



Discover South Burnett
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FUTURE OF THE VICS REPORT



Stacey Perrett
SOUTH BURNETT REGIONAL COUNCIL

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1.0 Introduction

The South Burnett Visitor Information Centre network consists of five (5) accredited information centres, which are fully funded by the South Burnett Regional Council.

The Visitor Information Centres (VICs) rely heavily on volunteers who are supported by Council staff. Council is committed to the future of the VICs and as a result will be undertaking the Future of the VICs study to develop a clear plan ahead for visitor services in the South Burnett.

The discussion paper will focus on a range of investigation/research topics and will use case study examples from other locations or local history to form a Discussion Paper.

Consultation with volunteers, industry and Council will be undertaken on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and gaps within the current Visitor Information Centre network.

South Burnett VICs play a valuable role in the visitor economy and South Burnett Regional Council will continue to work with all stakeholders and volunteers to ensure the VIC's offer value into the future.

2.0 Executive Summary

The Future of the VICs project is expected to develop a clear plan for tourism services in the South Burnett region. A range of investigation/research areas have been identified and case study examples from other locations and Visitor Information Centres will inform a Discussion Paper. Open consultation with volunteers, industry and Council will be undertaken on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and gaps, developing an informed direction for the VICs.

3.0 Background/ Objectives

3.1 Background

In recent years, South Burnett Visitor Information Centre's (VICs) have been under the spotlight as the tourism sector sees shifts in consumer purchase behaviour. The wider tourism industry has witnessed the closure and/or rejuvenation of VICs. South Burnett is not immune to these changes, with a decrease in visitors through the VIC network over the last 10 years. Influencing the consumer behaviour shift is the use of digital platforms (internet) for searching, selecting and booking travel. This activity is increasing and is potentially educating tourists about accommodation options, places to visit and things to do. In this changing environment, South Burnett's network of VICs still has a vital role to play, providing local information, local products and sharing local knowledge with visitors and residents.

The discussion paper aims to ascertain how VICs can evolve during changing consumer and digital landscapes to foster regional tourism and economic growth.

3.2 Objectives

As VIC's are an important contributor to tourism in the South Burnett, this discussion paper will assist with information for a number of stakeholders including the South Burnett Regional Council. The main objectives to this discussion paper aims to quantify:

- The value and performance of the VIC's
- Identify the strength and weakness of the South Burnett VIC Network
- Provide ideas and opportunities for continuous improvement in visitor servicing.
- Provide clear direction to form visitor servicing strategy

4.0 Visitor Information Centre Network Overview

4.1 Profile

The South Burnett Visitor Information Centre Network consists of five Visitor Information Centres that promote the South Burnett locally and further afield through key strategic links and other relevant avenues/bodies.

The South Burnett Visitor Centre Network offers an important community service, providing information on things to see and do, where to stay, shop and eat to visitors to the region. The reception visitors receive at the Centre contributes to their overall experience, and will often shape their perceptions of the town and region. Therefore, it is important visitors receive a friendly welcome and exceptional customer service.

The Visitor Information Centre Network comes directly under the auspices of the South Burnett Regional Council within the Economic Development directorate.

Stakeholders include those involved in the tourism industries - tourism operators, other businesses, local tourism committees and organisations, local artisans, residents and local government. By working together, these groups have the capacity to attract visitors, increase their knowledge and understanding of the region and generate economic and other benefits for the whole community.

Tourism creates opportunities for the establishment of new products, facilities and services, and expansion of existing businesses, which would not otherwise be justified with the resident population.

4.2 Role

- to provide friendly, helpful and professional visitor information services
- to encourage extended length of stays and increased visitor expenditure in the area
- to provide an effective and efficient distribution outlet for tourism products
- to provide comprehensive and accurate information on the local area, local region, neighbouring regions and other regions of the State
- to provide a retail outlet for souvenirs displaying the logo “Discover South Burnett”, as well as souvenirs which serve as a reminder of our local towns

4.3 Mission

- To actively promote the South Burnett Region, focusing on its country lifestyle and attractions.
- To provide effective and comprehensive information services for visitors and residents.
- To continually update and maintain local knowledge to ensure a high standard of service to all residents and visitors
- To raise public awareness and promote services located around the South Burnett and beyond.
- To promote friendship and achieve personal satisfaction through teamwork, helping others and developing community spirit

