

# APOLLO BAY



Destination Action Plan 2015–2017

November 2014



GREAT OCEAN ROAD  
REGIONAL TOURISM LIMITED



Image: Robert Blackburn



## 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 and to establish achievable affordable priorities that if delivered would increase Apollo Bay's competitiveness.

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

### Facilitators

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## Introduction

Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Ltd is undertaking the preparation of a Tourism Strategic Master Plan for the Great Ocean Road region which extends from Torquay in the east to the South Australian border in the west.

A core strategy is to recognise that visitors to the region are primarily attracted to destinations and experiences. Therefore the development, marketing and management of the regions destinations are pivotal to the success of the whole region.

This Destination Action Plan for Apollo Bay identifies priority strategies and actions which if implemented over three years will enhance the competitiveness of Apollo Bay as a primary visitor destination of the region. These strategies will also be reflected in the Tourism Strategic Master Plan for the region to facilitate regional collaboration and cooperation.

The Plan has been prepared by a facilitated workshop process involving business and community representatives who considered and reached consensus on tourism development, marketing and management opportunities and challenges. The Group then identified and agreed on the key priorities and actions that would make a positive difference to the growth and sustainability of the Apollo Bay visitor economy and experience.

## The visitor economy

Visitors to Apollo Bay are major contributors to the strength of the local economy. The visitors may be leisure travellers (domestic and international), visitors to friends and relatives, holiday residents, business visitors, students or day-trippers.

Their expenditure is ‘new money’ contributed to the local economy which supports jobs, real estate value and the provision of services, facilities and activities in the community.

The total tourism contribution to the Great Ocean Road region is \$1,832 million, 20,000 jobs, 11.1% of Gross Regional Product and 11.6% employment share. SOURCE: Victorian Regional Satellite Accounts 2011-12 produced by Deloitte Access Economics).

The Colac – Otway Local Government area attracted 323,000 domestic visitors (851,000 nights), representing 83.3% of visitors and 87.3% of nights to the region. Domestic overnight visitors spent on average \$130 per night in the region (Total \$301 million). International overnight travel to Colac – Otway’s was approximately 49,000 per annum, 43.5% of visitors to the whole Great Ocean Road Region. *Visitor night’s data for the region is statistically unreliable.*



Image: Robert Blackburn

## Core values statement

**Relaxed atmosphere, community connection, tranquil 'real' Apollo Bay, fishing village.**

To retain a relaxed ambiance, retaining the 'fishing village' appeal with a focus on the working harbour.

A hub from which to explore the cool temperate Otway rainforests and hinterland.

An engaged and active business community focused on providing quality services and experiences resulting in repeat visits.

Respect for a strong, vibrant and engaged community.



## Objectives

The common objectives for tourism are:

1. To increase visitor numbers
2. To increase visitor length of stay
3. To increase visitor expenditure
4. To increase visitor dispersal (geographically and seasonally)
5. To increase visitor satisfaction.

All of these are relevant to Apollo Bay with a particular focus on, seasonal dispersal and visitor satisfaction.



## Our challenges

**Gaining cohesion amongst all the stakeholders, community and various authorities which are not always aligned.**

- Lack of consistent and shared vision
- Lack of cohesion between community and government bodies in general
- People want change but resistant to change
- Gaining locals support for vision (what is the community support)?
- Constant engagement – not always implemented, community apprehension re inaction.

### Business engagement/sustainability

- **Lack of participation by business – key issue to address**
- Need to improve attitude as we are a town that relies on tourism
- Attitude by providers/operators that visitors will just come
- Lack of funding for local/regional tourism associations and lack of understanding of the return tourism brings to Apollo Bay
- Overpriced and under serviced – too expensive - visitors go elsewhere
- Seasonality
  - Brittle nature of businesses within tourism industry and hence brittle nature of employment exacerbated by the regions seasonality.

## Key challenges

- Lack of a consistent, shared vision
- Lack of participation by business – key issue to address
- Stake holder participation, engagement – greater collaboration required
- Lack of infrastructure, funding and investment (need to identify)
- Foreshore/harbour development/ business case (plans approved by Colac Otway Shire Council)
- Closure of key visitor sites.



