To develop a high quality touring experience that capitalises on the natural assets, vibrant cultural and festival activities that support a sustainable and liveable community.

The Towong Shire in North East Victoria is home to the Man from Snowy River legend and the untamed headwaters of the mighty Murray River. A destination blessed with natural beauty and the authentic charm of high country Australia. Its villages, characters, and lifestyle are the essence of the rugged Australia depicted in Banyo Patterson’s poem of 1890.

As a destination, the products and experiences of Towong are in the early stages of the tourism lifecycle, the region retains a charm and warmth that remind us of a time when life was less complicated. The stresses of modern life has no place in this vast inspiring landscape, in the pure waters of the untamed Murray, in the picturesque valleys and hamlets that give Towong its unique character.

The Towong Tourism Strategy (2010-2013) aims to recognise and build on the strengths of the destination, rather than actions to make it more like other destinations. It recognises that the Towong Shire has an authentic quality that must be preserved. The Towong Shire has the potential to grow and mature as a nature-based short-break and touring destination that retains a character so often lost in regional ‘revitalisation’. The spirit of the Man from Snowy River story is as relevant to visitors today as it was to the bushmen that were stirred by the tale around the campfires and inns of Patterson’s era.

While much has changed in the way we plan, book and experience a trip today, there is something timeless about setting off on an adventure and tamed the wild high country. Towong has its place in Victoria’s High Country, and the Australian Alps both geographically and in its essential character. It is a place of adventure, engaging characters, charming villages, inspiring scenery, and a lifestyle envied by many.

The opportunity exists to continue the development of the destination towards nature-based and adventure tourism that embraces a relaxed rural lifestyle, it has everything you need without being indulgent, and helps visitors find a peaceful space without having to think about relaxing. The key to its success will be differentiating itself from its partners in Victoria’s High Country, this will best be achieved through the adventure of Man From Snowy River story.

The Strategy is built on the concept of ‘Experiencing the Thundering Hooves on a High Country Adventure’ which embraces the spirit of the Man from Snowy River story as a key theme in the positioning of the Towong Shire as part of Victoria’s High Country. Bringing the essence, not just the historical context, of the Man From Snowy River story the Towong Shire can inspire travellers of today looking for a little adventure in the wild high country.

The Strategy aims to guide Towong’s tourism stakeholders to develop a high quality touring experience that capitalises on the natural assets, vibrant cultural and festival activities that support a sustainable and liveable community.

It recognises that the strength of the ‘Towong’ experience is its authentic, uncomplicated lifestyle, the villages, the events and the characters and highlights four priority projects:

- Make a modern interpretation of the Man From Snowy River synonymous with the Towong Shire and a core element of targeted promotion of Victoria’s High Country;
- Bring all Towong tourism businesses into the era of digital and cooperative marketing;
- Leverage off the current events and encourage new events to develop that will support viable new tourism businesses;
- Invest in infrastructure that attracts the primary target markets to bring additional value to the Shire; and
- Take every opportunity to encourage visitors to explore more of the region.

The region and its operators need to bring their relaxed, easy-going and charming lifestyle to the easy reach of time-poor modern consumers who are spoilt for choice but can’t seem to find what they are looking for. This can only be achieved through a truly collaborative approach working with local businesses, with the Regional Tourism Board and with partners in the tourism distribution network including Tourism Victoria, wholesalers, touring routes and industry bodies to take the Towong story to the world.
# ONE YEAR ACTION PLAN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION</th>
<th>RESPONSIBILITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: BUILD A UNIQUE IDENTITY</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRIORITY PROJECT: BRAND ALIGNMENT</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Brand and Style Guide development in conjunction with website development (align closely with Victoria's High Country)</td>
<td>TSC / Consultant / Community / RTB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Photo Library – categorised and criteria established for use</td>
<td>TSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EVENTS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Create an Events Program (Major – 2, Minor – 3, Start Ups – 3, Marketing – 5)</td>
<td>TSC / TAG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOURING ROUTE ALLIANCES</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Develop Marketing Plan and commence Secretariat Duties for Snowy Valleys Way</td>
<td>TSC / SVW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: TARGETED MARKETING</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRIORITY PROJECT: ‘GET ONLINE’</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Establish new website and Brand Style Guide that attracts, reflects Towong Shire’s character and services visitors/operators</td>
<td>TSC / Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Develop an Official Visitor’s Guide (OVG) to be distributed to all accredited VICs in major catchments with a shelf life of two years and be available online</td>
<td>TSC / Consultant / Industry Stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Establish operator engagement with expo’s, marketing collateral and advertising</td>
<td>TSC / Operators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: VALUE ADDING TO THE EXPERIENCE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRIORITY PROJECT: VALUE-ADD BY VISITOR CENTRES</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Visitor Information Centre Review – full review and assessment of current processes, goods, services, etc to ensure efficiency and growth</td>
<td>TSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Review Current Merchandising System and establish as revenue source for VIC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4: ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRIORITY PROJECT: REGIONAL TOURISM BOARD SEAT</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Towong Shire actively attends meetings with the Regional Tourism Board to enable direct engagement and lobby for improved promotion of the region as part of Victoria’s High Country</td>
<td>TSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PARTNERSHIP MODEL</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Empower and support TAG to become independent from Council while still working in partnership to achieve common tourism goals</td>
<td>TSC / TAG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Fund and engage independent consultant to assist with TAG’s business plan development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Manager Economic and Tourism Development to attend TAG meetings 2 – 3 times per annum with one staff member from VIC (Vic staff to alternate attendance with MGR)

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5: BUILD & DEVELOP INFRASTRUCTURE**

**TRANSPORT UPGRADES**

- Design, infrastructure and landscape development of five (5) roadside lookouts
  - Responsibility: TSC

- Develop submission for key interest groups and Council to utilise while lobbying for upgrade/sealing of identified priority roads
  - Responsibility: TSC / Consultant

- Develop Sandy Creek Rail Trail Bridge and Trail
  - Responsibility: TSC

**RV & CARAVAN INFRASTRUCTURE**

- Enhancement and development of dump site infrastructure (one Corryong and another south western end of shire) for RV/Caravan friendly town recognition
  - Responsibility: TSC

- Lobby for National RV Event 2012 in Corryong
  - Responsibility: TSC

**VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE**

- Building construction and enhancement for the Corryong Visitor Information Centre
  - Responsibility: TSC

**MAN FROM SNOWY RIVER MUSEUM**

- Marketing for the refurbished Man From Snowy River Museum
  - Responsibility: TSC

**Disclaimer**

The information and recommendations provided in this Tourism Strategy are made on the basis of information available at the time of preparation and the assumptions outlined throughout the document. While all care has been taken to check and validate material presented in this report, independent research should be undertaken before any action or decision is taken on the basis of material contained in this report. This report does not seek to provide any assurance of project viability and EC3 Global accept no liability for decisions made or the information provided in this report.

The content of this report does not reflect the views of Towong Shire Council or other project partners. EC3 Global shall not be liable, in any way, for any loss arising from use or reliance upon material in this publication by another person.
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PART A: UNDERSTANDING THE OPPORTUNITY
Located in North Eastern Victoria, the Towong Shire is the place of origin of two famous Australians, the Mighty Murray River and the Man from Snowy River.

Traditionally a fishing and camping destination for Victorians the region has had a renaissance as a touring destination for nature-loving visitors with a reputation for hosting outstanding and festivals and events. Spurred by the Snowy Valleys Way and the success of events such as the Man From Snowy River Bush Festival, the Tallangatta 50’s Festival and the Mitta Muster, the region is winning fans with its unassuming and authentic approach.

Known as the ‘Pure Towong Shire’ the crystal clear mountain waters run into the Murray Darling Basin providing over 41% of the water from just 14% of the basin’s land area. The area is over 70% public land that remains untamed.

Traditional industries such as beef and dairy farming continue to thrive in the fertile Snowy Valleys and new industries are emerging, including tourism. Not surprisingly Towong’s tourism industry is based on its natural assets – the rivers, lakes deep valleys and forested areas attract visitors seeking outdoor activities such as angling, cycling, 4WD experiences and bushwalking.

The region offers a unique range of visitor experiences including the opportunity to:

- Explore over 6,600km² of National Parks and State Forests, home to wombats, platypus and birdlife
- Fish or canoe over 700km of rivers and streams
- Camp on the banks and waterways of Lake Hume and Lake Dartmouth or relax in accommodation with magic views
- Visit the home and final resting place of the man who inspired the ‘Man from Snowy River’
- Photograph the spectacular mountain ranges (with 20 over 1000m) that provide over 40% of the water for the Murray River including the highest mountain in Victoria (Mt Bogong)
- See local villages come to life with authentic community-driven events
- Climb one of Australia’s largest monoliths, Burrowa-Pine Mountain a site of indigenous cultural significance; and
- Cycle through spectacular mountain scenery and feel like you are in the Tour de France.
The Towong Tourism Strategy 2010-2013 aims to align the future development and promotion of the Shire with the broader regional and state-wide tourism approach, while recognising the unique character of the region. This Strategy draws from and links to a number strategic tourism planning documents at the State and Regional levels.

Outlined below in Figure 2 is a selection of the over-arching strategic tourism direction and policy framework papers for this region.

The Towong Shire Three Year Tourism Strategy will be the strategic plan for tourism in the destination (not the organisation). It will outline the vision, goals and strategies for the destination and provides background information on how these were developed.

**Figure 2: Strategic Context**

- NE Victoria Forest Management Plans and National Park Management
- Australian Alps National Landscapes Tourism Strategy (2009)
- Lake Hume Land and Water Management Plan (2009)
- Victoria’s 10 Year Tourism and Event Industry Strategy (2006)
- Blueprint for Regional Victoria
- Regional Tourism Action Plan (2009 – 2012)
- Hume Region Sustainable Communities Strategy

The key strategic directions from the strategies influencing the future of the Towong Shire highlight:

- Victoria is recognized as a leading events destination;
- A focus on growing the ‘nature-based’ tourism market;
- Attracting investment to improve the quality of experiences;
- Clustering destinations to deliver greater market awareness and cut-through including the creation of the Alps National Landscape;
- Increasing protection of natural assets, especially the catchment of the Murray;
- Focusing on life-style experiences and regional destinations; and
- Creating better recreational facilities on Lake Hume
VISITOR TRENDS

Tourism is a significant economic contributor to the Towong Shire - worth an estimated $29 million and employing approximately 386 people in 2007-2008.

