

Urban Enterprise

**Prom Country  
Visitor Information Centre  
Location Feasibility Study**

**July 2006**

*Prepared for*

**South Gippsland Shire Council**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Background

The Prom Country Visitor Information Centre (VIC) is Level 1 Accredited, managed by the South Gippsland Shire Council's tourism unit. The Centre is located next to the Coal Creek Heritage Village, on the periphery of Korumburra and has been established as the primary distribution point of information/ collateral for the Prom Country tourism product.

For the past eight years the South Gippsland Shire Council combined with industry pressure has recognised that the current VIC is not effective in attracting walk-in visitation to the centre.

This study has been funded as part of the Bushfire Recovery project, to independently assess the most suitable location of the Prom Country VIC. The study aims to identify the optimal location for the VIC in the long-term and assess the suitability of the existing VIC location in its ability to deliver its services.

### Role and Benefits of a Visitor Information Centre

An investigation into the role and benefits of VIC's was undertaken to examine the importance of VIC's to tourism and the impact that location plays in the effectiveness of VIC's. The key findings of the investigation include:

- Effective VICs contribute to increasing tourism yield i.e. visitors staying longer and spending more.
- The location of the VIC can play an important role in increasing the number of walk in visitors using the centre. A highly visible and central location for a VIC should be selected if the aim is to draw visitors into the towns and if higher levels of "walk-in" traffic are targeted.
- Good directional signage to a VIC can increase visitation/ usage of a VIC.
- Retailing of merchandise from a VIC can assist in the region's promotion and add to the tourism experience.
- The Prom Country VIC is currently a Level 1 Accredited VIC. Whilst it is desirable to retain a level 1 Accredited VIC in the region, the South Gippsland Shires tourism unit should continue to provide other VIC satellite services across the region to support the VIC. Currently, Prom Country VIC maintains brochure stands in Loch (Hard Loch Cafe), Leongatha, Mirboo North (Mobil Service Station), Meenyan, Fish Creek (Roo Fuel), Sandy Point (General Store), Tarwin Lower (General Store), Welshpool (Transaction Centre) and Foster (Stockyard Gallery).

### Tourism Overview

Visitors generate a significant economic benefit to the South Gippsland Shire. It is estimated that visitors to the Shire spend a total of \$141 million annually. The Prom Country region attracts and estimated 1.1 million visitors annually. Of these visitors around half (577,000) are overnight visitors and 573,000 are daytrip visitors.

Significantly, 73% of these visitors are from Melbourne and almost 1 third of all visitors to the Prom Country region use the "Internet" to plan their trip.

The key tourism product features in Prom Country were identified as follows:

- Wilsons Prom
- Strzelecki Ranges
- Ocean Beaches
- Villages
- Food and Wine- Farming and Agriculture
- Events

The majority of the visitors to Prom Country are accessing the tourism destinations via the South Gippsland Highway, the main link between South Gippsland and Melbourne. Further, the most significant tourism product in South Gippsland is Wilsons Prom and the accommodation stock in the Shire is mainly concentrated to the villages along the main roads between Melbourne and Wilsons Prom.

### **Strategic Context**

As part of this feasibility study, policies and strategies at the local, regional and state level were examined. The key conclusions drawn from this analysis were that there are many benefits to having a centrally location VIC. These include:

- Rationalisation and centralisation of centres;
- Creating better integration of centres with the communities in which they are based; and
- Creating a spatial distribution of centres at each level;

### **Existing Situation**

There has been a steady increase in the number of phone enquires made to the Prom Country VIC and large increases in hits to the regional website. This suggests that there has been an increase in awareness and interest in travel to the Prom Country region, however, this has not been reflected in the number of walk in visitors. The number of walk in visitors has remained low.

Only a small proportion of visitors to the Prom Country are using the VIC. The importance that location can play in attracting visitors to the centre is evident from the dramatically increased visitor numbers to the Wangaratta VIC. The relocation of the Wangaratta VIC from a city fringe location to a CBD location has had a significant impact on the number of visitors coming to the centre. The location for the VIC in the commercial and retail centre has therefore significantly increased visitor's usage of the centre.

Compared to other VICs (including Wangaratta, Sale and Phillip Island) throughout Victoria the Prom Country VIC has very few walk-in visitors. Further, visitors to these other VICs have generally been increasing in their number, compared to the static use of the Prom Country VIC.

