

STRATEGIC PLAN



MURRAY RIVER, LAKES &
COORONG TOURISM ALLIANCE

MURRAY RIVER,
LAKES & COORONG
STRATEGIC TOURISM
PLAN 2017-2020



murray river
lakes & coorong

The Murray River, Lakes and Coorong tourism region includes a range of geographies, from the Mallee at our eastern most boundary to the majestic Murray River landscape with its internationally recognised lakes and mouth, and the World Heritage listed Coorong National Park with its wild beaches and extensive ecosystems.

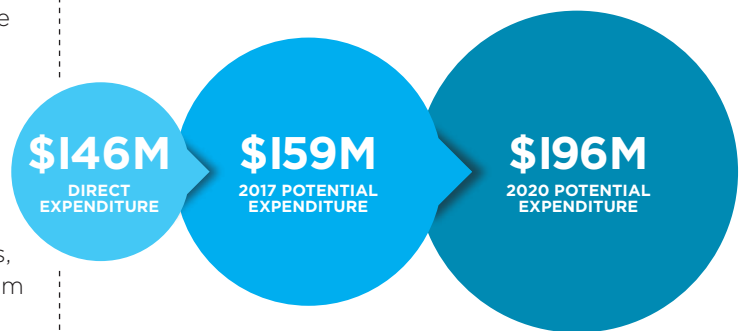
The focus of the MRLC Tourism Alliance Strategic Plan is from the mid-section of the Murray River and surrounds through to the River mouth and Coorong, however the MRLCTA supports 'all of River' partnerships to build the visitor economy along the length of the Murray River in South Australia, from the border to the sea.

This Strategic Plan sets out the priorities of the Murray River, Lakes & Coorong Tourism Alliance (MRLCTA) to grow tourism in our region. In developing this Strategic Plan, the MRLCTA has considered government and regional tourism plans, tourism data, existing tourism assets, and input from stakeholders and tourism operators.

The clear priority of this Strategic Plan is to grow tourism expenditure in the region by 7% per annum. We will achieve this through marketing, partnering, communicating and engaging our industry.

Data shows that the Murray River (combining the Riverland and Murraylands) has the second highest¹ number of domestic overnight visitors to regional South Australia. This position is further strengthened with the inclusion of visitors to the Lakes and Coorong², reflecting a diverse and exciting region.

The focus of the Strategic Plan is to consolidate resources to target 'opportunity points' that will have a significant influence on the growth of the visitor economy in our region. Our stakeholders overwhelmingly identified Driving Demand as the main focus of the MRLCTA, but there was also widespread recognition that accelerating the region's tourism growth requires greater density of quality product. The region's 'hero' experiences provide an important drawcard for visitation, and demand can be expanded through complementary investment.



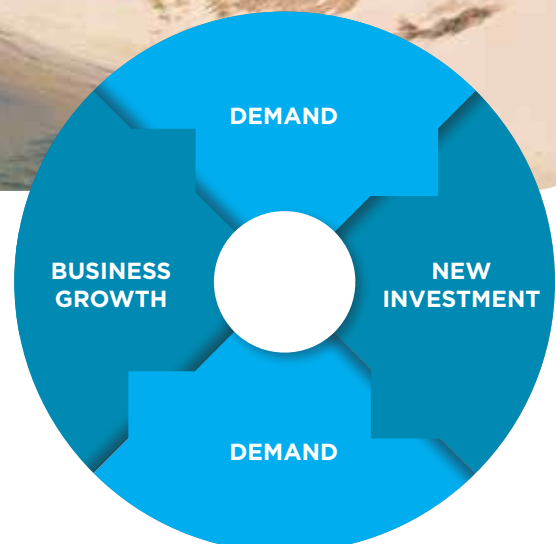
We have identified three highlights that will be a recurrent theme in our communications with funding partners, neighbouring regions and operators:

- ▶ Leveraging our regional 'hero' products and experiences.
- ▶ Cross-regional collaboration to create a natural visitor 'draw' into and across regions.
- ▶ Using data to target opportunity and demonstrate Return on Investment to attract new initiatives and investment in the visitor economy.



Driving Demand will be a key focus. Our philosophy is that as demand increases, businesses will see opportunity to grow, and their investment will create new and exciting product that in turn drives higher demand.

New investment, as well as upgrading existing products and experiences will always be a critical element in driving regional growth.



¹ Data averaged over 3 years, 2014, 2015 and 2016. Source: National Visitor Survey, Tourism Research Australia, Canberra. SA Regional Tourism Satellite Accounts, June 2015, Deloitte Access Economics.