The Towong Shire received approximately 170,306 visitors staying 255,750 visitor nights in 2009. Of these approximately 96% were domestic visitor nights which have more than doubled since 2001. This is quite a contrast to the neighbouring region of Wangaratta whose domestic visitor nights were down 18% from the previous year.

*Figure 3: Total Visitor Nights per Region*

![Graph showing seasonal visitor nights per region](image)

Towong experiences a greater level of seasonality than Regional Victoria on average and the regions of the Murray and High Country (see Table 1 below). As the region is not a primary gateway to the ski fields its visitation is primarily in the Summer / Autumn, which is also when the key events including the Man from Snowy River Bush Festival are held.

Towong’s average visitor expenditure per day for domestic visitors was $67 in 2007, this is well below the neighbouring regions of Alpine ($123) and Wangaratta ($89), and the State ($129) and National ($129) averages. See Figure 5 below.

*Figure 5: Average Expenditure per Region 2007*

![Graph showing average expenditure per region](image)

For every $1 that the Council invested in tourism in 2009 visitors spent $136 in the Shire. If the region could increase the average spend to that experienced in Wangaratta Shire it would create a further 133 jobs.

Table 1: Seasonal Visitation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Towong</th>
<th>Murray</th>
<th>High Country</th>
<th>Regional Victoria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autumn</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Based on average visitor numbers through the Corryong VIC over the four years 2005 – 2008
3. Based on domestic visitors to the region in the year ending December 2007
VISITOR PROFILE

In 2009 the majority of visitors to Towong stayed in a caravan or camping near road or on private property (33%), a friend or relatives’ property (29%), or a caravan park or commercial camping ground (23%). In comparison, the majority of visitors to the Alpine Shire are either staying in a hotel, resort, motel or motor inn (27%) or a caravan park or commercial camping ground (26%) only 10% are free camping.

The majority of visitors (91%) are the self-drive market with their own transportation and travelling for holiday or leisure (91%). The domestic visitors in 2009 were travelling as an adult couple (32%), in a family group (23%), friends or relatives travelling together (23%) or travelling alone (21%).

The average length of stay in 2009 was 4.61 nights; this is up from 2.23 nights in 2008. In 2009, 47% stayed for 4-7 nights.

Figure 6: Average Length of Stay 1999 – 2009

The majority of visitors are from Melbourne (30%) with regional visitors coming from: Murray (13%), Goulburn (11%) and Murray East (9%). Visitors from interstate (excluding NSW) make up only 11%.

The most popular activities for visitors to Towong Shire in 2009 are: Eat out at restaurants (45%), Going fishing (40%), Picnics or BBQs (38%), Visiting friends and relatives (34%), general sightseeing (30%); pubs clubs and discos etc (28%), bushwalking or rainforest walks (23%) and visit national and state parks (21%).

Nature Based Tourism Trends

- There is growing concern related to the carbon emissions produced by long haul air travel in some international markets (UK and Europe).
- Consumers are seeking environmentally sustainable experiences that protect biodiversity and take steps to limit their carbon footprint.
- Short break stays of 2–4 days are increasing, with consumers undertaking one or two smaller breaks in favour of one long holiday.
- Consumers are seeking more experiences in unique locations, that are more memorable, engaging, intimate and highly personal.
- Travellers are increasingly interested in more socio-culturally acceptable tourism products, particularly local Indigenous cultures.
- Climatic events, natural disasters and international disruptions will affect travel behaviour and industry viability.

VISITOR SNAPSHOT 2009

- Self drive (91%)
- Average length of stay: 4.61 nights
- 50% stay for 4-7 night, many are on short breaks (1-2 nights)
- Holiday / leisure visitors (91%)
- Travelling in as a couple, in a family group, with friends or relatives or alone.
- From Melbourne (30%)
- Primarily nature-based visitors

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6 Tourism Research Australia 2009 Domestic Visitor Survey

7 Tourism Victoria, 2008. Victoria’s Nature Based Tourism Strategy
TOURISM ASSETS & INFRASTRUCTURE

The natural attractions of Towong are its greatest tourism asset, yet they are generally low yielding – camping, 4WD, bushwalkers, anglers and others who visit the shire are often self sufficient and inject little money into the economy.

ACCOMMODATION

According to research by the Towong Shire Council there are an estimated 61 accommodation operators in the shire. The majority of the rooms are: self contained accommodation (43%), hotels (18%), motels (18%), Caravan parks (14%) and B & B’s (7%) and. These provide a total of 421 rooms (not including powered or un-powered sites) and 80% of these are in the Mitta Valley (29%) and Corryong (50%) as shown in Table 2 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Establishments</th>
<th>Rooms</th>
<th>Beds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mitta Valleys</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corryong Valleys</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tallangatta Valleys</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peninsular Lake Hume</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSC Grand Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>1065</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of rooms and establishments has grown by 3% per annum, with modest growth in self-contained accommodation, but declines in caravan park sites and hotel rooms over the same period. Camping site occupancy has risen 6% from 2005 to 2009, whereas hotels with five or more rooms has fallen from 42% in Dec 07 to 29% in Dec 09.

EVENTS

Towong Shire is becoming known for its authentic community-driven events, including:

- The Man from Snowy River (MFSR) Bush Festival (Easter, Corryong)
- The Tallangatta 50s Festival (October, Tallangatta)
- The Mighty Mitta Muster (March, Mitta Mitta)
- Nariel Creek Folk Festival
- The Tallangatta Farm Expo (April, Tallangatta)

TRANSPORT

Easily accessible via the Hume Highway and now established touring routes such as the Snowy Valleys Way and Great Alpine Road many visitors arrive by car. The three major road links are: the Murray Valley Highway, the Murray River Road, and the Omeo Highway all of which have been identified as needed further investment.

A growing trend is the fly-drive holiday and the region is well-placed to capitalise on this market with increasing frequency of interstate and regional flights into nearby Albury airport (growing 14% per annum since 2006/07 – see Figure 7). The Albury airport is the second busiest ‘regional’ airport and is serviced by four airlines.

Corryong Airport is an asset owned by the Towong Shire Council, and is widely recognised as having the potential to contribute significantly to the growth of tourism within the Shire. The key constraints are around lighting, aircraft fuel facilities, and transport services from the airport.

The region is also serviced by rail through the VLine service into Albury/Wodonga.

By 2031 it is predicted that 20% of all domestic holiday makers will fly to their destination, Towong Shire is perfectly placed to benefit from this growth.
TOURING ROUTES

The Towong Shire has two major touring routes linking into the region: the Great Alpine Road and the Sydney – Melbourne Heritage Drive. Together with the Snowy Valleys Way which provides an alternate route off the Hume Highway (the Sydney to Melbourne Heritage Drive).

The Great Alpine Road links Wangaratta to Bairnsdale, a popular route for the drive between Melbourne and Sydney, through the Alps. The road is Australia’s highest year-round accessible sealed road.

The Sydney to Melbourne Heritage Drive provides an alternative to the coastal route travelling through Canberra. Off this route is the Snowy Valleys Way, an alternate route to the Hume Highway. Towong Shire Council provided leadership for the initial development of this touring route. This five shire cross border initiative set a new benchmark in tourism development.

The proposed Man from Snowy River Adventure Drive presents a unique opportunity for Towong and should be progressed in partnership with DSE.

LIFESTYLE

The 6,256 residents of the Towong Shire enjoy a lifestyle the envy of many, with almost a square kilometre each they live in one of the most picturesque and protected areas of Victoria. The economy is driven by primary industries such as dairy, beef cattle, and sheep production, with a mixture of other agriculture activities and an emerging tourism sector.

PROTECTED AREAS

The Towong Shire with its 6,600km² of National Parks and State Forests and over 700km of rivers and streams provides visitors with an abundance of opportunities for outdoor activities and experiences.

The pristine alpine waters, rivers and streams including Lake Hume and Lake Dartmouth provide ideal locations for camping, fishing and canoeing. The countryside hosts idyllic picnic spots and impressive lookouts.

TOWONG’S UNIQUE SELLING POINTS

- Inspiring picturesque landscape
- A famous story – the Man From Snowy River
- Community events
- Untamed nature and wild rivers
- Camping and fishing
- Local characters and storytellers
- Authentic country villages
TOURISM CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

CHALLENGES

- Average occupancy rates for the hotels at just 30% and caravan parks at 28% are well below what is required for new product investment (60-70%).
- The MFSR Festival alone attracts 6,000 people highlighting a clear under supply of beds.
- Mixed brand message (Murray & High Country) – unwinding or adventure?
- Lack of infrastructure – quality lookouts, wayside stops and basic amenities
- Minimal marketing presence outside Albury / Wodonga
- Poor online presence and lack of an OVG
- Limited out of hours services, dining and other visitor based and recreation opportunities
- Limited funding to support events
- Lack of major investment (Limited funding pool within Council)
- Low yield from natural asset attraction – How can we get people to spend more?
- Under supply of high yielding products – lack of product
- Road infrastructure

OPPORTUNITIES

- Towong Shire Experience’ routes and pathways are key to accessing attractions and tourism assets and should be communicated through effective maps and other interpretative media both online and in print media.
- Festivals and events – build on Man from Snowy River, Mitta Muster, 50’s, etc
- Touring routes – Snowy Valleys Way to be more inclusive of more towns
- Packaging the destination – more businesses included in distribution system
- Shire-led promotion – with greater cooperation from businesses
- Active holidays – rail trail, walking trails, etc are what the visitor wants
- Short breaks / day trips – from Albury/Wodonga, Wagga, etc will grow
- Natural disasters – better risk management, preparedness and communication
- Price rises / affordability – attract higher yielding visitors (Baby Boomers)
- Group travel market – to grow again (e.g. buses) and build critical mass
- Baby boomers – will enter retirement and go travelling
- Award winning businesses – help business to get recognised
- Self-sufficient travellers – RVs, caravans that need few facilities

