



CHARTERS TOWERS  
REGIONAL COUNCIL

# DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN 2020-2025





Australian Government

**BUILDING OUR FUTURE**

This project was possible by funding from the Australian Government through the Building Better Regions Fund

**TILMA GROUP**



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## MAYOR'S MESSAGE

**Charters Towers has so much to offer residents and visitors alike.**

Our region's rich history combined with our pristine wilderness, quirky arts scene, unique retail offerings, signature events and safe family fun environment make the visitor experience a truly memorable one.

**CHARTERS TOWERS IS A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE, WORK AND VISIT.**

This Destination Management Plan encapsulates our communities' vision to become an attractive visitor destination, loved and promoted by its locals for its diversity, heritage and nature.

We aim to showcase and celebrate the region's country hospitality and our natural assets.

Destination management involves thinking holistically about our visitors and our region.

It begins with the acceptance that visitors are not in some way separate from everyone else: they are a definable, yet indivisible, group. Like other groups, they have their unique requirements, but in many respects they are simply 'temporary residents'. What that means is that, unlike destination marketing, destination management is beyond the scope of the visitor industry alone: it requires alignment and collaboration between the public and private sectors, and with agencies that might previously not have considered themselves having any responsibility for visitors.

***Ultimately, it requires the engagement of everyone in the region.***

In promoting our wonderful region as a tourist destination, we hope to strengthen community pride and raise investor confidence, leading to direct and indirect job creation through the growth of the visitor economy.

*Mayor, Frank Beveridge*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Charters Towers Regional Council is committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas, and their rich contribution to our society.

We acknowledge the people of the Gudjala, Gugu Badhun, Birriah and Jangga first nation lands on which Charters Towers and its greater region are located, and where we conduct our business. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past, present and emerging.

We are committed to a positive future for all.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Charters Towers region's destination brand captures the core identity or DNA of the destination. The brand positions the region as a seamless harmony of the old and new world, where historically rich communities lead you back in time to connect with the past and seek out your own story. Six brand values encapsulate the essential characteristics that in combination differentiate the destination from others.

## OUR BRAND VALUES

**We are genuine and humble** – With a heart of gold, our region welcomes all. Find yourself grounded in a place where time slows down and the little things matter.

**We radiate country sophistication** – Our thriving towns are a treasure trove of boutique shopping, country pubs and cafés to discover and delight.

**We are rugged and real** – Our nature is down to earth, relaxed and not rushed. Generous with time to explore diverse landscapes and unearth hidden gems.

**We have stories to share** – Passionate about the past and possibility, this is a place to learn. Inspired by stories of times gone by as you create your own chronicle.

**We provide a sense of connection and belonging** – Come home to our communities, connect with your now and live a truly authentic outback experience where the west is linked to the coast.

**We are a productive region** – Feel a part of the fabric of time with our living history, where you can discover a region as rich in history and heritage, as it is in natural resources.

## WHERE WE PLAN TO BE IN 2025:

Charters Towers region will have a flourishing visitor economy supported by strong and effective collaboration between industry, community and government, with a compelling story interwoven through the destination's tourism experiences and marketing.

### Our goals to achieve this vision:

- Grow overnight visitation by target markets
- Increase spend in the region from overnight and day trip visitors
- Extend the shoulder seasons
- Increase destination awareness in target markets
- Increase visitor satisfaction

## PROJECTS

PHASE 1: CREATE IDENTITY & COLLABORATIVE SPIRIT	PHASE 2: BUILD BRAND AWARENESS & APPEAL	PHASE 3: CONSOLIDATE AND GROW
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Brand activation</li> <li>2. Regional open day</li> <li>3. Digital marketing</li> <li>4. Regional trail network</li> <li>5. Value-add experience development</li> <li>6. Pilot 'blank canvas' project</li> <li>7. Towers Hill precinct</li> <li>8. Visitor data</li> <li>9. Regional signage audit</li> <li>10. Optimising the VIC</li> <li>11. Thriving events</li> <li>12. Events calendar</li> <li>13. Business recovery and refocus</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Edutourism development</li> <li>2. New experience development</li> <li>3. Regional place making</li> <li>4. Small event series</li> <li>5. Ongoing industry skill development and growth</li> <li>6. Destination sustainability</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Regional master brand</li> </ol>

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### Acronyms

AR	Augmented Reality	PR	Public Relations
ATDW	Australian Tourism Data Warehouse	RTO	Regional Tourism Organisation
CBD	Central Business District	TEL	Townsville Enterprise Limited
CDG	Community Development Grants	TEQ	Tourism and Events Queensland
CTRC	Charters Towers Regional Council	TRA	Tourism Research Australia
DMO	Destination Management Organisation	VFR	Visiting Friends and Relatives
DMP	Destination Management Plan	VIC	Visitor Information Centre
EDIS	Economic Development and Innovation Strategy	VR	Virtual Reality
FIT	Free Independent Traveller		



# PART A: SETTING THE DIRECTION

The purpose of this Destination Management Plan is to increase the appeal of the region for our visitor markets, create compelling reasons for them to visit across the year, and build a flourishing visitor economy.

This Destination Management Plan (DMP) is the first strategic tourism plan that has been developed by Charters Towers Regional Council (CTRC) to guide tourism development. Funding through the federal government's Building Better Regions Fund grant program enabled the production of the DMP.

While the tourism industry has performed well over recent years, seasonality, a heavy reliance on Grey Nomads, and limited industry collaboration and leadership have curbed the region's tourism achievements. The COVID-19 global pandemic, with its associated shutdown in visitor travel, then brought considerable disruption and distress to many businesses across the region. At the same time, it also provided an opportunity for businesses to take stock, review what was working and what wasn't, to upskill, increase their digital presence, and engage with consumers in new ways.

Against this landscape, the DMP draws together practical actions to support the industry in recovery and rebuilding through optimising the region's tremendous assets and strengths. The focus is on rethinking target visitor markets and the experiences offered, and enhancing and adding value rather than reinventing the wheel. It is about working smarter to get the most out of the existing knowledge and quality tourism product within the region.

Charters Towers needs to grow its visitor economy to reap far greater benefit for local communities, the business sector and local government. To achieve this in a planned and well-coordinated manner requires a commitment to stimulating new development and investment, and to ensuring that the necessary processes, funding and supporting infrastructure are in place.

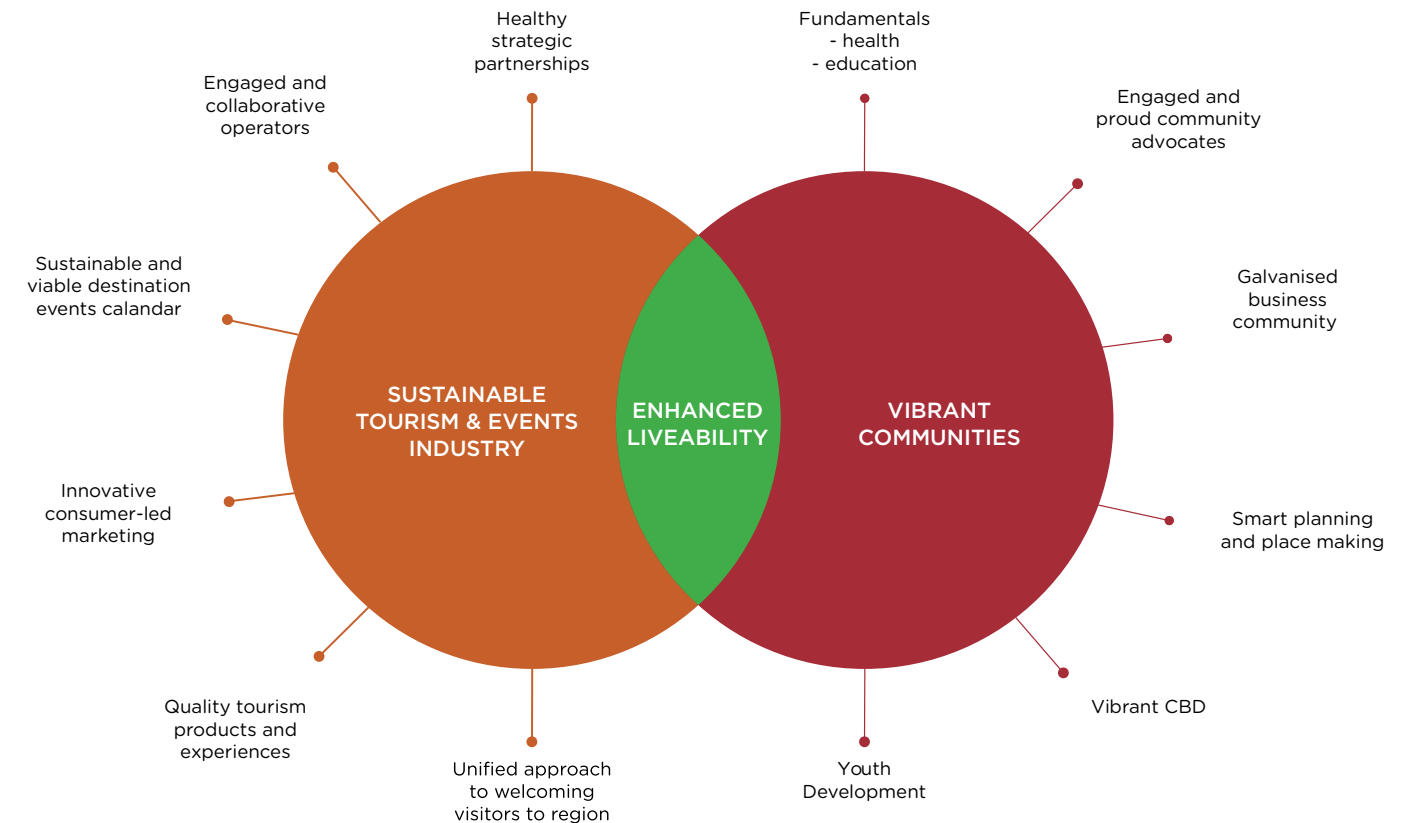


Figure 1: Elements of a sustainable tourism industry and vibrant communities

A flourishing, sustainable tourism (and events) industry as illustrated in Figure 1 is a key thread in the economic tapestry that facilitates a healthy local economy, and job creation and retention, and improves the liveability of the region for its communities. Growing the visitor economy increases the wellbeing of the community and local businesses.





## INDUSTRY-GUIDED PROCESS

To ensure the DMP is supported by the local tourism industry, engagement with tourism operators and the community was a central element in its development. Engagement included:

- 15 one-on-one meetings for information gathering
- meeting with Councillors
- initial information-gathering workshop with local industry and community (held across three sessions)
- information-gathering workshop with five local schools
- site visits in-region
- focus group session to test a Gaps and Opportunities paper recorded and shared with 18 industry and community representatives (conducted via teleconference due to COVID-19 travel and social distancing restrictions)
- survey to local industry and community to gather feedback on the Gaps and Opportunities paper (20 responses received)
- workshop with local industry and community representatives to present the draft DMP and brand concepts, and gather feedback
- presentation of the DMP to CTRC.

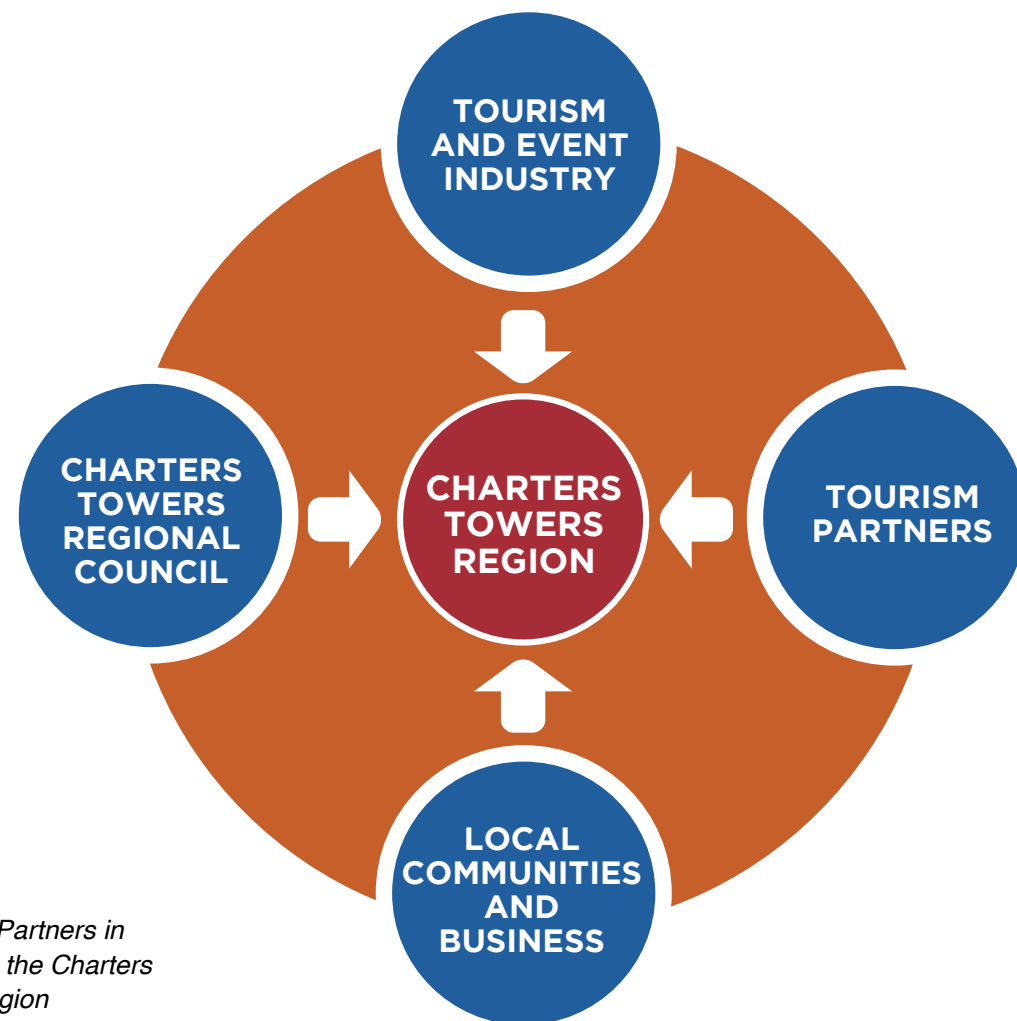


Figure 2: Partners in tourism in the Charters Towers region

The DMP provides a framework for a collaborative approach between tourism, the community and CTRC in the development and marketing of the destination. The main partners are illustrated in Figure 2.

## REGIONAL CONTEXT AND ALIGNMENT

Covering an area the size of Tasmania, the Charters Towers region in North Queensland is 134 kilometres inland on the Flinders Highway from Townsville (southwest) and 247 kilometres east of Hughenden. The region's 11,968<sup>1</sup> residents live in Charters Towers and the townships of Balfes Creek, Homestead, Pentland, Sellheim, Mingela, Ravenswood, Greenvale, Hervey Range and Hidden Valley.