## Consumer Preferences

To gain a greater appreciation of the relationship between location of the VIC and a visitors propensity to use the VIC a visitor survey was carried out in the South Gippsland Shire. This survey aimed to identify visitor location preferences. The key findings from these surveys were:

- 23% of visitors who normally utilise VIC's to plan their trips are currently not utilising the Prom Country VIC;
- The majority of people using the Prom Country VIC are people who have previously used the centre;
- Signage is crucial in leading visitors to the VIC as it is not only the main form of attracting visitors to the VIC, but is also a significant motivator for visitors to visit the centre. However, signage was the main area where visitors felt the Prom Country VIC lagged. The ease to find the centre and the location of the VIC were also areas that visitors rated as poor.
- The main point of entry for visitors to the Prom Country is via the South Gippsland Highway entering from the westerly direction. This is the main road linking the region with Melbourne. There are also some visitors entering the region along the South Gippsland Highway, from an easterly direction, the Strzelecki Highway and the Bass Coast Highway.
- Satisfaction with the VIC may be improved by providing an ATM, Internet access, brochures featuring specific activities, a seating lounge, visual displays and luggage lockers.

## Location Options

Visitors to the region mainly access Prom Country via the South Gippsland Highway, from the northwest of the Shire. The main destinations are predominately in the south of the Shire, including Wilsons Prom. Similarly, the majority of the accommodation stock also is located in the southern villages (i.e. Foster and Yanakie). Having regard to the information outlined in the previous section, a location on the South Gippsland Highway (or the equivalent main roads connected to the Highway within the townships, i.e. Foster Road or Main Street, Foster) is preferred.

These factors suggest that the townships of Meeniyah and Foster are the best location for a VIC.

Meeniyah is the most strategically placed town, as the majority of visitors to the region would travel through the town at some point in their journey.

Foster has the advantages that it is a larger township than Meeniyah and is located closer to the key attractions and accommodation stock within the Shire. Through appropriate signage at the major intersection points (in particular the turn off at Meeniyah for Wilsons Prom) visitors could potentially be drawn to Foster as they travel to the key tourism destinations.



## Assessment of Site Options

A number of site options were assessed against a set of location criteria. The location of the VIC in Foster or Meeniyán was a fundamental consideration for the assessment of the individual sites. The following sites have been identified as candidates for the VIC and have been assessed against the criteria:

Option 1- the existing VIC in Korumburra

Option 2- the Courthouse, Leongatha

Option 3- Meeniyán – Whitelaw Street – Old Health Centre site

Option 4- Stockyard Gallery, Foster

Option 5- Pearl Park, Foster

Option 6- Foster War Memorial Arts Centre (East Wing), Foster

Option 7- The Triangle site- Corner South Gippsland Hwy & Toora Rd, Foster

These site options are not a definitive list and additional sites may be found in the future. Any additional sites that are proposed can also be assessed against the criteria.

Each site is then given a “score” out of ten against each of the criteria.

## Recommendations

The most suitable location for the Prom Country VIC is within the township of Foster, or Meeniyán. Foster is located close to the major tourism products within the Prom Country and with the support from an appropriate signage strategy most visitors could be drawn to a VIC located in Foster. Meeniyán is also strategically placed to capture visitors as they drive through the Shire. Of the sites proposed the most suitable include;

- The Senior Citizens Club in Foster,
- Pearl Park in Foster,
- The site in Meeniyán

The Senior Citizens Club in Foster is in a highly visible location within close proximity to the commercial centre of Foster. Locating within the existing building would only require fit out and as a result capital costs would be significantly lower than other relocation options. The proximity close to the commercial centre of Foster also is likely to generate increased spending in the town by visitors. However, this option would be dependant on the relocation of the existing users of the site to a more suitable location and further negotiation would be required.

Alternatively, the redevelopment of the Pearl Park site with a new VIC, which would require significant capital investment, may be a long-term solution. This would depend on major capital investment and is not likely to be possible in the short-term.

The Meeniyán site has the potential to provide a suitable location. However, this alternative would require significant capital investment as it would require an extension to the existing building to increase the floor space.

Clearly, additional feasibility work will be required to investigate the capital costs and use of the proposed options for the relocation of the VIC. This would need to be undertaken prior to determining the most suitable site. It should also be noted that if the VIC is relocated to another location, the existing VIC (or the neighbouring Coal Creek Park) should continue to display visitor information. This could be a level 3 VIC or a smaller satellite service.