Image: Paoli Smith Pty Ltd

## Our challenges cont.

### Infrastructure/services

- Lack of key infrastructure
- Closure of key public infrastructure
- Planning and regulatory barriers to support vision
- Lack of state and federal government funding for public land.

### Resourcing

- Lack of growth, development and opportunity for current residents
- Lack of people power to implement
- Population – need to grow population
- Lack of employment opportunities in Apollo Bay
- Health care and education are under threat and critical to the region
- Rate increases impacting on size of community and sustainability.

### Environment/sustainability

- Threat of natural disaster (fire/flood/access)
- Impact of climate change on foreshore
- Threat of overdevelopment forsaking the fishing village.



## Priorities

1. Community cohesion and engagement, shared vision and identity
2. Better roads, bike paths, walks (infrastructure investment)
3. Harbour Precinct Development.

Image: Andrew Paoli

## Opportunities

### Liveability

- Build our permanent population to be sustainable
- Recognise residents/community vision and reason for living and how that can be captured i.e. Byron Bay focus on being different – maybe on yield not numbers focus on visitor needs and satisfaction
- Quiet places don't destroy what people come here to live for
- Community engaged council/community cohesion lots of experiences keep relaxed vibe

### Create a 'Wow' factor when people arrive

#### Retain small town visual feel – 'village'

- Tranquil 'real' Apollo Bay
- Capture the relaxed, quaint rural experience

### 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:

- A range of accommodation styles/prices to meet various markets (domestic/international)
- Package natural attractions – to draw on length of stay
  - Adventure, relaxation (including Otway Fly)
  - Start of the Great Ocean Walk
  - Quality bike and walking paths from Marengo to Skenes Creek
- Harbour redevelopment (probably biggest opportunity for Apollo Bay)
  - Experience precinct
  - Crayfish tours
  - Health and wellbeing including spa
  - Walkway boulevard
  - Coffee shop
  - Sailing club
  - Indoor heated swimming pool
- Access to local produce/arts – unique souvenirs
  - Create a made in Otways food brand - to facilitate brand integrity
  - Experience the cultural artist essence of the community

Events – run out of steam after 10 years development and sustainability (great opportunity to reflect brand strengths/address seasonality)

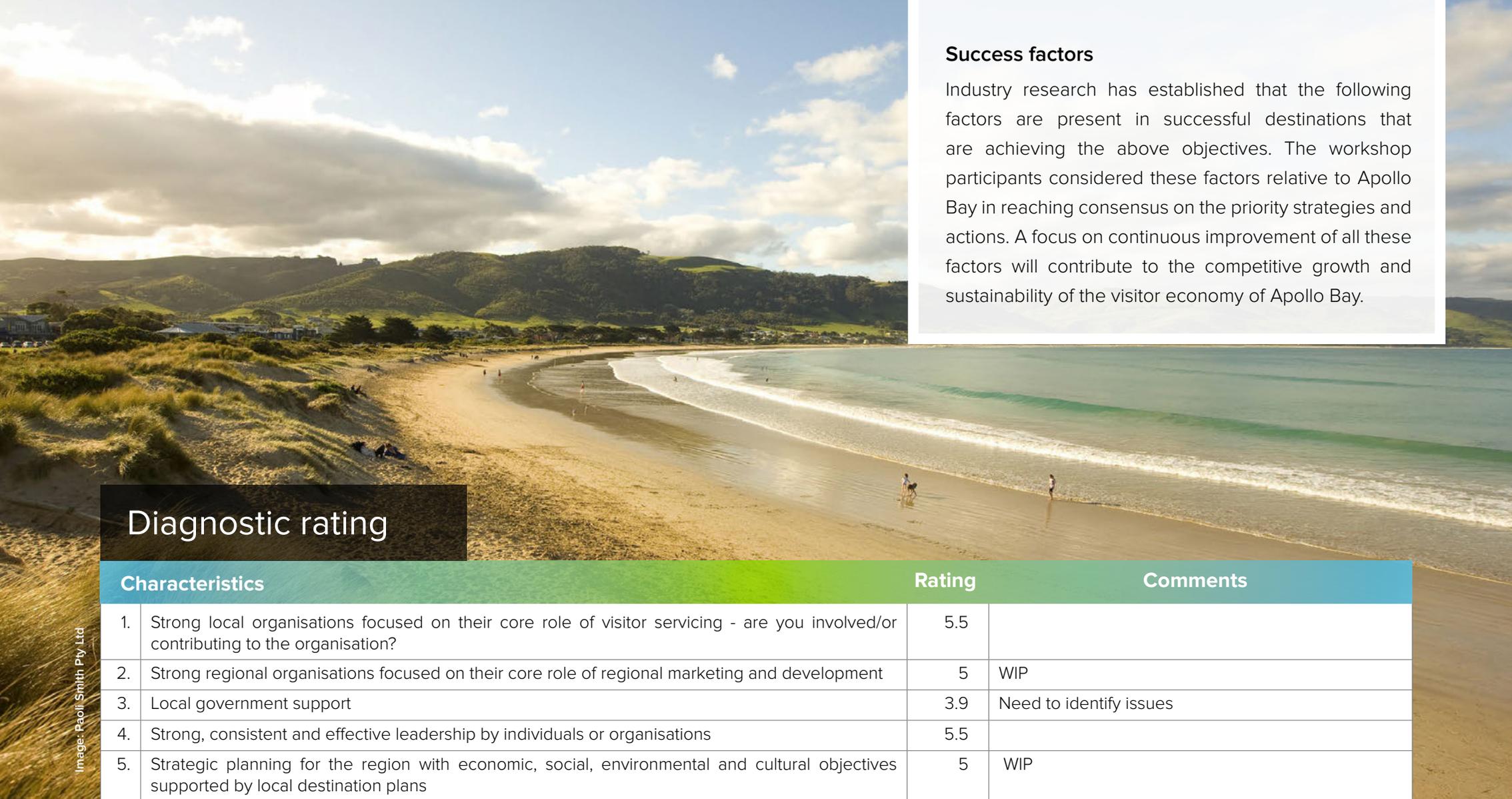
Communicate the importance of the visitor economy to the sustainability of the town (tourism growth = employment opportunities)