4.4 Performance

South Burnett Visitor Information Centre Statistics													
2008 to 2018													
Visitor Origin Statistics by Regional Tourism Organisation Region													
Centres included are Blackbutt, Kingaroy, Nanango, Murgon & Wondai													
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
Brisbane	15,079	16,302	14,586	13,862	13,562	11,707	11,054	10,503	11,712	12,070	11,612	142,049	22.5%
Gold Coast	2,444	2,575	1,854	1,669	1,672	1,524	1,768	1,529	1,680	1,904	1,611	20,230	3.2%
Toowoomba/Golden West	3,036	3,021	2,383	2,741	2,981	2,996	2,213	2,115	2,207	2,068	2,234	27,995	4.4%
Southern Downs	461	494	453	332	396	359	308	368	403	463	335	4,372	0.7%
Sunshine Coast	4,486	4,892	3,546	4,117	3,944	3,870	3,318	3,079	3,505	3,780	4,069	42,606	6.8%
South Burnett	16,574	17,380	22,030	17,465	17,906	17,009	15,419	13,921	13,882	12,699	13,247	177,532	28.2%
Fraser Coast	1,426	1,654	1,397	1,422	1,671	1,677	1,334	1,537	1,444	1,392	1,324	16,278	2.6%
Bundaberg	1,897	1,708	1,143	1,330	1,625	1,252	1,179	1,181	1,231	1,250	1,205	15,001	2.4%
Gladstone	357	389	438	325	274	294	236	223	326	273	299	3,434	0.5%
Capricorn	807	844	658	619	667	546	513	582	613	539	609	6,997	1.1%
Outback	280	276	217	211	228	210	160	227	200	184	286	2,479	0.4%
Mackay	439	485	541	452	410	406	413	369	442	370	450	4,777	0.8%
Whitsundays	75	73	81	64	56	88	50	76	66	62	60	751	0.1%
Townsville	453	468	338	413	363	409	369	381	477	393	407	4,471	0.7%
Tropical North Queensland	364	401	418	267	370	361	327	269	400	372	284	3,833	0.6%
New South Wales	6,001	6,500	10,873	5,118	5,625	5,540	5,684	6,266	6,544	6,400	5,973	70,524	11.2%
Victoria	3,056	3,563	3,034	2,658	2,949	3,044	2,627	3,166	3,434	3,785	3,451	34,767	5.5%
Other States	2,125	2,209	2,657	2,276	2,583	2,550	2,272	2,649	2,806	2,955	2,892	27,974	4.4%
Overseas	2,837	3,104	2,805	2,047	2,265	2,250	1,914	1,656	1,785	2,212	1,555	24,430	3.9%
Total	62,225	66,340	64,277	57,397	59,547	56,092	51,158	50,097	53,157	53,171	51,903	630,500	

5.0 Strategic Planning

5.1 Strengths

Volunteers

- South Burnett Vic Network volunteers have a strong commitment to assist visitors and provide quality customer service. (VSR18)
- Longevity of volunteers - majority of volunteers have been volunteering for more than two years. (VSR18)
- Volunteers have extensive local knowledge and history. (APP1)

Local Tourism Operators (LTO)

- 65% of the 47 LTO's surveyed currently supply a publication in one of the South Burnett VIC's. (TOS18)

Visitor Information Centres

- Five accredited visitor Information centres located in each major town in the South Burnett. (FOV19)
- Three of the five centres have an attraction/s within the centre. Admission is free and wheel chair friendly thus encouraging all visitors to access to these centres. (APP1)
- VIC's sell local handmade craft and items of interest to their specific area. (FOV18)
- Close proximity to cafes and other eating establishments, shopping centres and the business centre.

Location

- Proximity to Brisbane and Sunshine Coast ideal location for drive market. (FOV19)

5.2 Weakness

Volunteers

- Lack of paid staff in centres, places more unwanted responsibility on volunteers. (VSR18)
- Lack of support and assistance from staff. (VSR18)
- Volunteer's knowledge of local attractions. 42% of volunteers surveyed identified they need further training on local attractions. (VSR18)
- Training inconsistency with volunteers. (APP1)
- Lack of communication between volunteers and staff. (APP1)
- Volunteers lack of interest and knowledge of new technologies. Only 12% of current volunteers are interested in computer training. (VSR18)
- Recommendation to conduct Volunteer Survey annually not adopted. (VSR18)
- Age of present volunteers and seeming lack of younger volunteers to take their place. (APP1)

Local Tourist Operators

- Lack of awareness of the South Burnett VIC network. 58% of the 47 LTO's surveyed were not aware that the South Burnett has five visitor information centres. (TOS18)
- Local tourist operators failure to communicate business activities – special events, change to business information etc. (FOV19)