Tourism development across the region will be shaped by the continued evolution of the region's strengths, the impacts of macro trends on travel behaviour, and the implications of COVID-19. Key trends in travel behaviour include:

### Conscious travel



Australians are beginning to prioritise the environment, and are opting to explore alternate means of travel with fewer impacts. 'Conscious travel' is on the rise, driven by a growing interest in climate action<sup>2</sup>. Globally, over half (55%) of travellers report being more determined to make sustainable travel choices than they were a year ago, but barriers include a lack of knowledge, and a lack of available or appealing options when trying to put this into practice<sup>3</sup>. Conscious travel is not just about compliance and checklists but about tourism that delivers fulfilling, regenerative, reciprocal, meaningful benefits to all stakeholders in a way that's unique to the destination, and personal for the participants.

### Family connection



A growing reliance on technology for connection and busy lives means many families crave opportunities to slow down and re-connect with each other. Simple, meaningful experiences on holidays are sought, and across generations as well as multi-generational travel increases in popularity.

### Immersive experiences



Visitors want to feel inspired by the places they visit and the people they meet and enrich their lives through experiences and learning. They are seeking immersive experiences that allow them to forge deeper connections to the people, traditions and customs of destinations in ways that are meaningful and memorable.

### Exploring the backyard



Prior to the global COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a tendency amongst domestic visitors to head overseas, assuming that local experiences are not new or different. Now is an opportunity to capitalise on the current regional travel focus and provide compelling reasons for intrastate visitors to head to the region.

1. TRA Local Government Area Profile 2018, Australian Bureau of Statistics

2. Research by ING; [www.ing.com/Sustainability.htm](http://www.ing.com/Sustainability.htm)

3. Booking.com, 2019 Sustainable Travel Report



### Sustainable tourism



There is increasing consumer demand for sustainable tourism in response to the growing threats of climate change impacts on tourism, and poor development. Travellers are increasingly aware that their choices have an impact. The onus is on destinations to raise awareness, educate travellers, and demonstrate a commitment to sustainability through their planning and management. Responsible destinations maximise the benefits of tourism to local communities, minimise its negative social and environmental impacts, and help locals conserve fragile cultures and habitats.

### Visitor touch points



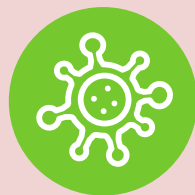
Visitors have multiple touch points when travelling to and through a region from rest stops, cafes, retail outlets and service stations through to visitor attractions and accommodation providers. Each has an opportunity to present a warm welcome and inspire visitors to explore and spend locally.

### Digital engagement



The rapid adoption of digital technology is changing the way visitors plan and book travel. Before they arrive and then when they are in the region, visitors have a variety of opportunities to gather information and engage with the tourism industry. Visitor engagement solutions both online and offline will continue to evolve in response to visitors' changing needs.

### COVID-19 implications for regional travel



As border restrictions gradually lift over time, travel initially will be limited first to intrastate and then interstate travel before international travel resumes. Regional destinations are poised to benefit if they can stand out in a crowded market and meet the needs of visitors. Road trips, caravanning and camping is set for a boom. Around 50% of those who own caravans and camping gear intend to travel again within four weeks of restrictions lifting and 80% intend to within the first eight weeks<sup>4</sup>. COVID-19 is expected to impact travel behaviour for many months after the virus threat has gone (See Attachment 3: Post COVID-19 Action Plan for a summary of expected trends, changing visitor markets, and resources to support recovery).

4. CEO of Caravan Industry Association of Australia

To maximise outcomes, the DMP aligns with the strategic objectives of the following local, regional and state plans and strategies (see Figure 3) and seeks to leverage the activities of the regional tourism organisation (RTO), Townsville Enterprise Limited (TEL), and the regional focus of Tourism 2030, the national tourism strategy:

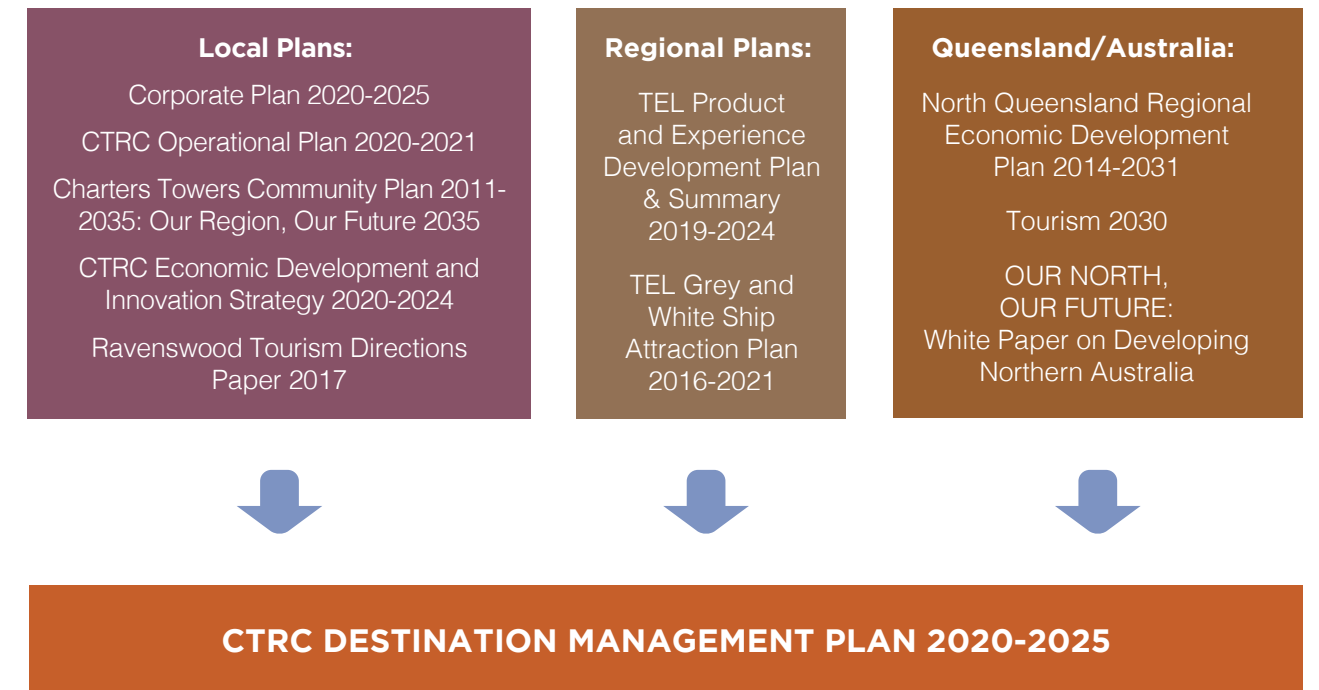


Figure 3: Strategic alignment

Development of the DMP occurred concurrently with the preparation of the Charters Towers Economic Development and Innovation Strategy (EDIS) and took into account the feedback gathered in its first round of engagement. Local business and community commentary highlighted that tourism is considered the economic driver that offers the most value for the region's growth over the next five years. The purpose of the EDIS is to:

- increase the wealth of the region
- support industry diversification and innovation
- promote population retention and growth
- develop employability skills to support and promote new and diverse industries.



# CHARTERS TOWERS' DESTINATION BRAND

## Positioning Statement:

A seamless harmony of the old and new world, where heritage-rich communities lead you back in time to connect with the past and seek out your own story.

## BRAND VALUES

### We are genuine and humble

– With a heart of gold, our region welcomes all. Find yourself grounded in a place where time slows down and the little things matter.

### We radiate country sophistication

– Our thriving towns are a treasure trove of boutique shopping, country pubs and cafés to discover and delight.

### We are rugged and real

– Our nature is down to earth, relaxed and not rushed. Generous with time to explore diverse landscapes and unearth hidden gems.

### We have stories to share

– Passionate about the past and possibility, this is a place to learn. Inspired by stories of times gone by as you create your own chronicle.

### We provide a sense of connection and belonging

– Come home to our communities, connect with your now and live a truly authentic outback experience where the west is linked to the coast.

### We are a productive region

– Feel a part of the fabric of time with our living history, where you can discover a region as rich in history and heritage, as it is in natural resources.

## BRAND STORY

A seamless harmony of the old and new world, Charters Towers is a place where life is lived at a relaxed pace, where infinite open skies, outback landscapes and real, authentic communities take you back in time to reconnect with the past and seek out your own story.

Our story begins with the discovery of gold, when a 12-year-old stockman named Jupiter Mosman stumbled across a nugget in 1871. And so began the evolution of a region dotted with charming towns and grand architecture, against a backdrop of vast outback landscapes, productive agricultural land, and on the eastern reaches, tropical rainforests.

Our region has a whole lot of history and we've seen our fair share of triumphs and tragedies. Our communities of Charters Towers, Pentland, Sellheim, Homestead, Mingela, Ravenswood, Greenvale, Harvey Range, Balfes Creek and Hidden Valley take you on a journey through time, each with its own tale to tell. Lend them an ear and our friendly locals will eagerly share a yarn as you discover our stories and create your own.

Learn about 'the tragedy on Mosman Street' on a guided tour through the World Theatre, or listen for the voices of the past on a walking ghost tour. Delve even deeper into the past at one of our museums, galleries or historical sites.

Our natural attractions are pure gold. The Belyando River Crossing is the perfect place to camp overnight, or you can venture further afield to discover the vast Lake Buchanan, which is four times saltier than the ocean. This great salt lake harbours plenty of local wildlife and big open skies to soak up the peace and quiet. Loads of space for adventure, boating and outdoor activities, gives you the freedom to explore and unearth natural assets.

As you wander our historic streetscapes, it is easy to connect with the sentiment of life in the 1800's - just look around. From the glass roof of what was one of Australia's few regional stock exchanges and the impressive Stock Exchange Arcade, to the striking clock tower of the Post Office and the columned World Theatre, our history doesn't need to be imagined. It can be seen today, vastly untouched, just as it was 150 years ago.

Relics of our gold mining history remind you of where we came from, while modern day experiences direct you to where we are going. An open cut mine and the Venus Battery, the largest surviving battery relic in Australia and the oldest in Queensland, are signposts of a time gone by. A legacy of the gold rush, the Great Northern Railway line, still passes this way hauling rich mining and agricultural loads from Mt Isa and Charters Towers to the bustling port of Townsville.

Charming tea rooms, quaint cafes, and historic pubs provide a place to enjoy our unique country hospitality, just like they always have. The legendary Slim Dusty agrees, immortalising the historic Three Rivers Hotel in his lyrics...Wherever I wander my memory will dwell, on those happy days in Three Rivers Hotel.

At a time when life revolves at a non-stop pace, it's time to redefine what we treasure, and find value in the smaller things. History, culture, connection, exploration, a sky filled with stars... Whatever it is you're seeking, find it in the Charters Towers region.



# COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES OF THE CHARTERS TOWERS REGION

A destination brand reflects a destination's competitive strengths and the identity they forge. It is what makes a destination distinctive and memorable.

## ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

Tourism is one of four economic pillars for the region and contributes over \$25.9m to the economy<sup>5</sup>. The other pillars are mining, agriculture and education. This diversified economy positions local businesses and communities to recover from the impact of COVID-19 and other external threats more quickly than many other regions.

## RICH HERITAGE

Each of the economic pillars has a long standing history in the region which shapes the visitor offering and, in turn, tourism activity has formed part of these industries. Mining's past dominates in grand 19th Century architecture that allows glimpses of the region's rich gold mining activity, and while current mining is less visible, it brings money into the local economy. The region's significant role in World War II is also visible for visitors, with many built remnants of defence troop activity remaining in Charters Towers.

## STORYTELLERS

The region is home to locals passionate about the area's history and about sharing stories of people and events from the past. Storytelling engages and deepens visitors' interest in a place's history, and connects them with the region's past and present to enhance their experience.

## EDUCATION

Leading education institutions and quality tourism experiences provide a sound basis to grow domestic and international edutourism activity. The region is well positioned to deliver learning outside of the classroom in ways that engage and inspire students, and enhance education outcomes and personal growth.

## OUTBACK LIFE

A number of local station owners open their doors for education and other groups to learn and immerse themselves in the rural lifestyle against stunning outback landscapes. These agricultural experiences enable visitors to experience a sense of the outback within just two hours of the east coast.

## ROADTRIP DESTINATION

Bisected by the Flinders Highway and the Gregory Developmental Road, Charters Towers region is a popular road trip destination. The region stands to benefit from visitors looking to explore their backyard and the regional attractions it offers.

## CLIMATE AND COUNTRY LIFESTYLE

The region enjoys a temperate climate year round with a laid back country lifestyle. Good boutique shopping, country pubs and tea houses provide sophistication amongst heritage buildings, reflecting a genuine, down to earth regional culture.

5. 2018/19 Economy.id report: <https://economy.id.com.au/charters-towers/tourism-value>

# TARGETS FOR SUCCESS

## Where we plan to be in 2025:

The Charters Towers region will have a flourishing visitor economy supported by strong and effective collaboration between industry, community and government, with a compelling story interwoven through the destination's tourism experiences and marketing.

## Our goals to achieve this vision:

Goals	Where we are now	Our targets	How we will measure success
Grow overnight visitation by target markets	147,000 visitors <sup>6</sup>	Increase by 10% to 161,700	Overnight visitation
Increase spend in the region from overnight and day trip visitors	\$312 per trip by domestic overnight visitors \$75 for domestic daytrip visitors	Increase spend to at least match Townsville's per visitor spend of \$776 per trip by domestic overnight visitors, \$142 for domestic day trippers <sup>7</sup>	Overnight and daytrip expenditure
Extend the shoulder seasons	Visitation is primarily between May-September (Mother's Day to Father's Day)	Increase visitor numbers in April/May and September/October	Number of visitors
Increase destination awareness in target markets	53,084 website users 1,245 Facebook followers 634 Instagram followers Two tours listed on TripAdvisor's Tours & Tickets	Increase in visitor engagement about the destination	Destination website traffic, social media engagement and online reviews
Increase visitor satisfaction	Google reviews and TripAdvisor ranking of 4.5+ for main visitor attractions	Achieve and maintain a 4.5+ ranking across online review sites for visitor attractions, accommodation, tours, retail and services	Online reviews Visitor survey results

These goals are distilled from the engagement with industry and community.

6. Charters Towers Local Government Area Profile, Tourism Research Australia (Data is based on a four-year average from 2015 to 2018, and captures total overnight visitors including holiday, business and other visitors including education group visitors.)

7. *ibid*



## OUR VISITORS



Charters Towers Country Music Festival May Day Long Weekend

Achieving a flourishing visitor economy will require targeting visitor markets that will visit during shoulder and off peak seasons and deliver higher yield through overnight stays and spend in the region. In turn, capacity to extend the visitor season and increase length of stay will be fundamental requirements for investment in new and existing product and sustainable businesses.