More involvement from different businesses in Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce & Tourism

- Support customer service award through the Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce & Tourism

Ability to employ and educate locally

- Pool of talent, knowledge, experience and crafts.



### Success factors

Industry research has established that the following factors are present in successful destinations that are achieving the above objectives. The workshop participants considered these factors relative to Apollo Bay in reaching consensus on the priority strategies and actions. A focus on continuous improvement of all these factors will contribute to the competitive growth and sustainability of the visitor economy of Apollo Bay.

## Diagnostic rating

Characteristics		Rating	Comments
1.	Strong local organisations focused on their core role of visitor servicing - are you involved/or contributing to the organisation?	5.5	
2.	Strong regional organisations focused on their core role of regional marketing and development	5	WIP
3.	Local government support	3.9	Need to identify issues
4.	Strong, consistent and effective leadership by individuals or organisations	5.5	
5.	Strategic planning for the region with economic, social, environmental and cultural objectives supported by local destination plans	5	WIP
6.	Consistent visitor service excellence	3.2	Repeat visits unlikely, word of mouth negative, etc.
7.	Research driven cooperative marketing	5	WIP
8.	A breadth and depth of tourism infrastructure, experiences and events matched to market demand	4.2	Need to expand to increase length of stay
9.	Risk management plans in place	3	
10.	Supportive communities which understand the value of tourism.	3.8	

Image: Paoli Smith Pty Ltd



Image: Mark Watson



## Action Plan implementation

The following Action Plan outlines priorities and actions as a guide for Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Ltd, Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce & Tourism and the Colac Otway Shire Council to collaboratively and cooperatively implement the plan. To facilitate this, an Implementation Leadership Group of representatives will be formed. While the Plan identifies primary organisational responsibilities and in many cases joint responsibility, it is reasonable to expect that the Implementation Leadership Group will consider and review this progressively. One key consideration will be the availability and securing of resources to progress the implementation of the plan in a timely manner. It may also be appropriate and necessary to involve other organisations and to seek funding for specific projects.

