2018



GREAT OCEAN ROAD
REGIONAL TOURISM LIMITED

Acknowledgments

The development of the Apollo Bay Destination Action Plan has been facilitated by Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Ltd.

The process brought together representatives from all stakeholder groups that benefit from the visitor economy; local government, state government agencies, industry and the community to develop a plan. This Plan seeks to identify the challenges and opportunities facing Apollo Bay, Skenes Creek and Marengo and to establish achievable affordable priorities that if delivered would increase the competitiveness in the region.

Specifically, we would like to thank the individuals that participated in the plan development process:

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Purpose

The new Plan will now be focused around:

- What are the strategic issues (referred to as key result areas or KRAs) we need to focus our limited resources on?
- What can we as a group influence and make happen?

It was also agreed that the Chamber would be the 'go to' organisation within Apollo Bay and to take a strong advocacy and leadership role on behalf of businesses and the community (referred to in the Plan as 'the community').

Introduction

This document is preceded by the Apollo Bay Destination Action Plan 2015-2017. The Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce and the working group that developed the original Plan, determined that it was timely for a review of the Plan and to identify and focus on the key priorities the Chamber could influence or provide advocacy for, on behalf of the community.

It was also recognised that the previous Plan contained a number of strategic actions that were clearly the primary responsibility of other organisations/agencies and outside the control or influence of the Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce. The recognition of this key factor influences the actioning of the priorities from one of a 'doing' role to that of the Chamber being the primary 'influencer' of change through advocacy and leadership.



Key Achievements in 2015-2017 Plan

Market positioning

The unique market positioning and brand development for Apollo Bay has been completed, however industry take-up needs to be greater (Chamber leadership required). The destination brand now provides for clear differentiation between the many coastal villages along the Great Ocean Road which will assist potential visitors in determining their destination of choice.

Brand positioning

- The *'Visit Apollo Bay'* website has been established by GORRT; with both Council and GORRT managing content for the site
- Several intrastate destination campaigns have occurred with local businesses, Council and GORRT having actively collaborated on each campaign
- The Apollo Bay Seafood Festival continues to grow in popularity
- A new event called *'WinterWild Apollo Bay'* has been created thanks to RDV economic and community recovery funds – this event captured the imagination of visitor, community and business

Maintain infrastructure, visitor management

- The feasibility study of Wild Dog – Skenes Creek Trail has been funded with leadership/advocacy by ABCC and the Skenes Creek Advancement Association
- GORRT and Council had influence into GOR repairs/closures. A Tourism Coalition of Local Associations was formed in 2016 to support this advocacy which included the Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce Inc
- Great Ocean Walk trail head in Apollo Bay was completed in 2015
- COS parking strategy in progress
- Funding for the refurbishment of Maits Rest has been allocated
- The announcement by the State Government of the Great Ocean Road Task Force – a significant step in addressing funding, degraded infrastructure and uncoordinated planning at state level

Harbour and foreshore

- Council leads an Apollo Bay Harbour Project Control Group with market testing of opportunities evaluated
- Coastal Management Act currently being reviewed by DELWP
- Foreshore Precinct Masterplan yet to commence by Otway Coast Committee

Increase stakeholder participation (Chamber profile and industry participation)

- ABCC has been reinvigorated and with an expanded member base along with new members to the Executive. ABCC monthly newsletter broadly distributed along with the Otways Tourism and GORRT's newsletter.

The visitor economy

Visitors to Apollo Bay are major contributors to the strength and sustainability of the local economy. The visitors may be leisure travelers (domestic and international), visitors to friends and relatives, holiday residents, business visitors, students or day-trippers. There are several distinctive visitor types: domestic day trips, domestic visitors that stay for more than one night (and holiday home owners/ annual site holders) and international visitors that are limited by time and generally do not stay more than one night.

Their expenditure is new money contributed to the local economy that supports jobs, real estate value and the provision of services, facilities and activities in the community, enhancing the livability of the area.

It is recommended that readers of this Plan consider the Strategic Master Plan for the Great Ocean Road Region Visitor Economy 2015-2025, to gain an understanding of the significance of the visitor economy to the region and the long-term aspirations for the industry.