GLOBAL AND NATIONAL TRENDS

- Growing outbound leads to flat domestic and growing international travel
- Increasing use of air transport (including low-cost carriers) as an alternative to long-haul drive holidays
- Increasing trend towards short-breaks (including an increase in fly-drive)
- Challenges in attracting investment in tourism infrastructure due to low ROI and complex planning schemes
- Experience Seekers looking for ‘value’ not price
- Media Fragmentation and Technology pushing online bookings
- Increasing competition – visitors see $6M in advertising daily and over 100 destinations per week
- Demographic shifts as the Baby Boomers begin retirement and Gen Y joins the workforce en masse
- Above average growth for Victoria, Regional Victoria is losing market share to Melbourne
- Changing consumption patterns – tourism losing share of household consumption
PRIMAR Y GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

As outlined in the Tourism Victoria Regional Tourism Action Plan the product strengths for the following regions are:

The Murray
- **Primary**: food and wine, golf and festivals and events
- **Secondary**: Indigenous, history and heritage
- **Emerging**: Nature Based

Victoria’s High Country
- **Primary**: Food and wine, nature based, adventure, ski, festivals and events
- **Secondary**: history and heritage
- **Emerging**: spa and wellbeing

It is proposed that Towong Shire is more aligned with Victoria’s High Country with the key growth opportunities being festivals and events and nature based.

NATURE BASED VISITORS

A nature-based tourism visitor is defined as a visitor who undertakes at least one nature-based tourism activity during their visit. The most popular activities are going to the beach, bushwalking or rainforest walks, and visiting national parks or state parks.

For year ending June 2007, 37 per cent of domestic overnight visitors and 77 per cent of international overnight visitors to Victoria undertook at least one nature-based tourism activity during their trip\(^9\). This included 8.1 million domestic day trips, 6.3 million domestic overnight and 1.13 million international nature-based tourism visitors. Natural attractions influence 56 per cent of all international visitors to visit Australia.

For Victoria to develop successful nature-based tourism destinations and experiences, gaps in the five A’s – attractions, access, activities, amenities and accommodation – must be filled.

Nature-based tourism is any type of tourism that relies on experiences directly related to natural attractions\(^{10}\).

There are five types of nature-based tourism, including:
1. Ecotourism (guided nature interpretation and Aboriginal cultural heritage in nature)
2. Adventure tourism (horse riding and kayaking)
3. Extractive tourism (fishing, gold panning and fossicking)
4. Wildlife tourism (native wildlife viewing and whale watching)

Towong Shire is best matched to the adventure tourism (horse riding and mountain biking), extractive tourism (fishing) and nature retreats. Outlined below is the nature based product match with the Roy Morgan Value Segments associated with Towong Shire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Market Segments</th>
<th>Nature based product match</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Traditional Family Life| • Ecotourism (18%)  
|                        | • Adventure tourism (14%)  
|                        | • Extractive tourism (16%)  
|                        | • Snow skiing / Snowboarding (2%)  
|                        | • Native Wildlife (15%)  |
| Visible Achievement    | • Ecotourism (25%)  
|                        | • Adventure tourism (20%)  
|                        | • Extractive tourism (30%)  
|                        | • Snow skiing / Snowboarding (20%)  
|                        | • Native Wildlife (28%)  |
| Socially Aware         | • Ecotourism (19%)  
|                        | • Adventure tourism (20%)  
|                        | • Extractive tourism (8%)  
|                        | • Snow skiing / Snowboarding (28%)  
|                        | • Native Wildlife (14%)  |

\(^9\) Tourism Victoria (2008) Victoria’s Nature Based Tourism Strategy

\(^{10}\) Tourism Victoria (2008) Victoria’s Nature Based Tourism Strategy
TOWONG VILLAGES AND VALLEYS

Outlined below is a review of five of the major villages within the shire and their unique selling points and priority projects as identified through community consultation.

Table 4: Towong’s Villages and Valleys Unique Selling Points and Priority Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Unique Selling Points</th>
<th>Priority projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Talangatta | • Pure  
• Calm  
• Relaxing  
• Unwinding  
• Inspiring  
• Bird watching and wildflowers  
• Artist retreat | • Interpret ‘the town that moved’ as part of the visitor experience  
• Market the benefits of tourism to locals  
• Identify 3 ‘must sees’ for locals to create a coordinated message  
• Cooperation between businesses and villages on tourism  
• Manned information centre during festivals (volunteers)  
• Investment in accommodation, retail, cafes and road infrastructure  
• Strategic alliance with CMCA |
| Mitta Valley | • Beautiful drives  
• Geology  
• Adventure trails  
• Route through 3 National parks  
• Banquets with wildlife  
• Peace and quiet  
• Safe  
• Clean water | • Omeo Highway upgrade  
• Create events around light aircraft owning niche visitors  
• Engage operators to expand into new guided tours in partnership with events and develop packages  
• Create new adrenalin experiences (e.g. parachuting)  
• Build the relationship with Government Agencies  
• Promote Mt Bogong loop route  
• Niche marketing in partnership with car hire companies |
| Corryong | • Clean  
• Mountains  
• Smell, touch, feel  
• Aussie bush life  
• History  
• Clear your mind  
• Friendly people  
• Real experiences | • Promote Corryong as an iconic Australian place (MFSR)  
• Collaboration between business and the shire  
• Promote ‘Beginning of Murray’  
• Leverage the Alps National Landscape, Geology & Pine Mountain  
• Create a coast to mountains Touring loop  
• Upgrade the Corryong – Benambra Rd  
• Accommodation for bus groups  
• Remove Council road blocks to new projects (planning scheme)  
• Retail opening hours |
| Walwa | • ‘Green outback’  
• Murray River  
• Australia’s High Country  
• Murray River Road  
• Peace and tranquillity  
• Freedom / escape | • Murray River tour  
• Accessibility of nature: upgrade trails, river access and interpretive signage, sealed roads  
• Targeted marketing (weddings / events / groups)  
• Murray River loop road  
• Mobile coverage  
• Employment for locals  
• Attract new residents  
• Repeat visitation |
| Bethanga | • Scenic views / panoramas  
• Fishing  
• Old mining town  
• Affordable rural land with views  
• Tree lined avenues | • Service quality  
• Signage  
• Infrastructure: Lake road (loop)  
• Wayside stops and the lookout at Kurrajong  
• Small accommodation  
• Cycle tourism events  
• Mobile coverage |
PART B: THREE YEAR STRATEGY – POSITIONING FOR THE FUTURE
VISION, MISSION AND GOALS

THE VISION
To develop a high quality touring experience that capitalises on the natural assets, vibrant cultural and festival activities that support a sustainable and liveable community.

THE MISSION
- To provide a high quality tourism experience that increases visitation and spending across the Towong Shire.
- To develop high quality touring information to promote the Shire in a positive way.
- To develop and implement improved tourism infrastructure; wayside stops and lookouts, to encourage visitors to return to the shire either as visitors or residents / investors.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES
- Retain our environment and lifestyle
- Build local employment and grow population – especially young people
- Longer stays and a higher spend
- Make local businesses viable
- Provide infrastructure for locals
- Promote the essence of the region to locals, visitors, potential locals and investors
- Generate year round and repeat visitation
- Provide the impetus to improve key tourism infrastructure
- Improve operator and industry skills to enhance the visitor experience
- Attract tourism and business investment
- Educate locals on the benefits of tourism

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES
- To improve the visitor experience
- Improve key tourism infrastructure
- To promote a product that can be delivered, don’t over or under promise
- To improve operator and industry skills to enhance the visitor experience
- Attract tourism and business investment
- Increase visitation, spend and length of stay

2010-2013 KEY STRATEGIES
- Develop an online (website) presence that attracts and services visitors and operators
- Improve the visitor experience at Visitor Information Centres to deliver a lasting memory and increase yield
- Refine the printed brochure suite to provide a clear message
- Improve gateway, township, locality and directional signs to better communicate the Towong Shire brand
- Orientate and direct visitors by improving key visitor sites (lookouts, wayside stops, parks and museums), resulting in an improved visitor experience and increase yield
- Enhance the product knowledge and develop the professional skills of staff, volunteers and tourism operators
- Actively develop the tourism proposition of Corryong and Mitta airports in order to raise its profile and increase return visits
- Develop business plans and submit funding applications for key tourism projects
- Develop and implement package based marketing campaigns to define and communicate the Shire’s core product strengths
- To prioritise and support key event partnerships
- To maximise return on investment through key tourism partnerships
- To monitor and evaluate Council’s role in regional and local tourism
COMPETITIVE POSITIONING

With 30% of visitors coming from Melbourne and 36% from regional Victoria\textsuperscript{11}, the regions primary competitors are areas closer to Melbourne & Canberra or those offering a similar experience including Far East Victoria / Gippsland, Grampians, and the NSW Alps. The key competitors are the Alpine and Wangaratta Shires.

*Figure 8: Competitive Position Wheel*

Based on this examination of the target markets and positioning of the two destinations, the Murray and Victoria’s High Country it is clear that Towong currently has a foot in both camps. When looking at growth opportunities they are primarily in:

- Nature-based short breaks
- Camping
- Fishing and
- Cycling

This direction would suggest a stronger fit with Victoria’s High Country targeting the primarily (70%) socially aware, visible achievers and Traditional Family Life (see Table 5).