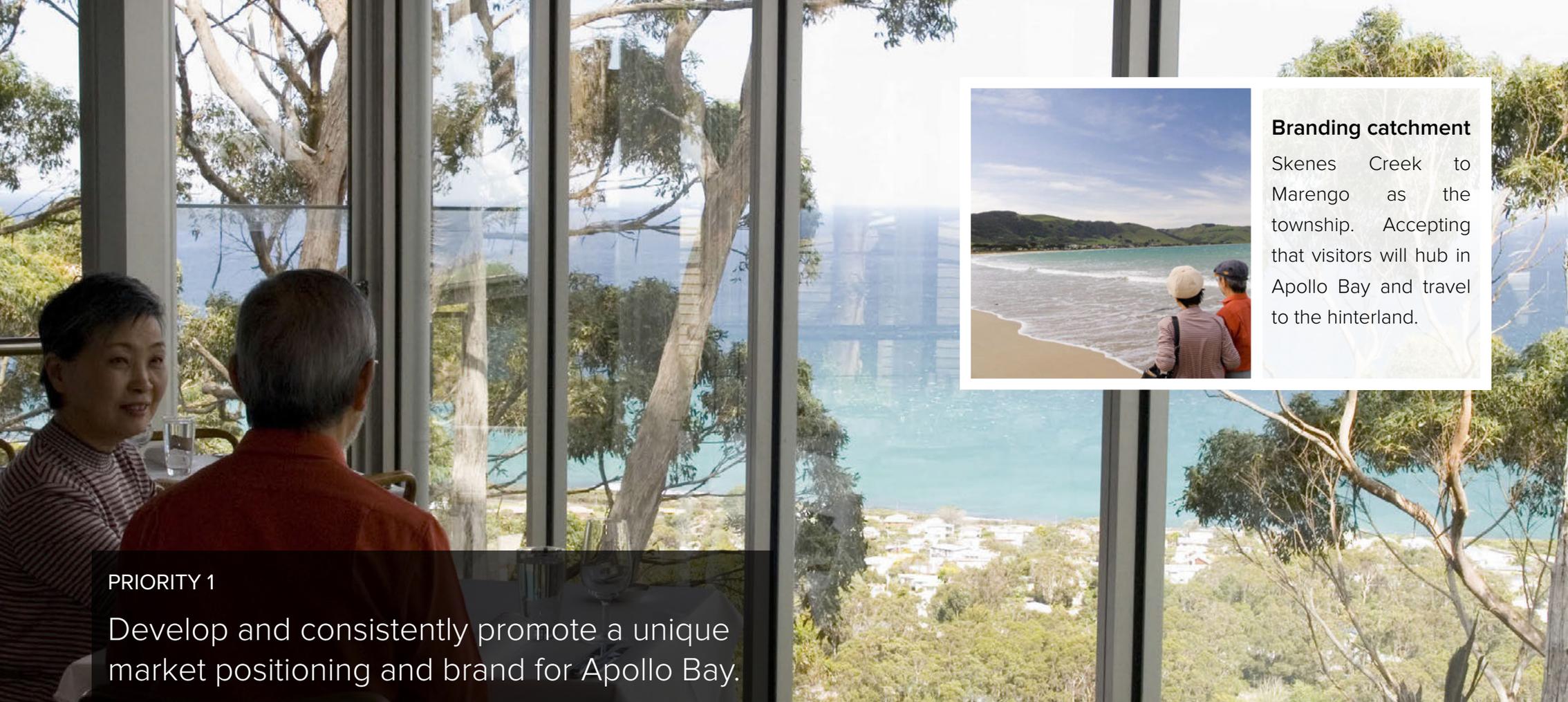
The Plan does not commit any organisation to the actions proposed but is a guide to pursuing priorities and actions which will make a positive difference to the achievement of the tourism objectives noted above.

The priority actions have been assigned a KPI priority rating as a guide. These ratings are:

- HIGH within the first year
- MEDIUM within one to two years
- LOW within three years

Progress of implementation of the Plan will be undertaken annually by Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Ltd in consultation with the Implementation Leadership Group. This may result in a revision and updating of the Plan. Regardless, a new plan will be prepared in three years.

The Destination Action Plan will provide input to the preparation of a Strategic Master Plan for the Great Ocean Road region.



**Branding catchment**  
 Skenes Creek to Marengo as the township. Accepting that visitors will hub in Apollo Bay and travel to the hinterland.