² Visitation and visitor economy income for these separate areas is not calculated as a subset of the region at this stage.

The key elements of the strategy are:

DRIVING DEMAND:

1. Implement a regional tourism marketing strategy.
2. Increased representation on Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW).
3. Identify and promote the region's 'hero quality experiences'.
4. Collaborate with promotional leaders to maximise cost effective trade, marketing and promotional activities.
5. Monitor day trip numbers and encourage initiatives that build longer stays.

WORKING BETTER TOGETHER:

1. Support collaboration between hero product / experience.
2. Work with RDA M&R to build development processes for tourism businesses.
3. Support the development of Aboriginal cultural tourism.
4. Develop Touring Route opportunities.
5. Drive ROI focused representation at travel and trade events.
6. Review Visitor Information servicing to ensure it delivers in the digital economy and within the priorities of this plan.

SUPPORTING WHAT WE HAVE:

1. Audit tourism infrastructure and product to identify and target gaps.
2. Encourage the growth of accessible on-water experiences.
3. Promote and encourage the development of major projects in the region.
4. Leverage SATC and in-bound distribution channels to attract in-bound air travellers.
5. Partner with DEWNR to identify tourism opportunities.

INCREASING RECOGNITION OF THE VALUE OF TOURISM:

1. Ensure effective communication that demonstrates visitor economy benefits.
2. Work with regional industries and community groups to advocate for tourism as a growth sector.

USING EVENTS TO DRIVE VISITATION:

1. Ensure www.themurrayriver.com is a reliable source of information about all regional events with data entered via the ATDW.
2. Leverage Adelaide-based events as a source of visitors to our region.
3. Develop a Regional Event Strategy to promote the region as 'event capable'.

DOING BUSINESS:

1. Efficiently and effectively allocate our resources.
2. Advocate for improving efficiencies and removing barriers to business.
3. Conduct an annual review and update of this Strategic Plan.

INVESTMENT IN PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE:

1. Streamline the process of supporting grant applications.
2. Lobby for funding and infrastructure development.
3. Encourage operators to capitalise on public infrastructure.

Driving Demand

SATC PERSPECTIVE

It is essential that South Australia drives a united and collective marketing message to ensure consistency in getting the right message to the right markets and consumers.

It is well established that visitors respond most strongly to messages with an experiential focus, particularly around South Australia's competitive advantages of food and wine, nature and wildlife encounters.

To build visitation and spend we need to recognise and focus on South Australia's areas of competitive advantage and better tell the story around these experiences.

MRLCTA APPROACH

A majority of resources (financial and human) will be allocated to Driving Demand (marketing).

Our philosophy is that as demand increases, there is incentive for new product to develop and our aim is to foster a catalyst for such growth.

We support SATC's goal of consistent, united and collective messaging – and highlight the importance of offering and promoting experiences that capitalise on our competitive advantage.



STRATEGIES

- 1** Develop a MRLC tourism marketing strategy that leverages the work of local business operators (tourism and non-tourism) and the South Australian Tourism Commission, highlights cross-regional product and touring routes, and provides clear guidance to operators as to the most effective messages, channels and mechanisms for collaboration.
- 2** Engage our regional businesses and tourism assets to list on the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW) to provide trade and visitors with the greatest opportunity to find, buy and experience their products.
- 3** Identify the features of 'hero quality experiences'; guide operators to deliver exceptional services; and facilitate training and development to improve operator capabilities through partners such as SATC, SATIC and RDAMR.
- 4** In collaboration with regional product, support SATC famils to highlight and promote regional tourism assets. Prioritise quality and experience in famils, trade and consumer promotions.
- 5** Identify and encourage initiatives that grow day trip numbers and conversions to longer stays in the region.

Working better together

SATC PERSPECTIVE

To fulfil our growth potential, South Australia needs a stronger and more collaborative industry, empowered by leadership from across Government, business and industry.

Industry mobilisation across all stakeholders will allow us to better pool our resources and insights, agree on shared priorities and leverage the opportunities for driving growth.

MRLCTA APPROACH

We will use our networks, groups and influencers to communicate with SMEs, to build positive visitor economy attitudes and regional capability.

Our regional tourism products and experiences (heroes) will be encouraged to collaborate to achieve stronger penetration into target markets, and consider how smaller operators can complement activities and promotions.