\textsuperscript{11} Tourism Research Australia 2009 Domestic Visitor Survey

*Table 5: Victoria’s High Country Roy Morgan Value Segments*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value Segments</th>
<th>VHC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic Needs</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairer Deal</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Family Life</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventional Family Life</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Look At Me’</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something Better</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Conservatism</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Optimism</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visible Achievement</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socially Aware</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Roy Morgan Values Segments\textsuperscript{1} (% of domestic visitors to Victoria’s High Country)
TARGET MARKETS

Aligning the Towong Shire with Victoria’s High Country presents an outstanding opportunity for leverage and growth. While Victoria’s High Country has a broader target market and appeal (as outlined below), the Towong experience is a strong fit:

Victoria’s High Country Target Markets are:

- Victorian Young Couples (25+) and Older Couples (35-49) on a soft adventure short-break. Primarily Melbourne, Regional Victoria and Southern NSW
- Interstate Young Couples (25+) and Older Couples (35-49) on a passion for food and wine. Primarily Sydney and Canberra
- International Experience Seekers from US, UK, Europe (Germany) and NZ predominately self-drive FIT seeking the road less travelled.

Victoria’s High Country Messages and Hero Products:

Adventure Happens: “The High Country is nature’s playground, a place that will unlock your spirit of adventure and leave you feeling invigorated, indulged, and rewarded.”

- Cycle tourism
- Food and Wine
- Nature-base tourism
- Villages and history
- Touring

TOWONG TARGET MARKETS

Given Towong’s distance from Melbourne (5hrs) the primary target markets are a mix of:

- Short-breaks (growth opportunity);
- Touring (traditional market); and
- Emerging niche markets including fishing enthusiasts, motoring clubs; and special interest groups (education, birdwatching, etc)

The primary motivations for a holiday in Towong are to “Escape and unwind in a place where the people are at one with the land, authentic and unpretentious. It leaves me feeling invigorated, inspired and alive”.

BRAND POSITIONING

Who we are | Authentic
Unassuming / Unpretentious
Pure / Untamed / tranquil
Bold / inspirational / adventurous
In touch with the land

Where we fit | Local – Pure Towong Shire
Regional - Victoria’s High Country
National – Australian Alps

Who we target | Active and Outdoors
Traditional Family Life
Soft adventure – cycling
Nature based visitors
Fishing, Motorbikes, & Clubs

STRATEGIES TO ATTRACT THE TARGET MARKETS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roy Morgan Value Segment</th>
<th>Primary: Short Breaks</th>
<th>Secondary: Touring</th>
<th>Emerging: Niches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Market – Traditional Family Life (Intrastate) “connect with those they care most about”</td>
<td>Family camping escapes</td>
<td>Long-haul Caravan/Motorhome via touring routes</td>
<td>Targeted school and education trips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Market – Socially Aware (Intra/Interstate) “catching their breath; feeling calm and peaceful; and gaining perspective”</td>
<td>Authentic B&amp;Bs and Farmstays in nature</td>
<td>Shorter motorbike, car and 4WD touring trips with friends</td>
<td>Bird watching Trout fishing Indigenous tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging Market – Visible achievers (Interstate/International) “pushing their boundaries and feeling alive”</td>
<td>Day and short-break trips around events</td>
<td>Hire car partnerships Britz Maui, Wicked</td>
<td>Backpackers Study tours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

This strategy recognises that Towong Shire with its pristine mountains; icons and legends; rivers and lakes; national parks and touring routes has the potential to provide high quality tourism experience that increases the value of tourism across the Towong Shire.

The key challenge is to address awareness, develop a clear brand message and provide effective promotional material to the consumer. The Strategic Plan identifies five core Strategy Areas which aim to develop and better promote high quality touring experiences to achieve a greater yield from tourists. These are outlined below in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Core Strategy Areas, Action Areas and Key Performance Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES</th>
<th>ACTION AREAS</th>
<th>KEY PERFORMANCE AREAS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. BUILD A UNIQUE IDENTITY | ▪ Align with a Regional Brand  
▪ Reinvent the Man From Snowy River  
▪ Leverage Events  
▪ Generate Media & PR | ✓ Towong villages are recognised as part of Victoria’s High Country  
✓ Media value from Shire activities  
✓ Unique visits to website |
| 2. TARGETED MARKETING | ▪ Get Online  
▪ Official Visitor Guide  
▪ Cooperative Marketing  
▪ Touring Promotion | ✓ Growth in share of the High Country visitors  
✓ Awareness of Towong Villages in High Country  
✓ Cooperative marketing funds secured  
✓ Proportion of off-peak visitation |
| 3. VALUE ADDING TO THE EXPERIENCE | ▪ Establish a VIC booking system  
▪ Encourage new products & experiences  
▪ Planning for Tourism Growth  
▪ Interpret the Landscape | ✓ Online and Visitor Centre booking revenue ($s)  
✓ New experiences promoted via media partnerships (number)  
✓ Increased visitor expenditure ($ per day through VIC survey) |
| 4. ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS | ▪ Join the Regional Tourism Board  
▪ A Regional Partnership Model  
▪ Online Education and training  
▪ Network Newsletter | ✓ Tourism Advisory Group projects undertaken  
✓ Council and Community support (Council base funding and grants) |
| 5. BUILD & DEVELOP INFRASTRUCTURE | ▪ Facilities on the Rail Trail  
▪ Road transport upgrades  
▪ Scenic route infrastructure (Lookouts)  
▪ Caravan and Camping Policy Direction  
▪ Investment in sporting or cultural facilities | ✓ Increased average length of stay  
✓ Increased spend/night  
✓ Increased growth rate for events |
1. BUILD A UNIQUE IDENTITY

The Towong Shire Council has developed the ‘Pure Towong’ brand which is well suited to local and Shire promotion. However, ‘Towong’ has limited brand recognition or appeal for regional or interstate consumers. As competition increases and the media becomes congested with tourism messages the challenge is to achieve ‘cut through’. The first step is to leverage a well-known regional identity and then to ensure Towong has a clearly defined and unique place within that region.

The brand personality, future marketing direction and identified target markets for Towong Shire align with the regional brand of Victoria’s High Country. Therefore it is recommended that Towong Shire align with leverage this successful brand.

Priority project: Align Towong Shire as a destination within Victoria’s High Country

Within Victoria’s High Country are a number of strong destinations (Bright, Mt Buller, and Beechworth) and Towong Shire and its products need to stand-out. It is recommended that the positioning of Pure Towong within Victoria’s High Country is to leverage off the events, fishing, camping / nature-based, touring and the Man From Snowy River.

Victoria’s High Country exceeded visitor expectations in the following categories:
- A place to spend quality time with partner/family/friends
- Local atmosphere
- Friendliness of locals
- Food and wine experiences

The Man from Snowy River legend provides a key platform for Towong to build a brand identity around. The brand essence aligns closely with the Towong experience as an authentic, untamed, pure and adventurous place.

Reinventing the Man From Snowy River brand into a modern context, that inspires short-breaks where visitors can reconnect with nature and themselves in a peaceful yet active experience. To achieve this, the following priority project and supporting projects have been identified:

Supporting projects:
- Develop a regionally aligned brand identity based on a modern interpretation of the Man From Snowy River as part of Victoria’s High Country;
- Leverage the regional partnership to generate media and PR; and
- Grow the existing events market to further promote the brand;

PRIORITY PROJECT: ALIGN TOWONG WITH VICTORIA’S HIGH COUNTRY

The Man from Snowy River is to become the core of the Towong brand. This positioning clearly aligns Towong Shire with Victoria’s High Country and this should be formalised through membership of the Regional Tourism Board and recognised by Tourism Victoria. Through a modern interpretation of the MFSR story the Towong Shire will be positioned as:
- Authentic
- Adventurous / tranquil
- Unassuming
- Bold / inspirational
- In touch with nature
- Untamed / Pure

Recent research by North East Victoria Tourism and Tourism Research Australia showed a very high visitor satisfaction level with the High Country, in fact in the top four of 66 destinations surveyed nationally. Towong Shire can leverage of this success and work with the new Regional Tourism Board to establish a suitable marketing and media program that recognises the values and unique selling points of Towong Shire. Unprompted awareness of the High Country is the second highest in the State (behind the Great Ocean Road).
RE-INVENT THE MAN FROM SNOWY RIVER

The Man From Snowy River is one of Australia’s most famous stories telling of an inspirational young rider chasing the wild brumbies through the rugged countryside that could have been the Towong Shire. The story has universal appeal for those seeking to escape the city and the trappings of modern life, and feel alive again.

Reinventing the Man From Snowy River is about giving the story a modern context, for some exchanging the horse for motorbike horse power, or the group of riders with a peloton of cyclists. Aligning with Victoria’s High Country gives this brand a fresh outlook and the aim for the near future needs to be to build a unique identity that leverages the brand including:

- Quality Images and Footage
- Taglines and emotive copy for regional promotions
- Packages that reinforce the identity; and
- Supporting new products, experiences and events

Victoria’s High Country ‘Adventures Happen’ Campaign

The campaign aims to highlight the region’s distinctive visitor appeal which encompasses: history; spectacular scenery; and outdoor experiences. The ‘Adventure Happens’ campaign has been developed to highlight the unique Victorian alpine villages and creates opportunities to:

- Improving consumer awareness of the year-round tourism experiences (not just winter); and
- Assisting the facilitation of new investment to build its appeal as a year-round destination.

MEDIA AND PR FOCUS

The Towong Shire is blessed with natural assets, unique characters, inspiring landscapes, great fishing and camping, and engaging events. At present consumers have a limited awareness of the Pure Towong brand and experience. The opportunity exists to leverage the natural advantage of the region to generate media and publicity (including online) in the absence of large marketing budgets.

‘Best Job’ Online and Media Campaign

In 2009 Tourism Queensland proved that ‘it is not the big that eat the small but the fast that eat the slow’ with a campaign that took the world by storm, using a simple concept backed by a well executed campaign delivering:

- Global news coverage, from CNN to Time magazine valued at over AUD$400 million.
- Reached an audience of approximately 3 billion through media coverage.
- The campaign was ranked 8th on the international list for the world’s top 50 PR stunts
- 34,684, one minute video job applications from 197 countries.
- Web stats of 8,465,280 unique visits with an average time spent of 8.25 minutes

Through the Regional Tourism Board and Tourism Victoria’s Visiting Journalist Program, the Towong Shire can leverage significantly more media exposure for its events, experiences and characters. Key targets include travel programs, camping and touring magazines, newspapers, niche publications (e.g. fishing, equine) and online media. To achieve this Towong need to:

- Develop a suite of new stories ideas
- Identify local characters that work with the brand and can work in the media; and
- Create engaging media releases around quirky and different ideas (publican drinking a beer then the water straight from the Murray).
EVENTS

Events are one of the biggest visitor drawcards for the Towong shire with the Shire’s visitation clustered around its three annual hero events. These events are very effective in bringing visitors to the region, so much so that local accommodation facilities are fully booked and overflow to neighbouring Shires.