**PRIORITY 1**

Develop and consistently promote a unique market positioning and brand for Apollo Bay.

Actions		Responsibilities	Priorities
1.	In collaboration with key stakeholder organisations, undertake a destination positioning process. Consideration to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Beach and Otway's National Park, village tranquillity</li> <li>▪ Natural, relaxation, escape</li> <li>▪ Fishing village theme</li> <li>▪ Heart of the Great Ocean Road</li> </ul>	Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism, Implementation Leadership Group, Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce & Tourism	High
2.	Develop an Implementation and Action Plan to encourage consistent use of the Apollo Bay positioning and bring to life: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Encourage local business and organisations to use Apollo Bay branding and merchandise.</li> </ul>	Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism, Implementation Leadership Group, Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce & Tourism	High

## PRIORITY 2

Develop and maintain infrastructure, visitor experiences to match demand, improve seasonal dispersal and to complement the positioning.

Actions	Responsibilities	Priorities												
1. Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Ltd Board to facilitate a multi agency public land management workshop to discuss regions challenges, opportunities and priorities and create agreement on level of service and greater opportunities for collaboration	GORRT	High												
2. Develop a sustainable cost structure for public infrastructure for the visitor/community	State government, Colac Otway Shire Council	Ongoing												
3. Implementation Leadership Group to develop criteria to audit key visitor sites and determine 'visitor value' priorities and costs associated with maintenance and renewal – Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Ltd to assess whether or not there is a current matrix/template	GORRT, Implementation Leadership Group, Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce and Tourism	High												
<p>4. Public land visitor sites and facilities to be open and well maintained year round. List of priorities to include, but not limited to the following sites:</p> <table border="0" data-bbox="260 1218 1315 1372"> <tr> <td>▪ Mariners Falls</td> <td>▪ Waterfalls</td> <td>▪ Red Woods</td> </tr> <tr> <td>▪ Mariners Lookout</td> <td>▪ Binns Road</td> <td>▪ Maits Rest</td> </tr> <tr> <td>▪ Turton's Track</td> <td>▪ Paradise</td> <td>▪ Harbour Precinct</td> </tr> <tr> <td>▪ Foreshore Reserve</td> <td>▪ Great Ocean Walk</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p>Note: Synergies in Otways experiences. National Heritage listing, no master plan.</p>	▪ Mariners Falls	▪ Waterfalls	▪ Red Woods	▪ Mariners Lookout	▪ Binns Road	▪ Maits Rest	▪ Turton's Track	▪ Paradise	▪ Harbour Precinct	▪ Foreshore Reserve	▪ Great Ocean Walk		GORRT, Implementation Leadership Group to lobby	High, ongoing
▪ Mariners Falls	▪ Waterfalls	▪ Red Woods												
▪ Mariners Lookout	▪ Binns Road	▪ Maits Rest												
▪ Turton's Track	▪ Paradise	▪ Harbour Precinct												
▪ Foreshore Reserve	▪ Great Ocean Walk													
5. Advocate for the maintenance of the quality of the Great Ocean Road as a world standard touring experience (road surface, vistas, lookout points, signing, information)	VicRoads	High, ongoing												



**PRIORITY 2 cont.**

Actions		Responsibilities	Priorities
6.	Encourage and showcase artisan products, Otways branded produce and especially feature seafood on restaurant menus and via the Fisherman's Co-operative (The best seafood on the Great Ocean Road), promote planning opportunities	Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Ltd, Implementation Leadership Group, Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce & Tourism	High
7.	Signify and promote the start of the Great Ocean Walk	Parks Vic, Colac Otway Shire Council, Otways Tourism	High
8.	Develop the Events Plan to complement and ensure continuous improvement of the Great Ocean Road Marathon, Seafood festival and Music festival and crayfish season: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consideration to be given to the employment of a dedicated resource</li> <li>▪ Development of the tools and templates to support the back of house functions to build capability</li> </ul>	Colac Otway Shire Council to develop strategy/manage calendar of events. Continue work on manual/facilitate workshops. Tie in with Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Ltd Events Strategy	High
9.	Develop walking and bike paths from Marengo to Skenes Creek: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Active transport committee has identified priority paths etc. and are undertaking a way finding strategy</li> <li>▪ Otway Coast Committee also undertaking as part of the Foreshore Management Plan have funding to undertake construction and design drawings, external funding for building will need to be sought</li> </ul>	Otway Coast Committee	High, subject to funding Plans completed
10.	Develop the Visitor Information Centre into a Visitor Experience Centre – to be considered in the Apollo Bay Harbour Development Plan.	Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Ltd, Colac Otway Shire Council	Low

Images: Bill Fox



**PRIORITY 3**

Support the development of the harbour and foreshore precincts.