If none of the above options can be achieved in the short term (i.e. next three years) then it is recommended that rather than relocating the centre to a smaller or less suitable location (such as the Stockyard Gallery) the VIC should remain in its existing location.

However, the following works should be undertaken to improve the VIC:

- Removal of the vegetation to increase visibility to the centre.
- Undertaking the essential maintenance works (rewiring, painting etc.)
- Repair/ replacement of the benches and tables in the outdoor area.
- Extension to the existing building (to increase floor area providing additional storage, office and display areas).
- Additional signage leading to the VIC.

# **1. INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Background**

Urban Enterprise Pty Ltd, urban planners, tourism planners and land economists were commissioned by the South Gippsland Shire Council to prepare a location study for the Prom Country Visitor Information Centre (VIC).

The South Gippsland Shire Council's tourism unit provides a range of tourism services both internal and external to the Shire.

South Gippsland Shire Council operates a Level 1 Accredited Visitor Information Centre, which is the primary distribution point of tourism information. The Centre provides a range of services including a central booking service (free accommodation booking service) and plays an important role as the first point of contact for visitors to the region.

For the past eight years the South Gippsland Shire Council combined with industry pressure has recognised the need to consider alternative options for the location of the Visitor Information Centre. The location of the current VIC is not effective in attracting walk in visitation to the centre.

Many reports have been written and options considered. Many of these options have been considered as a result of political pressures at the time or that it suited another purpose. The decision has not been made on merit alone.

Part of the Bushfire Recovery project funding was allocated to do an independent study on the most suitable location of the Prom Country Visitor Information Centre .

This feasibility study is required to assess the long-term suitability of the current location of the VIC, and its ability to deliver its services.

## **1.2 Study Objective**

The objective of the study is to develop a comprehensive location solution for the sustainable delivery of tourism services by the South Gippsland Shire's tourism unit.

## **1.3 Study Approach**

In the past location options for the Prom Country VIC have been identified largely from opportunities that have arisen. The identification of options has had to take into account Council resources for capital works. The approach we have taken in this study is to identify the most appropriate location for a Level 1 Accredited VIC in the Shire, having regard to travel patterns, location of major attractions and the location of accommodation stock.

## **1.4 Study Methodology**

To undertake the assessment of the Prom Country VIC the project consultants undertook the following tasks:

- A review of the existing situation analysis for the current Level 1 visitor information centre at Korumburra.
- Identification of the Council resources available for visitor information services;

- A comparison with other visitor information centres eg: Wonthaggi, Phillip Island, Sale, Traralgon, Dromana and Wangaratta;
- Preparation of an intercept visitor survey with input from South Gippsland Shire (for South Gippsland Shire to carry out), identifying relevant indicators of visitor behaviour. This intercept survey consisted of a one-page questionnaire which included questions on the following
  - Visitor origin;
  - Entry point into the Shire;
  - Location of stay and length of stay;
  - If visitors normally use VIC to plan their trips;
  - What contact visitors had with the Prom Country VIC;
  - How visitors learnt about the VIC;
  - What assistance they received from the VIC; and
  - How visitors would rate the services of the Prom Country VIC.
- An analysis of visitor survey data;
- Identification of location options;
- An assessment of location options and identification of preferred option(s);
- Identification of indicative capital costs (including land, construction and fit-out) of the preferred option and investigations of possible funding opportunities including grant programs.

## 2. ROLE AND BENEFITS OF A VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE

### 2.1 Overview

Victoria has over 68 Accredited Visitor Information Centres (VIC'S). The Centres are generally located in prominent positions on touring routes or within towns and are denoted by the national VIC trademark symbol - an italic yellow 'i' on a blue background.<sup>1</sup>

The majority of research undertaken on Australian VIC's has been commissioned by Victoria University and Tourism Alliance Victoria (TAV), however, the body of literature available on this subject remains very limited. Research currently available has made no recommendations in regards to the optimum locations for a VIC, nor has it documented the relationship between tourists and the region they visit.

Australian studies (NSW 1998, Qld 1999 and Tas 2000) have suggested that tourists' behaviour may be changed after visiting a VIC<sup>2</sup>. However, these studies have not explored the conditions under which behaviour may be changed. Studies have suggested that the critical factors include:

- The nature of the travel party;
- The extent of pre-planning that went into the trip;
- Familiarity with the region;
- Characteristics of the trip.<sup>3</sup>

There are no existing studies available on the relationship between location of the VIC and a visitor's propensity to use the VIC.

