



**COOTAMUNDRA-
GUNDAGAI** REGIONAL
COUNCIL

Tourism and Economic Development Strategy

Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council

March 2019





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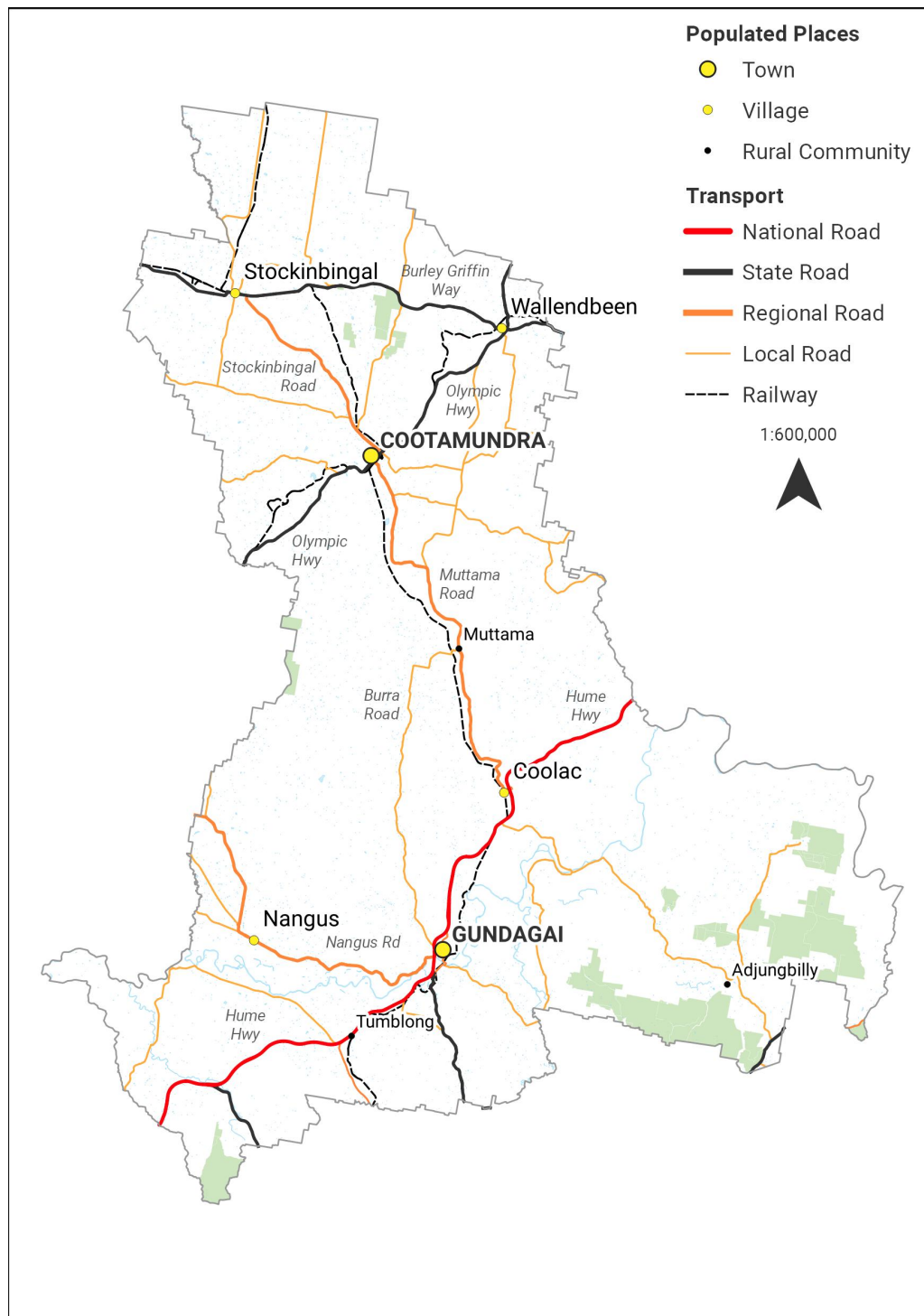
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INTRODUCTION

The Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council has created the Tourism and Economic Development Strategy to define how to grow and sustain the economic base of the region.

The Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council area is shown in the map below.



Note: The Cootamundra to Tumblong rail line has closed.

CONSULTATION PROCESSES

The Strategy used a range of community consultation processes to gather information including:



Consultation processes undertaken to prepare the Council's Community Strategic Plan "Our place, our future 2018-2028" and other consultation sessions held prior to the commencement of the Strategy as supplied by Council were also considered.

TOURISM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOCUS AREAS

Five strategy focus areas have been identified to drive tourism and economic development in the Cootamundra-Gundagai Local Government Area (LGA).

The focus areas have been identified from feedback from an online survey, one on one interviews, workshops, economic and demographic data gathering and analysis plus consideration of a large array of strategic work already done by the Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council and NSW Government.

Council has already identified over 60 activities which will enable economic growth in its key strategic planning documents, including the Community Strategic Plan and Delivery Program. Additional activities to augment the existing program of works as identified in the creation of the Tourism and Economic Development Strategy are provided in the priority action plan.

The five strategic focus areas for tourism and economic growth and sustainability are:



Improving liveability



Supporting local businesses



Managing planning issues



Developing the visitor economy

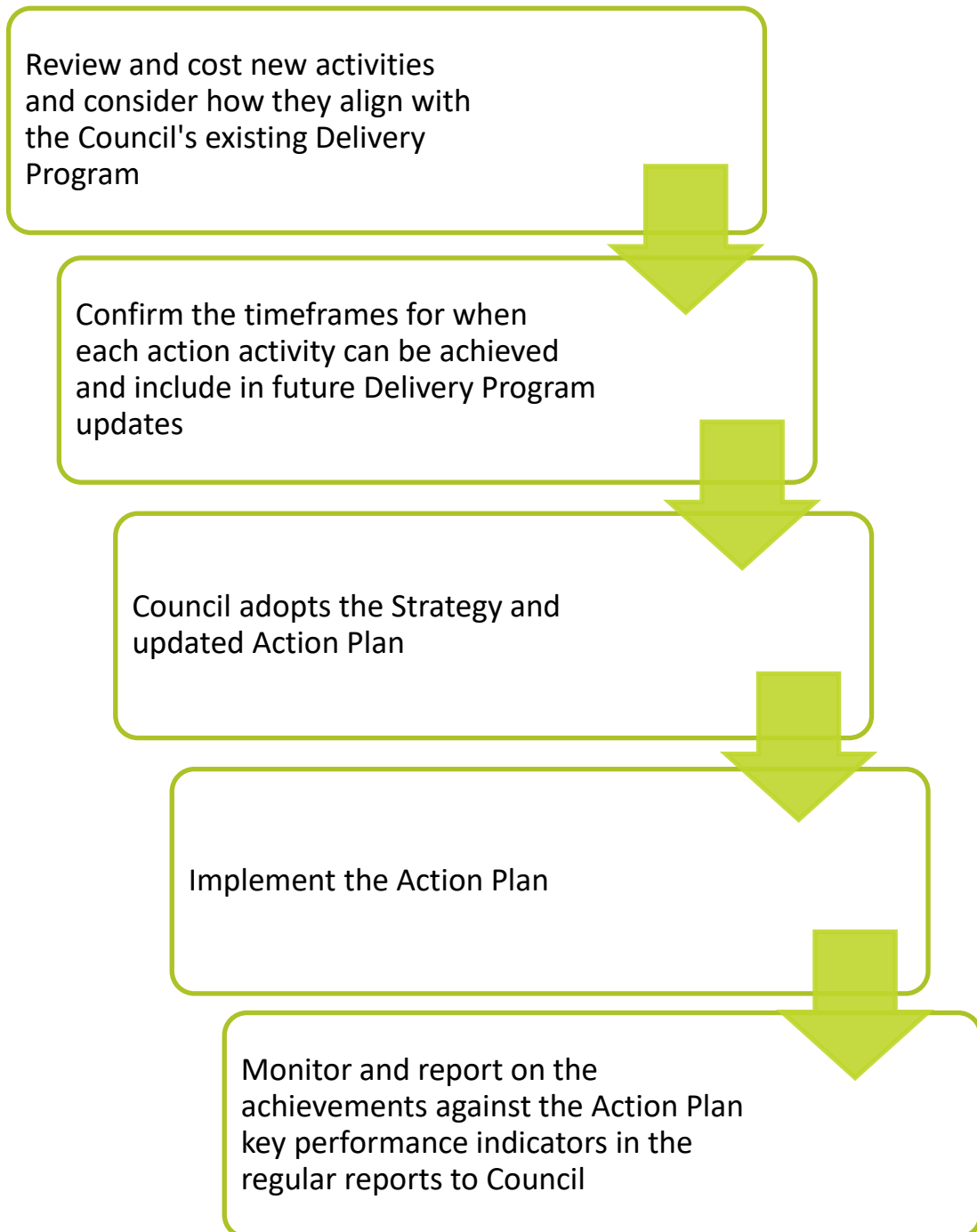


Branding and marketing






Priority action activities on each of the above focus areas are provided below followed by more detailed commentary on each of the focus areas. This Strategy's activities have been linked to activity areas of the Council's Community Strategic Plan (CSP) to illustrate how they could be incorporated into and align with Council's existing programs.







NEXT STEPS







Council needs to consider the Action Plan activities and determine the commitment of resources. Processes to progress the Action Plan are:








PRIORITY ACTION PLAN TO IMPLEMENT THE TOURISM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY






	Recommended actions:	Responsibility	KPI	Related CSP strategy
1.  	<p>Develop and keep current centralised information on the LGA's attributes in the towns and villages including features, events and services. Make information available for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Events organisers – to assist in scheduling events, organisers to provide details of their events to enable events calendar to be kept current Residents – for their information on events Residents – for them to distribute information to people staying with them/visiting the area New resident's kits updates Investors – to promote the region's features <p>Host data on Council's website.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council Community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete the online events calendar and host on Council's website by July 2019. Weekly updates to events calendar based on organiser supplied information. Annual updates on services and attributes of the LGA on Council's website by July 2019, and then July annually. Advise residents of information. 	1.1a
2.   	<p>To build the population, actively market the LGA in a specific advertising campaign delivered in two tranches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For residents - to encourage them to stay local For new residents - to attract relocations <p>The marketing should articulate the region's liveability attributes by identifying the unique features including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost of living savings by living in the region Cost and availability of industrial and residential land, houses to buy, rentals (housing and commercial) etc. Proximity to larger centres and good transport access options Reduced travel times to work, cycling to work options, providence of produce and other healthy life benefits Life/work balance benefits <p>The existing new residents' packs could be updated with the information generated to assist in the effectiveness of the packs.</p>	Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liveability attributes of the region defined by June 2020. New residents pack completed annually. Liveability information available and promoted to residents via Council's website by July 2020. Budget allocation in 2020-21 budget for marketing campaign to attract new residents by July 2020. Marketing campaign targeting new residents undertaken August -December 2020. 	1.1a




	Recommended actions:	Responsibility	KPI	Related CSP strategy
3.  	<p>Encourage the local event culture by implementing a competitive application based events funding program in the LGA that is monitored to assess value for money and impact of the event on the visitor economy. Categories to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural and arts related events • Community run events • Sporting events • Applications that offer a refresh of ideas in existing events to build their attendances 	Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines for grant process and eligibility criteria developed by December 2019. • Advertise for applications by February 2020. • Events grant included in 2020-21 budget and onwards annually. • Initial grants awarded by July 2020 and then annually. 	1.1a 1.1b 1.1c
4  	<p>Assistance offered by Council to event organisers in preparing applications seeking funding from NSW and Federal Government programs.</p>	Council	Regular updates provided to community on grant opportunities as they arise.	1.1a
5  	<p>Include in the proposed Youth Strategy (CSP 1.1e(2)) <i>Develop and implement a Youth Strategy which meets the needs of young people within our community</i>, the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An assessment of programs that would encourage the retention of youth in the LGA • Identification of education pathways to develop skills in areas of current and projected skills needs to deliver a locally sourced labour supply (see action activity number 19 below) • Host a jobs expo for school students to determine their intentions and interest areas for employment matching opportunities • Meet with Vocational Education Training (VET) sector and universities regarding courses delivered locally/by distance related to current and future skills gaps (see action activity item 19 below) • Review the online capabilities for course delivery under NBN (see activity action item 10 below) • Design and implement a youth wellness and mentoring program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council • VET training organisations • Universities • NBN • Schools • Youth Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobs Expo for school students by July 2021. • NBN engagement includes online course delivery parameters. • Youth wellness and mentoring program implemented by July 2021. 	1.1e




