

OTWAY COAST HAMLETS

Separation Creek, Wye River, Kennett River & Wongarra



Destination Action Plan 2017–2020

June 2017

Acknowledgments

The development of the Otway Coast Hamlets Destination Action Plan has been facilitated by Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Ltd (GORRT) as a project funded via Regional Development Victoria (RDV) as part of the recovery program for the 2015-2016 Bushfire.

Destination Action Plans are also in response to strategies and actions from the *Strategic Master Plan for the Great Ocean Road Region Visitor Economy 2015-2025*.

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 the Central Otway Coast and to establish achievable and affordable priorities and actions that if delivered would increase the value of the visitor economy to the Otway Coast Hamlets.

Specifically we would like to thank the people who participated in the plan development process:

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Introduction

Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Ltd completed the preparation of the Strategic Master Plan in 2015 for the Great Ocean Road region which extends from Torquay in the east to the South Australian border in the west.

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

This Destination Action Plan for the Otway Coast Hamlets identifies priority strategies and actions for the villages of Separation Creek, Wye River, Kennett River and Wongarra that will enhance the competitiveness of the destination/s. These strategies are consistent with the Visitor Economy Strategic Master Plan for the region to facilitate regional collaboration and cooperation; a key element to success.



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The visitor economy

Visitors to the Otway Coast Hamlets are major contributors to the strength 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. Accommodation is predominantly camping in holiday parks and holiday rental homes and there are few retail and food and beverage outlets. 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.

The 2015-2016 bushfire had a significant impact on the Otway Coast Hamlets, destroying bushland and homes. The publicity resulting from the fire and the rebuilding process has also impacted on visitor market perceptions.

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.

Objectives

The common objectives for tourism that are relevant to the Otway Coast Hamlets and this Plan are:

1. To increase visitor length of stay
2. To increase visitor expenditure
3. To increase visitor dispersal seasonally
4. To increase visitor satisfaction.

Additionally, an important guiding objective for this Plan is to develop the environmental sustainability of the villages and accessible nature based tourism experiences.

Our vision

'The Otway Coast Hamlets celebrate the Otways meeting the coast. The perfect hub to explore and immerse yourself in the natural attractions and the riches they produce, synonymous with the Great Ocean Road region.

Known for its rich and diverse natural environment, the visitor and community amenity supports and showcases the breadth of ways to enjoy and explore including the opportunity to capture the majestic ocean vistas and to see a range of native wildlife.

The visitor experience is seamlessly managed and supports sustainability of flora and fauna. The experience of visitors and local community members is symbiotic and mutually respectful. Visitors leave the area with an increased understanding of responsible approaches to engaging with a fragile environment and a positive experience of our coast and hinterland.'



Our values

- Environmental sustainability
- Responsible tourism
- Respect for nature
- Relaxed and laid back
- Resilient.



Our collective strengths

- This piece of the Great Ocean Road and its coastal villages, reflect its true experience
- Unspoiled coastal wilderness
- Beach meets the bush
- Peace and tranquillity
- Connection with nature
- Family, retiree and visitor holiday haven
- Uncommercialised coastal villages.



Our challenges

Funding for infrastructure improvements	8
Lack of integrated wildlife and habitat plan	5
Poor internet and phone coverage	4
Lack of micro destination promotion	4
Too many agencies associated with management of the road	3
Mass visitation management	2
Disruption by OTA's impact on RTB/LTA's	2
Coastal inundation and erosion	1
Limited on ground information – day visitor conversion	1
Funding for maintaining servicing	
Not destroying the key visitor experiences and sites	
Lack of community/holiday owners/involvement	
Next two years construction – disruption to visitor experience	
Alignment of multiple stakeholders	
Lack of regional economic opportunities – (e.g. aging population and volunteers)	
Disconnect between demand and government infrastructure support/development	
Increasing visitor volumes and spend	
Shared objectives – government agencies, business and organisations, community	
Economic viability/sustainability of attractions (if road closure for extended periods)	
Lack of adequate commercial recycling service	
12 A's centric promotion	
Lack of visitor revenue for local reinvestment	
Potential hostility/tension between locals and industry	
Lack of management of tour groups	
Need to act on strategies and plans	
Local government support for facilities e.g. parking and toilets	
Regional visitor experience improvement and management	
Cultural awareness and sensitivity – locals/visitors	
Road closures/parking	