### 2.2 VIC accreditation and other VIC services

Visitor Information Centres (VICs) are designed to enrich the experience of Visitors to a region and to encourage them to stay longer. This is achieved through informing the visitor of what to do and see and where to stay. Research on VICs in Victoria, New South Wales and Canada has shown that VICs increase the amount of money visitors spend in a region and they contribute to dispersal.

As there are few barriers to starting up a business in the tourism industry it is essential for the industry to have a benchmarking tool. Accreditation ensures that a commitment to professionalism and good business practice is applied. Accreditation is essentially a set of standards that have been established by and for the tourism industry covering good business practice and customer service. A 1-3 level Accreditation system has been established for VIC's.

The ability to attract funding and the range of information displayed is impacted by the level of accreditation of the VIC and only Visitor Information Centres accredited under this Program will be:

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<sup>1</sup> CVTC Website- [www.cvtc.com.au](http://www.cvtc.com.au), accessed on 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2006

<sup>2</sup> Deery, M. Jago, L. Daughery, S. Carson, D. Adams, K. 2003, *'Improving the Yield of Tourism in Regional Areas: The Role of Visitor Information Centres,'* Australia CRC for Sustainable Tourism Pty Ltd, Southern Cross University & Victoria University, Australia

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

- Recognised as official network outlets
- Eligible to receive and display Tourism Victoria jigsaw brochures
- Eligible to become involved in statewide initiatives such as electronic linking, booking services, funding opportunities
- Included in Tourism Victoria publications
- Eligible to use the accreditation logo and Visitor Information Network i-sign symbol
- Included in training programs
- Included in promotion of the network to the travelling public and the industry
- Eligible for membership of Tourism Alliance Victoria
- Involved in developing visitor services throughout Victoria
- Included in the Tourism Victoria internet site

### 2.3 The Role of VIC's in Increasing Tourism Yield

Regional destinations invest heavily in VIC's as a key component of their tourism services and product promotion strategies. Visitor Information Centres are considered to be one of the key measures in increasing tourism yield. Increased yield is measured in extending the visitors' length of stay and increasing their expenditure. However, finding out how much VIC information increases tourism yield is highly complex and while research generally shows an increase there are discrepancies over the extent of the increase.

Research undertaken found that<sup>4</sup>:

- 13% of respondents stayed additional nights because of VIC information
- 21% took additional tours
- 56% visited additional attractions.
- The overall additional economic contribution of VIC activity to NSW was estimated at over \$57,000,000, (however to attain this figure a multiplier was used and thus the results must be treated with some caution).<sup>5</sup>
- Research undertaken in Canberra in 2003 found that the VIC was influential in extending the length of stay of more than one third of visitors, and had a similar positive influence to undertake more activities.<sup>6</sup>
- The Nova Scotia Tourism Partnership Council made another estimate in 2001, that visitors spend 11% more if informed by a trained professional at a Visitor Information Centre.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Advance Tourism (13 March 2003) Visitor Information Centre- can they operate at a Profit?

<sup>5</sup>Deery, M. Jago, L. Daughery, S. Carson, D. Adams, K. 2003, *'Improving the Yield of Tourism in Regional Areas: The Role of Visitor Information Centres,'* Australia CRC for Sustainable Tourism Pty Ltd, Southern Cross University & Victoria University, Australia

<sup>6</sup> CRC for Sustainable Tourism Website- [www.regionaltourism.com.au](http://www.regionaltourism.com.au), accessed on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2006

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

## 2.4 Location

Location has many important functions in relation to the VIC.

TAV research has found that if you want to draw visitors into your town then a CBD location should be considered. Such a location generates a high level of walk-in traffic, allowing an enquiry to be converted into a sale.<sup>8</sup> South Gippsland Shire has a major town in Leongatha and other large towns in Korumburra and Foster. It does not have a pre-eminent CBD such as Ballarat or Bendigo. The TAV further recommend that the ideal location would be one where the visitor is exposed to it upon arrival at the destination. However, TAV also argue that being exposed to signage is just as satisfactory and that travellers will follow these signs to wherever the VIC is located.

Fallon and Kirwoken also argue that if a VIC has good signage, is placed in a location near attractions and is of a distinct and innovative design, then it provides an opportunity to enhance the tourist experience.<sup>9</sup>

Evidence collected and analysed by Urban Enterprise in a number of studies indicates that where Visitor Information Centres have improved their location (i.e. more centrally located, greater exposure), improved directional signage and/or upgraded their facilities and services (including the addition of interpretative displays), substantial increases in visitation to the VIC has resulted.