In order to achieve the vision and goals for Charters Towers' tourism growth, target visitor markets have been identified on the basis of:

- market size
- potential to attract to the region
- propensity to stay overnight
- increased likelihood to visit during shoulder seasons (with the exception of older couples/Grey Nomads)
- fit with the region's visitor experience offering.

The primary opportunity markets for the region are:

- families, couples and singles from Townsville
- families, couples and singles from Mackay, Mount Isa, Hinchinbrook, Cairns and Burdekin regions
- education groups (domestic school groups, international study tours)
- special interest visitors (events, culture and heritage visitors).

Families, couples and singles, education groups and special interest visitors have the propensity to stay overnight and visit during shoulder seasons. They include Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) – travellers who will visit the region across the year and, together with locals, are important ambassadors for the region. Nearby Townsville, with its 190,000 residents, is an important visitor market opportunity for overnight stays and daytrips.

Grey Nomads are a mainstay market for the region to retain. While they travel during peak times, currently they are the largest visitor group, and have a tendency to stop and spend time in the communities across the region.

## OPPORTUNITY MARKETS - OUR TARGET MARKETS

### FAMILIES, COUPLES AND SINGLES FROM TOWNSVILLE

THEIR TRAVEL HABITS	EXPERIENCES THEY ARE SEEKING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Singles, couples and families taking day trips and weekends away</li> <li>• Families travel during school holidays and seek interactive and adventurous kids' activities and things that Mum and Dad can also enjoy</li> <li>• Travel to reconnect and discover new places</li> <li>• Looking for new experiences</li> <li>• Spend time shopping and eating out</li> <li>• Travel to attend events (sports, arts/culture and leisure)</li> <li>• Expect good quality facilities and standard of accommodation</li> <li>• Value for money is important</li> <li>• Book online or via email or phone</li> <li>• May not be aware of what is on offer locally</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New/different experiences for families/VFR</li> <li>• 'Instaworthy' moments</li> <li>• Self-drive itineraries</li> <li>• Self-guided contemporary trails</li> <li>• Soft adventure-based activities</li> <li>• Access to information through smart devices</li> <li>• Seasonal food events</li> <li>• Food and artisan markets</li> <li>• Night-time activities (markets, street performances, food events)</li> <li>• Family-friendly events</li> </ul>

### FAMILIES, COUPLES AND SINGLES FROM MACKAY, BURDEKIN, MOUNT ISA, HINCHINBROOK AND CAIRNS REGIONS

THEIR TRAVEL HABITS	EXPERIENCES THEY ARE SEEKING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families travel during school holidays and seek interactive and adventurous kids' activities and things that Mum and Dad can also enjoy</li> <li>• Travel to reconnect and discover new places</li> <li>• Looking for new experiences</li> <li>• Spend time shopping and eating out</li> <li>• Travel to attend events (sports, arts/culture and leisure)</li> <li>• Expect good quality facilities and standard of accommodation, whether in park cabins, motels/hotels or in their own caravan or motorhome</li> <li>• Value for money is important</li> <li>• Book online or via email or phone</li> <li>• May not be aware of what is on offer locally</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contemporary interpretation</li> <li>• Self-drive itineraries</li> <li>• Access to information through smart devices</li> <li>• Soft adventure-based activities</li> <li>• Self-guided contemporary trails</li> <li>• Unique experiences that offer something different</li> <li>• 'Instaworthy' moments</li> <li>• Seasonal food events</li> <li>• Food and artisan markets</li> <li>• Night-time activities (markets, street performances, food events)</li> <li>• Educational experiences</li> <li>• Family-friendly events</li> </ul>

### EDUCATION GROUPS (SCHOOL GROUPS, STUDY TOURS)

THEIR TRAVEL HABITS	EXPERIENCES THEY ARE SEEKING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel to extend learning and explore new places</li> <li>• Schools develop a connection with a destination and establish strong long-term relationships</li> <li>• Streamlined transport connections, safety, alignment to curriculum, suitable student accommodation and affordability are important</li> </ul> <p>Domestic school groups specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grades 6-10 are the main grades that take interstate school excursions</li> <li>• Require learning outcomes aligned to the Australian Curriculum</li> </ul> <p>International study tour groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Largely from USA tertiary institutions</li> <li>• Travelling as part of a broader regional or state itinerary</li> <li>• Credit may or may not be included</li> <li>• May require homestay or dormitory style accommodation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovative experiences that encourage learning and development</li> <li>• In field learning opportunities and connections with experts to extend their knowledge</li> <li>• Contemporary interpretation</li> <li>• Personal development</li> <li>• Indigenous history/ culture</li> <li>• Learning/discovery centre or hub</li> <li>• Range of student accommodation options</li> <li>• Organised itineraries that link to the curriculum and learning outcomes</li> <li>• Central booking agency/centre</li> <li>• Educational tools and resources to support visits</li> </ul>



# PART B: ACTIVATION PLAN

## SPECIAL INTEREST VISITORS (EVENTS, CULTURE AND HERITAGE VISITORS)

THEIR TRAVEL HABITS	EXPERIENCES THEY ARE SEEKING
<p>Culture and heritage visitors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High income, mobility and education</li> <li>• Most likely to be aged 50-54 (11%), 30-34 (10%) and 20-25 (10%)</li> <li>• Interest in learning and exploring new concepts</li> <li>• More likely to seek high value experiences</li> </ul> <p>Event visitors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel across the year</li> <li>• Self-drive or group travel</li> <li>• Singles, couples, families, groups</li> <li>• Book online, email or phone</li> <li>• Look for other things to see and do around the event</li> <li>• Seek value for money</li> <li>• Often return as leisure visitors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friendly service, hospitable people, and knowledgeable guides</li> <li>• A secure and safe destination with plenty of available information pre-arrival</li> <li>• Free Independent Traveller (FIT) itineraries</li> <li>• Self-guided contemporary heritage trails</li> <li>• Access to information through smart devices</li> <li>• Plenty of things to see, do and experience in close proximity</li> <li>• Places to eat</li> <li>• Range of accommodation options</li> </ul>

## MARKETS TO RETAIN

### GREY NOMADS (CAMPING/CARAVANNING)

THEIR TRAVEL HABITS	EXPERIENCES THEY ARE SEEKING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Couples and couples travelling in convoy</li> <li>• Self-drive with campers/caravans (some fully self-contained) from all states/ territories</li> <li>• Seekers of soft adventure, new places, and things to learn</li> <li>• Travel to attend events (sports, arts/culture and leisure)</li> <li>• Value for money is important</li> <li>• Need access to services to allow them to travel for extended periods</li> <li>• Mainly travelling April to September</li> <li>• Increasingly plan their travel online and communicate through social media</li> <li>• May be slower to return to long distance travel post COVID-19</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-drive itineraries</li> <li>• Soft adventure-based activities</li> <li>• Self-guided contemporary heritage trails</li> <li>• Reconnecting with past (people and activities)</li> <li>• Expanded range of tagalong tours</li> <li>• Freedom camping sites in natural settings</li> <li>• Seasonal food events</li> <li>• Food and artisan markets</li> <li>• Night-time activities (sunset/campfire activities, markets, music and other performances)</li> </ul>

### Emerging markets to keep in view

With the development of suitable product, cruise visitors (via Townsville) are a potential future market for the region. These are typically older couples from Australia and international markets (USA, Europe and Asia). Due to COVID-19, this market opportunity will be longer term and subject to the cruise industry rebuilding and international borders re-opening.

## DMP ACTIVATION

A clear process for implementation and associated resourcing are critical to the activation of this DMP. During engagement with the local tourism industry the message was clear that without the means to drive the projects, tourism development and success in the region will continue to be limited.

The DMP identifies 20 projects to build a flourishing visitor economy in the Charters Towers region. Many of the projects will benefit local communities through increased recreational and social amenities, services and employment opportunities, and enhanced community pride. The projects are phased across the five-year term of the DMP. A mix of funding sources is recommended including grant funding and corporate sponsorship. In many instances, project implementation will be pending securing grant funding. Project costs may incorporate planned budget for existing activities that can be reallocated. CTRC has a crucial role in facilitating projects to be shovel-ready to encourage private sector contributions and secure grant funding.

As an industry-owned DMP, industry has an important role in its activation. Formation of a regional Industry Advisory Group is recommended; one which draws together industry and community representatives and is tasked with overseeing the implementation of the DMP and directly managing specific projects. As the region progresses through Phase 1 and into Phase 2, establishing its brand identity, increasing the competitive product offering and ensuring the region's assets are enhancing the visitor experience, this group provides a practical framework for the industry to come together to work on and deliver specific projects. The group is also a starting point for building a collaborative model that may or may not require a more formal structure in the future. (Refer to the Central Highlands case study on the establishment of a collaborative industry model.)

Project success will require CTRC to assign resources with the required knowledge and expertise to deliver the projects. Where outsourcing is necessary to fill a skills gap initially, this can be used as an opportunity to build internal capacity.

Through the effective implementation of the DMP, the region's tourism industry will be better placed to optimise its relationship with TEL. With a clear brand identity, additional commissionable product and experiences that increase the destination's competitiveness, and greater digital capacity, the Charters Towers tourism industry will be better positioned to leverage the support TEL can offer in achieving the DMP's vision and goals.



Actions to establish the funding required by the projects include:

1. Confirm projects to be progressed to shovel-ready stage and align with targeting funding programs.
2. Incorporate DMP activation as a line item in CTRC's annual budget, with bids to be made for project funding, including supporting funding for grant applications.
3. Remodel existing community grants fund and/or create a fund to support experience development projects, modeled on the Regional Arts Development Fund, with funding guidelines that encourage innovation within the tourism industry.
4. Secure corporate sponsorship and project partnership arrangements.
5. Identify and pursue relevant grant funding opportunities.
6. Establish an Industry Advisory Group facilitated by CTRC to deliver assigned projects and participate in review of DMP Activation Plan.

## CASE STUDY – TOURISM ACTION GROUP

Central Highlands Development Corporation (CHDC) is dedicated to advocating for sustainable regional and economic growth. Tourism sits alongside mining, agriculture and construction as the main drivers of the economy. The region is home to 28,783 residents and hosts around 678,000 visitors annually, half domestic overnight visitors and half domestic daytrip visitors.

To foster a collaborative and cooperative approach between and within the tourism industry and community, CHDC has established a Tourism Action Group. The group is facilitated by a CHDC staff member and is responsible for:

- providing industry and stakeholder representation
- providing direction to industry and stakeholders
- generating outcomes to grow tourism.

The group is driving the implementation of their tourism plan, the Central Highlands Visitor Economy Strategy 2020-2023, and its annual review.



## PRIORITY PROJECTS

The following are the priority projects to deliver on the DMP's vision, goals and targets. Further project details including budget estimates are provided separately in an Activation Plan to guide CTRC in implementation.

Projects	Phase 1		Phase 2		Phase 3		ONGOING
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	
DMP Activation							
<b>PHASE 1: CREATE IDENTITY &amp; COLLABORATIVE SPIRIT</b>							
1. Brand activation							
2. Regional open day							
3. Digital marketing							
4. Regional trail network			Launch of art works trail		Multi-day cycle trail		
5. Value-add experience development							
6. Pilot 'blank canvas' project							
7. Towers Hill precinct							
8. Visitor data							
9. Regional signage audit			Signage upgrades implemented				
10. Optimising the VIC			VIC's function in heritage precinct as part of Regional Place making project				
11. Thriving events							
12. Events calendar							
13. Business recovery and refocus							
<b>PHASE 2: BUILD BRAND AWARENESS &amp; APPEAL</b>							
1. Edutourism development							
2. New experience development							
3. Regional place making					Regional implementation		
4. Small event series							
5. Ongoing industry skill development and growth							
6. Destination sustainability							
<b>PHASE 3: CONSOLIDATE AND GROW</b>							
1. Regional master brand							



## PHASE 1: CREATE IDENTITY & COLLABORATIVE SPIRIT (2021-2022)

In Phase 1 the focus is on getting the foundations right. This includes establishing a clear identity, optimising existing resources and assets and facilitating industry and the local community's involvement and leadership.



### 1. BRAND ACTIVATION - BRINGING THE STORY TO LIFE

Good product development, a cohesive and proud industry (and community), and consistent marketing activity are in place to drive destination brand development.

A destination brand is the DNA that defines the destination. It should run through every act of marketing communication and behaviour by CTRC, industry and other destination stakeholders.

#### Activation is key

Building a vibrant, unique destination brand will increase market awareness of Charters Towers and grow appeal amongst target markets. It presents a compelling and readily identifiable character for the region, enables cut-through in an increasingly noisy marketplace, and ensures consistency of message when talking to consumers through different channels and touchpoints. The development of a destination brand for the region is not a panacea to grow the visitor economy, however. The impact of a destination's brand in driving growth and development across the region is dependent on the success of its activation. Brand activation means bringing the brand to life in ways that create an emotional connection with target markets, which in turn will build brand awareness and brand appeal.

#### Industry and community support and ownership

The first step to brand activation is gaining complete industry and community support and ownership. The tourism industry and communities must feel confident and excited to weave the destination brand into their own stories, and into their product and event development and experience design.

Communities with a clear sense of what they stand for and their distinct personality, and that are inspired to attract and welcome visitors in an authentic way, will have the power to attract those visitors who value the types of experiences on offer. The work still needs to be done in identifying visitor markets, developing experiences and undertaking marketing but this can be much easier when the community is in alignment. Integration with the community is key. A flourishing visitor economy depends on the local community providing a social licence to operate and an effective marketing force as passionate ambassadors.



### Campaign activity

Once support and a sense of ownership is achieved, a collective approach to campaign activity that builds brand profile is required. Some forms of campaign activity include:

- brand launch campaign
- 'always on' digital campaigns
- Public Relations (PR) activations in key geographic locations
- leveraging sponsorship and partnerships
- hosting of destination events.

ACTIVATION STEPS	
1.	Establish an annual brand marketing plan and associated activation budget to build industry and community support and pride while building brand awareness in key markets.
2.	Develop a suite of resources to support industry in activating the brand within their business or organisation and to promote the region's story.
3.	Harness the 150th birthday anniversary in 2022 to reset the story of the town and region (for example, by aligning theming to the brand).
4.	Share collateral with TEL so that their assets and messaging can be updated, and the region is positioned to leverage the RTO partnership effectively.
5.	Update all existing marketing collateral and assets to include the new story, language and visuals.

 **PROJECT LEAD:** CTRC

 **PARTNERS:** Industry Advisory Group

## 2. REGIONAL OPEN DAY

### Creating local and regional advocates for the Charters Towers region.

There is no better way to build destination awareness, support and pride amongst locals than by allowing them the opportunity to see 'tourism in action' and encouraging them to explore their own backyard.