	Recommended actions:	Responsibility	KPI	Related CSP strategy
6    	<p>Develop a masterplan for the revitalisation of the Cootamundra CBD that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • capital upgrades • strategies for the utilisation of vacant shops for popup opportunities • local produce outlets • promotion of the CBD • signage • arts precinct masterplan completion for The Arts Centre Cootamundra • identify projects and funding sources that will deliver the revitalisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council • Businesses • Cootamundra Development Corporation • Local producers • The Arts Centre Cootamundra 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masterplan prepared by December 2020. • Seek funding and work with investors and the community to secure funding for Cootamundra based initiatives, including a Motorcycle collection. 	1.2c
7  	<p>Specifically relating to 2.1a(2) of the CSP <i>“Work in partnership with individuals, the private sector, other agencies and levels of government to deliver economic development initiatives”</i>:</p> <p>Add: Work with NSW Business, Cootamundra Development Corporation and businesses across the LGA to form one Council committee to support businesses in all LGA locations.</p> <p>Add: Masterplan access to the Murrumbidgee River and be shovel ready to seek funding assistance to action the capital improvements.</p> <p>Add: Work with businesses to develop display marketing materials (brochure stands, A4 “what’s on table place mats” for example).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council • Businesses • Tourism Action Committees • NSW Business • Cootamundra Development Corporation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council host a meeting of businesses across the LGA annually to discuss business conditions and issues impacting growth. • Establish one Council committee with representatives from businesses across all of the LGA by July 2021. • Murrumbidgee River masterplan developed and project shovel ready for funding opportunities by December 2021. • Priority projects identified in the Cootamundra masterplan developed to shovel ready stage for funding application opportunities. • Identify businesses who would partner with Council in a program of regularly updated information distributed from their premises by July 2020. 	2.1a

	Recommended actions:	Responsibility	KPI	Related CSP strategy
<p>8</p>  	<p>Implement the branding and marketing activities:</p> <p>Branding activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the <i>G'day Gundagai</i> tag line • Develop tag lines for Villages • Identify Council support on marketing materials (when appropriate) <p>Marketing campaigns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a standard survey for capturing data to build an accurate visitor profile • Develop promotional campaigns highlighting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Murrumbidgee River. ○ Events promotions ○ History and heritage ○ Nature based experiences ○ Agricultural experiences including agritourism, farm stay, pick your own and produce specialisations of the region ○ Arts and culture ○ Sports related activities and facilities • Develop online resources and digital promotion to deliver from tourism websites • Review signage • Identify funding for an LGA wide promotional documentary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council • Businesses • Tourism Action Committees • Tourism operators • The Arts Centre Cootamundra • Community • Agriculture sector • Destination NSW - Riverina Murray 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement standardised visitor data capture by July 2019. • Analyse data to build a visitor profile by July 2020. • Complete the proposed marketing strategy (Delivery Program 2.3b(2)) and update marketing campaigns to target the visitor profile market segments by July 2021. • Schedule and undertake listed topic specific marketing campaigns. • Create and keep updated tourism websites by December 2020. • Plan signage upgrades for entry to towns and villages by July 2020. • Council to determine costing and funding source for an LGA wide promotional documentary by July 2020. 	<p>2.1a</p>

	Recommended actions:	Responsibility	KPI	Related CSP strategy
9 	<p>Implement the Villages Strategy recommendations that relate to tourism and economic development including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing trails for canola, rail (inclusion in the Eastern Riverina Rail Trails Alliance), art (Coolac, Muttama and Nangus), trail (Coolac-Gundagai-Tumblong), walking and riding trails • Create a brochure promoting the economic opportunities of the LGA villages (see also action activity items 1 and 2 above) • Review Developer Contributions Plan to assist in funding village development • Develop camping/long stay accommodation sites 	Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess trails capital and operational expenditure and consider in budget development deliberations for 2019-20 and beyond. • Promotional campaigns as trails become active. • Village related elements of the Developer Contributions Plans updated. • Budget for and develop campsites / long stay accommodation in the villages and promotional activities to drive RV visitation by July 2022. 	2.1a
10  	<p>Specifically relating to 2.1d(3) of the CSP - <i>Offer and promote free public Wi-Fi internet access in key public spaces across the local government area.</i></p> <p>Add: Optimise the benefits of the NBN and promote connectivity as an attribute of the region to attract new businesses.</p> <p>Add: Ensure the connectivity will support course delivery to enable skills development and keep students/workers local.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council • NBN • Businesses • Education sector 	Council's engagement with NBN specifically drives high quality connectivity to meet business and student needs.	2.1d

	Recommended actions:	Responsibility	KPI	Related CSP strategy
11  	<p>Identify value adding opportunities (use of new technology, processes and packaging, collaborations, shared transport costs, use of waste materials for new products etc.) to maximise the opportunities in the sectors where Cootamundra-Gundagai's competitive advantage exists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture • Manufacturing • Health and social assistance including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Aged care (including understanding the impacts of the ageing nature of the population and the capacity of the facilities that already exist/will be needed). ○ Disability services accommodation and service delivery programs <p>This action will also assist with potential jobs growth to support the sustainability of the LGA and make it an attractive place to move to or stay living in.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council • Community • Businesses • Facility owners • Agriculture sector • Manufacturing sector • Aged health sector • Investors • NSW Government • Federal Government • Care service providers in the disability sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value adding additions to the three sectors identified and opportunities promoted to existing and new business by July 2022. • Identify opportunities for aged care (new facilities and expansion to existing) and assisted housing/ special needs services developments in collaboration with investors, other tiers of government and the community by July 2023. 	2.1e
12   	<p>Work with business owners to extend hours of operation and ensure a range of services are available to encourage visitation to the LGA.</p> <p>Recruit an events officer to manage Council events and assist with the development of new events across the LGA. (see also activity action item 17 below regarding the recruitment of an economic development/tourism officer).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council • Tourism Action Committees • Tourism sector Businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop with businesses and Tourism Action Committees to plan for growth in the visitor economy held by December 2020. • Tourism Action Committees review the tourism assets list annually. • Recruit an events officer to assist with Council wide events creation and management across the LGA by July 2022. • Complete the online events calendar identified in the Delivery Program by July 2020. 	2.1e

	Recommended actions:	Responsibility	KPI	Related CSP strategy
13 	<p>Specifically relating to 2.1f(2) of the CSP: <i>Work with key partners and local business owners, investors and employers to investigate, advocate for and promote opportunities for business development and networking.</i></p> <p>Add:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration with industrial land owners to establish a timeframe for the development of their land and create promotional materials outlining land availability for new/expanding businesses. • Consideration of development opportunities at the Airport to develop value adding opportunities. This could include accommodation opportunities for extensions to drag racing, camping and RV friendly facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council • Businesses • Land owners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a list of available industrial land and publish quarterly updates on Council's website by July 2020. • Develop marketing materials that include the available land to attract new businesses/support existing businesses seeking to expand by July 2021. • Masterplan Airport development by July 2023. 	2.1f
14 	<p>Regularly hold joint meetings of the Tourism Action Committees to assist in the implementation of the Tourism and Economic Development Action Plan and work towards unified promotions of the LGA.</p> <p>Work towards merging the two committees into one.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council • Tourism Action Committees • Tourism businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two annual joint meetings with the Cootamundra Tourism Action Committee and the Gundagai Tourism Action Committee. • Reports to Council on achievements against the Action Plan. • Merge the two committees into one by July 2022. 	2.1f
15 	<p>Work with investors/developers to improve facilities for a premier food/agritourism distribution point.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council • Businesses • Agriculture sector • Investors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In collaboration with investors/owners, assist in the creation of a masterplan for an outlet for local produce at the Old Gundagai Mill site. • Collaborate with producers to jointly fund an LGA wide premier food/agritourism products marketing campaign by July 2021. 	2.1f

	Recommended actions:	Responsibility	KPI	Related CSP strategy
16 	Work with the community to develop ways to promote regional produce.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council • Community • Agriculture sector • Businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community run farmers markets held on a regular basis by July 2022. • Consideration of agritourism business requirements in land use planning instrument updates. 	2.1f
17 	Improve the Cootamundra visitor information service levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit an Economic Development/Tourism officer to be located in the Cootamundra Heritage Centre (as space permits) • Seek grant funding to improve the facilities of the Heritage Centre 	Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of an economic development/tourism officer in Cootamundra by July 2019. • Masterplan improvements to Heritage Centre and have shovel ready for grant applications by July 2020. 	2.3c
18 	Reduce the cost base of visitor information services by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designing services that are best practice • Developing more online resources for the whole LGA • Implement kiosk services/brochure displays for information delivery 	Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement best practice visitor information service delivery by July 2021. • Complete website upgrades/creation by July 2020. • Consider kiosk/brochure display and other options for information distribution by July 2021. 	2.3c

	Recommended actions:	Responsibility	KPI	Related CSP strategy
19	<p>Analyse the current and future skills gaps in order to develop skills in locals, particularly youth, to provide a skilled workforce.</p> <p>Identify the locations where those with required skills live and market opportunities to those locations to encourage them to relocate.</p> <p>Work with business to assist in filling vacancies and developing required skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council • Business • Education sector • NSW Government • Federal Government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete skills gap analysis by July 2021. • Marketing campaign directed at locations where people with needed skills live undertaken by December 2021. • Through the new Council wide business committee, work with the business sector on filling jobs by July 2022. 	2.4a
20	<p>Work with the schools, VET and university sector to build educational pathways aligned to skills needs to retain youth in the region.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council • Education sector 	Workshop with schools, universities and VET training organisations on education pathways to ensure courses that will develop skills needed locally are being delivered locally by March 2021.	2.4a

Note there are over 60 additional actions to those listed above in Council's Community Strategic Plan and Delivery Program that are easily identified as offering improvements in areas that underpin the tourism and economic health of the Cootamundra-Gundagai LGA that are already planned and being implemented.



IMPROVING LIVEABILITY

Population impacts

Liveability attracts new residents and retains existing residents. Population sustainability is an essential component for economic stability and growth. Residents stay because of employment and services and businesses stay because the population is constant/growing, they can make money and they have access to a skilled workforce. New residents are attracted by the level of services and jobs they can easily identify in the locations they are considering.

Cootamundra-Gundagai LGA has many reasons for residents to work and live locally:

- The towns and villages provide a range of attractive locational options
- There is a diverse and resilient economic base
- The physical location provides access to Sydney (4 hours), Melbourne (5 hours) and Canberra (2 hours) and closer proximity to major regional centres (Wagga Wagga, Griffith and Albury) via major transport infrastructure.
- 2 hospitals
- 8 schools

Liveability is how connected, enjoyable and attractive a place is to live in and includes visual amenity, natural features, the range of services and the infrastructure available for community use, the costs associated with living in the area and the quality of the built landscape.

- Rail and air services

Promoting liveability

Ensuring the existing community is aware of the LGA's features assists in building the level of satisfaction with their location and therefore their intention to remain local.

The power of word of mouth advertising shouldn't be under estimated.

Council acknowledges the need to ensure the community is kept informed. Well informed residents bragging about their locality is a cost effective marketing method. With **39,000 visitors** (31% of all visitors) staying with friends or relatives in 2017¹, some visitors may be convinced to relocate if they are shown the attributes and taken along to local events every time they visit. An association with regional areas helps the decision making process of moving out of cities.

The survey undertaken to prepare the Tourism and Economic Development Strategy identified an opportunity to improve local

¹ Tourism Research Australia, Gundagai Local Government Area Profile, 2017. Accessed online February 2019.

knowledge of the LGA's features which would extend the awareness of services and provide useful information to residents for them to share with visitors staying with them.²

Employment opportunities

The LGA's three main areas of employment are:

- Agriculture
- Manufacturing
- Health care and social assistance.

These are sectors that are influenced by external forces including commodity prices, movements in the value of the Australian dollar, trade conditions and government budgets.

One of Cootamundra-Gundagai LGA's strength is the diversity of the economic base. In addition to the three sectors above, the LGA has competitive advantage³ in Transport, Postal and Warehousing, Accommodation and Food Services and Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services sectors.

There is a high level of connectedness, and thus internal reliance, within the LGA's business sector.⁴ This delivers regional self sufficiency advantages.

However, the level of reliance within the business sector on local customers can create issues should larger businesses falter or change

location. Ongoing engagement with businesses is therefore recommended to ensure the health of the business sector is understood.

A whole of LGA Council business committee is recommended as the means to effectively engage businesses across the region.



Milestones sculpture

² See Appendix C for survey results

³ Specific industry employment distributions and comparative advantage analysis is provided in Appendix B.

⁴ Survey results indicated 68% of Cootamundra's customer base and 80% of Gundagai's customer base comes from within the LGA. The high connectedness creates a solid economic base but one exposed to risk if a large operator changes focus or relocates. See Appendix C for full survey details.