Visitor Information Centres

- 19% decline in visitation to the South Burnett Visitor Information centres over the past 10 years.
- The Murgon and Blackbutt VICs stand alone and do not house an attraction, which can often be the drawcard for a visitor to walk through the door. (FOV19)
- Limited interactive displays. (APP1)
- Failure for visitor Information centres to attract younger visitors. (APP1)

Location

- Kingaroy VIC not located in prominent and accessible location visitors. (APP1)
- Lack of awareness of South Burnett as a destination and its location. (*Caravan and camping expo feedback*)
- Lack of support from local operators to join ATDW

5.3 Opportunity

Volunteers

- Review volunteer retention and training program to provide adequate support and direction to volunteers. (FOV19)

Local Tourism Operators

- Collaborate with local tourism operators in sharing visitor statistics and data. 76% of local Tourism operators surveyed are interested in sharing their visitor statistics. 87% of those local tourism operators are interested in receiving additional visitor information from the VIC network.
- To increase South Burnett visitor data collection – age, length of stay etc. 65% of Local tourism operators surveyed are interested in assisting the VIC network in conducting visitor surveys .(TOS18)

Visitor Information Centres

- Capitalize on existing walking and bus tours and explore the option of farm tours. (APP1)
- Create self-guided historical walking tours around all towns. (FOV19)
- Opportunity for Murgon VIC to incorporate fossil display in centre. (APP1)
- Opportunity for Murgon and Blackbutt VIC's to partner with other community groups that have an existing attraction which will enable the VIC to become a destination in its own right.

5.4 Threat

Volunteers

- Lack of staff to supervise volunteers negatively affects volunteer morale and retention. (FOV19)
- Lack of volunteers forcing Visitor Centre to close. Adversely affect the ability to maintain accreditation. (APP1)
- Lack of staff forcing centres to engage volunteers who are unmotivated and who lack enthusiasm to deliver exceptional customer service and deliver a high quality visitor experience.

Visitor Information Centres

- Internet and Mobile technology overriding the need for visitor information centres. (APP1)
- Prospect of visitor numbers to the VIC's decreasing further (APP1)

6.0 Goals

- To enhance the aesthetic appearance of the centre by updating current display material that will reflect local attractions and industries.
- To increase the level of visitation to the area and encourage extended length of stays and increased visitor spending
- To develop and maintain a well-trained and highly motivated staff / volunteer team

7.0 Industry Analysis

For too long we have been discussing how to make VICs more effective and continuously justify their value. It is time we address the issues and find solutions to ensure the VICs continue to play their part in inspiring visitors to stay longer, dispersing visitor expenditure across the region and increasing yield (TOU1).

Gone are the days when visitors sought out visitor information centres for brochures, maps and travel advice. This is evident in the statistical data that illustrates visitation to our visitor information centres has decreased by 19% over the last 10 years. This data is consistent with VIC's across the country with only 8.7% of domestic overnight intrastate visitors currently using a VIC (VIC18). Mobile internet has drastically changed the way visitors plan their trips, it is providing information more thoroughly and conveniently than information, centres can (DAV18). Recent studies from google suggest that 45% of smartphone users in Australia research plan and book their entire trip using only their mobile phone (HTT18).

7.1 Value

There is no doubt the VICs play an important role in the local economy and there are numerous studies and research articles to support a value of well-run Visitor Centres. Research from other states suggest that visitors will spend an additional \$59 to \$151 per adult because of visiting a visitor information centres. Statistics from Victoria VIC Network state that 24% of visitors surveyed stayed longer in the region after visiting a VIC and 84% would spend more money because of a VIC visit. (VIC18).

These are just a few statistics that formulate the extensive research completed to substantiate that VIC's are working and have an important role in the community in growing visitor economy.

Every destination requires visitors to have a positive experience and a well-run visitor information centre can provide that experience. However, customer needs are changing and our visitor information centres need to adapt to these changes. We can no longer continue to do things the same way when we know the market and consumer behaviour is changing (DAV18). Being friendly, providing information, giving out brochures is still important, however visitors want more they want a local experience. The future success of accredited VICs will depend on their ability to respond to visitor and industry expectations, whilst delivering value to visitors, the industry, local government and residents.(TOU1)

Visitor centres in the South Burnett are no exception.

