

Murrindindi Inc

Submission to Murrindindi Shire Council Draft Tourism Strategy 2019

Murrindindi Inc Membership discussed the Murrindindi Shire Council Draft Tourism Strategy (MSCDTS) at its recent Bi-Monthly Meeting.

Members expressed different responses to the MSCDTS. Some Members were happy with certain sections of the Report whilst others were very dissatisfied with crucial sections of the report.

Murrindindi Inc's role is to Support, Promote and Advocate for all businesses in the Shire, in particular those represented by the Membership of Murrindindi Inc.

In saying this, Murrindindi Inc is very much about supporting and advocating for strategies which help create a positive vibrant climate where businesses can thrive and grow. This has an outcome of employing more people; i.e. more jobs it what it is all about.

It must be noted that Tourism is an extremely important Economic Driver for Prosperity and Jobs within Murrindindi Shire; however, it is only part6 of Economic Development as there are other important Industry Segments that Murrindindi Inc seeks to represent.

The crux of the MSCDTS is Chapter 8 Strategic Directions.

Section 8.2:

Dot Point One: There is no argument per se with this statement and it is not rocket science. However, the point does not make reference to the State Wide Review of Regional Tourism and the possible impacts of this on Murrindindi.

Dot Point Two: Again, makes a self-evident statement but does not come to terms as to why there is not the investment and real strategies that will lead to change in this area. This is about Yield which produces Jobs.

Dot Point Three: Again, makes a good statement with some good words but the reality check is where is the money going to come from for the marketing if there are not the businesses in existence with the appropriate marketing budgets.

Dot Point Four: Agree that the marketing and competitive strengths are Marysville/Lake Mountain and Lake Eildon.

The Great Victorian Rail Trail (GVRT) has great potential but disagree it is currently a known marketing strength.

Disagree that the Village destinations of Yea, Alexandra, Kinglake Ranges are well known Village Destinations outside of Murrindindi. They currently do not have the accommodation to even be considered a marketing strength. They may attract day trippers or people on the way to other destinations. For example, village destinations that are well known are Daylesford, Beechworth, Bright, Echuca, etc.

Further the sentence: a focus on promoting the niche competitive strengths to nature-based markets etc.; It mentions some activities but a major economic driver of boating and water sports is not even

on the radar and mentioned. This creates significant concern about the creditability and depth of this report.

Further, it does not mention Agri-Business Tourism including Food & Wine and the potential of growing the market that happens in the Yarra Valley and expanding it into Murrindindi, especially the Yea & Surrounds Quadrant or Segment of Murrindindi.

Again, this highlights limited consultation, as the Murrindindi Winemakers are not even referred to in this report. The executive of the Murrindindi Food & Wine Group has not been consulted which has led to incorrect and out of date information in the report.

Dot Point Five: There was consensus at the Murrindindi Inc meeting supporting the four Quadrants or Segments concept for Murrindindi. However, the statement that there is not a role for Murrindindi Inc is totally rejected.

It is extremely disappointing that such a statement can be made without any consultation with the executive of Murrindindi Inc.

As mentioned earlier Tourism is extremely important to Murrindindi Inc but it is not all of the businesses it supports.

Murrindindi Inc is always open and prepared to assess its role and how it can better deliver for the businesses it represents.

This leads to the statement of greater leadership by Murrindindi Shire is needed.

This is of great concern as a Government Authority will tell businesses what to do. This smacks of a top down approach by people who do not operate businesses.

Unless businesses have ownership and are prepared to invest their own dollars and can see a return for that investment, we are wasting our time.

There is certainly an important role for Murrindindi Council Officers to work with Businesses and their representatives to help facilitate positive outcomes that deliver on the Council Plan as well as deliver positive benefits to business.

This suggestion again provides a lack of confidence in this report and it gives an impression of nothing different from many previous reports that are gathering dust.