Maximise the benefits from existing advantages

The NSW Government's South West Slopes Regional Economic Development Strategy 2018-2022 assessed the Cootamundra-Gundagai LGA and 4 neighbouring LGAs (Bland Shire, Temora Shire, Weddin Shire and Hilltops). The region was estimated to provide **\$2.4bn** to the NSW Gross Regional Product (GRP) in 2015/16.⁵ Endowments of the region were identified as:

- Transport and logistics infrastructure
- A relatively rare mineral resource base
- Favourable climatic conditions including rainfall patterns
- Livestock selling facilities
- Central location with access to major centres
- Lifestyle infrastructure to improve quality of life choices
- Education infrastructure

Specific suggested activities to maximise the endowments include:

- Identifying current and future skills gaps
- Working with the Vocational Education Training (VET) sector, schools and universities to identify training needs for current and future skills demand
- Building capacity and skills of existing residents to keep them local

- Identifying the unique needs of youth to ensure they stay in the LGA
- Understanding the impacts of the ageing population and seeking to maximise opportunities this presents – the aged care sector was identified in the consultation as being stronger in Cootamundra, while opportunities exist in Gundagai for new infrastructure. A suggestion was made that the redevelopment of the old hospital site could be considered.
- Assisted/ special care accommodation and servicing was identified in the consultation processes as an opportunity in the health sector. Opportunities exist for Council to partner with care and service providers in the delivery of services/accommodation to those with special needs.
- Considering the requirements to provide readily accessible premises was also identified as a point of difference that would improve the attractiveness of the LGA to residents.

Placemaking and community infrastructure

Investment in local infrastructure and services makes the LGA a more attractive place to live.

Council has a broad range of assets maintenance and renewal expenditure already planned and detailed in its strategic documents.

Council's Community Strategic Plan and Delivery Program identifies over 60 individual activities to support tourism and economic activity already programmed and budgeted that will deliver placemaking outcomes to maintain or augment the amenity of the Cootamundra-Gundagai region.

⁵ NSW Government, South West Slopes Regional Economic Development Strategy, 2018-2022, p 11

The activities in locations in the current Delivery Program and the activities suggested in this Strategy provide the place making community infrastructure needed to maintain vibrancy in the LGA.

Council's creation of a Place Plan identifies it will include the issues raised in this Strategy as part of its land use planning framework.

Events development

A Tourism Services Review⁶ conducted with the Tourism and Economic Development Strategy identified that developing the existing events portfolio is an opportunity for the LGA. This action can be commenced in the short term, while other recommendations require longer time frames for implementation.

Capturing better intelligence and building a visitors profile that details who is visiting the LGA is also a key need but will take time to arrange. In order to understand where to direct activities for the most effective marketing that will drive visitation, the Council needs information on who is coming to town and where from, why they are coming, how long are they staying and how much they are spending.

It is also suggested that the Council initiate an annual grants process and incorporates it in the budget annually to give existing events a boost and encourage community members to start new events. Implementing a competitive application based approach (as used in many other councils) is a quick win for Council and the community.

A further recommendation is to recruit an events officer to assist with the management of Council's events and to support those creating new events or building on the existing events. This position is in addition to the

recommended position of an economic development/tourism officer to be based in Cootamundra.



The Great Rescue of 1852 sculpture

⁶ Provided at the end of the Strategy

Cootamundra Central Business District revitalisation

Community feedback identified a need for the Cootamundra streetscape to be refreshed to make a more inviting place to live, work and socialise.

The Destination NSW Riverina Murray Destination Management Plan identifies streetscape improvement and beautification as important to increasing tourism visitation.

There is also an opportunity to develop outlets for the sale of regional produce and the possibility of using vacant store fronts for popup ventures.

Many in the community support value adding to agriculture. Agritourism activities development were identified as possible additional features to improve liveability and attract visitors to the LGA.

The Arts Centre Cootamundra has identified it is preparing a masterplan to develop the Centre. An opportunity to house a motorcycle collection in Cootamundra has also been identified. Adding these initiatives as parts of the CBD revitalisation, would add value to the Centre and the town and add to the assets and attractions in Cootamundra.

Promoting the region's liveability is paramount to ensuring residents are willing to stay and in order to attract new residents.



Dad, Dave, Mum and Mable- photo credit Tahlia Crane



SUPPORTING BUSINESS

Work with local businesses

Businesses benefit from strong professional networks and local leadership. A forum for businesses to meet from across the whole of the LGA provides the opportunity for broad networking and support.

A strong business chamber can provide formalised services for its members that includes:

- Advocacy
- Business to business connections
- Business advice
- Support and solutions

The Cootamundra Development Corporation identifies it is providing a number of the services in the Cootamundra area. Council supports the Corporation financially to undertake some economic development activities.

In the short term, a meeting held annually for all businesses to attend would offer a forum for the business community's input to Council's priority setting processes.

Longer term, the creation of one Council committee with representatives from businesses across the whole of the LGA who could discuss business conditions and identify economic drivers for business growth is recommended.

Encourage businesses to extend hours

Opening hours were identified as being an issue in the consultation processes.

Availability of services is particularly relevant for the visitor economy. If visitors can't find attractive places to purchase food, beverages and goods, they are unlikely to form a positive opinion of the LGA and are unlikely to return or promote the LGA to friends and family.

There is significant community support for businesses to remain open longer. The top response on new ideas from survey respondents (rated at 9.5 out of a possible 10) was to encourage businesses to open on weekends, public holidays and when community events are run.

Opening additional hours must be worthwhile for the businesses.

A recommendation is made for Council to work with the business sector to develop operating hours that cater for visitors, particularly when events are being held and numbers of potential customers can be expected.

Work with local businesses to expand value adding

Value-adding has been defined as including *any process or service in the supply chain that adds to or enhances the value of products to customers.*⁷

Value-adding may include supplying new products or different varieties of products, collaborative efforts between local producers, use of new technology, changing presentation/packaging to meet market requirements, providing expertise and/or services and promotion and marketing activities to differentiate products.⁸

The Cootamundra-Gundagai LGA is a large agricultural producer with food manufacturing businesses of various sizes. Economic structure analysis using the location quotient technique identified that the LGA has a competitive advantage in both agriculture and manufacturing sectors compared to NSW⁹.

That is, the LGA has more people employed in these sectors than would be expected and therefore these sectors can be seen as areas of strength that differentiates the region from other areas.

The region has significant value adding capacity for utilising existing businesses (such as the meat processor and a grain milling businesses) and exploring new value adding opportunities.

It is recommended that Council work with interested businesses to establish opportunities for value adding processes.

Council could monitor grant opportunities to assist business in offsetting costs associated with value adding additions to existing businesses.

Employment, training and qualifications

High unemployment is being experienced in the LGA. The 7% unemployment rate for September 2018 in the Cootamundra-Gundagai LGA compared with the NSW rate of 4.4% and the Riverina region rate of 5.9%¹⁰ illustrates the position.

In 2016, 57% of Cootamundra-Gundagai's population were of working age (15-64 years old) while 24% were over 65 years of age. By 2036, it is projected that 51% of Cootamundra-Gundagai's population will be working age and 31% will be 65 or over¹¹. The declining working population is a notable risk for sustaining a skilled available workforce in the LGA.

Businesses are having difficulties recruiting in Cootamundra-Gundagai. 34% of survey respondents identified issues in attracting suitable staff. A wide range of skills across most industry sectors were identified as gaps in the skills base.

A collaborative effort by Council, NSW Government, businesses, the vocational education and training (VET) sector, schools and universities to address the education pathways needed to fill current skills gaps is recommended.

To ensure future skills needs are also identified, the skills gap assessment should also document the future infrastructure/expansion plans. This will assist in identifying future skills needs alongside the current skills gaps. It will also be useful information to encourage people to relocate to a region that is forward looking and planning for sustainable jobs.

⁷ RDA Central West, Value Adding to Agriculture in Central West NSW, 2016, p 9.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ See location quotient analysis in Appendix B

¹⁰ Small Area Labour Market data, September 2018. Accessed March 2019.

¹¹ NSW Department of Planning and Environment, state and local government area population projections, 2016. See Appendix B for further detail.

Understanding what skills are needed now and into the future will assist in identifying courses and the educational pathways needed to deliver skilled **local** workers. Current and new residents will see a Council that is looking to ensure jobs are available locally and is planning for a prosperous and vibrant community. 100% of survey respondents who identified difficulties in recruiting said that lack of skills /training was a contributing factor. High pay expectations and applicants being unwilling to travel/relocate to the region also featured highly in why recruitment was difficult.

Therefore, a recommendation to identify where potential candidates live who have the skills that are currently missing in the local labour force is made. This will provide the basis for a targeted recruitment campaign to promote the Cootamundra-Gundagai region and to fill jobs.

Supporting business will build the capacity and diversity of the workforce, improve employment opportunities and develop long term skills and capacity building advantages.



MANAGING PLANNING ISSUES

Industrial land issues

A growing region needs to be able to illustrate where development can occur.

Council is confident there is adequate land zoned for industrial purposes, albeit site development may not have commenced and identification of readiness for development might not be readily evident.

An up to date register of zoned land populated with likely development timeframes for individual blocks would provide useful market information to potential new or expanding businesses. This tool would illustrate to potential new businesses or to existing businesses thinking of expanding, that the Council is proactive in encouraging development. Council would build a solid working relationship with the property developers by engaging them in the process of creating an available land register.

The quick provision of useful data to a business contemplating a regional presence can be a defining decision point – the easier the LGA is to do business with, the easier location selection becomes.

Agricultural land issues

Smaller agricultural lots have support in the LGA¹².

Smaller agricultural lots can diversify the agricultural offering in the LGA by allowing new agricultural businesses to get a foothold (particularly assisting younger farmers with less available capital), by allowing for more

intensive agricultural enterprises and by encouraging the development of tourism focussed agritourism businesses.

Developing a value add approach in any economy opens opportunities to maximise the endowments that exist as identified above.

Agritourism is an opportunity for value adding identified across the consultation and research processes and features in Council's own strategic planning documents. It involves people travelling to a region to engage with agricultural pursuits/products and includes:

- Visits to and possible stays on farms
- Participating in pick your own activities for their own consumption
- Being employed to pick produce for farm production sales
- Visits to rurally based wineries and restaurants
- Attending farmers markets
- Visiting natural attractions in rural settings

Importantly, agritourism has the capacity to support farming businesses by deriving a second income to supplement farm income.

Council planning rules need to be flexible enough to enable agritourism initiatives to be attractive to the developer with viable projects being able to be readily approved.

¹² Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council, Rural Lands Issues Paper: Agritourism, 2018, p 30.

Council flagged in its 2018 Rural Lands Issue Paper on agritourism the willingness to enable rural enterprise to develop. Promoting this willingness to the existing farming community would be a good initiative.

Villages strategy

Council prepared the Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council Villages Strategy in 2018. The purpose of the strategy is to provide clear strategic indicators for the development of the villages of Cootamundra-Gundagai LGA over the next 30+ years.

The recommendations from the Villages Strategy are endorsed and implementation is recommended.

Activities in the Villages Strategy that support economic growth include various proposed trails, streamlining planning processes, considerations on land use zoning to assist development and infrastructure upgrades.

Consultation in preparing this Strategy also suggested campaigns to promote the villages specifically would boost visitation and a recommended action is identified. Ideas included promotion of bird watching opportunities and heritage based tours were identified in the consultation processes.

Free camping and provision of dump sites for RV travellers in villages were also mentioned as ways to improve visitation to the villages.

Land use planning that is structured around enabling suitable development will support sustainability.



DEVELOPING THE VISITOR ECONOMY

The development of the Cootamundra-Gundagai visitor economy featured in all the strategic documents that were reviewed in creating this Strategy. Both NSW Government and Council see the visitor economy's growth as a key ambition to assist in economic sustainability and growth for the LGA.

Destination NSW's Travel to Regional NSW report highlights that the top activities for visitors in regional NSW include:

- Eating out, dining at a restaurant or café
- Visiting friends and relatives
- Going shopping for pleasure.¹³

This information gives key insights into the activities that visitors to the Cootamundra-Gundagai LGA are likely to seek and the types of tourism assets the region will need to develop to attract these visitors.

This Strategy is informed by the Visitor Services Review which was completed as part of the research phase. A copy of the findings is provided at the end of the Strategy.

An assessment of the value of the current visitor information service levels compared to 5 other regional council tourism services was one part of the

Visitor Services Review and highlighted some areas where process improvement may lift efficiencies.

A range of ideas are listed below as recommended actions in this focus area.

Develop Gundagai Old Mill into a premier food/agritourism site

It is recommended that Council work with operators to utilise the Old Gundagai Mill premises as a premier food/agritourism site. Opportunities exist for a range of products including:

- Craft beverage facilities
- Winery cellar doors and expansion of on-site tourism facilities (accommodation, function centre etc)
- Destination dining businesses
- Quality food establishments focusing on local produce
- Special events and festivals celebrating and promoting local produce.¹⁴

¹³ Destination NSW, Travel to Regional NSW (Year ended June 2018). Accessed 24 January 2019

¹⁴ Destination NSW Riverina Murray Destination Management Plan

This would assist the town to develop its food and beverage assets and align with the Destination NSW Riverina Murray Destination Management Plan for growth product offering in food, agritourism and heritage themes.