7.2 Changing visitor markets and expectations

Currently domestic visitors to our VIC centres are typically Baby Boomers with over 70% of visitors aged over 65years , followed by 23% Generations X's, being visitors aged 41-65years. Baby boomers prefer face-to-face interaction to digital media (VIC18).

Millennials are the new generation of visitors set to replace the Baby Boomers, yet a recent survey conducted by the VIC network reports that only 5% of surveyed visitors were aged under 40years. Millennials have a direct approach to travel need information and they want it now. They plan their trip themselves online with preference for personal experiences and local connections. Millennials need a reason to stop and engage at our visitor information centres.

7.3 *Moving Forward*

The number of visitors using our VICs across the South Burnett has declined. Therefore it is time to re-visit the role of our VICs, re-think the way we provide visitor servicing, respond to the needs of the visitor, re-align our visitor servicing to the destination marketing strategy and reinvent the VIC's to ensure they remain a valued resource into the future.

The 'national perspective on visitor information centres' has defined six strategic directions for accredited VICs in order to remain competitive and relevant moving forward.

7.3.1 Adopt a customer-focused approach

Matching the VIC role to customer needs

VICs play important role as information provider on and offline. However the current roles of the VIC network are outdated and do not address the changing expectations and needs of the customer at present or in the future.

The VIC network needs to adopt a visitor servicing strategy to guide visitor servicing for the region in the future. The strategy will provide direction for visitor information delivery; highlight the need to 'tailor' visitor information services, include ways in which visitors prefer to collect information, and providing a flexible approach to improve information available to visitors.

The visitor service strategy will provide staff and volunteers a clear direction for the future delivery of visitor servicing

RECOMMENDATION:

- Develop Visitor Service Strategy

Meeting visitors information needs

The VIC's role is to inspire and encourage visitors to explore the area. Identifying and understanding the VICs target market is crucial to ensure the information provided is relevant and valued (VIC18).

Visitor centres provide content in three ways: face-to-face interaction, printed material including brochures & maps and digital delivery through the website, social media and datatrax touchscreen platforms.

Developing a market plan will help identify the VIC's target market and provide a plan as to what information is needed on and offline to facilitate the overall visitor experience.

RECOMMENDATION:

- Develop market plan for the visitor information centres

Storytelling

Staff and volunteers are the biggest asset in a visitor information centre and it is important they have the knowledge and ability to tell the story of the region and provide information in such a way that it drives visitors to experience our area.

Storytelling has been found to create memorable experiences through the activation of certain parts of our brain. Our goal is to create those memorable experiences that visitors want to share with their friends, family and online community, ultimately driving visitation.

Unfortunately, a storytelling workshop conducted at Kingaroy VIC received little interest from volunteers with only six attending. The initiative was developed around the belief that each accredited VIC has a unique story to tell, and in learning how to do so they can encourage visitors to stay longer.

RECOMMENDATION:

- Identify each towns story
- Incorporate story telling in volunteer training plan

Adapting business model to increase performance

A thriving VIC network needs to be capable of successfully meeting visitors' information needs. They need to have the skills and resources to use digital technology, engage with visitors across different digital mediums and provide high-quality visitor information services (TOU15)

Whilst the VIC network has volunteers that have extensive local knowledge and are able to share their story that resonates with visitors, they are very hard to come by. Changes over the last eight years has seen paid staff reduced by 70% relying on volunteers to fill the gap. Volunteer hours spent in the VIC has tripled during this time. Long serving volunteer numbers are decreasing and the opportunity to hire volunteers who possess the skills necessary of a Visitor Information Centre officer are becoming harder. This has presented major challenges for staff and volunteers to adequately service the needs of the VIC and customer. Closing a VIC and introducing a mobile one may be a cost effective option if circumstances do not change.

It is time to optimize the VIC network by creating a new visitor service model that will be relevant to today's visitors, and look to the future providing the best opportunity to meet consumer needs and demands, whilst increasing performance. A new visitor service model will help identify the current gaps in visitor servicing.

RECOMMENDATION:

- Review visitor service model

Impacts on VIC service and performance

VICs need to become viable into the future to ensure they maximise the economic and social benefits of their visitor Information services (TOU15). Standard benchmarks are required to measure performance consistently across the network.

Tangible evidence of the contribution of a VIC will help make informed decisions on the most appropriate action for the future of the VICs. South Burnett is unrivalled and unprecedented in its operation five VICs in the region. Measuring the VICs performance and rationalizing whether the cost of operation outweighs the benefit to visitors is necessary to ensure the VIC Network positively contributes to tourism.