STRATEGIES

- 1** Support collaboration between existing hero product/experiences and build new 'heroes' to lead growth by sharing information about forthcoming activities and promotions, and identifying opportunities for smaller operators to partner in marketing and new initiatives.
- 2** Work with RDA M&R to set up a screening and business development process so that new and growing tourism enterprises have the right help, by the right agency, at the right time.
- 3** Engage the local Aboriginal peoples to encourage the promotion and development of cultural experiences and sites across the region.
- 4** Build the regional value proposition to increase day trip visitation and engage operators in Touring Route marketing.
- 5** Encourage operators to be involved in travel and tourism trade events where exposure and consistent brand presence delivers a commercial value so that representation is cost-effective and ROI focused.
- 6** Evaluate Visitor Information Servicing to identify visitor servicing models that reflect and capitalise on new technologies and the interdependence of servicing across regional boundaries.

Supporting what we have

SATC PERSPECTIVE

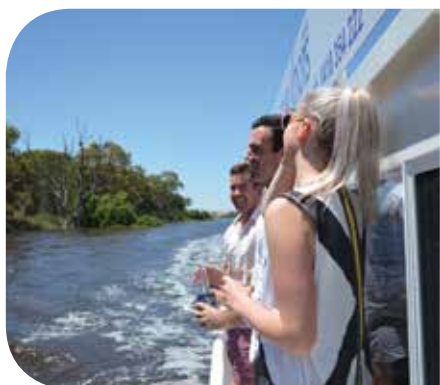
Greater profitability in our existing industry is essential to support re-investment and new developments. We need to utilise existing infrastructure to foster quality contemporary experiences, particularly those that drive conversion and entice visitors.

The strategy focuses on attracting greater numbers of in-bound aviation visitors, and securing dispersal to regions.

MRLCTA APPROACH

We collect, analyse and interpret data and evidence to assist operators to make sound investment and development decisions.

We identify specific opportunities that make a significant contribution to regional tourism growth and promote the development of product and marketing to accelerate these.



STRATEGIES

- 1** Undertake a comprehensive audit of tourism infrastructure, product, accommodation, food and beverage and use this information to identify gaps, target new investment to address latent demand, and encourage bundling and collaborative marketing.
- 2** Encourage the growth of accessible on-water experiences for visitors.
- 3** Support the work of major projects by communicating tourism opportunities which expand the visitors' perceptions of the region and build multiple visit demand (e.g. The Bend Motorsport Park)
- 4** Engage with SATC to disperse a greater proportion of in-bound air travellers to the region, where we can demonstrate a greater engagement with regional 'heroes' and 'exceptional experiences'.
- 5** Partner with DEWNR to identify tourism opportunities across DEWNR managed resources and promote these opportunities to potential operators and investors.

Increasing recognition of the value of tourism

SATC PERSPECTIVE

One in every 15 South Australian jobs are supported by tourism. Sharing messages about the growth and significance of visitor expenditure in the State will help others understand and help facilitate actions identified in the Tourism plan.

Appreciation of the role tourism plays at the local economy level also helps individuals and communities take a more ambassadorial role in welcoming and showcasing their communities and places to visitors.

MRLCTA APPROACH

We will use networks, groups and organisations to communicate with and influence SMEs, and in doing so build positive attitudes about the visitor economy and regional capability.

Our newsletters and communications will appeal to a wide community audience, using stories and data to encourage better understanding of and engagement with the visitor economy.



STRATEGIES

- 1 Continue the production, and expand the reach of materials that focus on the value of the visitor economy and how businesses in the broader visitor economy profit from tourism.
- 2 Focus communications activity on groups and organisations with strong membership and community business networks. Engage group leadership in the communication of key messages.
- 3 Identify and communicate opportunities from emerging trends and markets (e.g. China, International Students, Nomad Travel, Soft 4WD).

Using events to drive visitation

SATC PERSPECTIVE

High profile events and festivals help grow awareness of South Australia as a diverse and attractive place to visit. They support the SA Brand and consequently contribute to increasing overall visitation. In addition, events and festivals directly drive visitation giving potential visitors a reason to visit South Australia now.

MRLCTA APPROACH

Our focus is to link events, operators, and potential suppliers and volunteers to expand the event program to boost local economies through increased trade.

Connections will be developed with the Adelaide event and conference market to create interest in pre/tour/post activities for participants and partners of Adelaide conferences and events.

We encourage local engagement and support promotion of the region as 'event capable'.



STRATEGIES

- 1** Engage event coordinators to maintain up-to-date event listings via ATDW.
- 2** Strengthen MRLCTA's access to large Adelaide-based events and identify strategies to enable regional operators to capitalise on tours, pre/post event activities and speciality experiences.
- 3** Develop a Regional Events Strategy that articulates our regional capability and the economic value of events.