Our opportunities

Destination brand development	7
Maximise road upgrade – visitor experience and visitor safety	6
Marketing and promotion for each sub region food trails and experiences	4
Tools to include maps	
Digital focus	
Hinterland infrastructure e.g. walks and trails	4
Be known for world best practice for enhancing natural environment from visitor income and input	4
State of the art signage – wayfinding, info, history, fire, walks, wildlife	3
Development of better viewing platforms along GOR	3
Tourism operator and Community partnerships to support local goals/projects	2
Data gathering and sharing – visitors needs/future demand	1
Advocacy – lack of election ready projects	1
Create a Little GOW manageable for children	
Farm and local produce	
Leverage DWELP – post fire wildlife plan including education	
Local communication with tour operators	
Rebuild = new quality accommodation	
Create an event – especially in winter or off peak	
Economic demand/product existence	
Potential for co-op marketing	
Public transport – coast links	
Multi-organisation cooperation – sharing with communities	



DIAGNOSTIC RATING

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 (**rating them from 1 to 10**) relative to the Otway Coast Hamlets 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 the Central Otway Coast.

Success factors

CHARACTERISTICS	RATING	COMMENTS
1. Strong local organisations focused on their core role of visitor servicing	5.2	Has been challenged to get coverage and participating operators across entire area
2. Strong regional organisations focused on their core role of regional marketing and development	6.7	Opportunity for further engagement
3. Local Government support	4.8	Opportunity for improved support
4. Strong, consistent and effective leadership by individuals or organisations	6.3	Needs to be valued and nurtured
5. Strategic planning for the region with economic, social, environmental and cultural objectives supported by local destination plans	5+	In progress
6. Consistent visitor service excellence	7+ Business 4 Community	Opportunity for holistic improvement to welcome and value visitors
7. Research driven cooperative marketing	5.5	Opportunity for increased collaboration through GORRT
8. A breadth and depth of tourism infrastructure, experiences and events matched to market demand	5.2	Product and infrastructure development opportunity
9. Risk management plans in place	3.75	Action to address required
10. Supportive communities which understand the value of tourism.	3.9	Need for improvement (communication and engagement) between industry and community.



Action Plan implementation

The following Action Plan outlines priorities and actions as a guide for stakeholders 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 of a \$50,000 grant 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 assessment and of implementation of the Plan will be undertaken annually by Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism 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.

Responsible organisations

Regional Development Victoria (**RDV**), Wye River & Kennett River Surf Life Saving Clubs (**WRSLSC & KRSLSC**), Kennett River Association (**KRA**), Otway Tourism Advisory Committee (**OTAC**), Otway Coast Committee (**OCC**), Otway Coast Tourism (**OCT**), Visit Victoria (**VV**), VicRoads, Country Fire Authority (**CFA**), Parks Victoria (**PV**), Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Ltd (**GORRT**), Colac Otway Shire (**COS**), Wye Progress Association (**WPA**), Community Resilience Committee (**CRC**).

The Implementation Leadership Group (**ILG**) will have a coordination and leadership role for all strategies and actions.