RECOMMENDATION:

- Identify standard benchmarks to measure performance of the VIC network

Combining Resources

Studies have been undertaken to assess the value of combining resources to deliver visitor information services. Outsourcing the responsibility of VICs to community groups is one option to consider. The South Burnett VIC network could also explore this model with a number of community groups.

- Qld Dairy & Heritage Museum (Murgon)
- Natda/Ringsfield House (Nanango)
- Roy Emmerson Museum (Blackbutt)

Investing in self-service kiosks is another avenue to extend visitor services around the region. Providing information kiosks in high traffic areas (service stations, dams and shopping centres) could reduce the needs for physical Visitor Information Centres.

RECOMMENDATION:

- Explore opportunities to combine resources with local community groups

Industry collaboration to deliver value

A Vic’s ability to maximise economic and social benefits is reliant on an attractive tourism product. Limited product translates into less reasons to visit a destination. The VIC network plays an active role in ensuring there is sufficient and relevant product to drive visitation. Whether it is creating a tourism hub, supporting events, hosting interpretive displays or supporting the latest in digital technologies, VICs are a core component of regional tourism and community activities.

The VIC network collaborates with industry in numerous ways including: hosting South Burnett Unpacked networking events each, collating monthly newsletter, hosting pop-up information booths, providing information bags at events, hosting tourism operator displays (Kingaroy VIC), and assisting business with listings on ATDW.

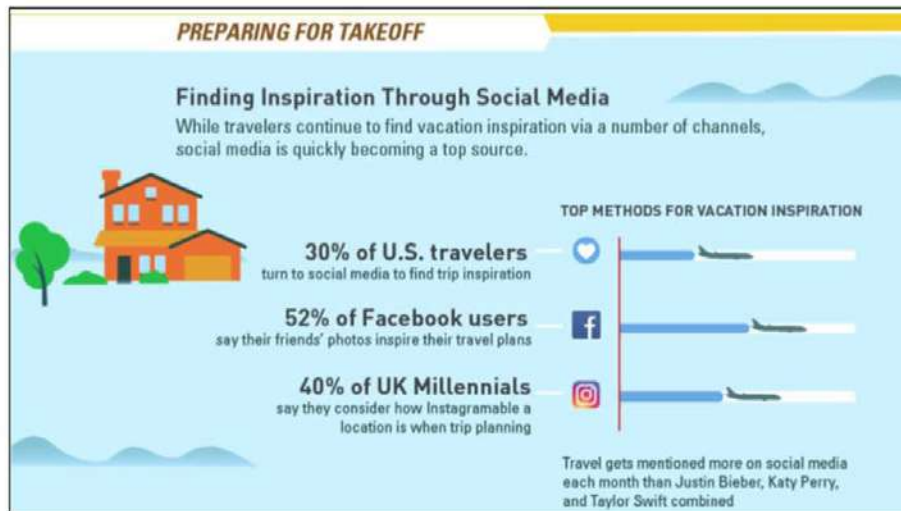
However, the VIC network cannot provide accurate information and messages to visitors if they are not actively engaging with local tourism operators. A strong collaboration between the VIC network and LTOs is required to ensure visitors have a positive “VIC experience”. At present, a strong relationship does not exist and communication between the two parties is minimal. (FOC18)

RECOMMENDATION:

- Identify ways to improve communication between VIC Network and Tourism Operators.
- Conduct meaningful surveys, which provide useful information.

Information hub roles

Visitor information centres are well placed to become the primary source of information for the region. The VICs play an important role in supporting local tourism operators and local council by taking the lead in the maintenance and dissemination of information. A successful information hub requires a strong online and offline presence, volunteers and staff who have extensive knowledge of the region and skills necessary to access information online.