Improve access to the Murrumbidgee River

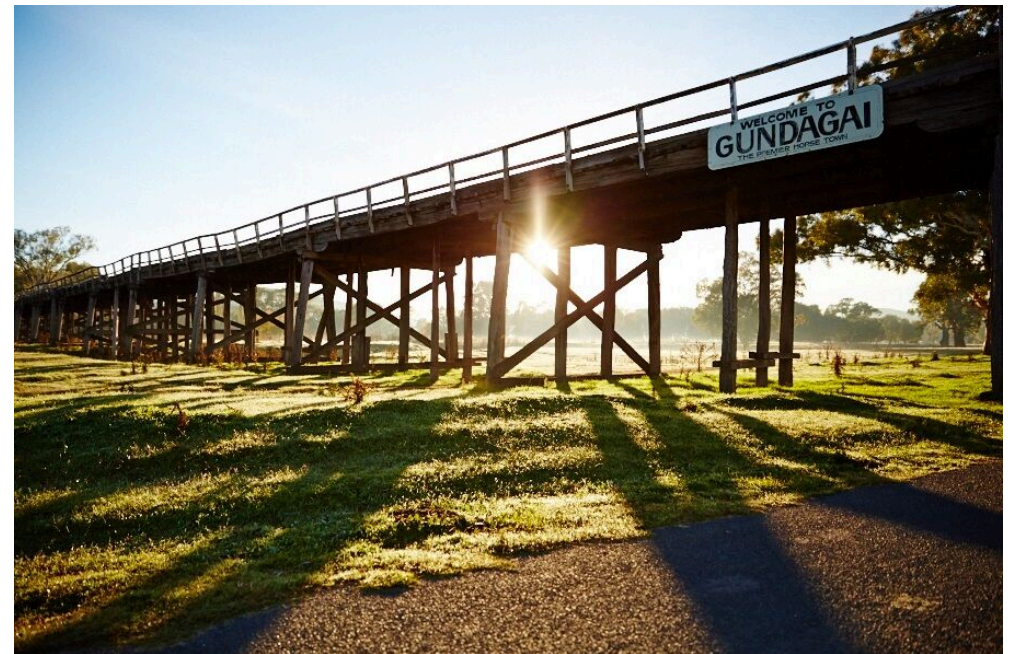
The Murrumbidgee River is a key natural asset and there are opportunities to improve access to the River to make it an attractant that brings visitors to the region.

A range of ideas were raised in the consultation processes around maximising the River environment including:

- specifically featuring the River in branding exercises
- promotion of the natural beauty and facilities along the River
- highlighting the heritage value of the Prince Alfred Bridge as the first major river crossing.
- Completion of a masterplan to enable access to the River so that Council is shovel ready when funding opportunities arise.
- Improvements suggested included a deck and boat ramp.

Creating a masterplan is recommended that designs and costs infrastructure improvements. Having this level of planning completed will have the project shovel ready when grant opportunities arise.

Promotional activities would then be enhanced by featuring the River access improvements.



Develop Cootamundra attractions

The Strategy recommends a masterplan for the Cootamundra CBD to establish plans and designs for improvements to the amenities in the town.

The Arts Centre Cootamundra masterplan for an arts precinct is in the planning stage and is a project which would build visitor attracting assets for Cootamundra and supplement the CBD masterplan. A possible motorcycle collection has also been identified.

Having a Cootamundra CBD masterplan prepared will assist Council in scheduling works through the budget processes plus enable Council to put forward works that are shovel ready for grant funding as programs available.

Food

An attractive food and beverage offering is a key tourism asset. Failure to provide a memorable food experience can impact on the reputation and repeat business that a region offers.

Noting that some existing businesses are currently doing this well, community feedback and the audit of local tourism businesses/activities highlights that there could be improvement to these services.

Some observations made in the consultation processes in developing the Strategy relating to food and beverage offerings in the region were:

- that there is a limited range of food options (particularly at certain times of the day)
- these options are more oriented towards locals (membership-based clubs, takeaway options, lower level of décor)
- some offerings are tired and in need of refreshing.

Key factors to consider when providing these services include:

- Attractive décor and surroundings

- Quality food
- Dietary options
- Findable (visitors can find premises quickly online)
- Good service
- Open at times convenient to visitors

Council can work with businesses to ensure they are aware of events that are likely to bring potential customers to their location and thus encourage extended operating hours.

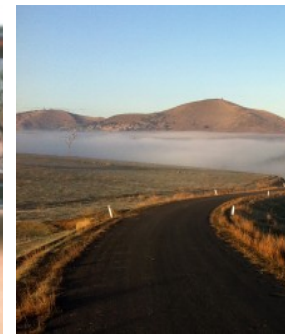
The planned events calendar that is already identified in the current Delivery Program will enable businesses to tailor their services and potentially attract more sales.



Moonlite's grave



1924 Chevrolet at the Australian Road Transport Heritage Centre



Morning view

Events

Events attract visitors to a region.

The audit of tourism assets and activities for the Cootamundra-Gundagai LGA highlights that there are already a reasonable number of events in the LGA. The review highlighted that these are of varying size and success.

Cootamundra has a good range of events including:

- Antique Car Rally
- Drag Racing
- Tubby's Ride and Family Day
- Local Unlimited
- Make it Local
- Cootamundra Show
- Father's Day Swap Meet
- The Cootamundra Cup
- Bachelors and Spinsters Ball
- Haycarters (Cycling)
- Haycarters Recovery (Cycling)
- Cootamundra Annual Classic (Cycling)
- Cootamundra Annual Classic Recovery (Cycling)
- Organic Farm Tour
- The Arts Centre Cootamundra *Make it Local* Shared Dinner
- Coota Beach Volleyball Festival

- Cootamundra Wattle Time Festival
- Touch football competition
- Cootamundra picnic races



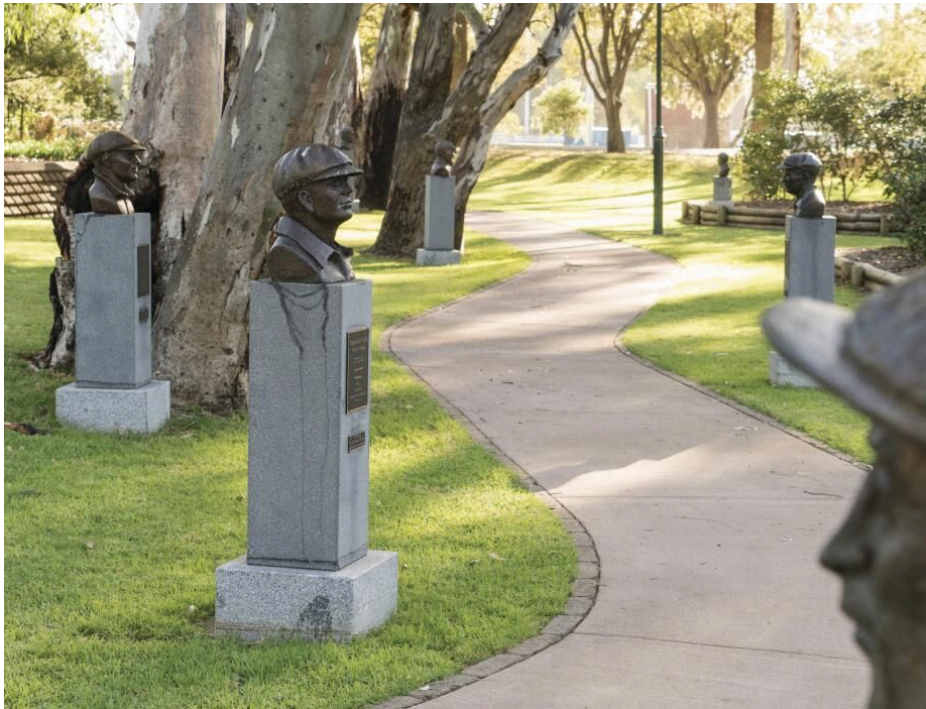
Gundagai has fewer events, with a greater focus on equine and agricultural themes:

- Anglican Flower Show
- Australian Busking Championships
- Battle on the Bidgee

- Gundagai Show
- New Year Races
- Popped up at Kimo
- Gundagai Rodeo
- Snake Gully Cup (Horse Race)

Working on building Cootamundra's strength, existing events could be grown and more broadly promoted to attract more visitors. For example:

- The popularity of Cootamundra's cycling events could be built upon to include mountain biking events at Pioneer Park.
- Expansion and wider promotion of the Coota Beach Volleyball Festival – it is point of difference in the events market. Link up with Volleyball NSW as a sponsor and seek cross promotional opportunities.
- Revitalise the Wattle Festival given the unique naming of Cootamundra Wattle
- Highlight the arts and crafts skills of the region by promoting an arts trail across the whole LGA
- Joint promotion of the Bradman Birthplace Museum, Captains Walk and Bradman Oval (and other ovals) targeting cricket enthusiasts – this is a significant key point of difference for tourists and could include a "test match" on the Don's birthday (27 August) annually – celebrity players, retired players, current NSW/Australian players, hold the Prime Minister's 11 game in Cootamundra, seek a Big Bash or similar pre-season game be held at Bradman Oval and investigation of a Cricket NSW Centres of Excellence opportunity.
- As the Strategy identifies improving access to the Murrumbidgee River, promotions specifically feature events on the River arise as future possibilities.
- Expand the Wattle Festival with a "wattle swap" feature
- Promote the heritage of the region and its cemeteries for those researching family history
- Promote the region as part of the canola trail
- Promote the rail trails in the region



Captains' walk

Improve tourism industry liaison

The Cootamundra Tourism Action Committee and Gundagai Tourism Action Committee are separately run.

Closer affiliation and having the two groups work jointly on a whole of LGA approach to tourism would be beneficial in building awareness of the strengths and knowledge across the tourism sector.

The committees currently meet annually. More frequent joint meetings may offer opportunity to collaborate further.

Ultimately, the merging of the two groups into one section 355 Council Committee should be considered to assist in whole of LGA promotion and capacity building between members and across the community.

Visitor Services

The Visitor Services Review completed to guide Council's management of visitor services as part of this Strategy's development is provided at the end of the Strategy.

In the consultation processes, the need for a dedicated economic development/tourism staff member in Cootamundra was noted. Council advised there is currently an annual contribution to the Cootamundra Development Corporation for the delivery of economic development/tourism services.

Support in the community is also in favour of a standalone Visitor Information Centre in Cootamundra.

The Review highlighted Council is already contributing the highest expenditure per visitor of the 5 other visitor information centres used in the benchmarking exercise (see Review at the end of the Strategy for details). The costs for visitor services are being contained given services are offered by volunteers in Cootamundra at the Heritage Centre. Cost efficiencies across the visitor services expenditure would need to be identified to be able to afford a Cootamundra standalone VIC in Cootamundra when consideration of the capital and annual operational additional costs that would arise.

The visitation to the Gundagai VIC was the highest in terms of the percentage of total visitors who presented at VICs against the other 5 VICs benchmarked. 23% of visitors to Gundagai go to the VIC. Only 2% of visitors go to the Cootamundra centre.

Some of the results are influenced by the lack of reliable and comparable data on visitors across the Cootamundra-Gundagai VICs and tourism

assets. While data is and has historically been collected, it is ad hoc and an opportunity exists to improve the collection processes.

A standardised short survey is recommended to be distributed to tourism operators. Information would also be collected at the VICs. Council would then be able to collate accurate information on the demographics of visitors and make details known to businesses who participate in the data collection as an incentive. Those participating would thus have better information to inform their own marketing efforts.

Consideration of the efficiency of the current services should be undertaken to identify cost savings areas in the VICs given the Review identified a high current cost base per visitor. Kiosks offer a cost effective means to disseminate information. It is acknowledged that Council has already tried kiosks but reconsidering them along with improved brochure displays may offer efficiencies.

Rather than create a standalone VIC in Cootamundra, it is recommended that an economic development/tourism officer to be located at the Heritage Centre. This offers value for money and service improvement outcomes. Improvements to the Heritage Centre would be required and funding for the works identified. It is recommended that the improvements be costed to have a shovel ready project available when grant funding is identified. The officer could be employed prior to the completion of the upgrade and could be charged with managing the upgrade project works.

Various models for levels of service were identified in the Visitor Services Review. The recommended model for tourism services across the Cootamundra-Gundagai LGA is as follows (see the Review at the end of the Strategy for details):

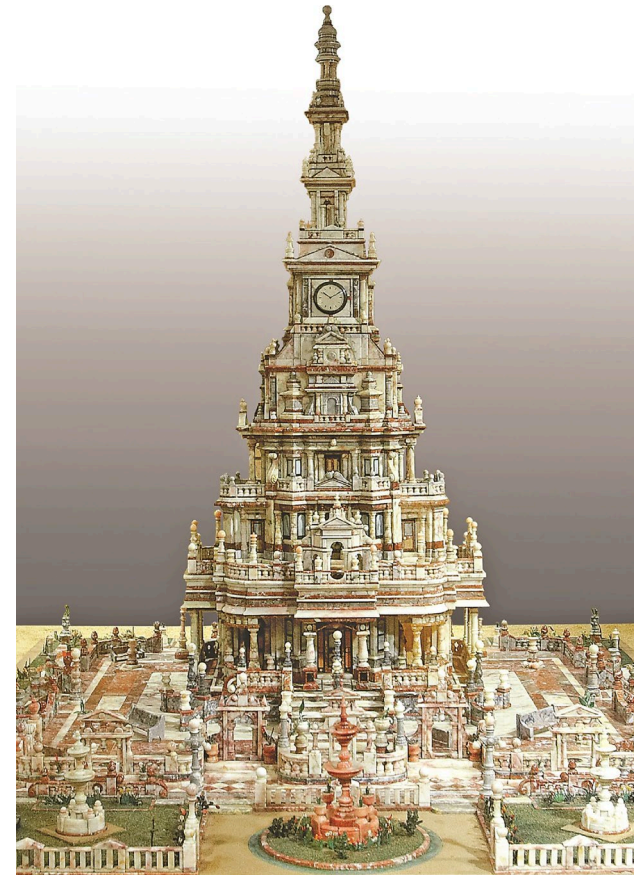
Lower level of services, Council operated	
Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VIC operation utilises a mixture of Council staff and volunteers. Council manages marketing on a smaller scale plus some marketing/event management managed by Council Event management is supportive and community driven.
Level of Tourism Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emerging tourism assets may or may not be fully developed – limited funding often influencing. Smaller LGA visitation rate. Tourism markets not well defined.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower cost - between \$300,000 and \$700,000 – salaries most significant cost - blend of paid and volunteer staff control costs.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong local knowledge of events and attractions. Council has control of tourism direction. Consistency of tourism brand and messages. Good feedback channels directly from visitor to Council. Ability to react quickly to negative feedback and manage issues.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expensive - particularly VIC services. Cost of VICs absorb potential expenditure from marketing and branding activities. Management of volunteer staff – training requirements Lower brand recognition.