PRIORITY 1

Destination marketing

ACTIONS

RESPONSIBILITIES

PRIORITIES

1.	<p>Develop and consistently promote a unique market positioning and brand for the GOR Central Coast</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Undertake the GORRT facilitated destination positioning process ▪ Develop an implementation Action Plan to encourage consistent use of the GOR Central Coast brand and positioning by business and community organisations ▪ Feature and integrate the agreed brand and positioning on the Central Coast website (or alternative such as a page within a current GORRT website such as VGOR or Otways) 	<p>GORRT Colac Otway Shire ILG</p>	<p>High</p>
2.	<p>Develop a marketing plan for the GOR Central Coast destination in collaboration with GORRT Ltd to facilitate integration with the GORRT marketing strategy.</p>	<p>GORRT, COS OCT, ILG</p>	<p>Medium (2-7)</p>
3.	<p>Appoint a representative to join the GORRT Marketing Committee</p>		
4.	<p>Negotiate a partnership Agreement between Otway Coast Tourism Association and GORRT Ltd</p>		
5.	<p>Encourage local business to participate in the GORRT marketing services program. (Note: subject to 1.4, GORRT will contribute 20% of business services purchased to the local association.</p>		
6.	<p>Consider redeveloping the Otway Coast Tourism website to be consistent with the GORRT digital strategy and to ensure up to date local content curation.</p>		
7.	<p>Collaboration with neighbouring destinations, The Otways, Apollo Bay and Lorne for visitor dispersal.</p>		



PRIORITY 2

Infrastructure and product development

ACTIONS		RESPONSIBILITIES	PRIORITIES
<p>1. Prepare a priority list of infrastructure maintenance and improvements for the GOR Central Coast towns (Wye River, Kennett River, Separation Creek, Wongarra) Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accessible public toilets and wayfinding signing ▪ Picnic and BBQ sites ▪ Safe viewing platforms ▪ Parking and pedestrian crossings/safe havens ▪ Public transport services ▪ Local shuttle bus service ▪ Rubbish management ▪ Internet and phone services ▪ Wi-Fi hotspot. 	<p>COS, OCC DEWLP, ILG</p>	<p>High</p>	
<p>2. Identify specific maintenance and development improvements of the Otway Coast Hamlets sections of the Great Ocean Road, as part of the current and any future Government funded maintenance program. Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rationalise road signing ▪ Landslip stabilisation and reinstatement of Paddy's Path? ▪ Viewing sites ▪ Vegetation clearing for vista exposure ▪ Safe turn out lanes ▪ On road directional signing ▪ Safety in regard to international drivers ▪ Safe pedestrian access and havens ▪ Cycle lanes and associated vegetation clearing to improve safety ▪ Rubbish management ▪ Wildlife, historical and Indigenous interpretive/information signing at viewing points. 	<p>VicRoads, ILG</p>	<p>High</p>	



PRIORITY 2 cont.

ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITIES	PRIORITIES
<p>3. Advocate for the priorities of 2.1 and 2.2, either directly to Colac Otway Shire and/or in collaboration with GORRT to State and Federal Government where appropriate.</p>	<p>ILG, GORRT</p>	
<p>4. Consider opportunities and prepare a product development plan, matched to market demand and consistent with the Strategic Master Plan for the Great Ocean Road Region Visitor Economy 2015-2025. Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Walking trails – feasibility & implementation of local trails ▪ MTB? Is there an opportunity? ▪ Proposal for feasibility of Great Ocean Walk extension ▪ Nature (flora and fauna) interpretive signing ▪ Touring loop to the hinterland ▪ Local produce experiences ▪ Local events and activities (e.g. seasonal nature walks, summer beach activities) ▪ Collaborative initiatives with The Otways Destination Action Plan ▪ Hinterland sites (e.g. Redwood Forrest) ▪ New accommodation offerings post fire reconstruction ▪ Camping sites in National Parks and Freedom Camping ▪ School holiday nature based programs. 	<p>GORRT, COS, ILG</p>	
<p>5. Consider options for managing the coach visitor impact at Kennett River.</p>	<p>PV, DELWP, OCT, WBA COS, OTAC,ILG</p>	
<p>6. Events – development of new key events. * Trail run/half marathon (RDV community and economic recovery fund).</p>	<p>In conjunction with neighbouring associations such as ABCC, LBTA</p>	