For example, and possibly a Case Study would be the very recent successful Foodworks Murrindindi Inc 2019 Business Awards.

This was put together by a Committee of business people with expertise and commitment to perform a task. The important ingredient was Murrindindi Inc engaged and paid for an Admin Support Person to do all the day to day leg work at the direction of the Committee. The Committee listened to previous feedback and then used innovative ideas and concepts in putting the Business Awards program together. It was managed well and worked to its Budget. All feedback, so far received, has been most positive.

Section 8.3 Vision.

Whose Vision is this?

Who has ownership of this Vision?

The Vision lacks inspiration and is typical of in the never, never without any accountability type of statement.

Where is the Yield, the Jobs and the Prosperity of this Community mentioned?

Section 8.4 Objectives

Says nothing about Jobs and Prosperity.

Says nothing about the Roadblocks being removed to enable Investment.

Says nothing about facilitating initiatives that Businesses will see value in and invest their money in.

Section 8.5

Consensus and agreement with opening statement.

Strategy 1

Action 1.1 Consensus and support for this action.

Strategy 2

Action 2.1 Strong opposition to this statement.

Suggest: Murrindindi Shire Council will work with and facilitate the decision of local Tourism businesses as represented by their respective associations as to the most appropriate avenue and methods to market their businesses regionally.

This decision will be impacted on by the State wide Review of Regional Tourism and any decisions made without this knowledge could be in the wrong direction.

Further investigation is required before any decision as the Regional Tourism Bodies may not want us and or their membership fees might be above our ability to pay. Then whatever fees are required needs to be balanced against the exposure our businesses will receive for the costs incurred.

There are emerging non-traditional avenues to market our businesses and these need to be explored. Suggesting a discussion with someone like James Anderson from Turbo Productions as his work with lakeeildon.com achieves excellent results for the outlay required.

Strategy 3

Consensus and agreement with opening statement.

Action 3.1 There is merit in this proposal as it requires a business input/ownership into the proposal or initiative.

Even though everyone agrees and says, great more money from Council spent on Tourism is required and fully supported, but unless businesses support and buy into an initiative or campaign where they see a return on their investment, it runs the risk of not being relevant in the market place or a good idea not based in reality.

Getting the balance right here is important and there has to be business ownership of the initiative.

Action 3.2

Dot Point One: The VICs in the Shire provide an important service. With the size & population of Murrindindi funding all of them is not a reality.

Communities take pride and volunteers act as Ambassadors for their Communities.

Each Community is different as demonstrated by the four Quadrants or Segments of the Shire.

There are great benefits if each VIC works in with and supports each other.

The biggest issue in managing a VIC is reducing the Volunteer workload on management issues. Similar to the Murrindindi Business Awards Case Study having an Admin Support Person working with each VIC committee would be invaluable.

Having one person working in this manner for all VICs in the Shire is seen as a big positive. This would add to collaboration and sharing on marketing material, volunteer training etc.

Dot Point Two: This appears to be out of context as the greatest needs to deliver new jobs and prosperity in investment. There certainly needs to be the right balance here and more discussions with Industry is required.

Dot Point Three: Two things here: Who does it is one thing; however, the principle of Admin Support to assist LTAs in their development and responding to the needs of their businesses is supported; Ownership still has to stay with Membership, they have to tell everyone why it is good value to be a Member of the LTA.

Strategy 4.

We see this as the role of Murrindindi Inc and Murrindindi Inc will collaborate with MSC Officers who will assist in facilitating this.

Again, this statement appears like a top down approach which is rejected.

Action 4.1 Businesses are sick of talk fests; they want action and to see results that make a difference to their businesses. If Murrindindi Inc is supported and through it to its members, there should not be a need for such a summit.

Having a motivational dinner or event that delivers an outcome maybe an option but would come from Murrindindi Inc.

Section 8.6 & Strategy 5

Agree that Nature Based Tourism is a strength of Murrindindi.