The hero events in the region are:
- The Mighty Mitta Muster (March)
- The Man from Snowy River Bush Festival (Easter),
- The Tallangatta 50s Festival (October)

Emerging events such as the Towong Cup, the Nariel Creek Folk Festival and Upper Murray Challenge need to be packaged with experiences that value-add to the destinations aims of increasing value. The regions cultural diversity and friendly communities are of great interest to touring market and could be linked into events.

The identity of the region is in many ways defined by its events, and they are the building blocks for community pride and engagement. The opportunity exists to continue to build the current events and support their growth and development, while supporting a new nature-based sports event that could reflect the regions identity. Potentially an event based around cycling, fishing, or kayaking would be a strong brand fit.

**Case Study: Anaconda Adventure Series Races**

Rapid Ascent hosts a series of outdoor Adventure Race events throughout Australia and New Zealand, including the week-long Anaconda Mountain Bike Enduro race in the Red Centre (Alice Springs). The Adventure Race events include mountain biking, running, kayaking and swimming attracting thousands of participants from Australia and around the world, providing fantastic exposure for the host destination.

**EVENT EVALUATION CRITERIA**

Future investment in events should be based on a clear understanding the audience, the value and the community support. It is recommended that Towong Shire utilise the ‘Encore Event Evaluation Kit’ developed by the STCRC to monitor progress of the Shire’s events. Encore enables organisers and sponsors to assess the magnitude of new funds that are attracted to the host region and/or state as a result of a festival or event.

Key criteria for assessing events should include:
- Aligns with the Regional Brand;
- Attracts the primary or secondary target markets;
- Creates opportunities to leverage new product development (guides, accommodation, etc);
- Creates a high profile for the region;
- Generates economic value and a return on investment; and
- Is supported by the community.
### Table 6: Event Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Aligns with the Regional Brand</th>
<th>Attracts the primary/secondary target market</th>
<th>Creates opportunities to leverage new product development</th>
<th>Creates a high profile for the region</th>
<th>Is supported by the community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Man from Snowy River</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tallangatta 50s Festival</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mighty Mitta Muster</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nariel Creek Folk Festival</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>Med</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tallangatta Farm Expo</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### The value of events

While events have a direct impact on a destination’s visitation and the value of tourism, they can deliver a broad range of benefits to a community including:

- Building community support
- Leverage partnership marketing
- Supporting new product development
- Building a ‘critical mass’ of visitation to support a new venture (e.g. tours)
- Increased awareness of the destination and its brand essence

For example: the MFSR Bush Festival attracts an estimated 6,000 people (confirmed through entry ticket sales, 2009) and brings an estimated return of $3 million into the local community (Latrobe, 2005). It is through this kind of evidence that Tourism Victoria’s Events Program is seeking to support grant funding applications. The Man from Snowy River Bush Festival (April 2011) is considered a priority for development and will receive support from Tourism Victoria’s Events Program. This will ensure the Towong Shire has a presence in regional promotions.

### Identified opportunities for new events:

There are a number of event opportunities that have been identified through consultation. These include:

- A hero nature-based event
- Invest in venues and infrastructure
- Attract national and regional sporting events
- Building an event around the rail trail
- Creating a – multisport event from Albury to Burrowa and Corryong (ABC) using road, river and forest
- Developing a 5-6 day epic cycling challenge for women. A National women’s hill climb, ‘Corryong to the Capital’.

### Identified marketing opportunities

Events create a number of opportunities to raise awareness of the destination and its brand. It is recommended that the Towong Shire consider a printed calendar of events with iconic images for each month to engage local residents in local events. The calendar could also feature ‘fast facts’ on the value events and tourism brings to community e.g. jobs.

### Supporting events

Towong Shire will continue to support the growth and development of events through the creation of a two-tiered event funding program. Tier 1 events funding will provide greater financial support, limited to three years, for marketing and promotion. Tier 2 events funding will provide more hands-on assistance and support for event development.

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2. TARGETED MARKETING

The majority of marketing effort for Towong Shire over the past five years has been focused on the promotion of the Snowy Valleys Way and promotion of the major events. This approach has been successful with strong growth in visitation, length of stay and more than doubling the value of tourism.

Additional promotional initiatives undertaken include:

- Reinforcing the “Pure” branding, through the development of a network of tourist signage.
- Promotion of events through the community event billboards in Tallangatta and Corryong.
- Representation of the Shire and the SVW at the Melbourne Caravan and Camping Show.
- Promotion of visitor activity themes through printed materials - such as four-wheel-driving, fishing, camping.
- Tourism activity promotion through regional news and print media, including local newspapers, seasonal features such as “Out & About”, and the Shire wide tourism newsletter.
- Promotion of scenic flight opportunities through the Corryong Airport Fly-in.
- Corryong VIC volunteer support and unmanned information centres at Tallangatta and Eskdale.

While online is key to pre-trip planning, a suite of visitor information is needed including collateral, cooperative marketing, and promotion to the touring market. To achieve this, the following supporting projects have been identified:

Supporting projects:

- Develop an Official Visitors Guide for Towong Shire;
- Engage in cooperative marketing with strategic partners and involve local operators; and
- Continue to leverage the Snowy Valleys Way and Great Alpine Road to build the touring market.

Further, it is important that Towong Shire leverage its regional partnerships to gain cut through in most distant markets. As Figure 10 below highlights, it is possible to promote the ‘Pure Towong’ brand for those within 100-150 kms and to arriving visitors, outside of that the message is ‘Victoria’s High Country’ and for international promotion the partners are either Sydney Melbourne Touring Route (with Snowy Valleys Way) or the Australian Alps.

Figure 10: Geographic Marketing Partnerships
PRIORIT PROJECT: GET ONLINE

A dedicated campaign website for the Towong Shire is a key priority, and should provide a link to both Victoria’s High Country and Tourism Victoria. The website will act as a central hub for all tourism businesses in the region and will provide information about all the tourism attractions and events. It is also recommended that an online image library is established. The website will be the first point of call for the majority of visitors.

Supporting the site will be a number of critical actions including:

- An agreed online marketing plan with the Regional Tourism Board
- Education of operators on the need to and ways to link into the online distribution system (e.g. wotif, lastminute, AAA Tourism)
- A subsidy for ATDW membership for 20 local businesses

Over time the site can develop new tools including online booking potential with a partner such as V3 or Bookeasy, user generated content (photos, stories, etc) maps, accommodation finders, weather updates, iPhone applications, etc. Towong Shire needs to lead by example to encourage local businesses to embrace online promotion and distribution.

OFFICIAL VISITORS GUIDE

Supporting the new online presence should be a new, whole of region Official Visitors Guide (OVG). The OVG will primarily be distributed through Visitor Centres and within the region so its primary aim is to inform current and prospective visitors of the range of things to do, see and places to stay in the region.

The OVG should summarise the attractions, events touring and recreational opportunities for visitors to the shire. This will be provided to other visitor information centres in Victoria and NSW. In addition to the OVG is suggested that the Council develops:

- a touring map highlighting the touring routes, 4WD trails and fishing / recreation opportunities; and
- A consolidated Snowy Valleys Way brochure.

It is envisaged that the OVG will be of a high standard with a listing of all local tourism related businesses with advertising space for key products (including events). In this way Towong Shire will reduce its printed collateral suite but increase the ease trip planning for visitors (especially short break visitors).

COOPERATIVE MARKETING

This strategy recognises that a range of intrastate, interstate and international markets provide growth opportunities for the Towong Shire. To date Towong Shire has had relatively small engagement in cooperative marketing activities due to a limited budget and operators with a desire to advertise. As such it is recommended that Towong Shire focus on building operator participation online (Year 1), work to create new products and showcase those in the OVG (Year 2) and then consider cooperative marketing activities with Victoria’s High Country to access key domestic and international markets. The Tourism Victoria marketing framework provides a number of opportunities (see Figure 11 over page):

Towong Shire has the potential to build its Spring/Summer shoulder visitation by working with and the Nature based campaign through Victoria’s High Country. This campaign will be more effective if linked to events (e.g. new multi-sport nature-based event) and linked to a number of nearby regions (e.g. Murray to Mountains Rail Trail) to create leverage and critical mass.
Figure 11: Tourism Victoria’s Marketing Framework: Villages of Victoria

In the short-term the cooperative marketing focus for the region will be online and built around the regions current assets of low-key nature-based activities (camping, fishing, 4W Ding) and events. Therefore it is recommended that an online campaign such as a short film competition using ‘You Tube’ could be a cost effective but innovative way to build local and visitor support.

Film makers could upload snippets of film that could be used on the website to promote the destination. The competition would in itself be an event with Prize money an award ceremony and people’s choice award in a summer location where people could share in the viewing of the film creating both an event and a promotion.

TOURING ROUTE ALLIANCES

The Touring Market remains a primary target for Towong Shire. The use of touring routes and strategic alliances has been particularly effective in providing a vehicle to cooperatively market to international and interstate target markets. The Sydney to Melbourne Touring Route has been identified as a priority for Tourism Victoria. The Snowy Valleys Way is the primary tool for the Towong Shire to leverage and buy-in to this marketing channel.

It is important that other strategic alliances – such as the Australian Alps National Landscapes be leveraged to grow the touring market. The Alps National Landscape has a strong focus on linking the Kosciuszko Alpine Way back to Albury-Wodonga, thus a partnership needs to be retained with Destination Albury Wodonga and Tourism Snowy Mountains.