### Hosting a quarterly Regional Open Day

This is an event that is hosted each quarter in one of the towns/communities across the region, inviting visitors in Townsville, surrounds and locally to explore their own backyard and Townsville's 'country playground'. The event could consist of:

- tourism operators across the region offering special rates for locals
- a local artisan market and fair to showcase local makers, bakers and growers
- street theatre and live entertainment to activate the streetscape and heritage buildings and sites
- exclusive tours and behind the scenes experiences for locals to learn about the local tourism industry and local characters
- tours of sites and buildings that are not usually open to the public such as Pentland's Norwood Jail Cell.

These Open Days also offer an opportunity for tourism businesses to test new product and experiences before they invest in extensive development.

ACTIVATION STEPS	
1.	Develop an event plan to form the blueprint for the quarterly events.
2.	Develop a schedule with a different town in the region as a feature/host each quarter.
3.	Work with industry to offer special rates for locals.
4.	Develop 'Townsville packages' with accommodation and other activities for Townsville residents.
5.	Deliver the quarterly Regional Open Day events.
6.	Review for continual improvement each quarter.

 **PROJECT LEAD:** Industry Advisory Group

 **PARTNERS:** Local businesses, community groups and corporate sponsors



### 3. DIGITAL MARKETING

“People do not buy goods and services. They buy connections, stories and magic.”

“Marketing is no longer about the stuff that you make, but about the stories you tell”, says US marketing author and entrepreneur Seth Godin. Storytelling can take place across all levels, from a local producer telling their family’s challenges building their business from scratch to a Regional Tourism Board sharing the lives of their community’s characters. The evolution of the internet has seen consumers overloaded with advertising and brands. To cut through, it is vital to create an emotional connection with the consumer. Storytelling offers a way to connect with the consumer by moving away from ‘selling’ to developing engagement at an emotional level.”<sup>8</sup>

#### Optimising digital engagement

Embracing digital marketing channels is a fundamental strategy for the region as travellers increasingly use digital devices throughout the entire consumer journey (as outlined in Figure 4).

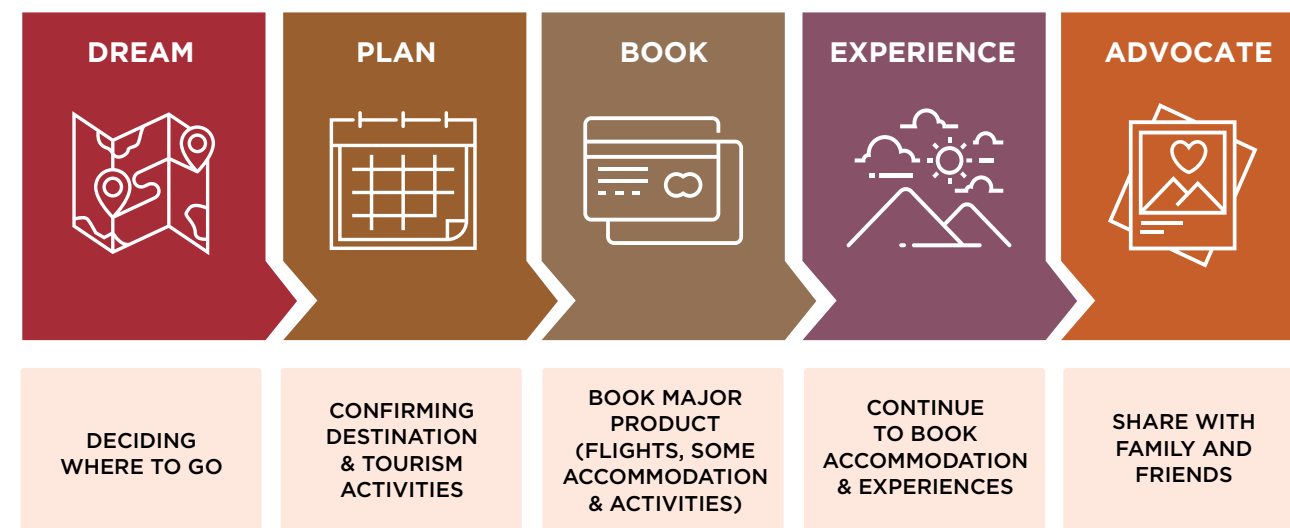


Figure 4: Consumer journey

Digital marketing channels to consider include:

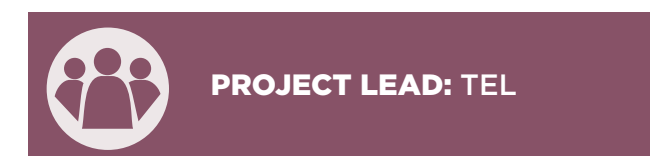
- website
- blog
- social media
- electronic newsletter (email marketing)
- podcast
- Search Engine Marketing (paid activity).

The ultimate goal is developing and delivering an annual digital marketing program that activates the brand and effectively connects the region with target markets in all stages of the consumer journey. This annual program will consist of a balanced mix of ‘always on’ strategic, targeted campaign activity such as a ‘making heritage fun’ social media campaign where visitors are invited to share photos and stories of fun heritage experiences; and sharing about the regional trail network to encourage exploration throughout the region. Social media advocacy alone can have a significant impact on a region and an operator’s business and help increase awareness and drive visitation.

This digital marketing activity requires an appropriate level of resources dedicated to the role and outcomes. The project will commence in Phase 1 with a focus on brand awareness and building marketing assets and content for target markets. It is a project that will be ongoing every year, with attention moving to conversion-based campaigns and activity from year two and into Phase 2.

#### ACTIVATION STEPS

1. Develop a marketing plan outlining the digital marketing strategies, tactics and messages to engage target visitor markets and convert interest to bookings.
2. Engage a professional to undertake a photo and video shoot that activates the brand, showcases year-round experiences and appeals to the target markets.
3. Update website in conjunction with development of events portal (see Phase 1’s Project 12 Events calendar).
4. Update website content regularly to ensure it is fresh and current, including new photos and video content, blog articles, downloadable itineraries and visitor guides tailored to target markets.
5. Develop social media protocols that enable the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) staff to engage with visitors, answer questions and provide information in a timely and relevant way, and post content about marketing campaigns, itineraries, events and local stories to create appeal and reasons to learn more and book; with this engagement managed by the VIC separately from the CTRC’s own social media activity.
6. Work closely with TEL to utilise their communication channels to share quirky stories to build the profile of region and inspire visitation.
7. Collaborate with TEL and industry on shoulder season campaigns that drive sales conversion.
8. Develop and implement the ‘always on’ quality social media calendar.



8. VTIC Visitor Servicing Toolkit 2019 [www.vtic.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Visitor-Servicing-Toolkit-200919-5mm-1.pdf](http://www.vtic.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Visitor-Servicing-Toolkit-200919-5mm-1.pdf)



## 4. REGIONAL TRAIL NETWORK – CONNECTING THE REGION

A regional trail network that includes drive routes, heritage and art trails, walking, cycle and mountain bike trails connects the region and encourages increased length of stay and dispersal.

### Creating journeys

Trails provide a means for visitors to explore and learn about a region's special places, characters and histories. Tourism is becoming more about journeys and experiences rather than simply visiting sites. Visitors are seeking to engage in authentic experiences that touch them in emotional ways and allow them to connect with people, culture and places. Different theming and different trail types from drive trails to cycle, mountain bike and walking trails, engage different visitor markets and encourage dispersal and spend across a region. Trails are also an important recreational asset for local communities, encouraging residents to be active and explore their backyard.

### Increasing heritage's reach

The region has many mining, military, railway and other heritage sites and disused buildings that could be brought to life for visitors and locals as part of a regional trail network. Augmented Reality (AR) is an increasingly popular technology that brings sites and characters to life for users, increasing their engagement and potentially leaving them with greater insight and advocacy for a destination. Trails around popular sites such as Towers Hill could extend the reach of heritage to a broader audience. With a map, interpretive signage, and lighting of ruins at night, visitors and locals could be encouraged to explore important local sites and their stories.

### Art trail

Expansion of the Ravenswood Art Trail and inclusion of the colourful murals on buildings in Charters Towers and Ravenswood as part of a regional art trail within the broader regional trail network would be an important contributor to the region's brand building, and celebration of local stories and characters. Art on disused buildings or large facades such as grain silos, railway sidings, water tanks, buildings, and storage facilities can tell the story of a place and become an attraction in their own right, as the Silo Art Trail has demonstrated. The Silo Art Trail is considered Australia's largest outdoor gallery and recognises and celebrates the Wimmera Mallee region's people in Victoria.

### Drive routes

Drive routes encourage visitors to disperse and explore a destination, or as part of a journey between regions, to stop and spend time and money in local communities. With an itinerary that takes travellers to points of interest along the way and provides them with engaging experiences, drive routes between Charters Towers and other regions can become attractions in their own right, rather than just a means to get from one point to another.

## ACTIVATION STEPS

1. Audit existing trails and drive routes to identify what's working well, where upgrades and new trail development is required and possible, and the interpretation requirements of visitor markets including signage. This project should be linked with Phase 1's Project 9 Regional signage audit, with the goal of achieving signage across the region that is consistent and reflects the brand while assisting visitors in wayfinding.
2. Plan and construct the staged development of a regional trail network including the expanded art trail.
3. Commission artists to develop a series of art works and murals reflecting the destination brand's essence.
4. Hold an event to launch the art works, including guided tours, workshops, and music performances. (This event will be part of Phase 2's Project 5 Event series.)
5. Develop a multi-day cycle trail to connect communities (Phase 3).



**PROJECT LEAD: CTCRC**



**PARTNERS: Industry Advisory Group and corporate sponsors**

## CASE STUDY: NEW ZEALAND CYCLE TRAIL

The New Zealand Cycle Trail includes 22 mostly off-road Great Rides that showcase New Zealand's landscape, environment, heritage and culture. The Trails comprise a couple of long-established rides such as the Otago Central Rail Trail and trails developed along existing pathways. Restoring and extending pathways has enabled cyclists to visit significant historic and cultural sites while traversing impressive landscapes. Many pathways follow those forged by early explorers and travellers, which led to the trails being given the official Māori name, Ngā Haerenga, 'The Journeys'.

The trails have proven to be not only a fantastic way to explore the country but have also enhanced local communities by creating jobs, promoting health and recreation, and fostering conservation projects. Development of the multi-day Otago Central Rail Trail, which follows a disused railway, revitalised a quiet corner of the South Island and become the second-largest income earner in the region after farming. The Rail Trail alone has resulted in the establishment and growth of cycle tour operators and food and accommodation providers, increased cycle sales, and dispersed visitor expenditure.

*Source: NZ Cycle Trails*



## CASE STUDY: WAGGA WAGGA TRAILS



Wagga Wagga City Council recently launched a brief online and printed [trail guide](#) that provides information on six routes around the city and surrounds for cycling, walking, running and horseback riding. The guide connects existing trails to provide all trail information in one place. The Wagga trails are centred on a 42km city loop with offshoots that lead to attractions including a wetlands, a beach, a mountain biking hill, significant Indigenous sites, a pick your own strawberry farm, the Botanic Gardens, and a water tower mural. A discovery/educational scavenger hunt of the trails is available through an existing app. The hunt can be updated easily to be seasonal (e.g. flowering plants to spot in certain seasons).

The connection of Wagga's trails is a long-term project that includes the identification of future infrastructure developments when funding opportunities arise. Currently Council is developing a ten-year masterplan which will support funding applications for large scale projects such as a velodrome, and trails to villages and agritourism experiences 10-20km away; as well as smaller projects such as the addition of a military trail, and events such as marathons and a laneway arts microfestival.

A focus on using the trails to increase tourism is part of the trail's future development. Currently the trails are not a draw for visitation but connecting many experiences and making them more accessible provides reasons to stay longer and discover more of Wagga.

Benefits of the trail guide so far include:

- increased recreation
- increased active transport
- increased community engagement including with Indigenous and low socioeconomic communities
- protection of habitat from encroachment by suburbia
- the ability for locals to show off their town to visiting friends and relatives
- opportunities for tour operators to offer tours on the trails.

The guide includes a trail map with details on each trail such as trail surface, length, gradient, and types of suitable activities. It includes information on local social fitness groups to join, where to hire and repair bikes, bike safety and rules, places to explore further afield, trail access points, and points of interest. A printed version of the guide was requested by motels, cafes and medical centres to hand to visitors. It is distributed by the Wagga Wagga Visitor Information Centre and by many local businesses.

## 5. VALUE-ADD EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT - REALISING THE FULL POTENTIAL

Value-adding to existing visitor product and experiences in ways that extend the region's offering to visitors and ultimately its appeal as a destination.

The region has quality tourism product and experiences that due to seasonality and limited destination awareness are not fully optimised. There is room for growth in the number and capacity of commissionable product and its availability into the shoulder seasons. Enhancing existing products and bundling them into a series of experiences with other operators may increase product appeal for visitors and deliver a greater return for businesses.



### ACTIVATION STEPS

1. Work with tourism operators to identify opportunities to increase the region's commissionable product through extending or adding value to existing products.
2. Work with operators to bundle different products together to create new immersive, themed and commissionable experiences.
3. Encourage product partnerships with tourism operators from outside of the region.



**PROJECT LEAD: CTCR**



**PARTNERS: Tourism operators**



## 6. PILOT 'BLANK CANVAS' PROJECT

Harnessing existing assets to enhance the region's competitive strengths and encourage visitors to increase their length of stay and spend in the region.

### Optimising assets and special places

The region has numerous assets and places that are underutilised and undervalued by visitors and locals. There are many 'blank canvas' sites with potential for regeneration into new sites to explore or assets to use in a way that celebrates what once was and what they now offer, and generate economic and social benefits for the region. These blank canvas projects also present an opportunity for community members and businesses to collaborate on determining possibilities for each site and how to turn them into new attractions and experiences.

### Storytelling

The region is rich in stories; behind the scene anecdotes, larger-than-life personalities, intensely fascinating cultural reveals, heritage stories that speak to other peoples, times and adventures. These stories reveal the destination's unique soul. Storytelling, therefore, is vital in bringing the region's assets to life, and inspiring emotional connections to the destination amongst visitors. The blank canvas project is an opportunity to encourage communities to come together to share stories.

### Immersive Towers Hill mining experience

Towers Hill at Charters Towers is a popular place for visitors and locals to spend time walking and exploring. Its many mine shafts are prominent reminders of the region's gold mining history. However, due to safety issues, these mine shafts are cordoned off and lack interpretation, leaving visitors and locals with only a limited appreciation of the gold mining activity that occurred. Fabricating a mine shaft and an associated experience would allow visitors and locals to step beyond static interpretation and immerse themselves into an important part of the region's history. Coupled with an updated, commissionable Ghosts After Dark tour would extend the visitor offering.