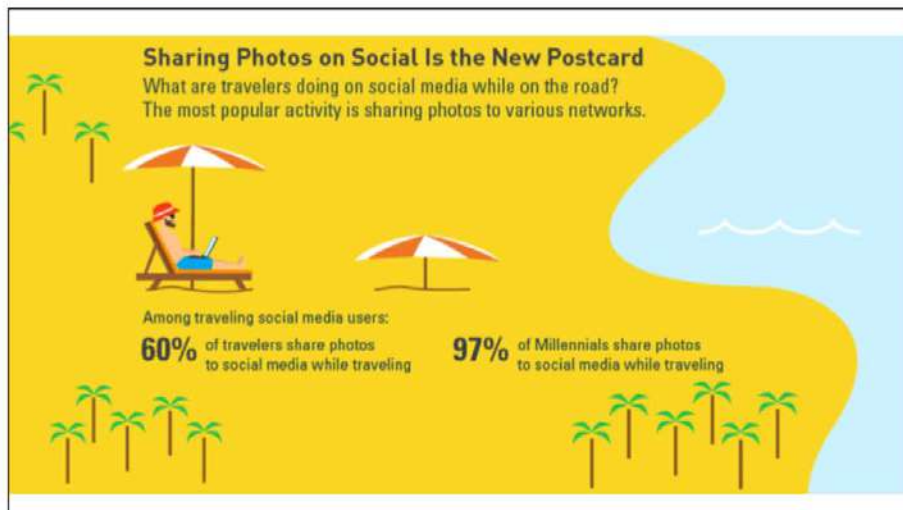
Information is increasingly being distributed online. Establishing a strong online presence is an essential role of any information hub, with travelers looking to social media as a top source of inspiration. VIC's are not only a place where visitors can talk to locals but confirm information they may have obtained via the internet, through social media or Discover South Burnett website.

Managing online resources to engage and persuade visitors to our region should be top priority. At present staff and volunteers, spend less than 5% of their time managing online content. As visitors increasing look for information online, we need to improve our online presence in order to meet their needs. Currently we lack the staff and volunteers necessary to support the VIC network as a primary source of information for the region

RECOMMENDATION:

- Increase online presence by develop social media strategy
- Investigate the opportunity to create a social media and content officer

Co-created content



Businesses and organizations have recognized the shift towards online information and the significance of social media in inspiring travel to a destination. Research shows that 64% of consumers are more likely to trust a brand if it interacts positively on social media. (Yellow social media report 2018)

Discover South Burnett encourages customers to become co-creators of content by sharing their experiences online. By including the customer in the production they not only create unforgettable experiences but turn the customer into a fan.(VIC18)

RECOMMENDATION:

- Identify opportunities to increase the exposure of the Discover South Burnett brand
- Develop activities within the VIC's to encourage visitors to share their experiences

Supporting local employment

With a 70% decrease in paid staff over the last eight years, the volunteers have become the backbone of the VIC network. As a result, the role of the volunteers has changed increasing the need for responsibility and skill level.

Putting quality volunteers in a volunteer supervisor position as a form of reward and recognition is an initiative that the South Burnett Network has explored and implemented in the Kingaroy VIC. This has caused some disconnection between volunteers. This enables staff members to focus on other projects other than the day-to-day operations of VICs. However, finding volunteers who are willing to take on the supervisory role is difficult as most volunteers do not possess the skills, want the added responsibility or have the extra time.

The need to maintain a consistent level and quality of service across the network will not change the need for more staff and volunteers to deliver the services required will.

Volunteer turnover is high and finding quality support is a challenge. Therefore, as volunteer numbers continue to decrease the need for staff to cover the roles does not.

RECOMMENDATION:

- Review staff and volunteer roles in visitor servicing
- Review the need for a paid staff member in each centre.

7.3.2 Position yourself to fish where the fish are

Location

The location of a VIC is extremely important to attract a steady flow of visitors. If not well located and easily found, people are less likely to visit. Location needs change over time, and it is therefore important to assess whether a VIC is in the best location possible to attract most fish in the sea.

Kingaroy VIC is the only VIC not located on the main road and has more complaints from visitors about inadequate parking and accessibility than any other VICs in the region. The location of a VIC is fundamental to its success and although the Kingaroy VIC is not in a prime location, additional measures to ensure it is highly visible and accessible to target visitors is essential.

Highly visible directional VIC signage and adequate parking for RVs and caravans is necessary.

RECOMMENDATION:

- Review all South Burnett VIC signage

Mobile Services

As visitors are turning to smartphones and other mobile devices to search and tailor information online before they get to their destination, the VIC network needs to shift towards a more proactive approach of taking information to the visitor. The national accreditation visitor information servicing guidelines advise, going to where the customers are increases the reach and awareness of a destination (VIC18).

Over the past two years, the South Burnett VIC Network has provided a mobile VIC service to numerous events in and out of the South Burnett. The move has proven to be very successful with over 7500 visitors serviced over the last twelve months at various caravan and camping shows across South East QLD. The service offers another means of distributing information outside of the VICs. This also offers an opportunity to engage with millennials who value roaming visitor services and will often pick up print material, particularly maps (VIC18). Recent data from the Cleveland caravan and camping expo supports this theory with approximately 13% of visitors engaging with the mobile VIC.