Actions	Responsibilities	Priorities
1. Support the Harbour Development Plan. Plan to include the following elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fishing village, heritage theme</li> <li>▪ Cray fishing interpretation ‘visitor experience’</li> <li>▪ Health and wellbeing including indoor heated pool, spa</li> <li>▪ Walkway boulevard, coffee/cafe, artisans and produce showcase/markets (indoor facility)</li> <li>▪ Public toilets</li> <li>▪ Sailing club</li> <li>▪ Power boat launching/parking</li> <li>▪ Beach access, tracks and trails headland and facilities</li> </ul>	Colac Otway Shire Council, Implementation Leadership Group, Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce & Tourism, Otway Coast Committee	High
2. Support the development of the Foreshore Precinct Plan	Colac Otway Shire Council, Implementation Leadership Group, Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce & Tourism, Otway Coast Committee	High
3. Encourage the two plans to integrate and to inform each other.	Colac Otway Shire Council, Implementation Leadership Group, Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce & Tourism, Otway Coast Committee	High

Image: Bill Fox

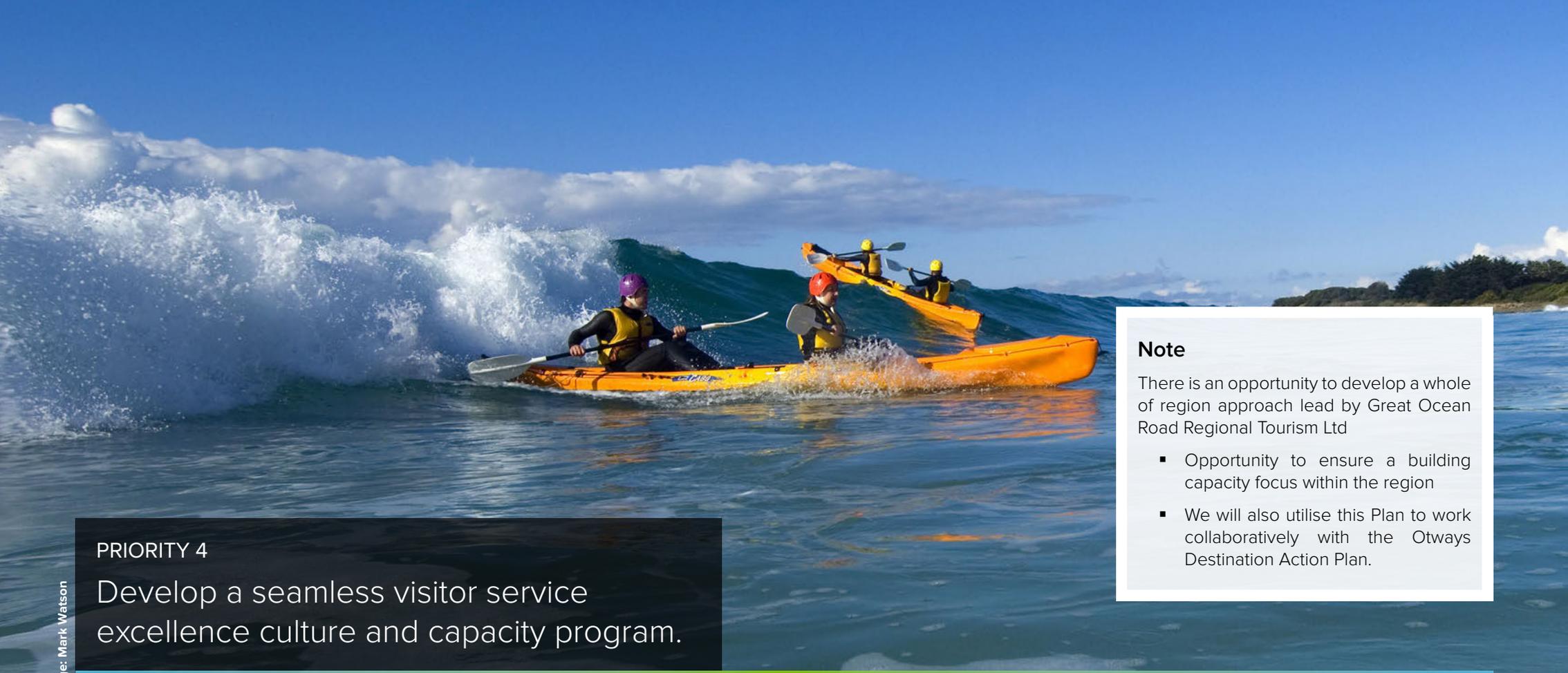


Image: Mark Watson

**PRIORITY 4**

Develop a seamless visitor service excellence culture and capacity program.

**Note**

There is an opportunity to develop a whole of region approach lead by Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Ltd

- Opportunity to ensure a building capacity focus within the region
- We will also utilise this Plan to work collaboratively with the Otways Destination Action Plan.

Actions		Responsibilities	Priorities
1.	Develop and implement a ‘visitor service excellence’ program for business. Program to include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Survey and benchmark visitor satisfaction including a ‘mystery shopper’ program</li> <li>▪ Establish a program to recognise and promote business excellence e.g. Tourism business and personality of the month Award</li> <li>▪ Implement a ‘Best 5 Things to do and see in and around Apollo Bay’ program for business and the community with seasonal variation including a communications plan</li> <li>▪ Integrate visitor service excellence and welcoming into communication of the value of tourism to the community</li> </ul>	Implementation Leadership Group, Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce & Tourism, GORRT to assist in program development (for whole of region)	High
2.	Participate in a Great Ocean Road Visitor Information Centre staff, volunteer and Industry familiarisation program	Otways Tourism	Medium