Objectives for the GOR Region

The primary objectives for the Great Ocean Road Region are to:

1. Increase visitor length of stay
2. Increase visitor expenditure
3. Increase visitor dispersal (geographically and seasonally)
4. Increase visitor satisfaction
5. Retain and leverage iconic status of Great Ocean Road from both a national and international aspect.

Our values

- **Relaxed atmosphere, Community Connection, Tranquil 'real' Apollo Bay, Fishing Village**
- To retain a relaxed ambience, preserve the 'fishing village' appeal with focus on the working harbour
- A **hub** from which to explore the Otways rainforests and hinterland
- An engaged and active business community focused on providing quality services and experiences resulting in repeat visitation
- Respect for a strong, vibrant and engaged community.

Considerations

Liveability

- Ensuring our permanent population is sustainable
- Recognise residents/community vision and reason for living here and how that can be captured – focus on being different: on visitor needs and satisfaction; yield not numbers
- Ensuring our community is engaged: council/community cohesion, lots of experiences, maintain a relaxed vibe

Maintain and promote the 'culture' of Apollo Bay

- To recognise the uniqueness of Apollo Bay and retaining its authenticity, village appeal and history
- Use of language in communications
- Healthy, sustainable and active lifestyle
- Celebrating success

Communicate the importance of the visitor economy to the sustainability of the town (tourism growth = employment opportunities = liveability)

- More involvement from different businesses in Chamber activities
- Ability to employ and educate locally
- Retention and utilisation of pool of talent, knowledge, experience and crafts.

Statements from brand framework

Apollo Bay is proof of the beauty in simplicity. It's about taking a step back and appreciating the view from where you stand.

Fresh air, fresh seafood, and the sound of the sea.

A tranquil harbour village on the doorstep of the Otways rainforest, sharing panoramic views, abounding seaside adventures; leaving all who visit feeling relaxed and re-energised.

The Southern Ocean's finest seafood: Apollo bay is the crayfish capital of the Great Ocean Road.





Key strengths

- Chamber profile – seen as a strong advocate for both the business sector and community on key issues impacting the town
- Destination branding – the strong branding for Apollo Bay township and key events aided by active social media
- Events – new events and strengthening of existing events with the Seafood Festival strengthening the brand positioning for Apollo Bay
- Some funding wins including the commitment in 2016 for events and GOR upgrades
- Investment in new developments/products – including the proposed Barham River development and Wildlife Wonders
- Higher yielding visitors – free independent travellers spending more time and money in town
- Thriving businesses – now trading all year round
- Apollo Bay P12 College voted best regional school in 2016 and 2017
- Great Ocean Walk product has grown and being actively promoted by Parks Victoria
- Numerous activities/attractions nearby – Otways, Shipwreck Coast, other GOR villages
- NBN rollout is occurring providing better connectivity
- Sufficient vacant land surrounding township provides for expansion (not so for other coastal villages)
- Although the township does not have high end group accommodation facility, the township boasts a lot of high end holiday houses.

Key challenges

- Giving structure and greater clarity around priority projects (ABCC)
- Provision of permanent accommodation (rentals) to attract working population – leads to employment sustainability
- Lack of walking/cycling tracks around town
- Sustainability of events around increasing workload and funding
- Demographic of residents – census data reflects aging population
- Advocacy around key strategic issues – cohesiveness of stakeholder organisations in the area (numerous land managers)
- Maintenance of key infrastructure; i.e., foreshore, National Park and GOR
- Visitor management – toilets required along key visitor nodes and the existing beach car parking and visitor signage needs investment
- Unmanaged parking within town centre
- Government structure – state government funding favours Melbourne with regional infrastructure neglected
- Creating employment that keeps the youth of Apollo Bay living in Apollo Bay
- Waste Management all year around
- Adapting to the growing overnight Chinese market
- Lack of night time activities, particularly for locals.