Cleveland Caravan Camping Expo 2019

18-29	169	8%
30-39	273	13%
40-49	375	18%
50-59	581	28%
60-69	500	24%
70 or over	144	7%
	2042	1

RECOMMENDATION:

- Review and explore the demand for mobile VIC services

Partnering up

Attaching VICs to a complementary attraction not only boosts visitation but also enables VICs to be a destination in their own right (VIC18). Research conducted on the South Burnett VIC network supports this theory with VIC’s in Kingaroy, Wondai and Nanango receiving the highest number of visitors and revenue over the past ten years.

Opportunities may exist for the Murgon VIC to partner with the QLD Dairy and Heritage Museum and Blackbutt VIC partner with Roy Emmerson Museum in order to increase patronage and provide a better experience for visitors.



Research conducted between July 2017 to March 2018 states that 41% of visitors to the Murgon VIC visited to pick up or drop off the key to free camp.

RECOMMENDATION:

- Review opportunities for VIC’s to partner with local groups.

7.3.3 Integrate technology with face to face service

New ways of interacting with visitor markets

The digital age has well and truly arrived and the future is now! Embracing new technologies is an integral factor in optimizing our VICs. A common opinion among volunteers and industry is that Technology is reducing the need for volunteers. Technology is not making the VICs redundant it is providing them with an opportunity to re-invent themselves. By integrating new and innovative solutions, visitor information centres have the potential to attract more visitors.

VISIT Queensland has recently sort expressions of interests for accredited VICs to offer “Virtual Reality” experiences to visitors. This is a great opportunity to bring the VICs into the future. We have nominated Kingaroy Visitor Information Centre to be a part of the program.

RECOMMENDATION:

- Investigate solutions to integrate digital technology and online platforms into the VICs.

Effective technology and avoiding the shiny new objects

Striking the right balance between online engagement and offline visitors is vital. South Burnett VICs need to be equipped financially and with digital expertise to meet the needs of the changing market. Emphasis on updating knowledge and skills in online information delivery is key to ensuring the centres have the ability to keep content knowledge high and consistent.

Handling online enquiries and social media engagement requires a dedicated staff member or team of skilled volunteers. At this point of time due to staffing numbers and volunteers, we have neither.

Digital resources should enable destinations to increase their services to visitors, this is particularly important when volunteers and visitor numbers to the VICs have declined.

RECOMMENDATION:

- Maintain staff and volunteer knowledge and expertise in use of digital technology.
- Review the online services to ensure they match visitor needs while appropriate to the VIC Content

7.3.4 Embrace visitor servicing

Broadening the service experience

The Vic's role is to inspire visitors to discover and explore the region. The challenge is to provide a reason for people to visit the centres, where volunteers and staff can encourage them to linger longer and ultimately boost the local economy.

Broadening the service experience offered in the VIC is one option. Visitors are seeking good food, quality experiences and mementos to buy. The VIC network currently stocks local products and merchandise that are unique to our areas. Three out of the five-visitor information centres currently offer quality experiences with their added attractions.

The VICs could take this to the next level by offering interactive displays, which can be an effective drawcard for visitors. Are there opportunities for a local business to operate its business from the VIC. Is there an opportunity to provide a service in the community that currently does not exist eg. Juice bar at Murgon VIC.

Being able to meet all those, expectation in one location is optimal for any VIC.

RECOMMENDATION:

- Review the serviceability of the VIC Network and explore opportunities to broaden current services.

Appendix 1

MURGON VIC VOLUNTEERS– SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- Support to Grey nomads
- Face to Face contact with visitors offering polite and friendly customer service
- First hand local information and local knowledge
- Five diversified centre which focus on benefiting the different areas
- Family history research

WEAKNESSES

- Not conducive to younger generations. Vic's are not meeting their needs
- Limited interactive displays
- Not enough volunteers

OPPORTUNITIES

- Tours or self-tours
- Exposure to fossils
- Sporting hall of fame

THREATS

- Not enough volunteers
- Technology will decrease the need for VIC's
- Keeping up with the times.

WONDAI VIC VOLUNTEERS– SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- Face to Face Information
- Open 7 days a week
- Promoting the South Burnett and local events
- Having volunteers with good working knowledge of the whole areas
- Getting personal attention and information face to face
- Promoting the attractions in the area/ festival, garden expo etc
- Access to ATM and internet connection very handy
- Video about timber very informative
- Caravan two day free stay with toilet and shower
- Diorama - excellent display
- Woodwork - local products
- We are central to the rail trail, which benefits local businesses and B & B's
- Volunteers services recognised
- We have a unique visual timber display. Locals bring their friends and relatives to visit.