Suggestions for VIC operations from the Review are summarised as follows:

- Develop the online tourism information resources for use across websites that cover the towns and villages in the LGA
- Develop one survey instrument for completion at tourism service provision points (VICs, accommodation providers, facilities etc). Collate data into longitudinal data sets that are comparable and offer better knowledge of the characteristics of the visitors who are coming to the LGA. Better understanding the existing market will improve marketing campaign effectiveness. It will also highlight missing market segments that Council may seek to pursue.

- Engage with locals and keep them informed on local events – 39,000 people stayed with friends and relatives in 2017¹⁵ which equates to over 31% of all visitors. Better informed locals offer a cost effective means of promoting local events and facilities to their guests.
- Continue to deliver visitor services from the Heritage Centre in Cootamundra
- Construct the adventure playground and complete the improvements to the Gundagai VIC
- Review the economic development services provided to Council from the Cootamundra Development Corporation
- Employ an economic development/tourism officer to be located at the Heritage Centre in Cootamundra
- Employ an events officer to assist in managing Council's events and to assist community members to create new events

Building the visitor economy across the whole LGA will create jobs and build capacity in multiple areas.



Rusconi marble masterpiece

¹⁵ Tourism Research Australia, Gundagai (A) tourism profile, 2017



Closely related to the development of the tourism economy is the potential to brand and market the region as a destination for visitors.

Some confusion can exist around what a brand is. One definition describes a brand as follows:

Unique design, sign, symbol, words, or a combination of these, employed in creating an image that identifies a product and differentiates it from its competitors. Over time, this image becomes associated with a level of credibility, quality, and satisfaction in the consumer's mind (positioning).

Thus brands help harried consumers in crowded and complex marketplaces, by standing for certain benefits and value. The legal name for a brand is trademark and, when it identifies or represents a firm, it is called a brand name.¹⁶

Branding for the Cootamundra-Gundagai LGA was developed when the council was created. This section relates to tourism branding exercises as further marketing initiatives for the region.

Cootamundra-Gundagai's online presence will be key in promoting the region to potential visitors. A greater focus on developing online marketing content to profile the LGA for residents, tourists and businesses is recommended as the first step.

The Council's website is attractive and well laid out and is an excellent tool. Increasing content and ensuring currency of data is critical. Linking from and to the Council's website will allow for consistent messaging on tourism marketing materials.

Branding to align with Destination NSW Riverina Murray Destination Management Plan

Branding and marketing activities will benefit from maintaining alignment with the Destination Riverina Murray Destination Management Plan.

The Plan has developed a number of key visitor experiences for consistent development of the brand in the Eastern Riverina region (including Cootamundra-Gundagai). These include:

- History and heritage
- Nature-based and recreation
- Agriculture and local produce
- Arts and culture
- Sport
- Touring region

¹⁶ The Online Business Dictionary, Accessed 19 February 2019.

Given the assets in the Cootamundra-Gundagai LGA can be allocated to all of these categories, alignment can be easily achieved in targeted marketing campaigns which are identified in the Action Plan.



Don Bradman sculpture

Brand development

60% of survey feedback favoured a two-brand strategy for tourism promotion resulting in separate marketing for Cootamundra and Gundagai. Some commentary also suggested the villages need to be separately promoted.

Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council has already established its branding. It should be used in conjunction with specific locations tag lines (for example, G'Day Gundagai, River crossing town), when appropriate, particularly when Council is contributing to the costs of promotions.

Respondents identified that Cootamundra and Gundagai are seen to have a different tourism offering, separate geographies and different people are likely to be travelling to each town.

To identify future marketing direction, the online survey conducted as part of the development of the Strategy sought comments from respondents on the most popular themes and actions for tourism development.

Gundagai based survey respondents rated the following top 5 themes and actions to develop the tourism sector:

- Sport and recreation
- Events and festivals
- History and heritage
- Rivers and waterways
- Improving the accommodation offering

Gundagai has previously been promoted around themes including nature, active recreation and history, with *G'day Gundagai* and historic river crossing as key tag lines used in signage and promotional activities.

The Murrumbidgee River is seen as a key attribute, but respondents agreed that access and facilities need to be improved as identified above.

Cootamundra based respondents rated the top 5 themes and actions to develop the tourism sector as:

- Events and festivals
- Sport and recreation
- History and heritage
- Improving the accommodation offering
- Arts and culture

Only one respondent in the consultation processes identified Cootamundra has used Cooee Coota as a tagline while G-Day Gundagai and the River Crossing town taglines were identified by a number of respondents. There is not a significant online nor branding presence for Cootamundra or the Villages in the LGA. There is a stronger presence for Gundagai.

The G'day Gundagai and Cootamundra tag lines should be continued to be used. Villages should also use tag lines on promotions.

Utilise data and information

As identified above, there is currently a lack of data about who is travelling to the region, where they are from and what they are interested in doing.

Little is known about gaps in the services offered to enable Council to tailor branding and promotion to businesses to fill voids which should be addressed over time.

Whilst detailed surveying and information gathering would be ideal, Council has a range of information at hand that is not being fully utilised.

VICs are currently capturing limited data on visitor origin, but this data is inconsistent - sometimes captured via postcode, sometimes by locality name and sometimes by state.

It is also apparent that visitor origin data is being captured by other organisations. At least one (and likely more) accommodation business interviewed in the engagement process is capturing postcode data, but admitted that they are not utilising this data. The Sir Donald Bradman Birthplace Museum is capturing postcode data but this data was not being forwarded to Council for use in understanding visitor origins.

The standard simple survey tool answered on a tablet identified in the visitor economy focus area should be developed and implemented with low costs to Council.

Tourism target market development

While more information on potential markets will be known once there is better understanding of who is visiting the region, promotion to Victoria, ACT and Wagga Wagga in the short term as an option was identified in the survey data that helped inform this Strategy.

This could be a starting point while the data to properly profile visitors is captured.

Council has identified in the Delivery Program (item 2.3b(2)) that a marketing strategy will be developed.

Assist local businesses to develop digital marketing and online presence

19% percent of survey respondents advised that marketing was barrier to growth for their business.

There is an opportunity therefore to seek training for businesses to assist them in the development of their online presence.








Dog on the tuckerbox- photo credit Jessie-Lee Waite

Consistent messaging that highlights the features of the region will improve the impact of marketing campaigns.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Developing the 5 strategy focus areas was done within the context of a range of existing strategic documents and their recommendations. This ensures alignment and acknowledgement of the significant amount of work Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council has already done in building the economic base of the LGA.

Document	Improving liveability 	Supporting local business 	Managing planning issues 	Developing the visitor economy 	Branding and Marketing 
South West Slopes Regional Economic Development Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Destination NSW Riverina Murray Destination Management Plan	✓	✓		✓	✓
Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council Our place, Our future Community Strategic Plan 2018-2028	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Riverina Murray Regional Plan		✓	✓		
20 Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
NSW Premier's priorities	✓		✓	✓	
Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council Rural Lands Issue paper: Agricultural Tourism				✓	
Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council Villages Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Appendix A summarises the relevant content from these strategic documents and other materials consulted in preparing this Strategy.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The Strategy identifies a range of activities which may give rise to issues including the following:

- Inability to engage the community to promote and grow the Cootamundra-Gundagai LGA as a whole
 - Action: Communications plan developed that outlines how and who will be engaged and messaging to be delivered
- Failure to identify and see implemented value adding ventures such as agritourism activities to grow the agricultural sector income streams
 - Action: Council to investigate opportunities and work with NSW Government and local businesses to build capacity of local businesses to initiate new enterprises.
 - Action: Funding opportunities to assist businesses to grow could also be identified by Council and communicated to the community.
- Population declines
 - Action: Identify areas where skills are needed and specifically target potential new residents to fill vacancies.
 - Action: Identify the skills gaps and build education pathways for existing residents so they remain local.
 - Action: Maximise the opportunity to create retirement options to services the needs of the ageing population.
 - Action: Identify and collaborate with service providers for special care needs of residents.
- Land use planning restrictions
 - Action: Council to consider the limitations of land use restrictions on economic growth in the development of the key planning instruments.
- Impacts of drought
 - Action: Council to work with the Joint Organisation of Councils and Regional Development Australia to identify drought assistance packages and how information is being communicated to those impacted by drought.
 - Action: Council work with the NSW Business regional coordinator/NSW Farmers/Department of Primary Industry to identify farm management practices to assist management of farms through drought and communicate to the community.

VISITORS SERVICES REVIEW

Introduction

WRI undertook a review of Cootamundra-Gundagai Council visitor services to understand the effectiveness of previous strategies and provide direction for the future provision of visitor services.

A range of research, engagement and assessment activities were done, including:

- Review of existing tourism strategies in the Cootamundra-Gundagai LGA
- Assessment of the Cootamundra-Gundagai Council Visitor Information Centre (VIC) services against VIC services in five other regional NSW council areas
- Site visits to Cootamundra-Gundagai VICs and various tourism sites across the LGA
- Update to Council's previous audit of tourism businesses, sites and assets across the LGA
- Interviews with a range of tourism business owners, managers and council staff
- Assessed available tourism statistics to understand visitation to the region

This Review assesses *Where are we now?* in relation to the provision of tourism services and offerings in the Cootamundra-Gundagai LGA. The Review also assesses the current servicing in Cootamundra-Gundagai benchmarked against 5 other locations, value for money, event management and levels of service.

Where are we now?

Review of previous strategy

WRI conducted a review of previous strategic documentation for visitor services in the Cootamundra-Gundagai LGA. Pre-amalgamation, Cootamundra and Gundagai had separate strategic directions and their respective visitor economies vary considerably.

An important finding was that Cootamundra has had no tourism related strategy to engage local tourism businesses, gather key information or provide direction. As a result, the tourism sector in Cootamundra has had little development and industry organisation is still in its infancy.

In contrast, Gundagai has an existing tourism strategy (Gundagai Tourism Strategy 2014 - 2019), a well organised tourism sector and has made good progress in reaching previous strategic goals. The existing Gundagai strategy lists five main goals:

- Support the regeneration and protection of our natural, cultural and built heritage
- Showcase our history as a River Crossing Town
- Develop primary attractions in the town
- Utilise the Visitor Information Centre as a tool to promote the town's attractions
- Become the go-to place for events in the Riverina

Feedback from the Gundagai Tourism Action Committee is that the previous Tourism Strategy was well regarded:

- The strategy has been largely effective and most of the outcomes have been successful. A review of strategy actions highlights that most of these items are partially complete or complete.

- Groups such as the Gundagai Tourism Action Committee and the Gundagai Racecourse and Showground Committee were seen to be the drivers behind the success of the local tourism sector. The main street upgrade, improved highway signage and events held at the Gundagai showground and racecourse were identified as successful outcomes.
- Key visitor cohorts identified in the previous strategy were believed to still be largely relevant, although there could be potential to capture more international visitation. Identified cohorts include RV travellers, transit traveller – diverted from highway, destination travellers, events and experience seekers/participants, Asian/International market with indigenous and iconic Australian town draw cards.
- There was agreement that any future tourism strategy should be consistent with the previous tourism strategy and build upon it.

A review of actions in the Gundagai Tourism Strategy 2014 – 2019 found that the majority of actions have been commenced or are completed.

Council tourism services

Currently, limited VIC services are provided in Cootamundra in a shared site and more extensive VIC services are offered in a standalone VIC in Gundagai. The Gundagai VIC offers marketing and digital activities and assistance to local tourism businesses. A more detailed breakdown of VIC and tourism services is provided below.

Cootamundra

The Cootamundra VIC services are run from the Cootamundra Heritage Centre. A limited range of VIC services are provided, including:

- Accommodation bookings
- Information and referral services
- Souvenirs
- Tea and coffee
- Ticketing for small events

There is currently no dedicated Council staffing providing tourism services in Cootamundra.