Priority opportunities

1. Maintaining community cohesion and engagement, having a shared vision and identity – retaining the Apollo Bay culture
2. Improved infrastructure for residents and visitors – better roads, bike paths, walks; all requiring infrastructure investment
3. Harbour Precinct Development.

Other priorities/activities

Enhance the visitor experience. Apollo Bay is a place that is a well-known destination and provides a broad, quality experience which is great value. Opportunity and need for:

- Create a 'Wow' factor when people arrive
- Increase focus on permanent attractions and infrastructure such as coastal trails and public art
- A range of accommodation styles/prices to meet various markets (domestic/international)
- Package natural attractions – to draw on length of stay (including Wildlife Wanders)
- Adventure, relaxation (including. Otway Fly, Otway Treetops Adventures)
- Start of the Great Ocean Walk
- Quality bike and walking paths from Marengo to Skenes Creek
- Indoor heated swimming pool

Harbour precinct redevelopment (priority) offering a range of experiences including:

- Crayfish tours
- Health and wellbeing including spa
- Walkway boulevard
- Coffee shop
- Sailing club

Access to local produce/arts – unique souvenirs

- Create a 'Made in Otways' food brand to facilitate brand integrity
- Experience the cultural artistic essence of the community

Events – take a strategic approach to address the following:

- Utilise events to reflect brand strengths and also to address seasonality
- Development and sustainability (funding)
- Dependence on volunteers.



Action Plan implementation

The following Action Plan outlines priorities and actions as a guide for the Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce Inc. to collaboratively and cooperatively implement the Plan.

The Chamber will determine and review priorities on an annual basis with the flexibility to address urgent matters should they arise.

The role of local business/tourism organisations throughout Regional Australia has, in recent times, shifted from a 'doing' role to that of providing leadership, advocacy, networking, communication and facilitation. There is general agreement that the Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce fits within that charter.

Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce VISION STATEMENT

Purpose

The purpose of the association is to foster a professional and collaborative business sector and to promote the economic well-being of Apollo Bay and district.

Vision

The Chamber is a champion of local character and a driver of local prosperity with a vision for a more prosperous and liveable community where people can sustain a quality lifestyle doing the things they love.

Roles

1. The Chamber is a key organisation for advocating to key government authorities and associated organisations about issues that influence and impact the character, economy and liveability of our town and community
2. To liaise with and strive to co-ordinate the activities of the various community groups, committees and local government departments that affect the physical and social makeup of Apollo Bay and district.

Key goals

1. Advocate for the dredging of the whole of the Apollo Bay Harbour to its maximum working depth, so as to both maintain it as a working fishing harbour and major visitor attraction **[High]**;
2. Achieve a workable, sustainable and funded solution to the issue of bus parking, visitor toilets, streetscape, other amenities and associated traffic management/ flow **[High]**;
3. The development of walking and riding trails, particularly the proposed Wild Dog to Skenes Creek Discovery Trail as well as re-opening Marriners Falls to the public **[High]**;
4. Cement the iconic cultural events such as Seafood Festival and WinterWild into the annual calendar **[High]**;
5. Develop a program to 'meet the locals' called 'The Place to Do It', enabling visitors to tap into local groups, clubs and communities **[Medium]**;
6. Pursue accelerating the transition of the local economy from a summer seasonal one to an economy based on all-year-round activities – leading to more full-time employment and more accessible rental accommodation **[Medium]**;
7. Advocate for development of low cost, quality rental accommodation for workers in the town and surrounds **[Medium]**.



Key result areas

KRA 1: Visitor Experience

Communicate the current experiences on offer and advocate for the development of a greater range of activities, products and enhanced services. Confirm Apollo Bay as the centre point or heart of Great Ocean Road.