WEAKNESSES

- Not having so many volunteers to man the Vics
- Would be better to have more space
- Need more signage for the visitors to see
- More videos including local sawmill
- More signage needed outside the building for caravanners
- Woodworks shop maybe can be open more on weekends
- More information flyers for advertising the B&B's
- Volunteers can help recruit friends and relatives to do their time volunteering
- Maybe we can change direction of the ender sign into brochures & sales area

OPPORTUNITIES

- Encourage visitors to stay longer and visit all the South Burnett
- If you have Facebook - sharing discover South Burnett articles and events
- To attract people to stay a bit longer in the district if you give them information which they will incorporate in their holiday or trip
- Can utilize outside install a class bulleting with information on Wondai and surrounding areas. Things to do and upcoming events
- Beautiful garden with flowers in season
- Can transfer the door entrance to the kitchen & toilet outside.

THREATS

- iPad and google - people will use these to book accommodation and directions to get from A to B
- Privacy - when visitors are viewing video

KINGAROY VIC VOLUNTEERS– SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- Size and precinct connection with Art Gallery and Museum
- Platform for Local Produce
- Located opposite the Peanut Silos
- Local knowledge - and willingness to share it
- Hub of the South Burnett
- Face to face interaction with visitors
- Guided Town Tours - Busses
- Large supply of brochures and information
- Interpretive Area around the back
- Modern Facilities
- 1913 Chambers - available for NFP groups at no charge
- Quality information passed onto visitors in a friendly and helpful manner
- Accommodation Board

WEAKNESSES

- Location - not on a main road
- Signage - Limited not enough
- Parking for Visitors with Cars, Caravans, Trailers etc
- Limited Trained Volunteers - Open / Close etc - inconsistent
- Lack of Paid Staff - Split between 3 Centres
- Centre System - Till, Stocktake etc
- Lack of communication between volunteers / staff etc
- Lack of sufficient storage for stock and brochures

OPPORTUNITIES

- Walking Tour / More Self Drive Tours
- Better Brochure Displays
- Market to Bus Groups to gain more tours
- Pitch to Accommodation providers to have a broader list
- Streamlined social media posts to capture a wider audience

THREATS

- Internet and Technology overriding the need for VIC's
- Lack of fully trained volunteers / aging volunteers
- Decreasing Visitor Numbers
- No real defining attractions

NANANGO VIC VOLUNTEERS– SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- Interactive Displays - Bike
- Local Knowledge - and willingness to share it
- Face to face interaction with Visitors
- Mural Walks
- Large supply of brochures and information
- Butter Factory Engines
- Quality information passed onto visitors in a friendly and helpful manner
- Free Showers

WEAKNESSES

- Location - not on a main road
- Signage - Limited not enough
- Limited Trained Volunteers - Open / Close etc - inconsistent
- Solo Working
- Lack of Paid Staff - Split between 3 Centres
- Centre System - Till,

OPPORTUNITIES

- Walking Tour / More Self Drive Tours
- Better Brochure Displays
- Market to Bus Groups to gain more tours
- More Volunteers

THREATS

- Internet and Technology overriding the need for VIC's
- Lack of fully trained volunteers / aging volunteers
- Decreasing Visitor Numbers
- No real defining attractions
- Solo Working

BLACKBUTT VIC VOLUNTEERS– SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- Location - Close to park and toilets
- Local Knowledge - and willingness to share it
- Face to face interaction with Visitors
- Caravan parking and space
- Large supply of brochures and information
- Quality information passed onto visitors in a friendly and helpful manner
- Heritage of the Hut
- Information Board attached
- Rail Strength
- Showground Caravan Park
- TV Show Representation

WEAKNESSES

- Lack of community engagement and support
- Signage - Limited not enough
- Limited Trained Volunteers - Open / Close etc - inconsistent
- Not enough promotion of local events
- Lack of Paid Staff - Split between 3 Centres

OPPORTUNITIES

- Walking Tour / More Self Drive Tours
- Better Brochure Displays
- Market to Bus Groups to gain more tours
- More Volunteers
- More Local Stock
- Increased Advertising

THREATS

- Lack of fully trained volunteers / aging volunteers
- Free Camping Changes

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- Defined destination and marketing plan for the South Burnett addressing VIC's
- Visitor Service Strategy – Review roles and functions of the VICs
- Social Media Strategy