For example:

- Visitation to Bendigo Information Centre increased by around 265% over a three year period after the relocation of the Centre to the former Post Office building;
- Visitation to Castlemaine Visitor Information Centre increased by around 260% over 12 months after the re- construction and relocation of the Centre;
- The Warburton Visitor Information Centre experienced an increase in visitors of 150% after reconstruction and relocation;
- The Portland Visitor Information Centre visitor numbers increased by 214% after the development of the new Centre on the foreshore;
- The Great Ocean Road Visitor Information Centre (Apollo Bay) visitor numbers increased by 180% over a 12 month period after the development of the new Centre on the foreshore.

## 2.5 Users of the VIC

43% of VIC users are adult couples, with 21.5% being family groups. Both of these groups are primarily self-drive. Results also indicate that the main age group of these visitors is evenly distributed between 35-54 years.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> CVTC Website- [www.cvtc.com.au](http://www.cvtc.com.au), accessed on the 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2006

<sup>9</sup> Fallon, L. & Kirwoken, K. 2002 *'Key Elements of Effective Sustainable Visitor Centres: An Evaluation of Strahan Visitor Centre'*, Tasmania, Australia CRC for Sustainable Tourism Pty Ltd, Australia

<sup>10</sup> Deery, M. Jago, L. Daughery, S. Carson, D. Adams, K. 2003, *'Improving the Yield of Tourism in Regional Areas: The Role of Visitor Information Centres'*, Australia CRC for Sustainable Tourism Pty Ltd, Southern Cross University & Victoria University, Australia

Research has also found that a high proportion of visitors to tourism regions are repeat visitors. Of the repeat visitors, 58% have visited the region between 1 and 4 times and 42% have visited 5 times or more. The research further indicates that 26% of these repeat visitors have used Visitor Information Centres in the past. This is significant in terms of opportunities for the VICs to develop customer management strategies over time.<sup>11</sup>

In terms of servicing customers, research has found that a VIC needs to provide a high quality service and staff should make connections with customers and relay their own personal experiences.<sup>12</sup> Tierney also found that the yield would be increased further if the staff members of the VIC were effectively communicating with their visitors.

Tierney also found that after access to staff knowledge and information from the VIC, 35% of respondents were encouraged to visit regions surrounding the VIC region. This was confirmed by the Canberra study where nearly 40% of respondents sourced information about surrounding regions from the Canberra and Region Visitor Centre and stated that this information would affect their visit to other regions.<sup>13</sup>

## 2.6 Retailing

Many Visitor Information Centres also have a retailing function, aimed at displaying and selling local products that reflect the region's tourism strengths. This is important in two ways:

- Firstly, profits derived from merchandising provides an additional revenue stream to offset operating expenditure; and
- Secondly, the display of local products promotes the tourism region and can entice visitors to explore the region. The purchase of local products has been found to be important components of the tourist experience.<sup>14</sup> The role of food and wine particularly enhances tourism and assists in creating memorable experiences. These products are often shared with other people such as friends and family and during this time experiences are reflected upon.<sup>15</sup> Respondents indicating they would stay longer also rated their satisfaction with the availability of local merchandise more highly.

## 2.7 Future Trends

Long term planning for visitor information services needs to consider how the tourism industry will continue to change.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> CRC for Sustainable Tourism Website- [www.regionaltourism.com.au](http://www.regionaltourism.com.au), 'Improving Yield of Tourism and Regional Areas the Role of Visitor Information Centres' accessed on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2006

<sup>14</sup> Deery, M. Jago, L. Daughery, S. Carson, D. Adams, K. 2003, 'Improving the Yield of Tourism in Regional Areas: The Role of Visitor Information Centres,' Australia CRC for Sustainable Tourism Pty Ltd, Southern Cross University & Victoria University, Australia

<sup>15</sup> CRCfor Sustainable Tourism Website -

<http://www.crctourism.com.au/CRCBookshop/documents/newsletter/Vol2no1/Iss103.htm>, accessed on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2006



For example the Internet is fast becoming the main source of information used in trip planning with “approximately 38% of visitors, who plan their trip, using the Internet”.<sup>16</sup> From the Prom Country Economic Impact Study –March 2004, almost one third of all visitors to the South Gippsland Shire used the Internet to plan their trip. This is also evident in the increase of “hits” to the Prom Country Tourism website.