3.	Develop and implement a community involvement program.	Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce & Tourism	Low (industry is the priority)



Image: Robert Blackburn

**PRIORITY 5**

Promote the value of the visitor economy to the community.

Actions		Responsibilities	Priorities
1.	Prepare and regularly communicate, via multiple mediums, the economic, social/community, cultural and environmental benefits of the visitor economy – feature good news stories, people and visitor business excellence	Implementation Leadership Group, Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce & Tourism, Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Ltd	Ongoing
2.	Provide educational material to schools on the Apollo Bay and Great Ocean Road visitor industry.	Otways Tourism, Colac Otway Shire Council	Medium



Image: Andrew Paoli

**PRIORITY 6**

Increase stakeholder participation and regional partner collaboration and cooperation.

Actions		Responsibilities	Priorities
1.	Establish a three year Destination Partnership Agreement between Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce & Tourism, Colac Otway and Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Ltd to maximise business participation and to undertake cooperative projects for mutual benefit, based on this Action Plan	All	Medium
2.	Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce & Tourism to collaborate with Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Ltd to facilitate relationships with other Great Ocean Road destination organisations to identify mutually beneficial cooperation and to undertake cooperative projects	Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce & Tourism, GORRT	Medium
3.	Build the strength of the Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce & Tourism, to ensure it is more representative and capable of communicating the challenges and achievements of the Chamber and the industry	Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce & Tourism	High
4.	Include relevant actions from this Plan in a proposed three year Partnership Agreement between Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Ltd, Colac Otway Shire Council	GORRT, Colac Otway Shire Council	Medium
5.	Identify WIFI strategy for the individual businesses	GORRT Otways Tourism	Medium
6.	Develop a strategy for long term financial sustainability – consider all options including levies/differential rate (as per Surf Coast \$1.5 million).	Colac Otway Shire Council, Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce & Tourism, GORRT	High