Observations on Cootamundra's tourism services after site visits and interviews :

- Location on a main road but not in CBD.
- Close to rest areas with good parking.
- Services are run by volunteers.
- The VIC provides a basic set of face-to-face services, including referral and information services, tea/coffee, accommodation bookings and souvenir sales.
- VIC does not have an online presence operated by Council and has no direct email address.
- Heritage Centre staff identified Cootamundra needed a standalone VIC in order to deliver better visitor services.
- Insufficient data has been captured to understand the trends in visitation to the VIC and to other tourism assets in Cootamundra.

Gundagai

The Gundagai VIC provides a range of services to visitors including:

- Produce and distribute the Gundagai Visitor Guide, Gundagai Heritage Walk and local information flyers
- Accommodation and Eateries Guide which also includes information on RV friendly locations/dump point
- Produce including souvenirs, Gundagai region wines, local products, kiosk items and a range of history books
- Viewing Rusconi's Marble Masterpiece
- Self-guided audio tours of the Old Gundagai Gaol
- Compendiums in accommodation rooms (updated each August)
- New residents pack to welcome and inform people moving to the area
- Assistance in finding available accommodation during peak periods
- General local information service (road updates, local business information etc.)
- Provide maps of local area, maps and brochures of other regional towns plus NSW and Victoria
- Historic town tours
- Advertising
- Coach and rail bookings

Observations on Gundagai's tourism services after visits and interviews:

- Good location on the main street and close to shops.
- Adventure playground being built soon.
- Has marble masterpiece which is a draw card, generally popular with children and older visitors.
- Planned improvements scheduled for the Centre.
- Employed VIC staff can undertake a wider range of activities - manage stock, sell alcohol, complete sales returns, book for coach tickets, update Destination NSW webpage etc.
- Most common requests look for family activities, and highlights in the town. Ask 'what's to do?' and 'Where is the dog?'.
- Challenging to get businesses to provide information to the VIC marketing staff.
- Approximately 40% of current visitors to the VIC are locals booking tickets on transport services out of Gundagai.

Tourism services operating models

WRI assessed Cootamundra-Gundagai Council VIC and tourism services against similar services in 5 other regional NSW council areas to understand operational issues and best practice approaches in other regions.

Interviews with other tourism locations were undertaken to understand different tourism services models, VIC services, financial considerations and assess their suitability for Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council.

Research was also undertaken to compare certain visitor service metrics across the five LGAs.¹⁷

Visitor service models

Four distinct VIC operational models have been identified and their key features are summarised in the table below. These models are:

- High level of services, Council operated
- High level of services, operated by external contractor
- High level of services, operated by Council and an external contractor
- Lower level of services, Council operated

Comparative information has been compiled below to show strengths weaknesses and operational attributes of the four operating models.

High level of services, Council operated	
Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high level of tourism services provided fully internally by Council. • VIC operation, marketing and branding, event management, tourism partnerships all run and managed by Council staff.
Level of Tourism Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mature visitor economy with well-established tourism assets (motor racing, food and accommodation). • Large LGA visitation rate. • Major annual tourism events managed by dedicated Council events team.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High, approximately \$1 million
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides local expertise to visitors expecting more specific information than they can gather online. • Council has total control of tourism direction. • Dedicated staff team for major tourism events and marketing.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expensive. • Balancing retail/business side of VIC with tourism services is challenging – low return on souvenir sales. • Challenges in justifying relevancy given volume of information available online.

¹⁷ WRI has made certain assumptions and utilised a number of methodologies to account for a range of data issues to develop processes that allowed comparisons of operational data.

High level of services, operated by external contractor	
Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VIC operation, marketing and branding, event management, tourism partnerships and tourism research all managed by contractor • Council funding provided.
Level of Tourism Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mature visitor economy with well established tourism assets (wineries, food and accommodation). • Large LGA visitation rate. • Well-defined tourism markets which are specifically advertised to.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High, approximately \$1 million primarily funded through a combination of Council and membership funding.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overnight visitation rate experiencing strong growth for past 4 years. • Successful in funding applications. • Marketing targets are very focused, good knowledge of target markets. • Representatives from Council on board of directors retain Council input. • Consistency of tourism branding messages.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expensive. • High need for funding. • High capital requirements in terms of building space/location of VIC. VIC would need to be co-located with another service such as museum/café to be effective.

High level of services, operated by Council and an external contractor	
Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high level of tourism services provided partially by Council, partially by an external contractor (a membership based tourism industry entity). • Marketing and branding, event management and tourism partnerships managed by the external contractor. • Council provides financial support to the external contractor – they are also funded by 2 adjoining LGAs • Council has retained some functions – including funding and management of the VIC and some sponsorships/management of separate events and marketing.
Level of Tourism Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mature visitor economy with well-established tourism assets (wineries, food and accommodation). • Large LGA visitation rate. • Well-defined tourism markets which are specifically advertised to. • Council is strong on data collection and understands its markets.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High - approximately \$1 million. • Contractor is funded through a combination of 3 Councils contributions and membership funding.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor expenditure and length of stay trending up. • Enables marketing and branding services by industry. • Cohesive branding and marketing strategy for region. • Council retains operational control over VIC, Council-run events and other tourism services. No bias basis as all operators, not just members of the external contractor, are supported. • Industry involvement in grant processes increased.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination of agendas of stakeholders can be difficult. • External contractor membership base requires a lot of resourcing • External contractor undertaking limited tourism research. • In early stages – long term outcomes hard to identify – engagement is on a performance based contract with outcomes (increased visitation, increased average nights stayed, event attendance analysis etc) to assist in measuring the value for money of the contract. • If tourism businesses do not wish to become members, the external contractor doesn't market them. Causes equity issues. • Difficulty servicing smaller tourism operators and events who cannot afford contractor membership subscription.

Lower level of services, Council operated	
Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A more limited range of tourism services provided fully internally by Council. • VIC operation utilises a mixture of Council staff and volunteers. • Council manages marketing on a smaller scale. • Council's event management role is supportive and community driven.
Level of Tourism Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emerging tourism assets may or may not be fully developed – limited funding. • Smaller LGA visitation rate. • Events are more community focused rather than tourism based. • Tourism markets not as well defined.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower cost - between \$300,000 and \$700,000. • Cost heavily influenced by number of VICs and if VIC staff are paid or volunteer.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong local knowledge of events and attractions. • Council has total control of tourism direction. • Consistency of tourism brand and messages. • Good feedback channels directly from visitor to Council • Ability to react quickly to negative feedback and manage issues.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expensive - particularly VIC services. • Cost of VICs absorb potential budgets for marketing and branding. • Management of volunteer staff can be difficult. • Lower brand recognition.

Comparison of tourism services

Visitor service metrics, population and visitor data, expenditure and council tourism income were compared to understand the efficiency of Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council's tourism services.

Tourism service metrics compiled below include:

- Tourism services provided internally or externally.
- VICs staffed by paid staff, by volunteers or by both.
- Annual visitation rate in each LGA and attendance at their respective VICs.
- Recent revenue and expenditure figures.

Data for Cootamundra and Gundagai have been identified separately for comparison.

A range of key findings can be made from the comparative data:

- Cootamundra VIC visitation is poor and is well below the levels of other VICs.
- The Gundagai VIC is performing in line with its peers on a number of metrics.
- Gundagai sees the highest per centage of total visitors coming to the LGA who go to the VIC of all the VICs evaluated.
- Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council is spending more on its tourism and visitor services, per visitor, than peer councils.

Council's VIC budget is funding the provision of coach booking services in Gundagai. This activity was estimated to take up considerable amount of the VIC time. While offering a service to locals, some commentary identified it is not adding to visitation. A number of the other VICs assessed also provide coach booking services.

This is also an opportunity that Council could events participation by enhancing the information given to locals about events given the high proportion of visitors who stay with friends and relatives.

The tourism budgets in other areas are greater than Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council.

Council 5 is the closest fit visitor services model for Cootamundra-Gundagai in all operational metrics and is similar to current services provided in Gundagai VIC.

A summary of key metrics is provided below illustrating how the Cootamundra and Gundagai visitor information services compare with the other 5 council operations.

	Council 1	Council 2	Council 3 ¹⁸	Council 4	Council 5	Gundagai	Cootamundra
Tourism services provided by Council or external contract	Council	Council and External contract	External contract	Council	Council	Council	Council
VIC Staff Mode	Paid Staff	Paid Staff	Paid Staff	Staff and Volunteers	Staff and Volunteers	Paid Staff	Volunteers
Annual VIC Visitation¹⁹	51,000	84,583	33,225	47,691	27,524	16,781	1,211
Annual LGA Visitation²⁰	902,000	985,000	573,000	384,000	124,000	74,560	54,440
LGA Population²¹	41,301	40,348	24,079	14,398	6,110	3,597	7,570
Visitors Per Capita	22	24	24	27	20	21	7
% of LGA Visitors Attending VIC	6%	9%	6%	12%	22%	23%	2%
Council Tourism Revenue²²	\$244,800	\$81,000	\$865,067	\$62,950	\$61,000	\$43,000	\$13,519
Council Tourism Expenditure	\$985,892	\$980,000 ²³	\$935,724	\$1,037,564 ²⁴	\$358,699	\$400,000	
Council Expenditure per LGA Visitor	\$1.10	\$1.00	\$1.60	\$2.70	\$2.90	\$3.10	

¹⁸ Financial data sourced from an external contractor

¹⁹ Annual visitation rates from most recent available full year statistics.

²⁰ Annual LGA visitation rates from 2017 Tourism Research Australia statistics. Gundagai and Cootamundra visitor data has been split out based on pre-amalgamation visitor attendance data.

²¹ Population data from 2016 ABS Census.

²² Council revenue across a range of visitor services, such as merchandise, memberships, ticket sales, etc.

²³ Includes contract cost paid to external contractor of \$400,000. This relates to one only of the three councils who have engaged the external contractor to deliver part of the tourism services option – excluding VIC services. Additional contributions are paid to the contractor by the other 2 neighbouring councils above the \$400K.

²⁴ Includes National Parks and Wildlife Services contribution of \$362,961.

Value for money

Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council is paying more per visitor in VIC and tourism services than the other councils considered in the benchmarking process.

Opportunities arise for the streamlining of services to provide a more efficient, focussed set of services and a performance based review of operations may identify ways to streamline processes and reduce costs.

Consultation processes identified a desire for a stand alone VIC in Cootamundra. The vacant Roads and Transport Authority Building was identified as a possible location. On the visitation numbers provided by Council, there is little evidence to warrant Council expending more money on tourism services given the low visitation levels. It could of course be argued that a more prominent facility in Cootamundra with dedicated tourism staff may increase VIC visitation. However, the cost base for a standalone VIC in Cootamundra would increase even further the currently expenditure levels.

Council could investigate the return on investment of the creation of a Cootamundra VIC using a cost benefit analysis. On past assessment of VICs, it is unlikely that a positive cost benefit ratio would be returned unless the visitation is increased given the high cost base already in place in Cootamundra-Gundagai LGA.

In terms of the essential services undertaken within a VIC (customer facing services predominately relating to the provision of information), many of these tasks can now be undertaken online and via appropriate signage directing visitors to relevant digital platforms, at a much lower cost to Council.

Whilst VICs often provide additional services, such as marketing and branding activities, booking and a range of other services, these can be undertaken within other Council buildings/offices as they do not require face-to-face contact with visitors.

Services could also be made more cost competitive by utilising more online services that could be available in multiple locations in the LGA and via kiosks as utilised by many other VICs.

It may be a better option for Council to allocate funding to a dedicated economic development/tourism officer for Cootamundra. This would enable the development of the resources and services required to raise the profile of the Cootamundra area.

VIC services and budget allocation

Based on the review of tourism services provided of various VIC models, the service model which fits the current tourism services model for Cootamundra-Gundagai is the **lower service internal model** – meaning that VIC services and tourism services are Council run but, in response to lower visitation, provide a lower level of service and have a lower budget.

Given that tourism within the Cootamundra-Gundagai LGA is still emerging rather than being a highly established and developed market, it is believed that this model is a good fit for the continued cultivation of a tourism economy in the LGA.

Once visitation grows in response to more targeted marketing initiatives (discussed below), the model could be reviewed.

Event management

Feedback from the business community and Council is that tourism development and the management of events needs to be led by the local community.

Council does have a supportive role in the development, management and marketing of events and assisting with organisational and red tape issues, such as accessing Council facilities, permits and traffic management.

One respondent suggested that an external organisation should be engaged to manage events.

Events need to be aligned to the endowments and features of the area. For example, the previous Gundagai Tourism Strategy identified an action of contacting NSW and National Sheep Dog Trials committees to see if either would be interested in hosting an event in Gundagai. This event would be a good fit for Gundagai, aligning with the iconic image of the Gundagai Dog on the Tuckerbox.

Maintaining the audit of tourism assets (provided below) by adding new/amended details and better understanding the needs of visitors coming to events is also needed. Visitors are information hungry and currency of the resources in a location is paramount to ensure the visitor experience is a good one.