Also, important parts of the mix are AgriBusiness Tourism and Recreation/Lifestyle.

Agree that Marysville/Lake Mountain & Lake Eildon are strengths and well-known brands already existing in the market place.

However, the GVRT has great potential but at this stage cannot be considered as such.

Kinglake Ranges and Yea & Surrounds although offering great opportunities cannot at this stage be considered as leading and well-known brands or destinations.

Where is the yield from people visiting these places as a destination? Currently, it is minimal or doesn't exist. If you want to talk about passing through traffic whilst on the way to another destination then this is another matter and more realistic.

Any decision on aligning any of the four Quadrants or Segments of Murrindindi to Yarra Valley or Tourism North-East has to be dependent on the State Wide Review of Regional Tourism.

There is no mention of possible emerging ways to get the message to the specific market segments which our product strengths would be attractive to.

A possible Case Study is to look at Lakeeildon.com and have a conversation with its owner, James Anderson as Lakeeildon.com already provides great exposure for the Lake Eildon Quadrant and has the potential to do so much more; worth a serious conversation with someone who has this knowledge and experience. Interesting was the recent Nagambie Fishing Competition & Show and how they marketed this event.

Dot Point Six does not mention the extremely important Recreational Boating & Water Sports. This creates concern about this Report.

Action 5.1 This action mentions the four Quadrants and adds the GVRT and then the Goulburn River. Where does the Goulburn River sit? Is it a strength?

Is Food & Wine included in each of the four Quadrants or is it a strength by itself?

What is the view of the Murrindindi Food & Wine Group and the Murrindindi Winemakers Group?

After this is sorted then can support Dot Points 1 & 2.

Dot Point Three presupposes that a Regional Tourism Body is going to accept our businesses and that we have the required buy in money to be accepted by the Regional Tourism Body.

Action 5.2 The real issue here is to be able to make a viable proposition as to why LTAs should recommend to their businesses to invest in a marketing campaign and then businesses investing in the marketing campaign. Subsidies for marketing campaigns using Council funds is great but unless businesses support it and can see a return then it is not sustainable.

Action 5.3 Tourism North-East manages the Ride High Country program. Talks should happen with TN-E firstly to see if they want Murrindindi and if they do, how do businesses and which businesses currently in Murrindindi then see value to invest in the program.

The majority of the GVRT is in Murrindindi Shire, but do we have enough businesses receiving yield from it for them to be able to invest to the appropriate levels to be included in the TN-E Ride High Country Campaign?

If we don't then this action is superfluous and another action has to replace it. Maybe something with growing investment/businesses along the Murrindindi Section of the GVRT to then have the collective dollars to undertake more marketing.

Strategy 6

Agree fully with the statement however it should be taken further.

Successful Regional Promotion & Marketing can bring Visitors to our area;

Visitor Information Services once a person arrives are extremely important to make them welcome and value add to the spend by introducing them to local experiences for three reasons: -

(i) help to ensure they enjoy the visit.

(ii) they extend the visit= more yield.

(iii) they want to return to experience more.

The Ambassador Volunteers at the VICs are but one very important part of Visitor Services, others can include Official Visitor Guides; Web Sites; Apps; Maps, etc. There needs to be more work on what are the appropriate Visitor Services for each of the four Quadrants and how they are to be funded.

Action 6.1 This action is supported.

Action 6.2 Add to this statement the content management guidelines are developed with and owned by the four Quadrant LTAs and their VICs.

Action 6.3 This action is supported however suggesting it should read the Visitor Services Coordinator will work with each of the four Quadrant LTAs and their VICs in the development of collateral across each of the four Quadrant LTAs to ensure quality and consistency.

Action 6.4 Good concept but where is the reality check to back this up; where is direction for a business case to see if this is viable and or feasible.

Maybe the action should be that the Alexandra VIC explore business opportunities aligned to the product strengths of the area that could operate out of the VIC. This would enable the VIC to be more financially viable.