## **2.8 Conclusions**

Effective VICs contribute to increasing tourism yield i.e. visitors staying longer and spending more.

There are no existing studies available on the relationship between location of the VIC and a visitor’s propensity to use the VIC.

The location of the VIC can play an important role in increasing the number of walk in visitors using the centre. A highly visible and central location for a VIC should be selected if the aim is to draw visitors into the towns and if higher levels of “walk-in” traffic are targeted.

Good directional signage to a VIC can increase visitation/ usage of a VIC.

Retailing of merchandise from a VIC can assist in the region’s promotion and add to the tourism experience.

The Prom Country VIC is currently a Level 1 Accredited VIC. Whilst it is desirable to retain a Level 1 Accredited VIC in the region, the South Gippsland Shire’s tourism unit should continue to provide other visitor information satellite services across the region to support the VIC. Currently, Prom Country VIC maintains brochure stands in Loch (Hard Loch Cafe), Leongatha, Mirboo North (Mobil Service Station), Meeniyan, Fish Creek (Roo Fuel), Sandy Point (General Store), Tarwin Lower (General Store), Welshpool (Transaction Centre) and Foster (Stockyard Gallery).

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<sup>16</sup> NVS data, 2005, collated by Urban Enterprise

## **3. TOURISM OVERVIEW**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The following section provides an overview of existing research relating to visitation, visitor profile and niche markets for the Prom Country region. The data below indicates that Melbourne is the regions largest market, and in particular the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. The Prom Country region only attracts a small number of interstate (11%) and international visitors (3%).

The data is sourced from a visitor survey conducted from October 2003 to March 2004. Quantitative data is supplemented with the National Visitor Survey 2003 conducted by the Bureau of Tourism Research<sup>17</sup>, where the data is reliable at the Local Government Area level.

### **3.2 Visitor Profile**

Visitors generate a significant economic benefit to the South Gippsland Shire. It is estimated that visitors to the Shire spend a total of \$141 million annually. Daytrip visitors spend an estimated \$38 million and overnight visitors spend an estimated \$103 million annually. On average, daytrip visitors spend an estimated \$66 per person per visit. Overnight visitors (excluding visitors staying holiday homes) spend an estimated \$322 per person per visit. Visitors staying in holiday homes spend an additional \$72 million dollars in the South Gippsland Shire annually. For the purposes of this report, however, holiday home visitation and spend will not be included.

Prom Country region attracts an estimated 1.1 million visitors annually. Of these around half (577,000) are overnight<sup>18</sup> visitors and 573,000 are daytrip visitors<sup>19</sup>. The majority of these visitors visit Wilsons Prom (72%). 76% of visitors to the Prom Country region undertake general site seeing and a further 56%, visit the beach.

The average length of stay for overnight visitors is 3.7 nights. 44% of overnight visitors stay in paid accommodation, of these 40% stay in caravan parks or camping grounds.

#### Visitor Perception

52% of visitors perceive the Prom Country region as being “relaxing and peaceful”. 43% of visitors to the region associate it with Wilson’s Promontory National Park.

#### Visitor Satisfaction

Visitors were generally satisfied with visitor information, the range of activities available, tourist signage, accommodation, customer service and picnic and BBQ areas.

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<sup>17</sup> Prom Country Economic Impact of Tourism, South Gippsland Shire, Urban Enterprise (May 2004)

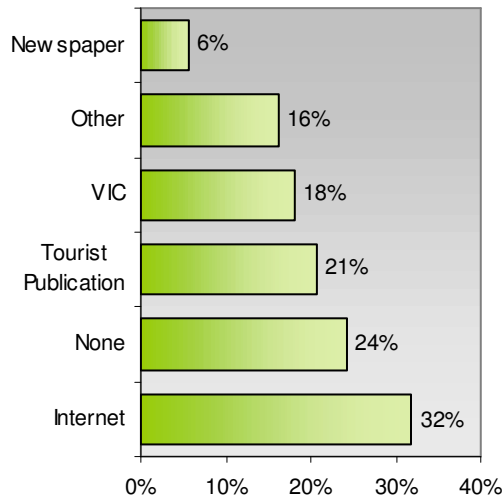
<sup>18</sup> Overnight visitors are calculated by adding the number of persons using paid accommodation to those staying in holiday homes as identified by the primary research recently undertaken. This compares with the NVS data, which identifies around 450,000 overnight visitors. The NVS data has an accuracy of +/- 20% at the 95% confidence interval, in comparison the estimates calculated by Urban Enterprise are considered far more accurate as they are taken from a census of all accommodation establishments as well as holiday home owners.