Council could consider establishing a grant process to assist new events or to expand existing events as part of the annual budget creation. This could provide community groups with an opportunity to partner with Council to enrich the event offering. Council offering assistance/information resources to be used by community members seeking grant funding from NSW and Federal governments may also offer solid returns.

It is also recommended that a standard, short survey instrument be developed for event attendees and visitors who go to the VICs and accommodation to complete. Tourism data at the LGA level is extremely limited and what is available is dated. It does not separate Gundagai from Cootamundra and this would make it difficult to assess the impact of the initiatives to develop the Cootamundra visitor economy.

Capturing information will enable Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council to identify its target markets. Postcodes of who is visiting/attending events plus how many days they have they stayed, what did they spend, where did they stay and how did they hear about the LGA can be easily captured on tablets. It takes minimal time but provides a wealth of information to formulate new event strategies and to understand who and where to direct marketing initiatives.

There is potential for Council to pick a small number of successful events that could be invested in that provide a good return on investment in terms of greater visitation and expenditure. These events would likely be already successful, have strong organisational capacity, be ready/willing to grow the event, able to provide a plan for how Council investment would grow visitation to the region.

TOURISM ASSETS AUDIT 2018

Gundagai

Asset	Type	Description
Bushman's Retreat Motor Inn	Accommodation	The Bushman's Retreat Motor Inn is located within a short drive of the town centre and offers comfortable accommodation as well as an outdoor pool, a laundry service and a dry cleaning service.
Church House B and B	Accommodation	Three bedrooms with ensuite, shared lounge and large modern kitchen. Situated 2 minutes from town centre of Gundagai.
Comfort Inn Sovereign Gundagai	Accommodation	Comfort Inn Sovereign Gundagai has 37 units and family suites.
Criterion Hotel	Accommodation	The Hotel features a large back deck area with a VIP lounge. The front bar features original oil painted murals of early Australian Bush-rangers and the Great Flood of 1852 that washed away "Old" Gundagai.
Darblara- The Coach House	Accommodation	Farm stay on the river in a restored 1870s coach house on property of Darbalara. One couple only, second room for second couple strictly by request.
Gabriel Motor Inn	Accommodation	The Gabriel Motor Inn is centrally located accommodation in Gundagai, 800 metres off the Hume Highway and is close to the shopping centre, golf course, swimming pool, pubs and services club.
Gundagai Cabins and Tourist Park	Accommodation	The Gundagai Cabins and Tourist Park is located two minutes drive off the Hume Highway, close to the centre of town. The business offers 14 park cabins all with internal ensuite, 40 undercover ensuite sites with television access, 30 powered sites and 50 unpowered sites located on the grass.
Gundagai Motel	Accommodation	The Gundagai Motel provides a range of accommodation and food services, including room service, breakfast room and access to BBQ facilities.
Gundagai River Caravan Park	Accommodation	The Gundagai River Caravan Park is situated on the banks of the Murrumbidgee River, within easy walking distance to the town centre and are the only river frontage accommodation in Gundagai.
Hillview	Accommodation	This business is situated just south of Gundagai along the Hume Highway, has been operating as a farm stay since 2006. It offers five cottages and one luxury "glamping" tent. It is not listed on AirBnB but has its own website.
Poet's Recall Motel and Restaurant	Accommodation	The Poet's Recall Motel & Restaurant is in the centre of Gundagai, located just off the Hume Highway. The business offers accommodation and a restaurant.
Tarrabandra Fishing Retreat	Accommodation	A 400 hectare livestock and crop farm south of Gundagai. Fishing is the main attraction for guests. Accommodation is provided in a four bedroom house.
Tuckerbox Motor Inn	Accommodation	The Tuckerbox Motor Inn is located just off the Hume Highway. It features free Wi-Fi, a solar heated swimming pool, BBQ area, and licenced room service dinner and breakfast are available.
Damasque Rose Oil Farm	Agritourism	Previously offered tours
Darbalara Farm Pty Ltd Poultry Farmers and Dealers	Agritourism	Sells eggs at Knight's Meats in Wagga Wagga and at Gundagai IGA.

Asset	Type	Description
Highfield Farm and Woodland (Mt Adrah)	Agritourism	This business sells lamb, eggs and kombucha at farmer's markets, offers farm tours on the State Government funded website Visit My Farm and has hosted events.
Anglican Flower Show	Event	Held in October at the Gundagai District Services Club. As well as the exhibition, includes a luncheon, plant stalls, cakes and craft.
Australian Busking Championships	Event	Gundagai hosts a Regional Busking Competition annually, the winners of which attend the Australian National Busking Championships.
Battle on the Bidgee	Event	Battle on the Bidgee is a Stockman's Challenge which includes stock handling, packhorse, whip crack, dry work pattern, bareback obstacle, horseshoeing & cross country, and other events. It is held annually over three days at the Gundagai showground.
Gundagai Show	Event	Held annually at the Gundagai showground, organised by the Gundagai Show Committee. Includes exhibitions of local produce and livestock, and various events and entertainment.
New Year Races	Event	Horse racing event held on New Year's Day at Gundagai Racecourse. Features a bookmaker's ring, catering, and bar facilities.
Rodeo	Event	The Gundagai Rodeo is a premier event on the national rodeo circuit, held at the Gundagai Rodeo Grounds. Includes full bar and canteen facilities.
Snake Gully Cup (Horse Race)	Event	Horse racing event which attracts thousands of racegoers each November at the Gundagai racecourse. Held over two days and includes fashions on the field.
Cafes	Food and beverage	There are a range of cafes and coffee shops in Gundagai.
Australian Road and Transport Heritage Centre	Heritage	National transport museum dedicated to the preservation, upkeep and display of vehicles and equipment. Open Thursday to Sunday 10am-3pm.
Bridges	Heritage	Prince Alfred Bridge built in 1866, first major crossing spanning the Murrumbidgee River. It is the longest timber viaduct in Australia and has been classified as essential to Australia's heritage by the National Trust. Railway Bridge completed in 1902, 819.4m long.
Captain Moonlite's Grave	Heritage	Bushranger 'Captain Moonlite' is buried near his friends in the North Gundagai Cemetery, under the shade of a eucalypt.
Dog on the Tuckerbox	Heritage	An internationally recognised Australian icon located 5 miles north of Gundagai near the Hume highway. Features a garden precinct with a café. Events benefitting a range of charities are held at the site throughout the year.
Gabriel Gallery	Heritage	Home to a private collection of historic photographs which are now internationally known as the Gabriel Collection. More than 150 photos from the collection are on permanent display in the Gabriel Gallery.
"The Great Rescue of 1852" Sculpture	Heritage	A larger than life-size, bronze sculpture to commemorate the 165th anniversary of the Great Flood of Gundagai in 1852.
Gundagai Gaol	Heritage	The Old Gundagai Gaol stands at the corner of First Avenue and Byron St, surrounded by a high wall of local slate with sandstone capping. Entertaining and informative self-guided audio tours of this heritage site are available daily between the times of 9:00am – 3:30pm.
Gundagai Old Mill Art and Cultural Centre	Heritage	This building is the oldest building in Gundagai and the only surviving representative of the original Gundagai township on the river flat.

Asset	Type	Description
Gundagai Rail Trial	Heritage	Not yet developed. Council has created plans for the development of a rail trail linking Gundagai and surrounding villages.
Gundagai Railway	Heritage	Displays within the railway station recall the travelling past when trains ran regularly on the now closed Cootamundra-Tumut branch line.
Gundagai Stagecoach Tours	Heritage	No longer in operation. A 1900s Coach ride to historic sites in Gundagai. Rides formerly held on last Sunday of every month, and by appointment.
Main Street Walking Tour	Heritage	2km stroll viewing many historic points of interest.
The National Pen Museum	Heritage	
Old Gundagai Common	Heritage	
Rusconi's Marble Masterpiece	Heritage	The Marble Masterpiece stands 1.2 metres high and is permanently on display at the Visitor Information Centre.
Gundagai Historical Museum	Heritage	The Gundagai Historical Museum is a treasure trove of memorabilia and displays. The Museum is managed entirely by volunteers. Open daily 9am-3pm.
Sundy in Gundy Market	Market	Various market stalls held on the last Sunday of the month from 9am-12pm in Sheridan Street, Gundagai.
Regional Sporting Grounds	Recreation	Gundagai features a range of sporting facilities
Crown Lands along the Murrumbidgee River – Canoe and Kayak Trail maps	Recreation	The trail maps cover 230km of river between the Burrinjuk Dam and Wagga Wagga. There are any Crown land reserves along the trail to camp overnight or stop for a lunch break.
Dog on the Tuckerbox Recreation Trail	Recreation	Walking/Cycling/Horse Riding Trail is a 4.6 km trail connecting the Dog on the Tuckerbox with the town of Gundagai.
Ellerslie Nature Reserve	Recreation	Covers an area of 1877 hectares containing six distinct forest ecosystems are found within the reserve and a diverse range of native animals. The reserve also contains a number of Aboriginal sites.
Gundagai River Walk	Recreation	A paved, shared, off-road cycle track links North and South Gundagai.
Lookouts	Recreation	Rotary Lookout, Mount Kimo, Mount Parnassus and Reno
The Murrumbidgee River	Recreation	The river plays host to all manner of activity - from water sports, to bushwalking.
Gundagai Emporium	Retail	Antique store situated on Sheridan Street in the centre of Gundagai.
Gundagai IGA	Retail	This business sells Darbalara Eggs from Darbalara Farm near Gundagai.
Remote Control Office	Services	Provides office/retail, shared office, and meeting spaces for professionals. Facilities include Wi-Fi printing, mail delivery, conference room, TV, and coffee.

Gundagai Visitor Information Centre	VIC services	The Gundagai Visitor Information Centre is located on the main street and provides visitor services including coach booking, as well as jail audio tours, sale of local produce and souvenirs, and houses the marble masterpiece on display.
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Cootamundra

Asset	Type	Description
Bradman Motor Inn	Accommodation	The Bradman Motor Inn consists of 20 units, situated in a quiet location, 1.5 kilometres south of the town centre on Sutton Street (the Olympic Highway).
Cootamundra Caravan Park	Accommodation	The Cootamundra Caravan Park offers a variety of accommodation, including motel rooms, ensuite cabins, onsite vans, and spacious powered and unpowered sites for caravanners and campers.
Cootamundra Gardens Motel	Accommodation	The Cootamundra Gardens Motel has 23 rooms set in a courtyard shape around the central pool and spa area and has an in-house licensed dining room and function centre.
Cootamundra Heritage Motel	Accommodation	The Cootamundra Heritage Motel is situated right on the golf course at Cootamundra. The property consists of 16 executive rooms, seven king spa rooms, one wheelchair access room and four two bedroom villas.
Elm and Wren	Accommodation	Guesthouse accommodation with 22 rooms, a short walk from the main street.
Southern Comfort Motor Inn	Accommodation	Motel offering queen, twin, and family rooms located approximately 1.7kms from the centre of town.
Wattle Tree Motel	Accommodation	The Wattle Tree Motel is the closest motel to the main Cootamundra central business district. It is only a short walk to the RSL Club, hotels, coffee shops, bakery, Post Office and Railway Station.
Woodie's Cottage	Accommodation	Located in central Cootamundra, Woodie's Cottage is a fully furnished, self-contained, four bedroom house which accommodates up to nine people.
Claron Park Produce and OBryan's Natural Products	Agritourism	The owner used to grow vegetables and native 'bush tucker' plants on her property in Cootamundra to be made into sauces and preserves. Business now closed.
Organic Farm Tour	Agritourism	Take the tour bus to visit two organic farms: Planted Cootamundra and The Patch Homegrown organic farm.
Antique Car Rally	Event	Held at the Airport annually
Bachelor and Spinster Ball	Event	Held annually every Easter Saturday at the showground.
Coota Beach Volley Ball Festival	Event	The annual Coota Beach Volleyball Festival is held every February. Games are held on the Saturday and Sunday, and the event includes beach sprints competition, music/entertainment, food and beverage stands. The event is free for spectators to attend.
Cootamundra Annual Classic (Cycling)	Event	Annual cycling event traditionally held on the last Saturday in August. It is one of the oldest open road races in New South Wales. The Cootamundra Annual Classic Recovery is a shortened version of the Classic course held on the Sunday.
Cootamundra Show	Event	The Cootamundra Show is held every year on the third weekend of October. The show is run by the Cootamundra Show Society, and includes pavilion classes, livestock competitions, the Showman's Guild (sideshow alley), trade stalls and family entertainment.
Drag Racing	Event	Held at the Airport annually
Father's Day Swap Meet	Event	The Cootamundra Antique Motor Club have been running their Father's Day Swap Meet for 26 years. Attracts crowds of 2,500 +. Held on the first Sunday in September.

