

Visitor Information Services Review in final stages

The community has been asked to provide feedback on its preferred option for how Visitor Information Services (VIS) should be delivered during the final stage of public consultation.

There are five options to consider, which were developed following three periodic stages of the VIS Review:

- Maintain the Current Operating Model
- Increase Digital Service Offering
- Integrated Model
- New VIC Location
- Close VICs and increase volunteer offering

Each option is outlined in detail under the Options section in the Visitor Information Service 2016-17 Options and Recommendations Report available on Council's website. Council will make a decision on the preferred option at the 28 June Council meeting.

Director Development Services, Bryan Sword, said the purpose of the VIS Review was to consider the current situation and identify the most suitable service profile which offered the best value and was consistent with visitor needs and current trends.

Council currently operates two fully accredited Visitor Information Centres (VICs) based at Coal Creek Community Park and Museum (Korumburra) and Stockyard Gallery (Foster). They perform an important tourism promotion function and analysis undertaken through this review highlighted their broad purpose.

VICs increase awareness of local activities, accommodation availability and encourage visitors to stay in the region longer. South Gippsland's current visitor services model also includes an accommodation booking service and VIS staff team provide additional marketing and promotional support to both Council's Economic Development and Tourism team and Prom Country Regional Tourism.

"The five future service model opportunities were identified following extensive consultation around industry and local visitation trends, usage and perceptions, booking services and technology considerations," Mr Sword explained.

"For example, with a noted increase in smartphone usage and access to new popular information websites, the findings suggested that there was an opportunity to further develop and improve accessibility to the Visit Prom Country website.

"Consideration should also be given to a more appropriate organisational structure which offers a more integrated, consistent service delivery and rather than continue with the current outdated booking system, there is an opportunity for Council to adopt a 'referral' model whereby VIC staff provide advice and encourage visitors to make bookings direct on their smart devices."

By completing this review in consultation with the community, Council will ensure that future visitor information services are being delivered as efficiently and effectively as possible, while meeting customer and industry needs, and delivering value to ratepayers.

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For media enquiries, please contact the Communications team on 5662 9200
South Gippsland Shire Council, 9 Smith St. (Private Bag 4), Leongatha 3953
communications@southgippsland.vic.gov.au
www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au