ACTIONS

PRIORITY/TIMING

1.	<p>Product development – ensure the collaborative promotion of existing activities and support the development of a greater range of easy and universally accessible activities around town for residents and visitors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 'The Place to Do It' program to include visitors in local groups and activities [Champion – Bob Knowles] ▪ Create and on-sell night time activities including restaurants, night sculpture walk, glow worms, festival programs ▪ Promote existing trails and walks 	Medium
2.	<p>Advocate for new and improved visitor services [Multiple Champions]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bus parking strategy to be in place ▪ Traffic management/flow to be improved – consider one-way status of main street or pedestrian-only strip ▪ The introduction of local tour services, packages ▪ Developing an integrated booking service (run from VIC), luggage storage, hot showers ▪ Better maintenance of visitor facilities in particular toilets, walking trails and lookouts ▪ Consider how 'service excellence' is acknowledged and rewarded 	High
3.	<p>Advocate for development of major conference facilities, function and performance spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enable discussions and community consultation around major new developments 	Low
4.	<p>Community and industry development [Champion – Holly Humphries]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support a cultural awareness program for the community to enhance the Chinese visitor experience ▪ Encourage online training programs or webinars for local business owner/operators ▪ Seek student engagement within the program ▪ Provide classes in Mandarin ▪ Seek to include Mandarin on the P12 curriculum. 	Medium

Key result areas CONT.



KRA 2: Marketing

In partnership with GORRT, guide the implementation of the marketing strategy for Apollo Bay with brand and product development including events.

ACTIONS

PRIORITY/TIMING

1.	Broader profiling of Apollo Bay (when visitors are planning their trip)	Medium
2.	Business participation and take-up of brand elements assisting in the promotion of points of difference between Apollo Bay and other coastal towns	Medium
3.	Public art /streetscape/iconic infrastructure to reflect brand elements	Medium
4.	Create a sense of arrival (determine how this will look i.e. Gateways/welcome at Skenes Creek/Marengo or to township, or theme consistent to all)	Medium
5.	Use the brand elements to enhance the marketing of our events.	Medium

Key result areas CONT.



KRA 3: Sharing of cultural heritage and environment

Capitalise on the opportunity for the community and visitors to the physical and emotional connection (stories shared first-hand or through interpretive experiences).

ACTIONS

PRIORITY/TIMING

1.	Storytelling – create and promote authentic representations of history and our environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use local ambassadors to tell their stories e.g. Nick telling stories of his industry's history 	Medium
2.	Promoting aboriginal and European history and the history of the land and environs (i.e. premium storytelling guided, tours free guided tours from the information centre – and Wildlife Wanders)	Low
3.	Celebrate our food and connection to the ocean	High
4.	Maximise existing activities such as the museum and the visitor information centre <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical infrastructure – maps and interpretive signage Community connections Cultural awareness education for students. 	Medium

Key result areas CONT.



KRA 4: Advocacy

The Chamber to assume a strong advocacy role on key issues impacting business/community and providing the necessary leadership, with an emphasis on communicating the value of tourism to the community.

ACTIONS

PRIORITY/TIMING

<p>1. Community engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chamber to inform and consult with the broader community and be the voice for this community with an emphasis on communicating the value of tourism 	High
<p>2. Collaboration with strategic partners (COS, GORRT and Parks Vic, OCC, DELWP etc)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seek an integrated plan for foreshore, harbour and main business strip ▪ Support other agencies on all of shire and regional issues e.g. signage for GOR road and key attractions 	High
<p>3. Representing the town on key issues to Government</p> <p>Issues include but not limited to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintenance and provision of quality infrastructure, amenity and public open spaces ▪ Skilled labour shortage (lack of familiarity with Mandarin), high percentage of casual workers ▪ Lack of permanent rental accommodation for workers ▪ Not meeting international visitor expectations <p>This will require the Chamber to identify the key strategic issues (annually) via a process allowing member and community engagement and to respond to the 'unplanned' issues as they arise</p>	High
<p>4. Advocating for funding of identified priorities and also being aware of other strategic plans/priorities (SCMP, Forrest MB Plan, etc.) Current priorities include walk/bike trails:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Skenes Creek to Apollo Bay Discovery Trail ▪ Re-opening Marriners Falls ▪ Marengo Marine Sanctuary ▪ Reconsider the walking trails in the Apollo Bay hills ▪ Longer walks connecting the coastal communities 	High
<p>5. Advisory role or referrals to information sources e.g. grant programs – may refer to COS or RDV.</p>	Medium