#### ACTIVATION STEPS

1. Undertake a feasibility assessment of constructing a mine shaft and visitor experience, and identify how this experience will complement other visitor and community activity on Towers Hill.
2. Gain necessary approvals for the mock mine shaft site construction.
3. Source funding for the development of the experience.
4. Construct the mine shaft visitor attraction (Phase 2).
5. Visitor activation and promotion of the new visitor experience as part of the 2022 anniversary celebrations (Phase 2).



**PROJECT LEAD:**  
Industry Advisory Group



**PARTNERS:** CTCR,  
local businesses and  
corporate sponsors

## 7. TOWERS HILL PRECINCT

Unearthing Towers Hill's history and secrets.

The Towers Hill precinct includes many reminders of the region's past, with a heritage-listed group of mining ruins that include the former Pyrites Works, Rainbow Battery, and Towers Chlorination Works as well as many military bunkers and storehouses. They offer a fascinating backdrop for walking and cycle trails through the precinct as part of the regional trail network, and are potential blank canvas projects. Presentation as a cohesive series of experiences would optimise the site and its many facets as an important heritage and recreation precinct.

#### ACTIVATION STEPS

1. Review blank canvas project sites on Towers Hill to gain a holistic view of the potential projects such as the old brewery site redevelopment or lighting of ruins, and assign those sites for future investigation.
2. Undertake feasibility assessments of blank canvas projects and identify how they will complement other visitor and community activity on Towers Hill.
3. Review and update the Ghosts after Dark film content and develop as a commissionable tour experience that can be sold separately and packaged with the mine shaft experience and any other related experiences.
4. Incorporate new experiences into the launch of the mine shaft experience for the 2022 anniversary.
5. Link activity with the walking and cycle paths as part of the Regional trail network project (Project 4).



**PROJECT LEAD:**  
Industry Advisory Group



**PARTNERS:** CTCR, local businesses  
and corporate sponsors




## 8. VISITOR DATA - THE POWER OF KNOWLEDGE


A regular collection of visitor data shared with industry to inform current and future decision making.

Access to current and timely visitor data is essential to support industry decision-making day-to-day and in forward planning. A sustainable industry needs to understand the best-fit visitor markets for their destination, and their behaviours and expectations, and be able to plan their business operation around expected peaks and troughs in visitation. More detailed knowledge about visitors' behaviour, the destination, and its services and products will prepare local tourism operators for their role as hosts and ensure they remain competitive and offer a high standard of quality tourism products.

While some visitor data is captured by the Visitor Information Centre (VIC), it only provides a snapshot of visitors to the centre, and Tourism Research Australia data can only offer an indication of visitor numbers and spend aggregated over a five-year period due to the small data set size.

ACTIVATION STEPS	
1.	Establish an annual seasonal visitor data project where visitor data is collected during a month in peak season and again for a month in the shoulder season.
2.	Extend the VIC visitor survey to include visitor activities and satisfaction with the experiences and the sustainability of the destination.
3.	Subscribe to a trip data collection portal to capture insights and data on in trip travel trends, visitor flows and visitor types.
4.	Establish a central point of data collection via the Visitor Servicing team, allowing them to gather all visitor data from the different sources and share it regularly with industry to assist with forward planning.

 **PROJECT LEAD: CTRC**

 **PARTNERS: Tourism operators, TEL**

## 9. REGIONAL SIGNAGE AUDIT - NAVIGATING OUR REGION

Directional and interpretative signage across the region encourages visitation and supports a clear brand identity.


### Clear signage and interpretation

Signage or wayfinding is an important part of the built environment, helping people navigate unknown places and find their way between points. They are also a means of reflecting the local culture and history, and give places their own identity. Having clear signage where it intuitively makes sense to help visitors find attractions or sites of interest, and find where to park, ensures the accessibility of places, reduces stress in new locations, and provides visitors a sense of the place. Interpretive signage helps visitors and locals better understand the significance of sites from a cultural, historical or environmental perspective.

### Brand building

When signage contributes to a destination's branding, it becomes part of the overall experience. The new brand for the destination provides a timely opportunity to review and upgrade signage so it supports brand building. Currently the region's signage is inconsistent, even missing or poorly placed in some instances and does little to capture the attention and imagination of passing travellers. Developing a new master concept for signage that conveys effective and coherent information will ensure better wayfinding for visitors and locals and help in establishing a clear identity for the region.

ACTIVATION STEPS	
1.	Audit directional and promotional signage at the region's main visitor touch points including entries and exits from towns and villages.
2.	Establish a consistent theme for signage at the main visitor touch points based on the new destination brand.
3.	Identify required signage upgrades and developments across the region.
4.	Consider and update signage needs as part of Phase 2's Project 4: Regional place making to ensure alignment (Phase 2).
5.	Roll out signage upgrades (Phase 2).

 **PROJECT LEAD: CTRC**

 **PARTNERS: Tourism operators, Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads**



## 10. OPTIMISING THE VIC - INSPIRE AND INFLUENCE

The VIC is an attraction in own right for visitors and locals, provides information, stories and inspiration about the region and services, and is an important source of bookings for the region's tourism operators.

### Many touch points of visitor servicing

Visitor servicing that inspires and influences visitors is key to a flourishing visitor economy. Through information shared and skilful sales and advice provided in person and online, VICs can have a positive impact on the overall visitor experience and unlock visitor spending, facilitating a flow on effect through increased visitor expenditure and duration of stay. However, visitor servicing must encompass not just the point of engagement at a VIC, but the whole journey from when a person starts dreaming of their holiday through to their return home. Visitors are sourcing travel inspiration from online review sites, friends and family, social media and travel websites well before they travel. In region, there are many touchpoints including tourism and business operators and VIC pop-ups where visitors seek information and recommendations then and there about what to see and do (see Figure 5). These touchpoints influence the quality of the visitor's experience and what memories they take away with them.

*A 2018 Visitor Servicing strategic discussion paper for Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Board concluded that 80% of visitors undertake pre-planning through digital distribution channels, yet VICs are predominantly devoid of digital integration. "Visitor information service provision needs to be continually reviewed with an understanding of the changing preferences of visitor information consumption. The delivery of quality and informative online information is critical for contemporary visitors."*



Figure 5: Multi channels of visitor servicing<sup>9</sup>

9. Adapted from A National Perspective on Visitor Information Servicing paper

### Re-invention of bricks and mortar VICs

In response to a need to improve their appeal to visitors, financial viability, and increase their return on investment, VICs are reinventing themselves with new business models of value-producing roles. These models focus on how to deliver on the expectations of visitors and increase length of stay and spend in the VIC and in the region.

Visitors are seeking things to see and do, and the Charters Towers VIC is well positioned to become a 'must-do' authentic country heritage attraction in its own right using immersive experiences, interpretation, storytelling and technology that encourages visitors and locals into the centre. Storytelling in particular is valued in visitor engagement and interpretation as it transports the visitor into a different place and time, bringing to life characters, places and elements of a destination. Curating and sharing stories also builds pride within the community. When visitors are drawn into the centre, VIC staff and volunteers then have the opportunity to inspire them to explore the region.

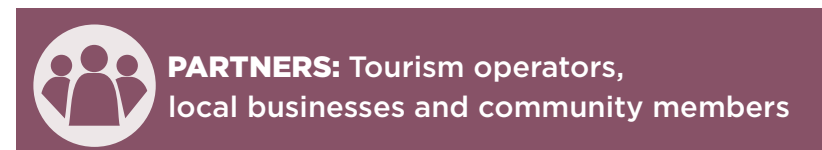
As a key visitor touch point, the VIC has the role of showcasing the brand values. The VIC must be welcoming, deliver country hospitality, provide visitors and locals with a sense of connection with people past and present through stories and information, and have them leave inspired to explore and learn. Within the heritage precinct, the VIC can readily merge old and new to meet visitor needs. Information provided in a contemporary way, such as digital screens and Virtual Reality (VR) content, is efficient when the centre is busy and presents the VIC as responsive to the digital needs of travellers, consistent with the brand.

### VIC sustainability

Bookings and retail sales can help a VIC to improve its viability while improving the visitor experience. Staff and volunteers can provide objective information while adopting a commercial mindset where the focus is on encouraging spend in the centre and region, and ensuring the sustainability of the centre as an important service for visitors, locals and the tourism industry; one doesn't preclude the other.

#### ACTIVATION STEPS

1. Scope a VIC upgrade to offer a contemporary, welcoming experience for locals and visitors, including providing a visitor attraction within the VIC that establishes the VIC as a 'must-do' for visitors.
2. Undertake the upgrade works.
3. Introduce activities and experiences to establish the VIC as an attraction in own right.
4. Strengthen the return on investment the VIC offers CTCR, the tourism industry and the local community.
5. Enhance digital engagement with visitors to build relationships, create interest, and inspire visitation and bookings.
6. Build visitor servicing skills to ensure every visitor engagement delivers value for the visitor.
7. Establish visitor servicing beyond the bricks and mortar VIC at key visitor touch points across the region, connecting the towns and villages and popular visitor spots.
8. Link VIC activity with the adjacent heritage buildings and the role of the VIC as part of Phase 2's Project 4 Regional place making.





## CASE STUDY: DIGITAL CONTENT AND TECHNOLOGY



Australian Capital Territory's only accredited VIC, the Canberra and Region Visitor Centre, provides content on the city and region to visitors in three ways: face-to-face interaction with staff and volunteers, printed information brochures and maps for visitors to take away, and digital delivery through a range of platforms. A large central touchscreen allows visitors to orientate themselves, see what's nearby and create mini-itineraries taking in a range of attractions, events and experiences. The content is drawn from the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW). VR is used at the VIC in two ways. The National Gallery is boosting awareness and ticket sales for their exhibitions by providing teasers of the latest exhibition using VR. The VIC also provides a VR hot air balloon view of events and attractions in Canberra and region.

A free VR experience showcasing the region turned the Albany VIC in Western Australia into a visitor attraction in its own right. Using technology that provides a unique 360° experience, visitors can see the region from a perspective that they would not be able to get when visiting the locations for real. The footage is accompanied with an audio narrative that brings each place to life through local stories. The rationale for introducing the VR tour was to attract more people into the VIC. Once in the centre, visitors can browse the unique retail offering and learn more about the region's attractions and tours from staff and the touchscreens.

Yarra Valley Tourism closed their VICs and installed touch screens at key attractions in the region and introduced a customer service training program for local businesses. The touchscreens have come with challenges such as the maintenance required, information relevance and ensuring they're in the right locations.

Bowen VIC introduced a touchscreen to increase their reach. It was eventually removed as visitors were not really utilising it and the VIC was unable to change any of the content. The VIC has now introduced a VR experience at the centre which is combined with a touchscreen which offers destination information (though no booking facility). Staff and volunteers prompt visitors to use the VR experience and touchscreen and find they still much prefer face to face interaction.

According to conversations with state tourism bodies, touchscreens have had limited success. Digital technology such as VR/AR can offer good results when used in conjunction with the personal interactions visitors have with staff and volunteers at a VIC.



## CASE STUDY: VIC SUSTAINABILITY

Albany VIC, funded and operated by local government, has undergone a process of redefining the VIC's 'why', and the business structure to deliver on this. Originally the VIC team saw their role as providing information and some retail sales. Now the focus is on increasing commercial viability to sustain a VIC service for the tourism industry and local community. The VIC team recognise that just being in the centre of town doesn't assure viability; the VIC's service offering is the driver. The VIC reviewed and refined the offering for their customers:

- for visitors: provide information and a booking service, with staff trained to have a friendly, non-apologetic approach to commission-based sales that are tailored to visitor needs and support the viability of the centre
- for industry: work with operators in getting product trade ready and delivered to visitor markets
- for community: recognise locals are tourists who live here and every person is an opportunity.





## 11. THRIVING EVENTS

Events are important drivers of tourism. Research indicates three-quarters of event attendees would not have gone to a destination if not for an event. In addition, for 57% of first-time visitors to the region, the event is the main reason for visiting and likewise for 69% of repeat visitors<sup>10</sup>.

The region has an extensive calendar of events including sports and recreation, arts, culture and leisure, as well as community and business events. Such events play an important role in forming and celebrating the identity of a destination and its community. Furthermore, events provide the opportunity to increase yield and shift seasonal visitation patterns to the more sustainable year-round visitation across a region to maximise the benefits of events to grow the visitor economy. Low visitation over summer months impacts Charters Towers businesses and jobs. Events can play a major role in driving off-peak visitation and regional dispersal as they create a reason to visit whatever the time of year. Homegrown arts and culture events in particular can establish or build a point of difference from other destinations, give leisure visitors more reasons to travel and stay in the region, and add value to business and sport event visitors either through additional activities or the energy they create.

Events such as the Goldfield Ashes is at capacity and attracting a large repeat visitor market. 10 Days in the Towers and Charters Towers Country Music Festival have the potential to grow and together could become a hero event for the destination, celebrating what makes the region special.

Many of the region's arts/culture/leisure and community events are volunteer-run which leaves them vulnerable to failure or reliance on grant funding. Event committees are limited by capacity, volunteer burnout, and lack of volunteers and skills. There is an opportunity to attract visitors and locals keen to be involved in volunteer projects connected to events as a means of engaging in new activities while making a difference.

Rationalisation by merging Taste of Towers into 10 Days in the Towers, alignment with the Charters Towers destination brand, and re-scheduling to the shoulder season will assist the viability of 10 Days in the Towers. Similarly, a review of the Charters Towers Country Musical Festival to identify actions to improve tourism and community outcomes will boost the event's long-term sustainability.

10. Reinventing Rural Places, The extent and impact of festivals in rural and regional Australia, University of Wollongong

### ACTIVATION STEPS

1. CTRC to encourage event organising committees to seek grant funding to:
  - develop a revitalisation plan for 10 Days in the Towers that includes incorporating Taste of Towers and revisiting the event activity to ensure it presents the destination brand
  - undertake a review of the Country Music Festival, identifying actions required to improve tourism and community outcomes and increase the event's return on investment.
2. Provide assistance with developing business plans for the region's events and with their implementation.
3. Provide event committees with event management templates and information resources to support their efforts.
4. Develop a volunteer pool, inviting locals and visitor to volunteer to support event delivery and be event advocates; and work with local community groups to manage their training.
5. Integrate events into the destination marketing of the region.
6. Encourage packaging and cross-promotion of events and tourism experiences focused on increasing overnight stays and maximising visitor spend.



**PROJECT LEAD:**  
CTRC's events team



**PARTNERS:** TEL, event organising committees, Industry Advisory Group



## 12. EVENTS CALENDAR

Events provide a compelling reason to visit a destination.

### Annual events calendar

An annual events calendar in one central portal is needed to support events and businesses with forward planning and provide a one stop shop for locals and visitors to find information on events across the region. Bringing together all of the region's events into one central calendar is also an effective means of highlighting the vibrancy of the destination, and providing a strong marketing tool for visitation and community engagement. Curating the events into this one central location will require a dedicated and systemised approach, with scope for events to enter their own data via a quality assurance process. The calendar should have a consumer-facing component for marketing purposes and a back of house component for events and staff to enter data and review. Once all events are curated and the system is functioning at its full potential, this calendar will become a powerful asset.