As a touring destination it is recommended that Towong Shire:
- Establish each town along the SVW and Mitta Valley as RV friendly towns
- Continue to have a presence at Caravan and Camping Shows under the Snowy Valleys Way umbrella
- Create a CMCA rally in one of the towns and then mini rallies in coming years in different locations
- Support the Sydney to Melbourne Heritage drive and then encourage visitors to get off the route and spend some time in the Towong Shire.

Victoria’s High Country and the Regional Tourism Board will have a focus on touring and growing a number of touring routes that link the destination to its primary target markets (e.g. Melbourne).

Case Study: Dig the Tropic Photo Competition

Dig the Tropic is a geo-tourism trail linking a number of significant attractions, events and communities along the Tropic of Capricorn, from Boulia, Outback Queensland, to the Great Barrier Reef. Covering a distance of over 1,200 kilometres, Dig the Tropic was unearthed by one of Queensland’s largest tourism working groups.

www.digthetropic.com.au provides an immersive online introduction to each geological site, links for further information and useful contacts for independent and group travellers.

One successful initiative undertaken by the working group was to hold a photo competition with entries via their website. The response was overwhelming with 400 entries received. These high quality are held on a central database using online image sharing facility ‘flickr.com’
3. VALUE ADDING TO THE EXPERIENCE

They say a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. While growing new markets is a priority for Towong this should not be at the cost of maximising the value of existing visitors. At present the Towong Shire receives only $67 per night from its domestic visitors, that is just over half of the Victorian average spent per day.

Increasing visitor spend per day is a Priority Project, the first step in achieving this is to engage the Corryong in direct booking and value-adding through a booking system. Following this, use of volunteers to staff the TallaNGatta and Eskdale Centres during events.

Priority project: Effective on-selling by Visitor Information Centres through a booking system

To achieve this, the following priority project and supporting projects have been identified:

Supporting projects:
- **Planning for Tourism Growth** – develop a Tourism Land Use Plan which feeds into the Municipal Strategic Statement and Land Use Planning
- **New product development** build around events and growing new market segments
- Ensure that inspirational interpretive information about the landscape and experiences through an Information and Interpretation Strategy.

### PRIORITY PROJECT: EFFECTIVE ONSELLING BY VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRES

When a consumer enters a Visitor Information Centre they are usually after one item e.g. a map or a visitor guide. This provides a prime opportunity for the Visitor Information Centre Staff to on sell other tourist attractions. To capture consumer bookings, there is a need to increase access to eCommerce booking facilities that link private and public tourism products.

Online visitor booking services require less resourcing, are available 24 hours a day, can be accessed worldwide, and the cost of implementing can be quickly recovered. There are a number of visitor booking software packages for visitor information centres.

BookEasy is one of the leading software solution for the Australian Tourism Industry and currently being used by 150+ booking centres across Australia. It was originally built to meet the needs of the Margaret River region, BookEasy, and is now available across Australia to manage online bookings, regional marketing intelligence, customer relationship management and extensive global distribution of your region’s products.

The system offers a fully integrated front and back office business solutions and will help visitor information centres to streamline their entire business operations.
TOURISM LAND USE PLANNING

There are a number of infrastructure gaps in the Towong Shire, requiring both public and private investment. Private sector investment is not precluded by the current land use planning arrangements; however planning policy does not facilitate tourism projects. Through the consultation process a number of concerns were raised regarding planning approvals for new tourism accommodation, especially those in rural areas.

The Tourism Strategy recommends a Tourism Land Use Planning Study be undertaken to assess a number of likely tourism development scenarios and assess the planning schemes ability to cope with these proposals. From this the Municipal Strategic Statement should be revised and specific planning requirements that are in the remit of Local Government reconsidered.

NEW PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Through the product review and community consultation the need for new high yielding product was marked as a priority.

The Australian Alps Tourism Master Plan was released earlier this year and identified a number of product development opportunities that are feasible for Towong Shire:

- Small-group, personalised cattleman / horsemanship heritage experiences
- Additional Indigenous tourism product and the establishment of independent Indigenous tourism businesses
- Increased wine and food experiences in alpine environment and cultural setting, of mountain valleys and foothills
- Adventure Bus between Canberra and Albury, through the spine of the Alps and connecting operators within the Kosciuszko Cluster – building the Victoria’s High Country pilot
- Prepare cluster Interpretation Delivery Plan and separately for the Snowy Valleys Way
- Assess potential for the promotion of Indigenous linkages across the Australian Alps along traditional indigenous pathways

Outlined below are the product development opportunities as determined by the Community.

- Development of high yield oriented products and experience focused products (specifically packaged tour products and pay for experiences).
  - Alpine ecotourism adventures
  - Fishing, 4WDriving, or wildlife tours
  - Horse related products and trail riding tours
  - Hang Gliding and Paragliding Activities
Develop a variety of themed trails including:
- artist and sculpture trails with public art installations
- a Snowy River Trail with interpretive signage that draws on the poem
- Continue to build on the Rail Trail (to Colac Colac)
- a Heritage Trail and interpretation on the geology, and indigenous history
- Development of a broader range of accommodation products/providers, capitalising on the Wilderness Experience or Eco-Design.
- Tour guides to start operation (e.g. scenic flights and night tours)
- Develop a Murray River Interpretive Centre near the origin of the river
- Major sporting event (cycle tourism, horse power, etc)
- To enhance the visitor experience through thematic interpretation at the Corryong Visitor Information Centre
- Develop and upgrade campgrounds and reserves (with GMW)
- Tour guides to start operation (inc. scenic flights & night tours)
- Establish new farmstays in the region
- Grow new events outside peak season – e.g. a National RV event, sporting events, etc.
- Build the indigenous tourism stories and products

PRODUCT IDEA: Black Duck Valley Moto Park

Black Duck Valley Moto Park is situated 40kms south of the township of Gatton in the picturesque Lockyer Valley on over 700 acres. Camping Facilities with flush toilets and hot showers are available.

The park has:
- Four adult tracks ranging from novice to advanced.
- Three intermediate to advanced level junior tracks.
- Two novice tracks to cater for junior & adults.
- One PeeWee track, these catering only for very young children riding Pee-wees fitted with training wheels.

Prices range from $5 for under 8’s up to $50 for over 18’s.
INTERPRETATION OF THE NATURAL LANDSCAPE

Consumers are increasingly looking to experience something unique. Unique nature-based tourism experiences offer higher levels of experiential learning of the natural and cultural environment specific to a destination.

Experiential learning is delivered through interpretation, both actively (guided) and passively (signage, guidebooks and maps). For instance, the international market demands Aboriginal tourism experiences and an essential component of these experiences is interpretation of the natural and cultural environment by traditional Aboriginal owners. Nature-based tourism operators and Visitor Information Centres can also support national parks and other protected areas by targeting information and education to ensure biodiversity conservation messages are conveyed to visitors and users.

Towong Shire is lacking in interpretation and wayside infrastructure. To encourage visitors to ‘explore’ the region a more consistent and engaging approach to information and interpretation is needed. That is, establishing key interpretative information at wayside stops to better inform visitors about the natural, cultural and historical heritage of the region.

At natural and established decision-points and stopping places, a network of information and interpretation is needed that introduces the passing traveller to the stories of the region and directs them to key locations to see, hear and experience more. On-site interpretation at key sites will be vital to delivering the experience of the Towong Shire as for many this will be limited as the online presence is limited and the region is lacking an Official Visitors Guide.

Developing the stories, themes and material will be a key part of the development and evolution of the Brand and should reflect the Brand Values. This includes the delivery of information through traditional methods (signs and printed materials) as well as innovative approaches (e.g. podcasts).

Key objectives of the delivery of the Visitor Information and Interpretation include:

- To engage local communities in sharing their stories;
- Link to existing infrastructure and stopping places where possible;
- Create a hierarchy of information locations; and
- Be innovative including adoption of new technology where possible.

Identified Interpretive Needs

Farran’s Lookout on the way to Walwa has been identified as an ideal site for a constructed lookout. The lookout provides 270/300 degree view of the Snowys and snow capped mountains and would be ideal for a viewing platform, some geological interpretation and a walkout to the set of rocks. The picnic area does need some refurbishment.

Towong Shire Council acknowledges Australia’s Aboriginal Heritage - including its parks and reserves. Through their cultural traditions, the Dhudhuuroa identify the Burrowa-Pine Mountain National Park as their Traditional Country and Australia’s largest monolith.
4. ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS

The Strategy aims to guide Towong’s tourism stakeholders to develop a high quality touring experience that capitalises on the natural assets, vibrant cultural and festival activities that support a sustainable and liveable community. This can only be achieved through a truly collaborative approach working with local businesses, with the Regional Tourism Board and with partners in the tourism distribution network including Tourism Victoria, wholesalers, touring routes and industry bodies to take the Towong story to the world.

To achieve this, the following priority project and supporting projects have been identified:

**Priority project:** Towong Shire has a seat at the Regional Tourism Board to enable direct engagement

**Supporting projects:**
- Establish a partnership model
- Improved networking and communication
- Education and training for online marketing and websites

### PARTNERSHIP PLANNING MODEL

- **TOURISM VICTORIA BUSINESS PLAN 2008 - 2011**
- **REGIONAL TOURISM ACTION PLAN 2009 - 2012**
- **NORTH EAST VICTORIA & NEWLY FORMED REGIONAL TOURISM BOARD**
- **REGIONAL MARKETING & DEVELOPMENT PLANS**
- **NORTH EAST VICTORIA ANNUAL MARKETING PLAN**
- **VICTORIA’S HIGH COUNTRY ANNUAL MARKETING PLAN**
- **TOWONG SHIRE ANNUAL MARKETING PLAN**
- **TOWONG SHIRE TOURISM STRATEGY 2010 - 2013**
- **TOWONG SHIRE COUNCIL PLAN**

Tourism Action Group and Township Progress Associations
PRIORITY PROJECT: RETAIN SEAT AT THE REGIONAL TOURISM TABLE

Tourism Victoria is in the process of reviewing its funding to Regional Tourism Organisations and Campaign Committees with the formation of Regional Tourism Boards. The High Country Regional Tourism Board is yet to be officially formed however this process should be complete by October 2010.