Doing Business

SATC PERSPECTIVE

The *South Australian Tourism Plan 2020* lists the following issues (which cannot be directly influenced by SATC) to be addressed under the action area 'The Total Cost of Doing Business':

- ▶ Easier access to capital
- ▶ Positive policy environment
- ▶ Penalty rates
- ▶ Streamlined licensing
- ▶ Labour force/workforce planning
- ▶ Support for innovation and entrepreneurship

MRLCTA APPROACH

The issues acknowledged by SATC are also relevant in the Murray River, Lakes & Coorong region, but may be beyond the influence of the MRLCTA.

The MRLCTA 'Doing business' section reflects our intent to provide a professional, effective and accountable organisation which advocates for the visitor economy and which has a measurable effect on tourism growth in the region.



STRATEGIES

- 1** Ensure the MRLCTA's resources are effective, flexible and can be scaled to adapt and support new opportunities or funding arrangements.
- 2** Advocate to government for the removal of 'red tape' barriers to trade.
- 3** Undertake an annual review and update of the Strategic Plan to ensure its relevance for emerging opportunities.

Investment in public infrastructure

SATC PERSPECTIVE

As with the 'The Total Cost of Doing Business', SATC recognises that public infrastructure is an important enabler of tourism, noting:

- ▶ Transport access
- ▶ Telecommunication connectivity
- ▶ Essential services and utilities
- ▶ Wayfinding and road infrastructure
- ▶ Consumer insights and data

MRLCTA APPROACH

Our stakeholders were vocal in identifying infrastructure as a priority for the region, particularly River infrastructure such as moorings, signage and frontage.

Councils provide significant community infrastructure that also supports tourism and events.

MRLCTA will influence infrastructure in a number of ways:

- ▶ Lobbying of agencies responsible for infrastructure provision
- ▶ Providing of insights to RDAMR in its development of priorities in the Regional Roadmap
- ▶ Providing letters of support for grant applicants
- ▶ Participation on committees and working groups with a mandate to deliver better regional infrastructure



STRATEGIES

- 1** Streamline the process of supporting grant applications.
- 2** Lobby for strategic approaches to funding and infrastructure development for priority projects and leverage national success stories to support infrastructure investment by Councils.
- 3** Work with stakeholders to improve access to and encourage operators to capitalise on existing public infrastructure.

The purpose of the Murray River, Lakes & Coorong Tourism Alliance (MRLCTA)



MRLCTA is responsible for the holistic development of tourism, including marketing, promotion and advocacy in the Murray River, Lakes & Coorong region. MRLCTA takes a destination management approach to the development of tourism in the region to consolidate and build the visitor economy. MRLCTA has a key role in consolidating the strategic direction of the tourism industry for the region.

MRLCTA provides resources to facilitate collaboration and cooperation between regional industry, all levels of government, community groups and relevant industry associations to optimise the economic value of tourism in the region.

The Murray River, Lakes & Coorong region comprises the local government areas of Rural City of Murray Bridge, Coorong District Council, Mid Murray Council, Alexandrina Council, District Council of Karoonda East Murray and Southern Mallee District Council.

The core focus areas for MRLCTA are:

Destination marketing: Ensure effective communication with potential visitors to influence their destination preference, intention to travel and ultimately their final destination and product choices. This should include broad representation of the regional tourism product;

Destination development: Coordinate and develop amenities, facilities, products and services that support the region to deliver quality experiences for visitors and enhance residents' well-being; and

Destination management: Coordinate tourism, industry, government and community leaders in planning for the future and for management of the region as a destination.

Regional Development Australia Murraylands & Riverland is responsible for facilitating and encouraging economic development within the Murraylands and Riverland region and delivers these services on behalf of its stakeholders including eight Local Government partners. The Murray River, Lakes and Coorong Tourism Alliance incorporates an area of the Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island RDA, through the inclusion of the Alexandrina Council which borders the lower western reaches of the Murray. The eastern lower reaches of the Murray is bordered by the Coorong District Council which is aligned to the RDA Murraylands & Riverland.

The MRLCTA encourages an “all of river” partnership through its stakeholders, devoid of boundaries, focused on building the visitor economy along the length of the River and its outlying communities and as such the MRLCTA works closely with our adjoining regional tourism partners.

The Murray River, Lakes & Coorong Tourism Alliance was established in 2016 by its regional tourism stakeholders: Rural City of Murray Bridge, Coorong District Council, Mid Murray Council, Alexandrina Council and Regional Development Australia Murraylands & Riverland as the Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO) for this region.

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