### Seasonal events campaign

Once the annual calendar is in place this content can be used to develop a seasonal events campaign that supports the distribution of the calendar and ensures all residents and local businesses are aware of what's on and have the tools to promote events to visitors, family and friends. The seasonal approach means that consistent collateral and communications is communicated to key markets four times a year, with scope to theme seasons and feature hero events as appropriate. Eventually, locals will wait for the seasonal calendar to be released so they can plan their weekends around it.

#### ACTIVATION STEPS

1. Establish a central Charters Towers events calendar that can be used by businesses and events as a forward planning tool to assist the tourism industry and local businesses to make the most of events.
2. VIC officer to work with event organisers to encourage their events' inclusion in the calendar.
3. Develop a seasonal calendar of events as the focus of a marketing campaign that runs year-round (such as distribution of a printed calendar brochure, digital promotion, and mentions by local media).
4. Consider a partnership with the local radio station or other appropriate media outlet to support the campaign.
5. Gain approval from CTIRC to have the printed calendar distributed with rates notices to ensure comprehensive distribution across the region.
6. Collate the calendar content each quarter and deliver on the campaign, ensuring that the seasonal campaign is released a minimum of 8 weeks prior to the first event in that season.
7. Distribute the seasonal calendar into key source markets such as Townsville.



**PROJECT LEAD: CTIRC**



**PARTNERS: Tourism operators,  
local businesses**

## SEASONAL EVENTS CALENDAR CASE STUDY: COOLAMON, NSW

Coolamon is a rural agricultural village of 2,200 residents, 30-minutes' drive from Wagga Wagga with its population of 64,000. A seasonal calendar of events has been a vital tool in increasing visitor numbers to Coolamon, and growing its visitor economy. The calendar also helps community groups and businesses to forward plan and ensures event dates do not clash.

Council's Community Development Officer sends a request for event information to event coordinators, community groups and relevant businesses via Council and school newsletters every three months to collect details on upcoming events.

Event managers participate because they receive the following free marketing:

- listing on the Visit Coolamon Shire website
- listing in the events calendar brochure, which is distributed throughout the region, and is available for download from the website
- mention in the Visit Coolamon Shire e-newsletter which is circulated to the tourism database
- promotion on the Visit Coolamon Shire blog
- listing on the regional tourism app, SeeRiverina
- promotion across Visit Coolamon Shire's social media channels.

Event managers upload information on their event via a Google form onto the region's tourism website. The form automatically populates an event listing on the website, and on a spreadsheet which is used to develop the calendar's brochure. While the free event listings on ATDW could be used to populate the event information, Coolamon has experienced good uptake on their simple form. The Community Development Officer or event committees upload information on larger events likely to attract significant out-of-region visitation to ATDW.

The types of events added to the calendar include concerts, markets, live music, theatre productions, special meal events such as long lunches, events for public holidays such as ANZAC Day or Mothers' Day, agricultural shows, car shows, fun runs, photography competitions, art exhibitions, race days, open days, festivals, street parties, comedy nights, participatory sports competitions such as cycle races and triathlons, and trivia nights.

Each season the events are promoted with Visit Coolamon branding in a brochure and social media graphics. The word is spread via a radio ad, brochure distribution to VICs, and major nearby attractions, restaurants, libraries and medical centres, and via social media using Facebook events, and organic and paid posts. The Community Development Officer also attends events where possible to capture social media content.

Locals are kept informed of what is coming up and encouraged to invite family and friends to visit for events. This has meant the calendar is an effective VFR marketing tool.



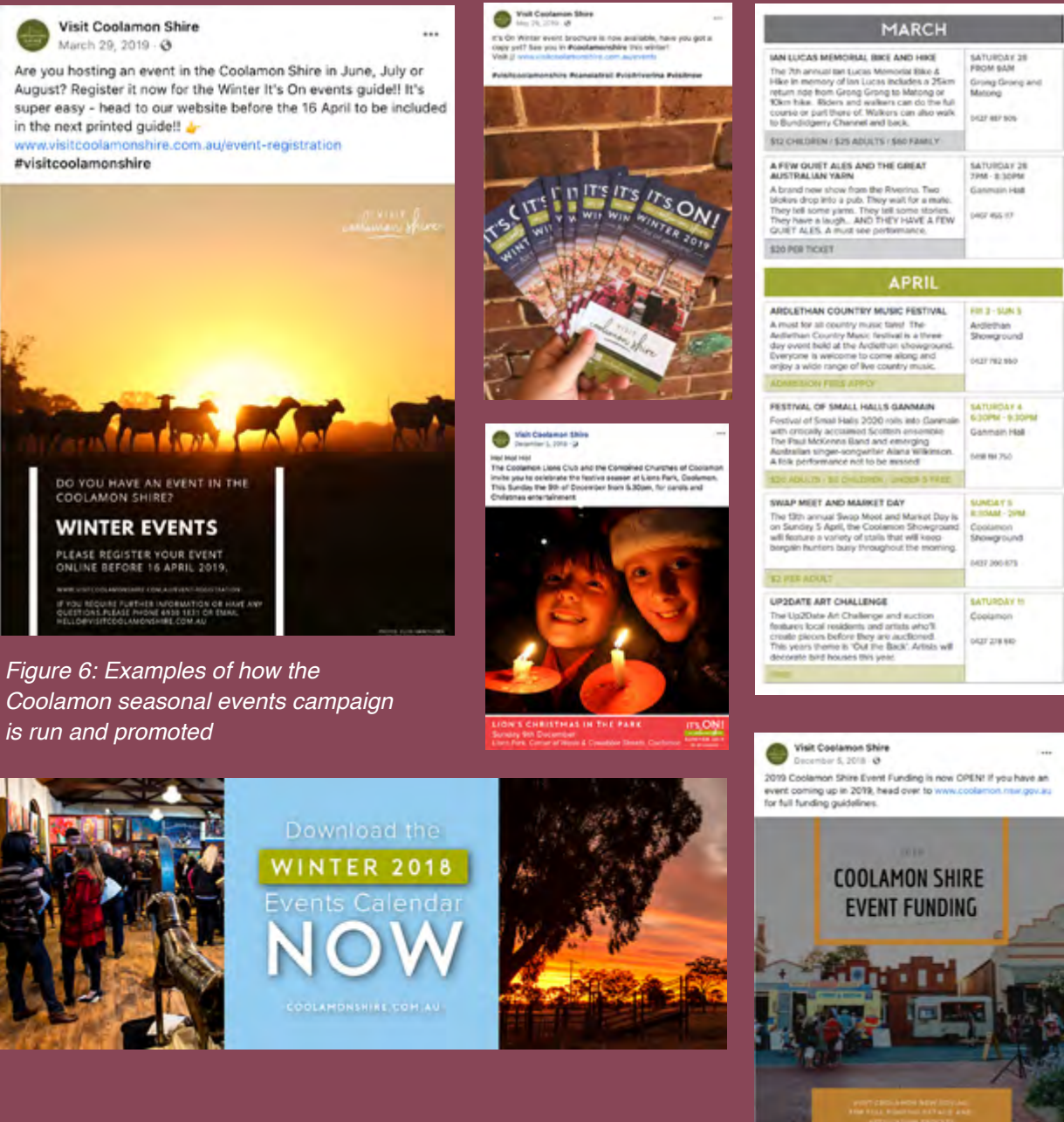


Figure 6: Examples of how the Coolamon seasonal events campaign is run and promoted

Council's event funding program provides financial assistance to promote events that will increase the number of out-of-town visitors, along with mentoring for their committees on marketing and event sustainability.

The region's events promoted through the seasonal calendar have had an impressive impact on visitation to Coolamon. Together with initiatives such as the introduction of an anchor attraction (a cheese factory/restaurant), the town has transformed, particularly on weekends, resulting in the opening of new main street businesses and new tourism attractions.

"The Seasonal Event Calendar has effectively marketed our local events to a wide target audience and been instrumental in attracting increased visitors to our town. It is a wonderful resource that encapsulates and communicates the vibrant culture of our region beautifully." - Bron Hatty, Advance Ganmain.

### 13. BUSINESS RECOVERY AND REFOCUS - BUILDING RESILIENCE

Post COVID-19 business coaching program to support speedy and sustainable industry recovery.

External threats such as the unprecedented COVID-19 global pandemic can be catastrophic for local businesses if they lack the knowledge and tools to recover and rebuild. Support can be as simple as providing a sounding board or information on financial support available through to business mentoring; therefore, support must be tailored to local business requirements.

#### ACTIVATION STEPS

1. Assist local businesses in navigating the range of support measures available and accessing the support they need.
2. Encourage tourism businesses to access available business development programs and resources including the state government's [Mentoring for Growth program](#).

 **PROJECT LEAD: TEL**

 **PARTNERS: Industry Advisory Group, tourism operators, Queensland Government**



## PHASE 2: BUILD BRAND AWARENESS & APPEAL (2023-2024)

This phase is focused on building on the foundations established in Phase 1 and increasing awareness of the destination brand and its appeal amongst target visitor markets. Now the foundations are in place, the attention is on new levels of activity and solidifying what the brand means for visitors and locals.



### 1. EDUTOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Proactive approach to development and growth of edutourism across the region.

#### Competing successfully for domestic education groups

Across Queensland and nationally, primary and high schools take their students outside of the classroom and immerse them in activities in the field where they can have hands on experiences and exposure to ways of thinking that extends their learning and development. They are seeking trusted, quality experiences that meet their learning needs as set by the Australian Curriculum and can be achieved within their time frames and budgets. They travel across the school year, including the shoulder seasons, and will often return to the same place and provider if the program meets their needs. This makes the education market an important target market to reduce seasonality and secure repeat visitation. For this reason, it is a competitive market, with other regions vying for their attention.

Providing schools with resources and suggested itineraries helps to put the destination into their consideration set when planning excursions. But to stand out from other destinations, and encourage schools to spend more time in the region, proactive engagement with schools is essential. Building solid relationships with schools enables a destination to stay abreast of their needs and know when to adapt the offering so that it remains innovative and compelling for teachers and their students. This project aligns with Tourism and Events Queensland's (TEQ) Outback Queensland Education Experience Program which seeks to attract increased numbers of domestic and international visitors to outback regions in the shoulder and off seasons, including mid-week.

#### Optimising education assets

Education is a strong pillar of the region's economy, with the region home to boarding students from across the state and country and from overseas. The region's school facilities are important assets with the potential for use outside of term time. Offering programs such as training workshops for out-of-region teachers, summer/winter school holiday programs, and other specialist intensive workshops linked with leisure activities could attract new visitor groups to the region.






### Collaborative approach to attracting international study tours

The Tourism North Queensland EduTourism Consortium brings together exceptional experiences and learning outcomes to deliver world-class study aboard and educational tourism programs in and around Townsville for international students. The Charters Towers region has the opportunity to work with consortium members to offer new educational experiences that increase the appeal and breadth of their study tour itineraries.

ACTIVATION STEPS	
1.	Work with current Edutourism partners to establish a dedicated resource to drive this activity.
2.	Establish a professional learning community with CTRC as the hub, with participating principals as a resource to build the region's knowledge and capacity around edutourism, including how to adapt product for the education market, and upskilling tourism operators and agriculture producers.



**PROJECT LEAD: CTRC**



**PARTNERS:** Local schools, tourism operators,

## 2. NEW EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

'Blank canvas' sites around the region are identified as project sites to be activated for tourism and community use.

This project takes the insights and lessons from the pilot project in Phase 1 and extends to a new series of projects across the region. As noted in Phase 1, there are many unused sites and infrastructure across the region with the potential to be transformed into new visitor attractions and experiences that would increase the destination's appeal and identity. These may be single locations or a connected series of sites.

ACTIVATION STEPS	
1.	Develop a list of potential blank canvas sites.
2.	Develop selection criteria for site assessment and apply to the identified sites.
3.	Identify and agree on the priority projects to be actioned.
4.	Undertake a visioning exercise of the experience opportunities at the site and how they can be realised.
5.	Establish the project tasks, milestones and budget costs, and assign responsibilities.
6.	Secure funding for the project activity.
7.	Monitor project progress and issues that arise, and support the Industry Advisory Group in achieving the desired outcomes.

### Potential sites for consideration include:

- Venus Battery
- heritage precincts within Charters Towers
- Towers Hill amphitheatre, old brewery site and pyrite factory ruins
- Burdekin Weir
- CTRC's river frontage land at Sellheim
- heritage cemeteries (including the Pioneer and Chinese cemeteries)
- disused military buildings
- old steam pump engines
- sites for the regional arts trails including Hervey Range, Ravenswood, Greenvale, Charters Towers and Pentland and railway sidings between Townsville and Mount Isa
- Ravenswood walking trails (activity beyond the regional trail network project)
- Pentland's Norwood Jail Cell .



**PROJECT LEAD:** Industry Advisory Group



**PARTNERS:** Tourism operators, local businesses and community groups, Overlanders Way group (for Townsville to Mount Isa railway sidings project)



### 3. REGIONAL PLACE MAKING

Development of a Charters Towers CBD Revitalisation Plan and a Heritage Asset Audit.

#### Capitalising on the region's rich heritage

The region presents preserved, authentic gold mining history, with a dominance of heritage buildings in a compact area, notably in the main streets of Charters Towers and in Ravenswood and Pentland. Gold mining relics across the region include shafts and tunnels, with several buildings and mines on the Queensland Heritage Register. The gold story is a core cultural heritage narrative for the region, and the historical buildings and relics are the backdrop to this story for visitors and locals.

There are many heritage experiences across the state and country which vie for visitor's attention and dollars. To stand out, the region needs to be clear in its identity and what makes it unique as a heritage destination. An important part of this identity is that the built heritage fabric of Charters Towers CBD is a bustling regional town, not a fabricated visitor experience. The centre has informal precincts that have the potential to become places that attract locals and visitors to linger and enjoy.

#### Creating a cohesive centre

A revitalisation plan for the CBD will identify the works required to create a cohesive centre that is attractive for locals and visitors to gather and spend locally. Attractive heritage facades, streetscaping and signage will enhance the identity of Charters Towers and the region broadly and community pride in the region's built fabric. It will also create additional attractions for visitors. The plan will need to identify low traffic spaces for pedestrian use and beautification requirements to improve street appeal, celebrate the town's identity and stories, and activate key precincts such as the World Theatre to the Stock Exchange through events and street art.

#### Coordinated approach to asset management and presentation

A master plan of the region's heritage assets is also required to achieve a coordinated approach to asset management and development, and consistent theming and presentation. The region has a dominance of museums run by enthusiastic volunteers and other sites with static displays. Unfortunately, the communication of the region's history to visitors is disjointed and the museums are in need of professional curatorial assistance. The museums hold important historical items of regional and sub-regional significance, along with memorabilia which offers unique insights into social history.