As Towong Shire seeks to be a partner in the High Country region it is strongly recommended that the Shire retains membership of the Tourism Board. Realising that Towong and the Regional Tourism Board will be going through a process of transition it is recommended that Towong negotiate a ‘partnership’ approach with full membership to the Board.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Towong Shire Council

Lead the shire’s tourism development and promotion through the implementation of the marketing pillars and actions as outlined in this three year Strategic Plan – ‘Thundering Hooves’.

Drive the promotion of the shire through:
- Online promotion
- Strategic partnerships such as the Snowy Valleys Way Initiative

Develop and provide information services including:
- A dedicated tourism website
- Visitor Information Centres and information points

Facilitate the Tourism Action Group and represent the Shire on the Regional Tourism Board

Manage the major infrastructure and recreational facilities including:
- Corryong Airport
- Recreational facilities such as swimming pools, tennis courts, golf courses, walking paths and cycling paths both directly and indirectly (e.g. rail trails)
- Roadway amenities such as signage (directional & gateway).
- Wayside stops
- Interpretive signage

Facilitation of networks and communication with tourism industry stakeholders:
- Tourism Action Group
- Snowy Valleys Way Partnership

Tourism Action Group

- To act as umbrella/voice for tourism in Shire (policies)
- To manage and oversee strategy and vision
- Co-operative group to oversee communication and networking and to disseminate information to tourism operators
- To work with council on the development of a number of promotional and development initiatives including:
  - Develop new events for the region to address seasonality including a multi-sport event, a combined rail trail event and a hero sporting event
  - Investigate the feasibility of niche events such as a light aircraft event at Mitta International Airport and a fishing event for youth (in partnership with the AFL)
  - Develop a campaign such as a short film competition using ‘You Tube’ as a cost effective but innovative way to build local and visitor support

IMPROVED NETWORKING AND COMMUNICATION

The Towong Shire recognises that effective networking requires the involvement of all stakeholders. It is also acknowledged that the mediums and channels of communication need to meet the requirements of local people. For example, the already established Tourism Action Group (TAG) is seen as valuable networking and communication initiative.
E-news
Key to this will be moving the industry beyond “emails” for communicating and establishing more effective online communication, for example through the Towong Shire corporate website intranet that functions to provide operators with features that mirror social networking sites, to cultivate improved sharing of up-to-date information and communication across the industry. Moving in this direction will be critical for the future of tourism within the Towong Shire.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR ONLINE AND WEBSITES

Key stakeholders in the community including the Local Chambers of Commerce / Progress Associations (e.g. Tallangatta for the Future) need to become ambassadors for the ‘Get Online’ project. To achieve this each organisation needs to receive training on e-commerce and online distribution and work with Towong Shire to roll-out workshops and one-on-one mentoring to build online capacity.

Through the partnership with the Regional Tourism Board and Tourism Victoria the Shire and its partners should access the Tourism Excellence training modules for online readiness and develop a local program of training and mentoring.

A number of resources are available online including the factsheets developed through the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ADTW) and these and other material should be used to coordinate the training and education process.
5. BUILD & DEVELOP INFRASTRUCTURE

The consultation process associated with the Tourism Strategy identified infrastructure as a key priority area for the Towong Shire. Road transport upgrades, wayside stop infrastructure (including lookouts), development of dedicated camping areas and increased investment in facilities have all been acknowledged as areas for improvement. To achieve this, the following priority project and supporting projects have been identified:

**Priority Project:** Invest in facilities to support the Rail Trail bridge upgrade funded by the State Government and commence cooperative regional marketing.

**Supporting projects:**
- Improve the accessibility to the region with road transport upgrades
- Develop and improve scenic route infrastructure (lookouts) through a Scenic Drives Infrastructure Strategy
- Develop a Caravan and Camping Policy Direction to deliver a suite of dedicated camping areas on Lake Hume
- Encourage investment in sporting or cultural facilities to support the growth of events in the region

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**PRIORITY PROJECT: DEVELOP AND PROMOTE THE HIGH COUNTRY RAIL TRAIL**

There is a growing market for rail trails in Victoria and across Australia. The success of the Murray to the Mountains Rail Trail (Wangaratta, Beechworth and Bright) demonstrates the potential for Towong Shire. The High Country Rail Trail is a significant tourism attraction to the region. Through funding provided by the State Government the Sandy Creek bridge will again connect both sides of Lake Hume when the missing link in the High Country Rail Trail is completed next year. The trail has the potential to become one of the region’s major tourism drawcards when the bridge is rebuilt after a $1.35 million injection.

It is proposed that viewing platforms will be constructed at either end of the 600-metre bridge, together with car parking, this will make the area a mecca for cyclists and walkers and provide a major economic boost to nearby Tallangatta. However, additional facilities are needed in the Towong Shire and a significant event will need to be established to raise awareness of the trail once completed. Further, an event could be coordinated linking the Beechworth spur of the Murray to the Mountain Rail Trail with the High Country Rail Trail (once the bridge is completed) to further cement the High Country partnership.

The current High Country Rail Trail is 40km long however there is potential to continue this to a 140km Trail. Once the bridge has been completed it is recommended that wayside stops and interpretation are created between the new bridge and the current trail end near Tallangatta.

The focus over the next few years should be to market the rail trail within regional Victoria in partnership with the Regional Tourism Board.

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**TRANSPORT UPGRADES**

All three major road links to the Towong Shire (the Murray Valley Highway, the Murray River Road, and the Omeo Highway) have been identified as needing further investment. In addition to these, the community consultation undertaken throughout this project identified the need to improve the accessibility of the region with transport infrastructure including, Benambra Corryong Road, Omeo Highway, Lake Loop road and the Murray Loop Road.

Each of these roads identified below are important to the community and as such have been assessed against criteria developed to determine which roads are a priority to upgrade.

**The Lake Loop Road**

The Road is Council owned and therefore Council has the ability to influence the decision on the upgrade. It’s location to major distributors provides an ideal opportunity for day trippers and possible events markets. The loop road is not a through road and therefore won’t provide the economic value of a through road but will open up the day trip market from the growing population of Albury and Wodonga and create a scenic drive off the Hume Hwy.
The Omeo Highway
The highway is a major through route to the region and thus represents significant economic value, yet the costs of upgrading are prohibitive. While the route could benefit from the freight and livestock from the Mitta Valley it would have lower direct tourism value. Given that the road is owned by VIC Roads, Council would need to lobby to see upgrades.

Benambra Corryong Road
Similar to the Omeo highway, the Benambra Corryong road is a major through route to the region and represents significant economic value yet the costs of upgrading are prohibitive. Council would need to lobby VIC Roads to see upgrades.

Murray River Loop Road
This road represents an ideal tourism route for the future but as it is not a through route it is not supported by freight and livestock and therefore would have less economic value to the region. Given that the road is owned by VIC Roads, Council would need to lobby to see upgrades.

In addition to the road infrastructure upgrades, it has also been suggested that the refuelling facilities at the Corryong Airport are upgraded to cater for charter aircraft. In light of Rex’s decision to discontinue flights to Cooma, it is unlikely that Corryong will be utilised as a scheduled service airport, particularly when Albury has recently upgraded their airport.

SCENIC ROUTE INFRASTRUCTURE
Developing key infrastructure along the scenic routes including lookouts, wayside stops and the interpretation at Visitor Centres are key to enhancing the visitor experience. It is also suggested that the shire improve the gateway, township, locality and directional signage including Town entry plantings (autumn colour).

To progress this initiative it is recommended that Council fund a Scenic Drives Infrastructure Strategy to identify the location and costs associated with key infrastructure and signage required. This will also enable further development of infrastructure along the Rail Trail and developing additional trails such as Artist and Sculpture Trails.

CARAVAN AND CAMPING FACILITIES
The Caravan market is a comprises over one third of Towong Shire’s total visitor market, however, under the current policy arrangements opportunities for camping at Lake Hume are limited. Many people do camp around Lake Hume regardless. Camping restrictions are difficult to enforce due to the extent of the shoreline, limited resources and poorly defined management arrangements. Bush camping remains a popular activity, particularly along the Murray arm of the Lake.

Goulburn-Murray Water is seeking to deliver a suite of accommodation options for the caravan and camping market in a way that maximises the benefits to the local community without impacting on their quality of life or the environment. As such, they are leading a Caravan and Camping Review.

The Review will provide recommendations for a clear and simple Lake Hume Caravan and Camping Policy Direction that builds on the existing State Policy on roadside camping developed in consultation with Goulburn-Murray Water, the five municipalities (Albury City, City of Wodonga, Towong Shire, Indigo Shire and Greater Hume Shire), Vic Roads and local operators. Recommendations will also be provided for marketing and information management (including the Visitor Information Centres) and business strategies for the ‘best use’ of existing facilities such as the caravan park, reserves and showgrounds.

The project includes reviewing the gaps and opportunities present at Lake Hume from an understanding of the trends and needs of the camping market. It is recommended that Towong Shire play an active role in this project to assist in the development of suitable caravan and camping accommodation options to cater for this market. Upon completion of the Lake Hume Caravan and Camping Policy Direction it is recommended that Council identify a priority site for bush camping or a low impact facility that is non competitive.

SPORTING AND CULTURAL FACILITIES
The region is home to a number of significant events. In addition, the population demands better sporting and cultural facilities. The upgrade and further development of these facilities will also benefit visitors to the region. Investment in sporting and cultural facilities has the potential to attract regional level sporting and cultural events that could significantly boost visitor numbers to the region. A regional school or adult based event e.g. track and field days or tennis matches could bring measurable economic benefits to a community.