Asset	Type	Description
Haycarters (Cycling)	Event	The First Coota Haycarters race was run as a fundraising interclub race. It has grown from a 40 field race to one of the biggest handicap races for its distance staged in NSW. The race is held annually on the 2nd Saturday of May The Haycarters Recovery is a shortened version of the Haycarters course held on the Sunday.
Local Unlimited	Event	Local Unlimited was a local food event held at The Arts Centre Cootamundra on 25 May 2018. It featured a presentation on the benefits of local food production by blogger Sophie Hansen and a tasting of local food from producers around Cootamundra.
Make it Local	Event	Make it Local is a quarterly shared dinner where attendees bring a plate of food made with ingredients sourced from a 100 mile radius of Cootamundra.
The Cootamundra Cup	Event	Horse racing event held annually at the Turf Club on Sunday of the long weekend in October. Includes covered betting ring and bar facilities.
Tubby's Ride and Family Day	Event	An event to recognise and appreciate the overwhelming support of the Cancer Council. The ride will start from two locations: Queanbeyan and Cootamundra, with other riders joining in on along the way. Includes a barbecue lunch, coffee van, jumping castle, face painting, kids activity table, fire engine on display, raffles, car and motorcycle display, fund raising merchandise.
Corridor 37 Cafe	Food and Beverage	This cafe in Cootamundra buys produce from backyard growers and sells it in its store Providore 37.
Dusty Road Coffee Roasters	Food and Beverage	Dusty Road Coffee Roasters is a coffee shop located on Cooper Street. They offer a collection of locally-roasted coffee blends for sale.
Planted Cootamundra Wholefoods Cafe	Food and Beverage	Planted Cootamundra is a wholefoods cafe specialising in local organic seasonal food. It also offers local sauces, cooking oils and jams for sale.
Aboriginal Girls Training Home	Heritage	The Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls' Training Home provides an example of the historical practice of Aboriginal wards of the State being denied their Aboriginality and cultural heritage which was the subject of a National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from the Families in 1997 (Commission of Inquiry).
Captain's Walk	Heritage	The Captains Walk features 42 bronze sculptures of Australian Test Cricket Captains, along with Unaarrimim the leading Aboriginal player in the first Australian cricket team to tour England in 1868. It is located in the Jubilee Park
Milestones sculptures in Cootamundra	Heritage	The sculptures are in two locations - in Mackay Park at Wallendbeen and in Parker Street next to the Catholic School in Cootamundra. These fibre optic lit sculptures were opened in 1997 by the then Governor General and are very beautiful and significant.
Railway Station	Heritage	Cootamundra railway precinct is of state significance as a major railway complex on the Main Southern line dating from a period of rapid railway expansion in NSW. Generally in good condition.
Sir Donald Bradman's Birthplace Museum	Heritage	The Donald Bradman's Birthplace Museum is located at the building in which Donald Bradman was born in 1908. The building has been restored and contains a collection of memorabilia. It is open 9 to 5, 7 days a week and offers souvenirs for sale.
WWII Ampol Aviation Fuel Depot	Heritage	The site elements surviving from World War II. The site has been disused since 1995 when Caltex closed it down. The key original elements built during World War II - notably the fuel tanks - remain intact and in fair to good condition.

Asset	Type	Description
Cootamundra Heritage and Visitor Information Centre	Heritage	The Heritage Centre (former Railway Barracks Railway Complex) houses an eclectic display of historical items relevant to Cootamundra. and district in a large main gallery (former dining room), kitchen and 14 smaller galleries which house items including locally built motorcycle from 1912.
Cootamundra Girl Guide's Sunday Market	Market	The markets are held on the second Sunday of the month at Fisher Park on Bourke Street in Cootamundra from 9am – 1pm. Some local producers/vendors.
Apex Park	Recreation	RV Dumping Point
Camp Grounds	Recreation	Jindalee National Park, Cootamundra Caravan Park, Pioneer Park, Buthungra Dam Reserve.
Cootamundra Country Club	Recreation	The Cootamundra Country Club is the oldest golf club in NSW since 1895. Offers sporting facilities for golf, bowls and croquet. Social activities include Bridge, Bingo, TAB, poker machines and a bar. Conference Room Facilities are available.
Jindalee National Park	Recreation	Jindalee National Park is located approximately 10 kilometres north of Cootamundra and covers an area of 1076 hectares
Migurra Reserve	Recreation	Activities at the reserve include bird watching, nature walks, Gardiners Lookout viewing place and picnic area.
Parks	Recreation	A range of parks are available in town
Rugby Club Grandstand	Recreation	Host games
Swimming Pool	Recreation	Cootamundra/Gundagai Council operates an Olympic Pool complex for the benefit of both residents and visitors.
Ulandra Nature Reserve	Recreation	Ulandra Nature Reserve was created in June 1981 to protect the Cootamundra wattle. It covers an area of 3931ha.
Bethungra Dam	Recreation	Bethungra dam is located near the settlement of Bethungra. Fishing and camping available.
Regional Sporting Grounds	Recreation	A range of sporting facilities including 9 cricket ovals, and recently upgraded tennis courts
Mountain Bike Track, Little Hurley Lane	Recreation	An extended series of mostly single track and a few fire trails behind the Cootamundra Country Club and Golf Course. Can be easily linked up with Pioneer Park via connecting fire trail for an extended ride.
The Arts Centre Cootamundra	Recreation	The Arts Centre Cootamundra is a community built, organised and controlled arts facility. It exists to provide a venue and facilities for Arts activities in the Cootamundra Gundagai Regional Council area.
Cootamundra Art and Craft Centre	Recreation/Event	The Cootamundra Art and Craft Centre offers locally handmade items for sale. There is a weekly gathering of a craft group on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday.
Cootamundra Butchery	Retail	Sells locally grown meat, including a breed of lamb called Texel which is produced at the property Hillside in Cootamundra.
Cootamundra SUPA IGA	Retail	Cootamundra IGA sells beef from Sunny Point farm in Oberon, locally produced olive oil and Harden Honey.
Quality Junk	Retail	Antique and collectibles shop located near Planted café in Cootamundra.
The Patch	Retail	This business sells eggs and seedlings at the Riverina Producer's Market in Wagga Wagga, Murrumbateman Village Markets and Cootamundra Sunday Markets. Potential to offer farm tours and set up a farm shop selling seedlings in the future.

Villages and Rural

Asset	Type	Description
Adjungbilly		
Community Hall	Recreation	Holds community meetings and schooling events. Located at the primary school.

Coolac		
Coolac Cabins and Farmstay	Accommodation	The cabin and farm stay business offers three cabins for hire on a 90 acre beef cattle farm.
The Rabbit's Hut	Accommodation	Offers accommodation in a two bedroom house on a cattle station bordered by the Murrumbidgee River.
The Beehive Hotel	Accommodation/ Recreation	The Coolac Beehive hotel offers meals, accommodation, and hosts a range of events.
Coolac Memorial Hall	Heritage	Coolac Memorial Hall was erected in memory of those who have served in conflicts in which Australia has been involved. The hall was erected around 1959 to replace an earlier hall that burnt to the ground the previous year.

Muttama		
Carinyah Homestead	Accommodation	A four bedroom farmhouse situated between Cootamundra and Muttama on a crop and livestock farm. It is listed on Airbnb as 'Homestead der Farm Carinyah'.
Wired Lab Festival	Events	The Wired Lab is an artist led organisation evolving interdisciplinary art practices in rural Australia. The 2017 Wired Open Day Festival was held in Muttama, showcasing the 'agri(culture)' project, a collaborative series with artists collaborating with farmers to explore emerging and ancient agricultural systems.
Muttama Recreation Ground Memorial Gateway	Heritage	2 Brick pillars either side of steel ramp with Memorial plaques for World War I attached to Left Hand Pillar and World War II attached to Right Hand Pillar.

Nangus		
Kimo Estate	Accommodation	Luxury accommodation, wedding and reception venue in Nangus on a 7,000ac sheep and cattle farm. It offers onsite accommodation for up to 28 people in four buildings.
Nangus Public Hall War Memorial and Gates	Heritage	War memorial hall with decorative blue and white 'sunburst' gates, displaying "Lest We Forget" in the metal work. Inside the grounds, a granite roll of honour, mounted on a stone. This memorial is displayed in an area framed by a garden arch
Popped up at Kimo	Event	Popped up at Kimo was held in November 2018 and featured a range of pop up shops at Kimo Estate.

Asset	Type	Description
Stockinbingal		
Balcraggon Accommodation	Accommodation	Country house accommodation situated 800 metres off the Burley Griffin Way. New and modern cabin surrounded by native trees can comfortably accommodate up to eight people. Features an outdoor swimming pool and children's playground.
Village Fair	Events	Held annually at Elwoods Hall, for the community and surrounding areas. Includes market stalls, food and beverage, and various displays.
Bowling Club	Recreation	Provides social and community interaction, e.g. lawn bowls, croquet tournaments and a meeting point for groups such as the Bike Riding Club, the Stop and Mingle Club, Housie nights and Foody Theme nights. Run by the community and volunteers.
Commercial Hotel	Recreation	Built in 1892 to cater for the Cobb & Co coaches which used the village as a staging post for the trip from Harden to Temora. Now permanently closed.
Ellwood's Hall	Recreation	Community function centre and a meeting place used all year round. Suitable for markets, parties, trivia nights and fairs.

Tumblong		
Paterson's Gundagai Vineyard Cellar Door	Agritourism	The cellar door has now closed, and the owner sells most of his stock to China online.
Tumblong State Conservation Area	Heritage	Tumblong State Conservation Area covers 746 hectares and lies 30 kilometres northwest of Tumut and 15 kilometres north of Adelong on the south west slopes of New South Wales.
Tumblong Tavern	Recreation	Café meals and coffee available, great atmosphere and beer garden. Bar Open 7 Days

Wallendbeen		
Wallendbeen Park Farm	Accommodation	A 150 acre farm producing mixed breed pigs and Speckled Park cattle. Farm stay accommodation is available in a cottage renovated from a former schoolhouse for up to three guests.
Station Master's House	Accommodation	3 Bedrooms, large enclosed garden, as well as a newly paved terrace and outdoor setting. There is opportunity to develop the house into a commercial facility.
Allawah Old Methodist Church	Accommodation	Allawah is a restored 100 year old Methodist church, located in Wallendbeen. It provides accommodation suited for couples.
Wallendbeen Hotel	Recreation	Originally a Cobb and Co office and stables, the Hotel has been operating since 1982. Currently serves as the hub of the Wallendbeen Community, offering drinks, as well as meals and accommodation on the weekend.

APPENDICES

A – Strategic documents review summary

B – Economic and Tourism profile

C – Survey results, forums and consultation commentaries

D – Tourism Committee Workshop summaries

E – Previous consultation by Council summary

WESTERN RESEARCH INSTITUTE

WRI is a regional development research organisation located in Bathurst, New South Wales. WRI holds a wealth of knowledge on employment, business development and investment issues affecting regional Australia. It has worked with Commonwealth, State and Local Governments and industry groups on numerous investment and development programs in regional areas. WRI has strong credentials in business and commercial market consulting and applied economic modelling including input-output analysis, shift-share, agribusiness and regional socio-economic surveys and analysis

Ms Kathy Woolley – Chief Executive Officer

GAICD, MIIA, Change Management Qualification (AGSM), Public Participation Certification (IAP2) BComm (Economics- with merit) (UWO), Cert IV Training and Assessment.

Kathy joined the WRI team in February 2018 having previously worked on a variety of boards and in senior management roles across sectors including media, health, education, regional development, government, event management, research and sales.

For a number of years Kathy also ran a consultancy specialising in services for not for profit entities, focusing on best practice techniques in management and governance.

With formal qualifications in change management, company directorship, community engagement, economics and training, and well developed skills in human resources, information technology, finance and economic development, Kathy offers a unique skill set to assist with most business needs.

This is the second time Kathy has worked for WRI, previously fulfilling the role of Business Development Manager. A position as a research officer for a similar organisation in the Illawarra rounds off the experience in economic modelling and research.

Mr Alistair MacLennan – Senior Research Consultant

BA Political Economy, First Class Honours (UNE)

Having served in a variety of parliamentary, public service and private sector roles, Alistair provides brings a wealth of research experience to WRI. Alistair has well developed skills in data analysis, economics and business and has a wide understanding of government. In addition, Alistair also has experience in policy development in the energy sector, where he engaged with industry, government agencies and Non Government Organisations to inform policy. Alistair's experience in engaging with clients, stakeholders and the public assists WRI to fully understand its clients' needs and provide tailored research.

Mr Chris Mullen – Research Officer

BEcon UNE

Chris is an Economics graduate from the University of New England currently undertaking a Master of Economics course. Throughout his degree, Chris has gained skills in benefit-cost analysis, business statistics and economic modelling. Chris has a great interest and passion for macro and microeconomics, policy analysis, and development economics.

Having grown up on a property on the mid-north coast, Chris has a strong understanding of life in regional Australia and the issues rural communities face.

Ms Dale Curran – Executive Officer

BA ANU

Dale is responsible for all administrative processes at WRI including executive support, finance, and management of the Board of Directors and maintenance of policies. She has worked in a variety of roles at WRI, including Fieldwork Supervisor and Research Assistant, and has worked on several community and business surveys. Dale brings a high level of organisational skill to her role as Executive Officer.

Ms Heather Waters – Administration Officer

Heather joins WRI in a Business Traineeship through Skillset and brings strong skills in customer service from her experience working in the retail industry. Raising a family in regional NSW, Heather is passionate about building strong rural communities and help businesses grow.