The limited commercialisation of heritage experiences, with many provided free or at little cost, is placing pressure on the sustainability of sites and their operation. There is potential to increase the quality of experience for visitors and at the same time, deliver a greater return on investment for the operators. A starting point is gaining an understanding of the assets across the region, those that have innate value for the community, and those that have the potential to be updated to improve their value as a tourism asset.

#### ACTIVATION STEPS

##### Charters Towers CBD Revitalisation Plan

1. Implement a tender process to attract suitable contractors.
2. Develop the plan.
3. Provide grant funding to encourage shop owners to update and enhance their street appeal in line with the overarching design plans.
4. Relevant staff attend 'Place Making' workshop to enhance their understanding of place making.

##### Master Plan of the region's heritage assets

1. Implement a tender process to attract suitable contractors.
2. Develop a Master Plan, including an audit of heritage assets. Implementation of the Charters Towers CBD Revitalisation Plan and the delivery of the Master Plan will be continued into Phase 3.



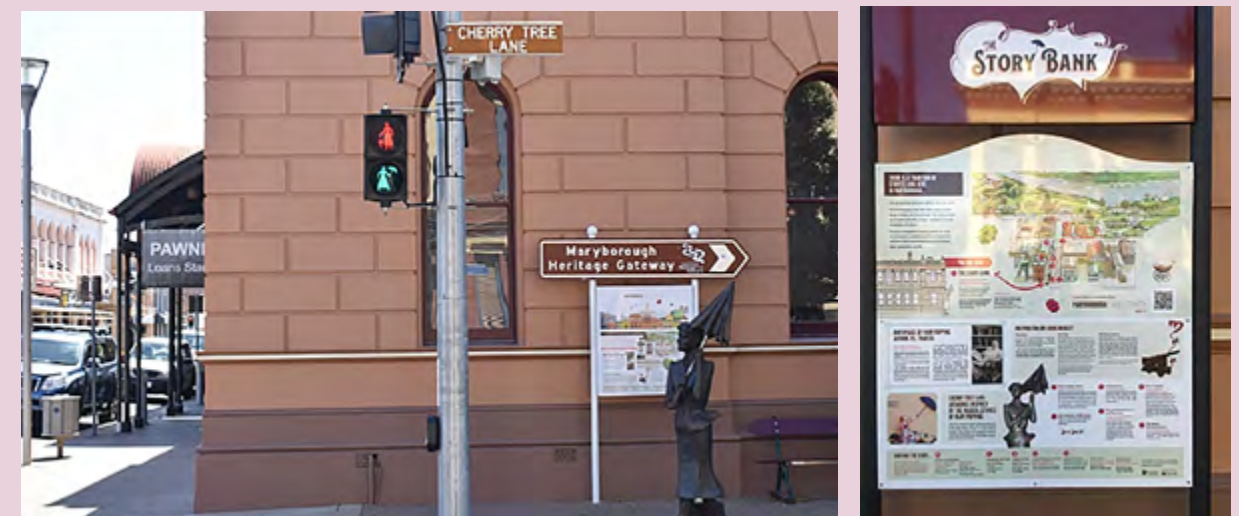
**PROJECT LEAD:**  
CTRC



**PARTNERS:** National Trust of Australia (Queensland), tourism operators, local businesses and community members

### CASE STUDY: MARYBOROUGH

Maryborough's historic downtown was the childhood home of the author of Mary Poppins, PL Travers. Elements of the neighbourhood, such as the park, made their way into the book's fictional London setting. Today a visit to the birthplace of PL Travers reveals a streetscape of Mary Poppins wonder with themed murals and word art on the heritage buildings, a sculpture of Mary Poppins, signage, and even Mary Poppins traffic lights! Today PL Travers' birthplace (a bank) is a 'story bank' - an interactive museum/creativity centre.





## 4. SMALL EVENT SERIES

Adapting to change and putting the spotlight on the uniqueness of the region.

### Shift in event type

COVID-19 means mass gatherings may never look the same, and the sustainability of these types of events needs to be reviewed. This presents an exciting opportunity for boutique events – small and micro events that are exclusive, niche, tailored, high end, stylish, or one of a kind. They focus on high value, quality and exclusivity over volume and mass numbers. Smaller, high value events across the year are an alternative model that are less resource intensive and build brand, destination awareness, community pride and industry collaboration.

### Activating sites and seasons

With many significant and quirky heritage and industrial buildings and sites across the Charters Towers region, the creation of a new premium event series that activates the brand, blank canvas sites, and iconic buildings is ideal for the region. The event series would be scheduled to ensure good coverage of shoulder and off-peak seasons and dispersal across the entire Charters Towers region, showcasing the character and characters of each community, while always considering the activation of the destination brand. The primary target market for these events will be local residents and their VFR, and Townsville residents.

### Potential new events may include:

1. Arts trail launch festival (may become an ongoing event)<sup>11</sup>
2. Hervey Range: Spirit and Soul Fest
3. Ravenswood After Dark
4. Miners ball or long table lunch/dinner at the Stock Exchange Arcade
5. Music and performances at Pentland's railway sidings
6. Opera on Towers Hill
7. Heritage themed dinners under the stars in the CBD and at the Venus Battery
8. Towers Dash (running event on the Towers Hill circuit)
9. Cycling road race event from Townsville to Charters Towers with additional events in Charters Towers during the day
10. Charters Towers region Gold Rush: search for the \$10,000 nugget competition in the shoulder season (minimum stay of two nights to participate).
11. Annual Truck Drivers Memorial event

### ACTIVATION STEPS

1. Work with the Industry Advisory Group and local community representatives to develop and design the event series and schedule.
2. Develop an event plan for each event, along with a suite of tools and templates that can be used for all future events within the series. (Establish systems and processes to streamline planning).
3. Develop organising committees for each of the events for event coordination and delivery.
4. Develop a dedicated section of the website's events calendar to feature this event series.
5. Plan and execute a marketing campaign to promote the series as a whole and each individual event.
6. Deliver events.
7. Undertake event review and post event debriefing to ensure continual improvement.



11. Similar to Toowoomba's First Coat festival, but spread across the entire region

## 5. ONGOING INDUSTRY SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH

Growing industry participation in a regional pathway to growth mentoring program and a local business awards program.

### Tailored business advice

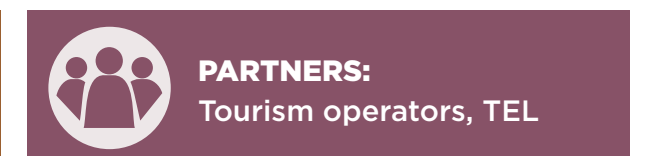
While greater work is required to move visitor services into a digital space, there is also a need for industry to upskill in the areas of social media and digital marketing methods as they offer cost and time efficient ways to reach visitor markets. Knowing how to adapt products and experiences to remain competitive with visitor markets is also vital. Tailored one-on-one business support such as mentoring has been demonstrated to deliver sustained improvements where they are needed by a business (see Case Study). Mentoring brings expert focus and keeps the business owner or manager accountable. TEL's business development workshops are also an important resource to help members to increase their skills.

### Celebrating local achievements

Business award programs provide an opportunity to encourage performance improvements, build capacity, and celebrate excellence. While local tourism operators have been encouraged to compete in the North Queensland Tourism and Events Awards, there has been declining interest. The time and effort involved in entering has outweighed the benefits for operators that have failed to gain recognition. A local awards program across industries provides a platform for local tourism operators to present themselves and their achievements and position themselves as a leader in the community. An awards program also contributes to local pride and collaboration.

### ACTIVATION STEPS

1. Encourage local operators to participate in mentoring programs or to engage mentors to support their business development.
2. Leverage and link with the business development programs offered by TEL.
3. Establish an annual awards program for all local businesses, with categories that encourage participation by tourism and events operators.





## BUSINESS MENTORING CASE STUDY: OUTBACK AUSSIE TOURS

Alan Smith of Outback Aussie Tours recommends the ideal time to have a business mentor is before beginning your business, at start up, and consistently through the life of the business.

"I sought out a mentor because of a feeling of Groundhog Day. I was not satisfied with the return on investment of my time, effort and money. Mentoring has resulted in personal and professional growth, improved job satisfaction, and the realisation of goals. I have more clarity and more enjoyment from my business. Psychologically and financially my business is more sustainable because it can return enough for my financial goals such as retirement.

I would recommend a mentor because of the experience and skills you may not have at the level of industry best practice. A mentor will help you maintain focus on return on investment and achieving goals. There is value in consistent reporting, and keeping in touch with your business. If you try growing without reporting, you will get appendicitis - something will be removed from your business.

A business can have more than one mentor, such as experts in different areas: finance, marketing, HR, and tourism. A financial mentor is critical and could be your accountant. You could hire a professional business coach; it's like going to a doctor - why use an amateur?

A mentor requires time for self-reflection; the time required should be part of your culture. Mentorship also requires consistent commitment, an open mind, willingness to change yourself first, discipline, and willingness to be called out and to do something about it."



## 6. DESTINATION SUSTAINABILITY

"Ultimately destination residents invite or accept tourists into their communities because they hope this economic activity will improve their quality of life or their wellbeing. If tourism is not making a net contribution to destination community wellbeing, then it's not a sustainable activity."

– Gianna Moscardo

Tourism, like any economic activity has a responsibility for how it impacts the local community and natural environment. Charters Towers has an opportunity to ensure sustainability is a core part of tourism development. This will involve embarking on a journey of continuous effort and adaption as a destination that invests in resilience and sustainability, where enjoyable authentic travel experiences are offered that are the product of community pride, that value the natural environment, local culture and sharing of stories that reflect the place and its people.

The CTRC Corporate Plan 2020-2025 identifies infrastructure and sustainability as a priority focus area, with attention on maintenance, enhancement and protection of built and natural environments. This DMP provides the platform to increase sustainability outcomes for the region through activity that supports community values and culture, and environmental responsibility.

### ACTIVATION STEPS

1. Require event organisers to demonstrate their environmental responsibility (waste and energy minimisation) and use of local suppliers in their applications for events held on public lands.
2. Work with local operators to develop an industry Sustainability Commitment, outlining the environmental and social practices operators will commit to in their business activities, and how to encourage visitors to be conscious travellers.
3. Incorporate into the blank canvas sites a sustainability lens such as use of renewable energy, engaging local community, and reusing/recycling.
4. Use the Regional Open Day program to encourage locals and visitors to support the local community by buying local.
5. Measure visitor satisfaction with the quality and sustainability of the environment in the visitor survey.



**PROJECT LEAD: CTRC**



**PARTNERS:** Industry Advisory Group, tourism operators, local community members





# PHASE 3: CONSOLIDATE AND GROW (2025 AND BEYOND)

In this phase the focus is on consolidating what has been achieved via the destination brand and taking it deeper into the region to strengthen the identity. This phase is also about project continuity, keeping the Phase 1 and 2 projects on track where they are ongoing or activated across several phases.



## 1. REGIONAL MASTER BRAND

Following the successful development and activation of the destination brand the next step is to extend this to create one holistic brand for the Charters Towers region. This will be a holistic industry and community brand that has been developed collaboratively and is designed to build local pride and engagement in all industries and to position the region as a fantastic place to visit, live, work, study and do business.

Developing this master brand will bring together all industries, sporting and community groups, education facilities, youth and local residents. Collectively through the process, they will define the master story and personality of the region, the DNA that everyone can resonate and connect with. By establishing a clear story and personality for the region, the master brand will be an important means to strengthen the regional economy. Through advocacy amongst locals, it will support the efforts of CTRC to attract more businesses to open and succeed, and investment into new infrastructure.

Similar to the Canberra brand (as per the case study below) this brand will come to life through local people, businesses, institutions and organisations using the brand in creative ways.

### ACTIVATION STEPS

1. Engage a branding agency to work with Council, businesses and the community on the master brand process (establish a project working group with a broad mix of stakeholders to oversee this project).
2. Undertake the brand development process with external experts.
3. Launch the new brand with a local event and campaign.
4. Create the resources and tools for all industries, community and sporting groups, etc. to use the brand.
5. Allocate an ongoing budget to brand activation activity.

 **PROJECT LEAD:**  
CTRRC / Project group

 **PARTNERS:**  
Local businesses and community members



## CASE STUDY: CANBERRA



The CBR brand was developed by Canberra Business Chamber to grow Canberra's reputation as a fantastic place to live, work, study and do business – to inspire people to live, start and grow businesses, study and invest in Canberra. Its mission is to strengthen and diversify the Canberra and region economy.

The brand consists of a community brand 'We Are CBR' and a regional economic development brand 'CBR – Canberra Region'. The brand comes to life through local people, businesses, institutions and organisations using the brand in creative ways.

The communications approach centred on leveraging the well-defined brand narrative and architecture; building a team of citizens, organisations and other key stakeholders to champion the brand; and content creation, curation and distribution.

The brand was received positively by internal stakeholders with good uptake of the brand's physical assets, such as window stickers and logo usage. In the first five months of the communication plan's implementation, canberra.com.au recorded close to 20,000 users who clocked up 46,000 page views on the new website. A Facebook page created to amplify CBR content amassed 4,700 likes over the first five months, while posts on the page received 500,000 impressions. There was also widespread adoption of the program's hashtag, #WeAreCBR.



## MONITORING AND REVIEW PROCESS

This DMP is a five-year plan with all 20 projects recommended to be initiated within this time frame. Implementation is a shared responsibility between CTRC and industry, with the Industry Advisory Group to oversee the implementation of the DMP. Members of the Group are recommended to include representatives of:

- CTRC
- tourism operators
- education tourism stakeholders
- Chamber of Commerce
- community
- TEL.

State government agencies such as the Queensland Department of Environment and Science (Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service) and community groups will be invited to attend meetings as relevant to projects being discussed.

### Review process

Two levels of review will be conducted across the life of the DMP:

1. Six monthly review as part of the annual CTRC Operational Plan quarterly updates to ensure the projects and their actions remain relevant and are being progressed, to identify and address any issues and opportunities that have arisen that have implications for delivery of the projects, and to monitor outcomes against the Key Performance Indicators
2. At the end of Phase 1 (2022) and Phase 2 (2025) to take stock, review achievements to date, and review and respond to any budget and other resourcing needs.

### Performance measurement

The Industry Advisory Group will be responsible for undertaking the reviews of the DMP. Performance will be measured against the specific project criteria and achievement of the DMP goals, and additional criteria for establishing a flourishing visitor economy.