The focus for council should be to upgrade the existing facilities to meet a demonstrated need. These upgrades could be beneficial to current events such as Man from Snowy River, the Mighty Mitta Muster, the Tallangatta 50’s festival, however, in forward planning the events coordinators may need to undertake demand assessments to see if the current infrastructure to host events (aside from accommodation) is suitable for future growth.
# Towong Tourism Strategy

## Building to Sustainability
- Investment attraction
- Interpretation
- Airport
- Road infrastructure
- Partnerships

## Maximising Yield
- Soft product development
- Visitor Centre booking facilities
- Training and Education (especially online marketing)
- Cooperative marketing

## Awareness and Availability
- Identity
- Online promotion and distribution
- Official Visitors Guide
- Collaboration
- Media & PR
- Events Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awareness and availability</td>
<td>Maximising Yield</td>
<td>Building to Sustainability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Towong Shire Tourism Strategy 2010 - 2013
## APPENDIX 1: SWOT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>WEAKNESSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iconic tourism assets:</td>
<td>Lack of infrastructure – quality lookouts, wayside stops and basic amenities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Murray River</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Snowy Mountains Range</td>
<td>– Lack of major investment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– The Man from Snowy River</td>
<td>– Low yield from natural asset attraction – How can we get people to spend?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Great Lakes – Hume and Dartmouth</td>
<td>– Minimal marketing presence outside the Albury/ Wodonga region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Dominance of National and State Parks</td>
<td>– Poor online presence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrated cross-border cooperation</td>
<td>– Lack of an Official Visitors Guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Snowy Valleys Way</td>
<td>– Under supply of high yielding products – lack of product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central to Melbourne and Sydney</td>
<td>– Limited out of office hour services, dining and other visitor based and recreation opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to Albury / Wodonga transport hub</td>
<td>– Need to identify strategic and relevant partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of the Tourism Action Group (TAG)</td>
<td>– Limited funding pool from within Council</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPPORTUNITIES</th>
<th>THREATS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop and improve tourist infrastructure - lookouts, wayside stops and basic amenities</td>
<td>Lack of detailed market intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope to develop high yield and experience focused products e.g. Fishing, 4WD, motorcycling, camping and RV</td>
<td>Over reliance on voluntary staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of a broad range of accommodation packages</td>
<td>Awareness of climate change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a new website and improved on-line presence</td>
<td>Industry engagement and investment in marketing activities and tactical campaigns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To enhance the visitor experience through thematic interpretation at the Corryong Visitor Information Centre</td>
<td>Consistently promoting a positive image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To provide educational opportunities to promote product and service knowledge – famil programs</td>
<td>Providing high quality customer service at all times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To develop strategic and relevant alliances / partnerships</td>
<td>Rising fuel prices, increased strength of the Australian dollar, economic impact on investments and incomes of core market (+46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meeting community and industry expectations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# APPENDIX 2: PRODUCT AUDIT

## NATURAL & PHYSICAL ATTRACTIONS

Before proceeding with plans for tourism development it is important to understand what the key attractors to the area are.

The Major Iconic attractors for the Towong Shire are:
- The Murray River (Upper / headwaters)
- Lake Dartmouth

Other moderate attractors (mostly major natural assets not yet working as major attractors):
- Stunning valley and mountain scenery (main range of Snowy Mountains + Mt Bogong (north side))
- Lake Hume
- Dartmouth Dam (Structure)
- The Mitta Mitta River
- National Parks such as Burrowa-Pine NP, Alpine NP.
- Regional Parks such as Mt. Mittamatite RP, Mt. Lawson RP, Jarvis Creek RP.

## ACTIVITY, EVENT & CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS

The Major Iconic activity & event attractors for the Towong Shire are:
- The Man from Snowy River Bush Festival
- The Tallangatta 50s Festival
- Nariel Creek Folk Festival
- Fishing (the pristine waterways, rivers & streams)
- Four wheel driving (the plethora or tracks & trails)
- Horse riding (trails) & events (campdraft / gymkhana etc.)

Other moderate attractors (some major cultural-historical assets not yet working as major attractors):
- The Upper Murray Challenge
- The Corryong Cup (Hang-gliding)
- The Corryong Open Paragliding Championships
- The Dartmouth Fishing Cup
- The Mitta Muster
- The Towong Cup
- Mitta Mitta Pioneer Mine
- Cudgewa Branch Railway Line (Rail Trail)
- Tallangatta District & Historical Machinery Museum
- Other (scattered) mining heritage sites
- Thologolong (birth of the Murray Grey)
- Tom Groggin Station (MFSR heritage)
- Townships past & present

## OTHER TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE

Other tourism infrastructure (man-made attractors and assets) in Towong Shire, not already mentioned in this overview, include:
- Parks, gardens, streetscapes, public toilets, bins, bus parks & caravan/trailer parks,
- Recreational facilities, golf courses, tennis courts, bowling greens, township walking and cycling tracks,
- The Man from Snowy River (Corryong) Museum.
- P.W. Attree Centre (2010) "Man from Snowy River Statue”.
- Historic Old Tallangatta (Butter Factory, Hospital).
- Tallangatta Heritage & Vintage Machinery Museum
APPENDIX 3: TARGET MARKETS

The key Roy Morgan value segments to the region are Traditional Family Life, Visible Achievement and Socially Aware. An overview of these segments is provided below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Traditional Family Life</th>
<th>Visible Achievement</th>
<th>Socially Aware</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>Holidays are a chance to connect with the people they care most about. They often compromise their own preferences in terms of activities to ensure everyone has a good time. It's about what is real and important.</td>
<td>Holidays are all about pushing their own personal boundaries and feeling alive. They want to be challenged by a holiday and love to explore and take part in adventure activities such as bushwalking, horse-riding and snowboarding.</td>
<td>Holidays are about catching their breath, feeling calm and peaceful, and gaining perspective. Don't travel too far, want accommodation with cooking facilities. More likely to holiday at a single destination, tend to take shorter breaks, financial commitments influence holiday choices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Characteristics | - Retired middle Australia  
- Family focused lives  
- Cautious of new things  
- Passive income earners  
- 20% Australian population  
- 13% interstate short breaks  
- 21% interstate holidays | - Success and career driven  
- Recognition and status seekers  
- Good family living  
- Wealth creators  
- 18% Australian population  
- 25% interstate short breaks  
- 21% interstate holidays | - Social issues oriented  
- Politically / community active  
- Up-market professionals  
- Wealth managers  
- 14% Australian population  
- 19% interstate short breaks  
- 16% interstate holidays |
| Products   | - Special interest  
- Coach tours  
- Nature  
- Gourmet food trails  
- Golf  
- Art galleries / museums  
- Gardens | - Historic sites / places  
- Golf  
- National parks  
- Restaurants  
- Skiing  
- Wineries  
- Children’s activities | - Art galleries / museums  
- Wineries  
- Aboriginal heritage  
- Restaurants  
- Skiing  
- Nature experiences  
- Food and wine  
- Historic sites / places  
- Bushwalking |
| Accommodation | - Hotels / motels  
- Caravans | - Boutique  
- Hotels | - Boutique  
- 4-5 star hotels  
- B&Bs |
| Holiday rationale | - Increase knowledge  
- Re-live the past  
- Interpretive  
- Touring holiday – self drive - coach | - Short break retreat  
- Fly-drive touring break  
- Explore and experience  
- New and different  
- Interpretive  
- Indulgent / boutique | - Spend time together  
- Family holiday  
- Indulgent / boutique  
- Weekend getaways |
## APPENDIX 4: BRAND PERSONALITY & POSITIONING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Towong</th>
<th>Victoria’s High Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>** Essence**</td>
<td>- Natural beauty (rivers, lakes, mountain views)</td>
<td>A natural high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Cultural features</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personality</strong></td>
<td>Linked to its physical attributes; aligned with the adjacent High Country</td>
<td>Genuine, understated, surprising, romantic, adventurous, energetic, charismatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Values</strong></td>
<td>Authentic experience based on proximity to sub-alpine/ alpine locations; Nature based attributes of waterways, lakes, mountain &amp; forests</td>
<td>Authenticity, ‘having a go’, adventure, fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benefits</strong></td>
<td><em>Functional</em>: Murray River experience; cycling, angling &amp; bushwalking (‘nature’s playground’)*&lt;br&gt; <em>Emotional</em>: sub-alpine townships, lush river valleys, mountain peaks &amp; Man from Snowy River legend → all aligns with High Country experience</td>
<td><em>Functional</em>: natures playground&lt;br&gt; <em>Emotional</em>: invigorated, indulged, rewarded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attributes</strong></td>
<td>Towong’s natural attributes, seasonal variations, legends, village life &amp; adventure activities fit perfectly within the High Country profile. Scenic touring is a further strength.</td>
<td>Scenic mountain and valley landscapes, lakes and rivers, four seasons, adventure activities, Australian legends, award winning restaurants, quality local produce, wineries – King Valley ‘Italian’ wines, Rutherglen wine regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target Markets</strong></td>
<td>Crossover in demographics, but High Country has the edge when it comes to adventure, but the real strength lies in the geographic target markets of southern NSW and the ACT</td>
<td>Couples&lt;br&gt; 25-30yrs &amp; 35 – 50yrs&lt;br&gt; Melbourne, regional Victoria, and southern NSW&lt;br&gt; Short break&lt;br&gt; Seeking something new,&lt;br&gt; High quality experiences&lt;br&gt; Not adrenalin seeking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 5: CONSULTATION PROCESS

The Process

EC3 Global, an international tourism and environmental management organisation were appointed by Towong Shire Council to facilitate the development of a Three Year Tourism Strategy for the Towong Shire through a comprehensive consultation process. The key steps undertaken are outlined below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Milestones</th>
<th>Timing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Project Initiation Meeting</td>
<td>April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Identification of Key stakeholders</td>
<td>April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Stakeholder Phone Interviews</td>
<td>May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>In-Region Community Workshops</td>
<td>May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>In-Region Councillor Workshop</td>
<td>May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Development of Draft Tourism Strategy</td>
<td>June</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Incorporation of Steering Group Feedback into Final Strategy</td>
<td>June - August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Presentation of Final Strategy to Council</td>
<td>August</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 6: MAJOR ROADS