Have the Consultants had any direct conversations with the current management of the Alexandra VIC to gain an understanding of how it currently operates and if the VIC management had considered such opportunities and if not why not?

Fraser within the Lake Eildon National Park has always been important to Alexandra.

Where is the mention of the new Parks Victoria, Fraser within the Lake Eildon National Park Plan?

Out of this Plan what opportunities are possible for better collaboration or even partnerships between Parks Victoria and the Alexandra VIC?

There is a statement within this Plan that suggests that Alexandra could be the Gateway to Fraser and the Lake Eildon National Park.

Action 6.5 This action is not supported.

This action specifically talks about VICs and not other Visitor Information Services.

There is no mention of any engagement with the Eildon Community over closing the VIC. In fact, in talking with people who are involved with the management of the Eildon VIC they had not heard of this proposal.

This shows a lack of understanding of servicing Visitors that are attracted to Eildon. How can these Visitors be serviced from Alexandra when a significant percentage of the Visitors do not travel through Alexandra?

There is no mention of the adjoining Eildon Museum and possibly how the Eildon VIC and the Eildon Museum could work closer together to support each other.

No indication as to how a touring VIC would work; who would fund it and how you would attract Volunteers, who are Ambassadors for their Community, to staff it.

Section 8.7

Agree that Nature Based Tourism is a major product strength and also that Food, Wine Agri-Tourism is extremely important but where is the mention or recognition of Recreation/Lifestyle which includes Fishing and Boating & Watersports.

This is a major oversight of this Report. There does not appear to be any appreciation or understanding of the value of Fishing and Boating & Watersports to the recreational/lifestyle opportunities to this area; the jobs it currently provides and the potential for it to grow significantly to add more jobs and add to the prosperity of this area.

Strategy 7

At least this point mentions boating and significantly somehow mentions Outdoor Education for the first time.

Action 7.1 With the agreement between Murrindindi Cycle Club and GMW, Eildon needs to be added to Dot Point 4.

Action 7.2 This is supported as currently this large Government Investment is only delivering minimal yield. This needs to happen before the GVRT can be considered a strength whereas currently it is a great opportunity.

Action 7.3 This project is shovel ready and support it proceeding. However, with the current low yield of the GVRT the priority for this proposal needs to be discussed further.

Action 7.4 The audit of the 20 walks in Murrindindi is supported.

This would be valuable information to the local VICs.

However, which ones are iconic when compared with other States in Australia (example Tasmania).

What criteria would be used to classify these walks?

How do you get yield from these walks that is going to produce jobs?

Who and How would these walks be managed, maintained, financed and marketed?

These and other questions need to be asked or this Action is typical of actions that lead to nothing but dust collecting on the shelves covering this report.

One such iconic walk worthy of consideration could be the Lake to Lake Walk from Lake Eildon to Lake Mountain which could be extended to Marysville and Healesville.

Draw on the example of what happens in Tasmania and seek to emulate their experience here in Murrindindi.

Maybe then we will have a product worth marketing with a Regional Tourism Group and maybe we will have something they will consider worth marketing.

Nice talking about walks, it sounds good, but where is the connection to a business that is going to lead to yield and jobs. Where is the direction to create a business case so this happens? Most of these walks have been there for years and nothing has happened. What is going to make the difference this time?

Action 7.5 The Rubicon Historic Area is iconic and has great potential.

An initial study would be supported to gain a scope of a possible project. This would be required due to the many assets; to gain an understanding of their condition and the scale of investment required.

My understanding of the assets in the Rubicon Historical Area is it would require a significantly large investment.

To attract such investment there needs to be a basic business case to gain an understanding if there is a business return for the scope of the investment required.

It would be valuable for a study to get any proposal to the first basic steps to see if it stacks up, i.e. financially viable.