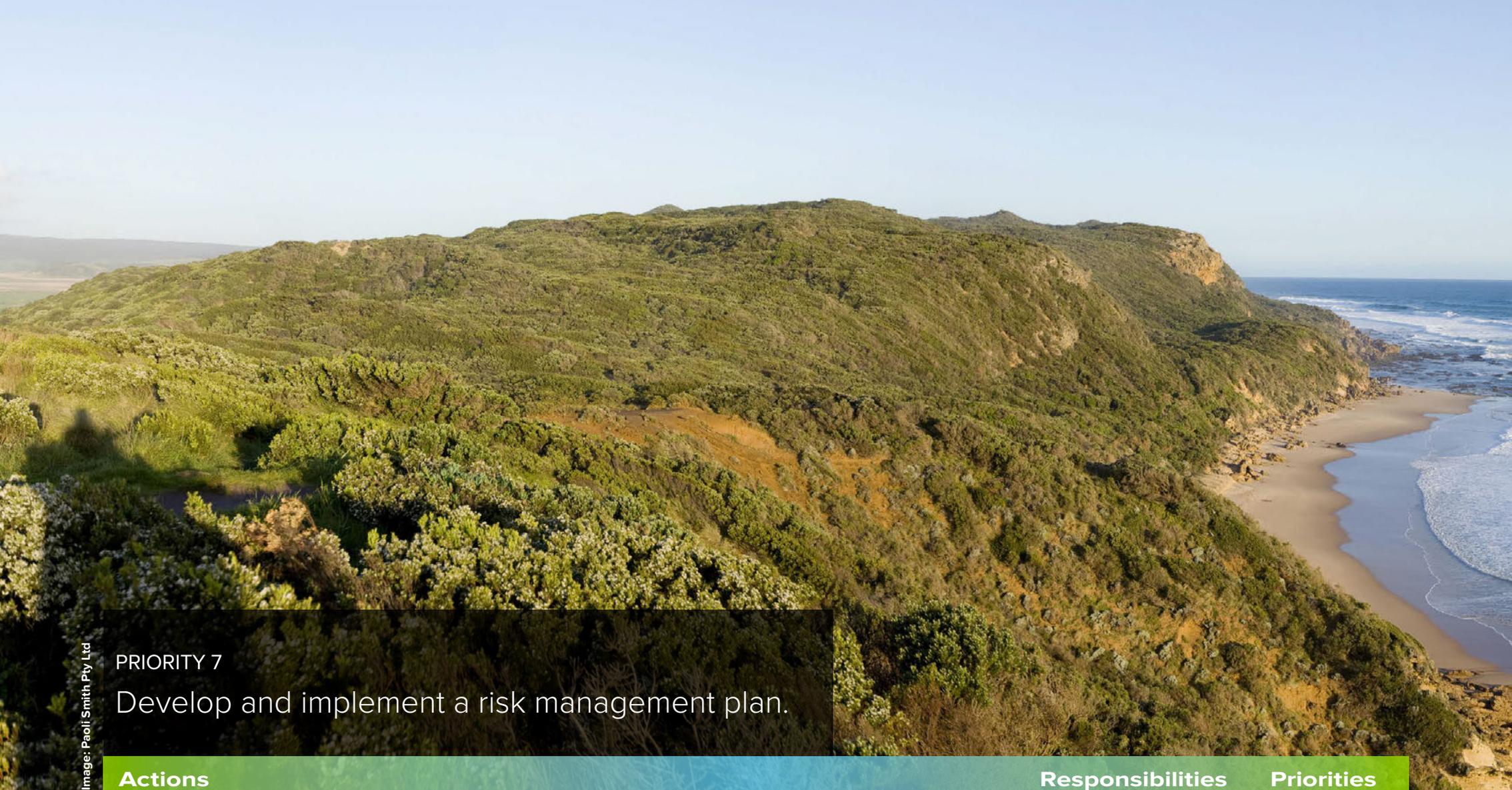


Image: Paoli Smith Pty Ltd

**PRIORITY 7**  
 Develop and implement a risk management plan.

Actions		Responsibilities	Priorities
1.	Review the existence and completeness of risk management plans to include the visitor economy	Colac Otway Shire Council, Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Ltd	Medium - High
2.	Prepare a specific visitor industry risk management plan including risk identification, mitigation, impact minimisation and recovery	Colac Otway Shire Council	Medium - High
3.	Regularly communicate and review the plan.	Colac Otway Shire Council	Ongoing