Goals	Key Performance Indicators
Increased overnight visitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of overnight visitors in region as reported by Tourism Research Australia (TRA), regional data collected, and other data insights captured</li> <li>Length of stay as reported by TRA and regional data collected</li> </ul>
Increased visitor spend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visitor expenditure by overnight and daytrip visitors as reported by TRA and regional data collected</li> </ul>
Increased visitation during shoulder months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of visitors to region as reported by TRA</li> <li>Number of visitors to VIC and visitor hotspots</li> </ul>
Increased destination awareness in target markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Destination website traffic (unique users)</li> <li>Followers on social media (Facebook and Instagram)</li> </ul>
Increased visitor satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive reviews and ranking on social media platforms (TripAdvisor and Google)</li> </ul>

Additional visitor economy criteria	
Enhanced liveability of the region (defined in the tourism context by a growing economy, vibrant public spaces, and community engagement in local events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of local residents attending local events</li> <li>Number of events and activities in public spaces</li> </ul>
Building business capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of businesses participating in mentoring program</li> <li>Number of new cooperative marketing and product development activities</li> <li>Number of operators listed on ATDW</li> <li>Number of trade ready products</li> <li>Number of tourism operators in TEQ's Best of Queensland program</li> </ul>

## ATTACHMENT 1: ADDITIONAL PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES

A range of additional project opportunities which were identified in the DMP's Gaps and Opportunities paper are summarised below. While these are projects are not included in the priority projects for the next five years, they warrant consideration when budget is available.

### Product & Experience Development & Events

#### Product:

- Continue to collaborate with Traditional Owners and the Department of Environment and Science on the development of Indigenous experiences at White Mountains National Park and on country, leveraging the 2020 Year of Indigenous Tourism for grant opportunities.
- Develop a Paddock to Plate experience celebrating local producers and country pubs e.g. Long Table food events to complement other events.
- Develop a drive trail from Townsville to Charters Towers and back, via Hervey Range in one direction and return via Ravenswood.
- Work with the Department of Environment and Science to develop a self-drive circuit of White Mountains National Park.
- Upgrade the historic cemeteries with refreshed interpretation and trails.
- Develop an EOI for redevelopment of the old brewery site into a year-round, all-weather attraction with food offerings and activities for visitors and locals.
- Develop an EOI for private investment in the development of adventure product including a luge on Towers Hill and a zip-line experience.
- Investigate the acquisition and refurbishment of the old army mess hall as a function space.
- Expand prospecting areas, for example, to the creek bed at Venus Battery.
- Foster bush food development initiatives.
- Relocate the Charters Towers flying fox colony to a suitable site that can be developed as an ecotourism destination providing interpretation and activities that celebrate the environmental value of the flying fox (see [Austin, USA bat tourism experiences](#)).
- Create a gold coin trail down Gill Street with a story of a local character or local fact in each coin.
- Develop a Truckies Memorial to celebrate the industry and showcase the significance of this industry to the district.

#### Events:

- Leverage off events in surrounding regions to attract visitors.
- Encourage events that increase night-time activity, particularly during the warmer months.
- Encourage street theatre, with actors in period attire for special events.

### Brand & Marketing

- Introduce picture frame photography sites in key locations to encourage visitors to co-create content and share photos, including the opportunity to hire costumes and have photos taken in and around heritage buildings.
- Continue to promote the region as a film location, and build relationships with Screen Queensland.







### Visitor Servicing & Infrastructure

- Install collection boxes for receipts at free or low cost camping sites to capture local spend by visitors.
- Develop a Self-contained Recreational Camping Policy that identifies appropriate sites, required facilities and length of stay, any requirements to access low cost or free camping sites such as eating out locally.
- Review and upgrade VIC parking provision and clear signage for improved accessibility.
- Develop infrastructure for local and visiting families such as a waterpark and recreational use of the river and dam.
- Investigate the development of camping facilities for school groups at Ravenswood.
- Assess the feasibility of a courtesy bus from low cost/free camping sites outside of Charters Towers into town and to tourist spots and eateries, with potential funding from Chamber of Commerce.
- Investigate the development of a train experience and/or a shuttle service to and from Townsville.

### Governance, Industry & Community Development

- Produce an agritourism development guide and toolkit to support farmer diversification into tourism.
- Facilitate the development of Indigenous tourism experiences through providing access to business advice, mentoring and funding opportunities.
- Work with the local arts community to build interest and skills in storytelling.
- Encourage the innovative delivery of experiences in off peak months, including the provision of AR/VR that enable access and interpretation without guides.
- Encourage the reinvigoration of local business development networks, with a common vision and activities that are relevant and appealing to the business community.
- Support the development of new activity spaces for local and visiting youth such as the original Youth Shack.

## ATTACHMENT 2: GRANT FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR DMP PROJECTS

### Infrastructure – Community Development Grants (federal) (CDG)

Applications through to June 2026

There is no minimum or maximum funding amount that can be applied for. The program will be delivered under Outcome 3: Strengthening the sustainability, capacity and diversity of our cities and regional economies including through facilitating local partnerships between all levels of government and local communities; through reforms that stimulate economic growth; and providing grants and financial assistance.

The objective of the CDG program is to support needed infrastructure that promotes stable, secure and viable local and regional economies.

The intended outcomes of the program are:

- to construct and/or upgrade facilities to provide long term improvements in social and economic viability of local communities
- to create jobs in the delivery of projects and ongoing use of the infrastructure
- to improve social amenity, increased health and wellbeing and social cohesion by utilisation of the infrastructure by community groups.

To be eligible you must:

- be a legal entity
- have an Australian Business Number (ABN).

[Fund Details](#)

### Preservation of historical buildings - Copland Foundation Grants (foundation)

For the study, management, conservation, acquisition and interpretation of relevant historic architecture. Grants will be awarded for the conservation, research and/or interpretation of historic houses. Priority programs are those involving historic houses, their collections and gardens. While grants are not limited to this category, the Trustees will be particularly pleased to receive grant applications that come under this heading.

[Fund Details](#)

### Purchase equipment, facility improvement, training, holding events - Gambling Community Benefit Fund

Up to \$35,000

Not for profits can apply.

[Fund Details](#)

### Infrastructure - Local Government Grants & Subsidies Program

Currently closed

[Fund Details](#)



### Infrastructure – Building our Regions

Currently closed

[Fund Details](#)

### Staff (trainees) - First Start

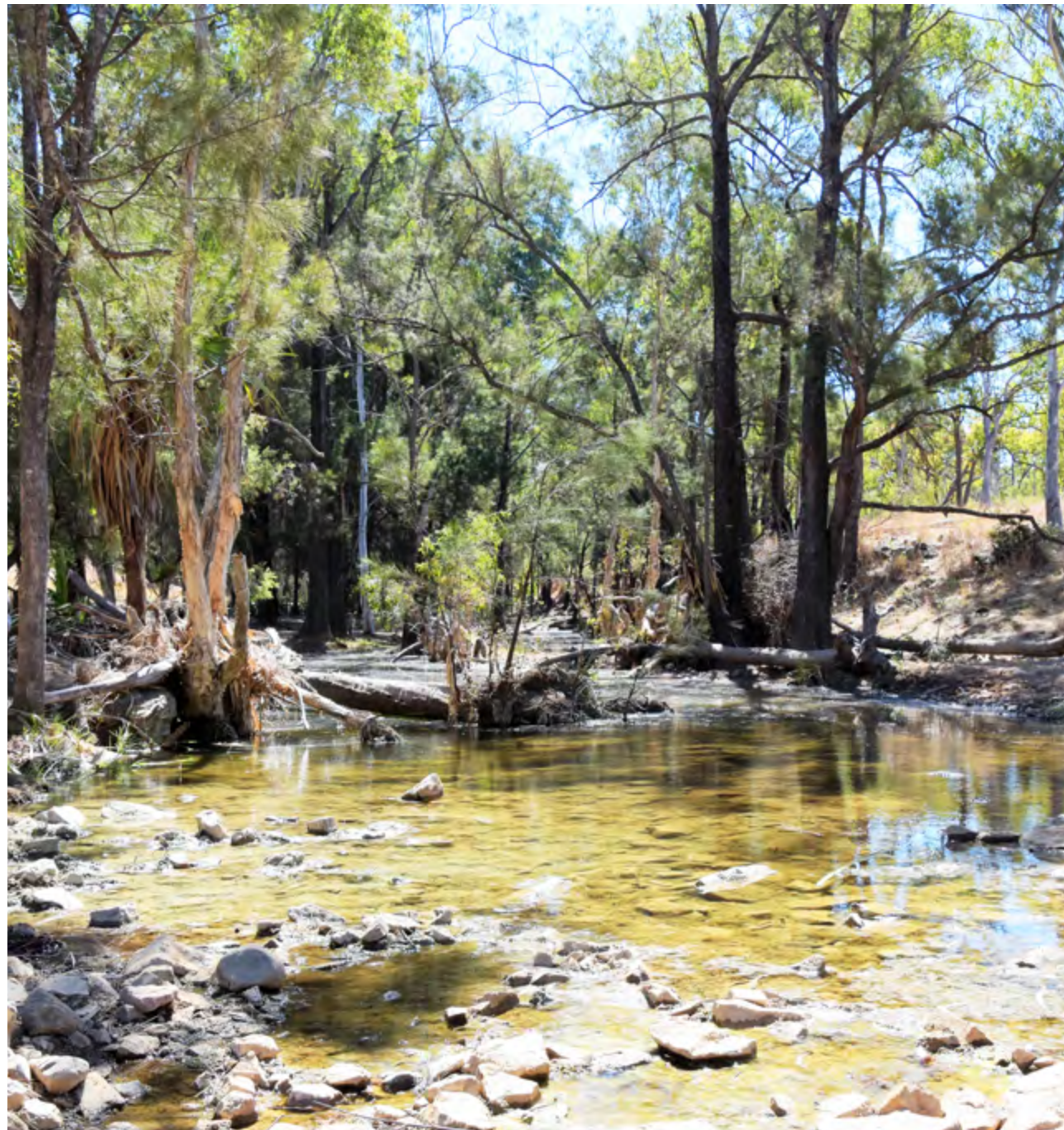
Provides wage subsidies to local government to employ trainees for 12 months.

[Fund Details](#)

### Infrastructure, Events, Strategic Planning, Leadership/Capability – Building Better Regions Fund

Currently closed

[Fund Details](#)



## ATTACHMENT 3: POST COVID-19 ACTION PLAN

As travel resumes in phases (intrastate then interstate and lastly international), regional destinations are poised to benefit if they can stand out in the crowded marketplace and meet the needs of visitors.

### POST COVID-19 TRAVEL TRENDS

COVID-19 is expected to impact travel behaviour for many months after the virus threat has gone. Some trends will include:

- consumers want something to look forward to and will be keen to plan and book a holiday
- consumers will seek out simple, meaningful experiences
- people will visit family and friends for emotional support and connection
- during an economic slowdown, tourists tend to travel less, stay closer to home and seek simplicity. For example: value-based holidays based on basic facilities, meeting locals, and free time. Here, tourism is about the beach or the view from the mountain, and being less plugged in
- travel will not be taken for granted, with greater intentions around planning to ensure the trip offers what travellers are looking for. During recessions, impulse purchases dramatically decline and travellers seek bargains. Those who manage household budgets (typically women) will search for detailed information on activities, experiences, reviews and prices. Destinations and tourism businesses should provide in-depth content
- during a recession values and behaviours change. We become more concerned for others and with collectivism and move away from individualism. Materialism and possessions become less important. Volunteering and social tourism have a higher priority in a more inclusive society.
- there will be smaller, boutique events as mass gatherings remain on hold until safety can be assured
- the strain that our lifestyle places on the natural environment has never been more apparent. If there is a silver lining to COVID-19, it is perhaps that destination management organisations (DMOs) have a unique opportunity to change the future of tourism to be climate- and environmentally friendly
- there will be increased requirements around health and safety
- Grey Nomads may be slow to return to travel due to safety concerns, requiring destinations dependent on these travellers to explore new markets
- cities will be the least appealing destinations.





## POST COVID-19 TRAVELLERS

The first travellers are likely to be:

- those visiting friends and family they haven't seen for a while
- local travellers or those who live nearby who would normally travel far away
- people travelling for their passion, doing things they haven't been able to in lockdown (This might also be locals taking part in their passion locally when they would typically do that elsewhere)
- millennials seeking adventurous outdoor activities
- business travellers.

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES FOR DMO'S

The following resources provide excellent guidance for destinations on what to do during the COVID-19 crisis and recovery.

### 1. COVID-19 Response Action Plan for Destinations (Tourism eSchool)

This detailed action plan covers

- communication with industry around COVID-19 changes
- being an advocate for local operators
- short-term actions such as digital training for operators and consumer communications
- recovery actions such as getting ready for funding opportunities, supporting experience development and consumer communications.

One additional tip: Develop, publish and share itineraries of experiences that meet social distancing needs.

### 2. Webinar series: How DMOs should respond to COVID-19 (Destination Think)

Destination Think ran [three webinars](#) as a virtual forum for DMOs:

i. A strategic approach to managing your destination during COVID-19

#### Key takeouts:

- address immediate needs and challenges
- consider the bigger picture
- responding to a rapidly changing landscape
- show leadership through rationality.



ii. How to adjust your destination's communications during the COVID-19 crisis and what to do with your earned, owned and paid channels

#### Key takeouts:

- use restriction scenarios to plan for phases of content
- lean on emotional lenses to help decide which messages are appropriate at different times
- work more collaboratively with stakeholders and industry
- use your values to clarify your DMO's role.

#### More ideas

iii. How to manage your destination and support your tourism industry to maintain resilience through the COVID-19 crisis

#### Key takeouts:

- there can't be winners and losers in our local industry
- be creative in your adaptation – tourism is a creative industry
- have community at the heart of your planning
- recovery to the old normal is an illusion – redevelop by cocreating
- the future is now – now is your chance to have regenerative tourism with deeply meaningful experiences (instead of a numbers game) - if not now, then when?

#### Your role as a destination management organisation in the slow restart of tourism - includes:

- restarting tourism will be a gradual process
- your DMO's role as public servant: Promote safe behaviour
- your DMO's role as business coach: Prepare tourism operators to run a restricted business
- your DMO's role as a teacher: Prepare communities to host travellers
- consider those most likely to travel first when places reopen.

[Preparing your DMO for the future](#) - Some effective ways to invest your limited time and resources to ensure your DMO's resiliency during all phases of COVID-19:

- consult historical trends and visitor behaviour
- see your audience as people, not numbers
- account for fear and trepidation during the restart phase
- measure trends, not snapshots in time
- consider a range of possible futures.

### 3. Scenario Planning

Destination Think recommend using data to create scenario-based plans for the future of your destination during the COVID-19 recovery.

Find out how to plan a matrix of four possible future scenarios [here](#) (the instructions in this link can only be viewed for free once, so consider saving a copy, or use [this explanation](#)). The four scenarios are developed using two impactful trends and two key uncertainties, and once developed, are used to support your strategic planning.





**CHARTERS TOWERS**  
REGIONAL COUNCIL