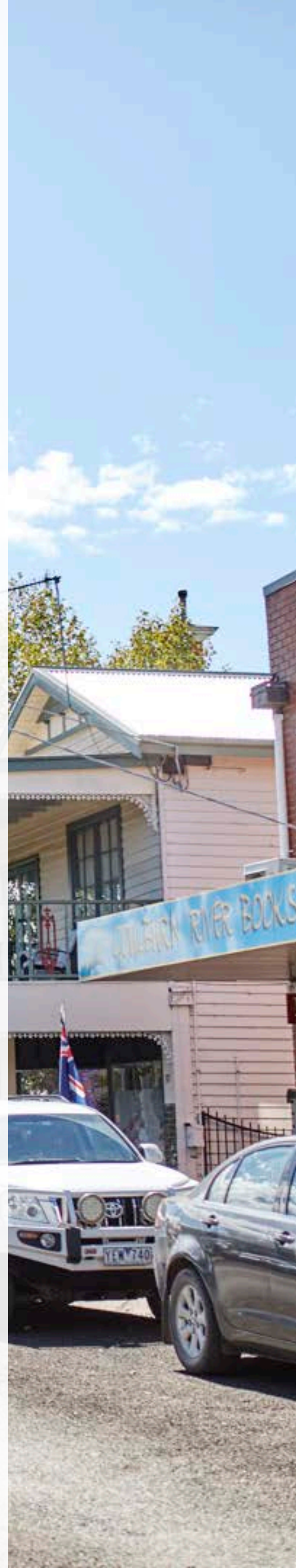




SHAPING  
MURRINDINDI'S  
FUTURE

# Tourism

**Primary Industry  
Entrepreneurial  
Discovery Process**







## Summary

A full day workshop in Tourism was held on Monday 26 February 2024 at the Marysville Community Centre. The workshop supported using the Quad-Helix model, with participants ranging in experience and expertise across industry, government, research, and community. The aim of this workshop was to define the asset further, and link potential opportunities that will create social and economic benefit within the community.

A range of key assets were discussed, with the group unable to unanimously agree on any particular opportunity, the group however did agree that Tourism should progress to Stage 3 – Innovation Working Groups. An additional workshop was held on Friday 17th May, with a smaller cohort of representatives from industry, government and community. The purpose of this follow up workshop was to clarify and define the opportunities for Tourism prior to the creation of the innovation working group.





## Key Assets

Tourism and the Visitor Economy is important to many towns within the corridor of the project. In both the workshops it was recognised that the area's natural environment is the key asset and attraction for the industry. Marysville is a well-established tourism destination with links to Lake Mountain, Alexandra, and Lake Eildon. It is surrounded by a wealth of natural resources and offers a diverse range of outdoor activities including walking, hiking, camping, fishing, four wheel driving, mountain biking, hunting, and rafting.





## Strategic Competitive Advantage

The location and proximity to Melbourne is a key advantage, as well as already being an established tourist destination with high visitation. Work has already been done to assist the towns recovery since the 2009 Black Saturday fires, in particular the Marysville and Triangle Economic Development Strategy.

Lake Mountain is the closest alpine ski resort to Melbourne and is a tourist destination in Winter. Other key tourist attractions in the local area include Steavenson Falls, one of Victoria's highest waterfalls, Lady Talbot Drive, as a scenic drive through rainforest, Keppel Falls lookout and the Beeches. Marysville has an abundance of tourist accommodation options from small B&B's, cottages, a motel, hotel and conference centre. Other services and businesses include several cafes, bakery, take away shops, boutique shops, pub, ski hire and supermarket. The Goulburn River attracts may year round visitors for its fishing and water recreation opportunities.





## Key Challenges

Challenges to tourism in the corridor include seasonal and extreme weather impacts on tourism, the high threat of fire in the summer, land access and lack of infrastructure to support longer stays in the region.

Availability of housing and accommodation for both visitors and staff. Finding suitable staff is also a big concern for majority of local businesses. Identity of the region needs some redefining- being part of Tourism North East, often associated with Yarra Valley and part of the Goulburn Region for other activities.



# Tourism Workshop 1

## Key Discussion Points

Key discussions identified a number of strengths, challenges and opportunities, with majority of the group identifying a need for a clearer vision for Tourism in Murrindindi Shire. The group agreed that more effective communication and connectivity is needed across all towns, to better unite businesses, community groups, information centres, and employees to work together and better support each other. There is an abundance of opportunity for activities that are so close to Melbourne, whether that relates to outdoor recreation, local food and wine destinations, or arts and culture. Defining a clearer identity in the region will help with attracting specific targeted audiences and building better awareness of the things to do across the Shire. This could be achieved with a clear marketing strategy that focuses on 'one brand' uniting Murrindindi Shire and establishing a cooperative body (for example 'Tourism Business Network') group. This could also incorporate a yearly Events Calendar network - working in with community groups and businesses to align events throughout the year in a central easy to access location.