Action 7.6 In principle support, however, the same rationale as in Action 7.5 should be put in place.

Strange that Mt. Bullfight is not included in this discussion.

Not sure how the second sentence relates to the first sentence in this Action; a little confusing.

Strategy 8

Support the statement in principle, however there needs to be emphasis or focus on where we have deficiencies or gaps in the market that will produce yield as highlighted by the current market analysis.

Currently there is a significant lack of accommodation in 4 Star or above accommodation. This is where there is yield that will produce Jobs.

Action 8.1 This action in principle is strongly supported however, it is easy to talk about opportunities. Most of these opportunities have been there for decades.

The real question this report should be asking is Why Not!!!

Why has this investment not been happening?

What are the Roadblocks to this Investment?

Just maybe we don't have land zoned appropriately.

Just maybe the Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) of the Murrindindi Planning Scheme needs to be updated to reflect the need for these types of Investment.

Just maybe the all-encompassing Farming Zone is a big restriction and should be changed.

If an Investor is of the opinion that they could be in VCAT for two to three years to acquire a Planning Permit, it is all too hard and they will go somewhere else.

Further from a Lake Eildon perspective the important question needs to be asked: - "Is GMW the appropriate body to be managing Recreation on Lake Eildon?"

Please refer to the Lake Eildon / LEHIA Submission for more in-depth background on this issue.

Action 8.2 Before you can have any realistic Investment Attraction Plan the Roadblocks have to be recognized and removed, otherwise you are not being realistic and then wasting everyone's time, money and creditability.

This is why so many of these types of reports just collect dust.

Strategy 9.

This strategy refers to Lake Eildon and makes no mention of the Mansfield Shire Council and working with them to ensure a co-ordinated approach to Lake Eildon, especially for the Planning Schemes affecting investment at Lake Eildon.

Further it makes no mention of the major influence on Recreation at Lake Eildon being GMW.

Again, it does not seek to understand the Roadblocks for Investment.

This section with its lack of depth in the understanding the issues for progress at Lake Eildon highlights the lack of consultation with LEHIA and tourism business at Lake Eildon.

Action 9.1 It is presumed this action refers to the "Activating Lake Eildon Project". This action is supported.

Action 9.2 Most frustrating this action and again highlights the lack of consultation with industry at Lake Eildon.

Add to the list of Dot Points: -

- (i) Recreational Management/Waterway Management of Lake Eildon to be investigated to find the best possible outcome that will enable investment and jobs to be created. (Refer to the GMW Land & On Water Management Plan which calls for a Co-ordinated Management Approach for Lake Eildon).
- (ii) A review into the Commercial Hire Houseboat Fleet on Lake Eildon (Why do we only have 15 Commercial Hire Houseboats when previously there were around 40 Commercial Hire Houseboats?)
- (iii) Acknowledgement of the Lake Eildon Recreational Boating Facilities Improvement Plan (LERBFIP) and to address the issues highlighted in this Report. A Report that was endorsed by Murrindindi Shire Council.
- (iv) The issuing on new Houseboat Licences.
- (v) The Licensing of Tourism Related activities on Lake Eildon.
- (vi) Support a Land exchange between GMW and Parks Victoria for land adjacent to Lake Eildon between Mt. Pining and Jerusalem Creek to enable Investment that will create Jobs.

Strategy 10.

This strategy is supported in principle but it would be good if wine was mentioned in the statement.

Firstly, the lack of consultation is again evident with no consultation with executive of the Murrindindi Food & Wine Group and the Murrindindi Winemakers Association is not even mentioned in the Report.

Feedback from the Murrindindi Food & Wine Executive indicates this Report mentions out of date information and businesses no longer operating.

This does not instil confidence in this Report with Industry Members.

What should be Action 10.1 is again addressing the Roadblocks for Investment in this Market segment.

Again, the Murrindindi Planning Scheme and the M.S.S. should be looked at. No mention in this report.