PRIORITY 3

Visitor servicing

ACTIONS

RESPONSIBILITIES

PRIORITIES

1.	Participate in GORRT visitor services development strategy initiatives.	GORRT, COS VicRoads, ILG	High (some point Medium)
2.	Provide local and regional information at key locations.		
3.	Ensure that the Otway Coast website is up to date and features local 'stories' and seasonally updated content.		
4.	Provide local and regional information to residents and holiday home and rental property owners. Consider locals information/networking functions to promote an understanding of the value of the visitor economy, the Destination Action Plan and local visitor activities.		
5.	Regularly review social media and digital visitor review sites (e.g. Trip Advisor) to gain an understanding of visitor satisfaction and to communicate locally.		
6.	Establish and promote a 'Best 5 Things To Do in the Central Coast' program with seasonal variations, (e.g. location specific notice boards, news-flyers/circular email/web site content).		
7.	Visitor Servicing Excellence program/Industry development – famil program for customer service staff <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Develop reference materials specifically for this or online training specific to region – participation in Otways Free Day (industry familiarisation program)▪ Training for meeting needs to better service needs of international (Chinese) visitors.		
8.	Area specific maps/information for visitors.		
9.	Consider implementation of visitor satisfaction survey.		



PRIORITY 4
Risk management

ACTIONS

RESPONSIBILITIES

PRIORITIES

1.	Prepare a Risk Management Plan for the local and visitor community, linked to the Colac Otway Disaster Management Plan. Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Risk identification (holistic risks not just natural disasters). Fire management (CFA emergency and community volunteer) and traffic management plans already exist ▪ Risk mitigation ▪ Communication protocols 	GORRT, COS, OCT ILG, OCC, DELWP VicRoads	High
2.	Ensure that all locals and property owners are aware of the Plan, understand responsibilities and are regularly updated on risk status.		
3.	Maintain close communication with GORRT relevant to regional risk management.		
4.	Consider how to manage amenity disruption during the next 2 years 'rebuild' activity.		
5.	Consider the impact of climate change.		
6.	Consider and support advocacy for a new 'Governance Authority' for the Great Ocean Road to alleviate the ongoing risk of multiple agency impact on maintenance and development of the nationally significant visitor economy assets and opportunities for visitor revenue generation.		



PRIORITY 5

Responsible tourism and environmental sustainability

ACTIONS

RESPONSIBILITIES

PRIORITIES

1.	Investigate recycling contractor services.	COS, Community and local business, DELWP, PV	High
2.	Promotion of responsible environmental practices to operators and visitors. Consider a 'Code of Conduct'.		
3.	Educate visitors in regard to wildlife and environmental sustainability and ensure community and businesses are aware of responsibility to educate visitors regarding appropriate behaviour around native wildlife: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not touching or feeding wildlife ▪ Fishing ▪ Interpretive signage/visitor information/fact sheets ▪ Safe rubbish disposal in regard to protection of wildlife ▪ Interpretive signage around rubbish disposal (can also be represented in GOR upgrade of amenity). 		



PRIORITY 6

Implementation leadership

ACTIONS		RESPONSIBILITIES	PRIORITIES
1.	Consider a formal launch of the Destination Action Plan to encourage and motivate industry, stakeholders and the community.	GORRT, ILG	High
2.	Establish a Destination Action Plan Implementation Leadership Group or Steering Committee.		
3.	The ILG to identify 2-3 actions for immediate action over the first year and apply sound project management process with facilitation support from GORRT.		
4.	Consider relevant to Action 3 above, the best use of the RDV grant.		
5.	Implement a communications plan to keep all stakeholders informed of progress and to maintain engagement and momentum.		
6.	Encourage stakeholder organisations to support the plan and to actively participate with the ILG.		
7.	Consider options to strengthen the Otway Coast Tourism organisation to facilitate increased participation and a focus on visitor servicing, industry and community engagement and participation in GORRT marketing and business services via a formal agreement consistent with other GORRT/Local Tourism Organisation agreements.		