## **Some of the key projects and opportunities that were discussed at this workshop are listed below:**

- Build, extend and maintain a variety of multi use tracks and trails – for walking, cycling, and horse riding. Connect and extend these tracks from Marysville through to Rubicon, Eildon and beyond to Yarck. Connecting the towns via trails and encourage visitors to explore other areas in the Shire and stay longer. Create more experiences for outdoor adventuring.
- Invest in hut and camping projects along the National Trail to encourage longer stay visitation and exploration of surrounding townships.
- Ride Marysville project will connect Marysville and Lake Mountain with up to 130km of international mountain bike tracks suitable to all levels and abilities. This will provide further opportunities for future track and trail maintenance, shuttle bus services, development of bike wash and pump stations, and bike gear sales and hire.
- Activating Eildon Master Plan – resort development, Fraser Park – under utilised
- Housing for both visitors and key workers
- Rubicon Historical area- Rubicon Historic and Haulage Line development – linking the line to Alex, Tours into Rubicon power station
- Extend and ensure tracks are accessible for camping and four wheel driving and open up more options for RV camping.
- Non adventure based activities to attract other markets- breweries, day spa and combining art, culture and nature. Linking local farming producers with tourism to create a new experience.
- Develop Education Programs in Lake Mountain and create further opportunities for students to be involved in outdoor programs and camps, with the learnings written into curriculum.
- Develop and improve the streetscapes to become more appealing and encourage visitors to dine later and stay longer.



# Tourism Workshop 2

## Key Discussion Points

Participants discussed the asset in further detail outlining the networks and connections that are already established in the region. Key discussions were based on the challenges and barriers to further growth and development for businesses reliant on the visitor economy in the area. Five key focus areas were identified for the Innovation Working Groups. These are:

### **Key Worker Accommodation**

Key worker accommodation has been a consistent challenge for many existing businesses in Marysville but also across the Shire. This includes the seasonal workforce for businesses such as Lake Mountain and Koala Cherries, but also for other businesses that try to attract skilled labour force for permanent positions. Given the breadth of the issue, there is a need for different levels and affordability of accommodation to suit the varied needs of a broad workforce. eg. singles, families, minimum wage workers. Many businesses have expressed their inability to grow and expand without further investment in worker accommodation and innovative strategies to address the current needs.





### **Capacity Building - Skills and Training**

Increase the skills and capacity of the necessary workforce will drive the visitor economy. Ongoing training and development initiatives to enhance visitor experience and building staff resources for the district is an opportunity.

### **Recruitment**

There is potential to share workforce across businesses, particularly the seasonal workforce. Job sharing arrangements across the Winter and Summer seasonal jobs within the Shire could be a positive proposition to those seeking ongoing work and reliable employment tenure. A dedicated employment service would be well positioned to take advantage of coordinating the working arrangements across the shire across all business - as a single point of access for both businesses and job seekers. This service could also be integrated with worker accommodation and training.





## **Marketing and Promotion**

Having a clear, concise and consistent message in marketing the area is important to attracting and growing the visitor economy. There is a broad range of assets across the Shire to promote. Largely the area is known and valued for its natural environment, outdoor activities and nature based tourism, with a smaller component associated with local produce (food & beverage). Promotion of current events and development of additional events to create new offerings for visitors with the potential to increase length of stays. The length of stay directly equates to economic yield. The priority across the Shire is to increase the length of stay in the area and develop strategies and infrastructure that can facilitate and encourage visitors to stay longer. This would be focusing on making the area a true holiday destination with bookable experiences. There is a lack of family friendly visitor options in Marysville and surrounds was noted. Opportunities to diversify the offerings could potentially increase the length of stay.

An assessment of current Tourism marketing and promotion for the region is needed and its effectiveness for encouraging visitation. The development of new programs will allow opportunity to grow the visitation numbers, increase national and international interest, encourage longer stays and help promote the variety of offerings in Murrindindi Shire.





## **Investment Ready**

There are barriers to expansion and development in the area due to administration and legal red tape that restricts investment. It is difficult to attract private investment to stimulate the visitor economy if the ecosystem is not readily available to facilitate this investment. Advocacy through levels of government to make system changes to allow for easier investment would be beneficial to not only the visitor economy but broader economic development within the region.





## **Policy and Regulations**

Future regulations and potential for commercial activity in what is currently state forest is currently under review through the Eminent Panel for Community Engagement. Participation in the process and seeking to understand the potential changes to the areas is crucial as the Panel's recommendations will directly impact the areas visitor economy, nature based tourism activities and any initiatives coming out of this working group.

## **Logistics**

It is important to understand the current marketing and promotion of the region, which includes Discover Dindi, Victorian High Country, Visit Victoria and Tourism Australia. It will also be important to work in with Tourism North East and Regional Development Victoria to gain insight into the bigger picture of Tourism.





## **Logistics**

Similar to other recent entrepreneurial workshops, there is opportunity for a community entity or organisation to link businesses together and combine experience and expertise. Decisions made by larger businesses, including opening hours or closures could have a ripple effect through other businesses in the community and there is benefit in sharing these decisions within a Business Network group. This group could provide support and advise to new businesses, work collaboratively to attract future funding for a variety of projects, help to develop and deliver these projects, and assist with recruiting and retaining skilled staff.

Further community consultation will be necessary in identifying the future needs for Tourism in the region.

Development of available land for a variety of housing, including hotels, Airbnb, and key worker accommodation is crucial to allow for expansion and growth of the region. This will out further pressure on public transport issues, childcare services, and shortages of skilled and suitable staff.

**Tourism | Primary Industry Entrepreneurial Discovery Process**





## **Conclusion**

This is a viable opportunity that could be realised in the short and longer term.