Further there is no reference to the Goulburn River Valley Tourism AgriTourism Project and the information contained within this AgriTourism Project Report. There is much detail on Murrindindi within this Report.

Why are we trying to re-invent the wheel when a lot of the work mentioned in Actions 10.1; 10.2; 10.3 & 10.4 is either contained in the GRVT AgriTourism Report or a discussion with the Murrindindi Food & Wine Group and the Murrindindi Winemakers Association could help inform what has happened and what is happening with the issues raised.

There is history as to why Murrindindi and Mansfield Businesses decided on different ways forward from the Upper Goulburn Food, Wine & Cultural Group.

The Murrindindi Food & Wine Group has undertaken a considerable amount of work with the Murrindindi Food & Wine Online Suppliers Guide. Maybe this initiative could be recognised and supported.

Strategy 11.

This initiative is supported however does require some work.

Section 8.8

Strategy 12

The statement is fine in principle however it needs to recognize the four Quadrants of Murrindindi and how each Quadrant can be independent of other Quadrants when talking about Events (i.e. The Foggy Mountain Bluegrass Festival @ Kinglake will have negligible impact on say Eildon).

Further suggestion is that the wording should include a co-ordinated events calendar.

The Report appears to concentrate on a very few specific events and does not appear to recognize the very many good events meet the criteria set out and are currently taking place in Murrindindi.

The Report does not appear to recognize the greatest impediment to attracting or enlarging events is the lack of quality accommodation in the Shire.

Some these current events include: -

- (i) Picnic Racing Clubs of Alexandra & Yea (7 events)
- (ii) Alexandra Motorcycle Club, Annual Kenda Rally.
- (iii) Alexandra Speedway, Calendar of Events.
- (iv) Goulburn Fishing Festival.
- (v) Tarmac Rally at Lake Mountain
- (vi) Blackburn Cycling Club Junior Tour Event at Eildon.
- (vii) The Canoe Slalom Course on the Goulburn River below Eildon attracting National Championships.
- (viii) Beanie Festival in Alexandra.
- (ix) Targa High Country in November
- (x) The new BIA Vic Regional Lake Eildon Boating & Fishing Show.

(xi) Tanglewood Festival at Thornton.

Action 12.1 Suggest this should read Murrindindi Council engage and work with the Communities of Marysville and Kinglake to come up with an action plan for Marysville and Kinglake Community centres.

The Yea and Alexandra Shire Halls could be added to this.

This action is more about better utilizing these venues rather than Tourism Events to attract Visitors and create Jobs.

Action 12.2 Dot Point One supported.

Dot Point Two needs to be altered to “preferable to attracting Visitors Off Peak”. There are some events that could be worthy of support at these times if they stack up.

Dot Point Three; there is no Murrindindi Brand but this action can be altered to being relevant to the strengths of the relevant Quadrant of Murrindindi.

Action 12.3 There are three exceptional venues in the Murrindindi Shire (Holmesglen; Vibe Marysville; Flowerdale Estate) and each of these businesses is working hard to promote their venues and attract clients. Outside of these venues, the question needs to be asked, do we have the appropriate venues providing the demanding standards required for Business Events.

The Strategy should be more about creating the right environment for investment in our area to cater for this significant and important market segment.

Action 12.4 How about we support current events to grow to be sustainable as well as encouraging opportunities for the establishment of new events.

Somehow appears to miss the importance of Boating on the list.

This Draft Submission has been put together after Member input at the recent Murrindindi Inc meeting as well as conversations with Members.

Regards

Mike Dalmau

President

Murrindindi Inc

30-06-2019

P.S. Please note; It is frustrating the time spent preparing this submission when if there had been appropriate consultation by the consultants, they would be doing this work as they get paid for. It sometimes feels like unpaid volunteers have to do the work others get paid for. Please understand, the time taken to talk to Industry Members and then prepare this submission is substantial.