<sup>19</sup> Total daytrip visitors are calculated by multiplying the total overnight visitors (calculated from the accommodation and holiday home surveys) by the proportion of daytrip visitors identified by the NVS for South Gippsland Shire.

Visitors were most satisfied with the accommodation in the Prom Country region; Visitors were least satisfied with public toilets.

### 3.2.2 Information Source

- Almost one third of all visitors to the Prom Country region used the “Internet” to plan their trip.
- 21% of visitors used a “tourist publication”
- A further 18% used a “visitor information centre” to plan their trip.



28% of visitors to Prom Country region are regular visitors, a further 20% were recommended to visit.

### 3.2.3 Visitor Origin

- 73% of visitors to the Prom Country region are from Melbourne. A further 14% are from country Victoria.

Origin	% of Total Visitors
Melbourne	73%
Country Victoria	14%
Interstate	11%
Overseas	3%

11% of visitors are from interstate and 3% are from overseas.

### 3.2.4 Spatial Origin of Visitors from Melbourne

- Visitors from Melbourne have their origins spread spatially throughout the entire metropolitan area, from western suburbs such as Hoppers Crossing to south-eastern suburbs such as Frankston. There is a concentration of visitors from inner eastern suburbs south of the Yarra River such as Hawthorn and Camberwell, as well as middle-eastern suburbs such as Glen Waverley. There is also a concentration of visitors who reside in north-eastern suburbs such as Eltham.

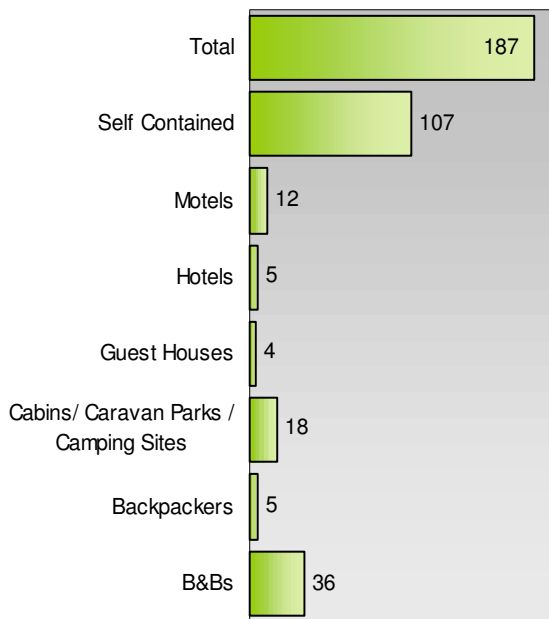
- Approximately two thirds of visitors to the Prom Country region are from the eastern and south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne.

### 3.2.5 Spatial Origin of Visitors from Country Victoria

- Visitors from country Victoria come mainly from regional centres including Moe and Morwell, Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong.

### 3.2.6 Location and type of Accommodation Stock

#### Number of Businesses



Locality	% of Total
Foster	14%
Yanakie	12%
Walkerville	6%
Leongatha	4%
Fish Creek	4%
Korumburra	4%
Toora	3%
Sandy Point	3%
Mirboo North	3%
Meeniyah	3%
Waratah Nth	2%
Waratah Bay	2%
Tarwin Lower	2%
Welshpool	2%
Venus Bay	2%
Other Towns (below 1%)	32%

There are 187 accommodation businesses identified in the South Gippsland Shire. Over half of the accommodation is classified as “self contained” (107 businesses). Accommodation businesses are evenly spread throughout the Shire, with higher concentrations of accommodation businesses in Foster, and Yanakie.

### 3.2.7 Characteristics of Holiday Home Ownership

- The vast majority of holiday homeowners (89%) live in Melbourne, in particular the eastern suburbs.
- The main reason for purchasing a holiday home in the Prom Country region was the natural beauty and tranquillity of the area.
- Almost half of all holiday homeowners have owned their holiday home for more than 11 years.
- An estimated 257,000 visitor’s stay in holiday homes in the Prom Country region each year.
- The average number of visits per holiday home is 27 days per year.

- Visitation and length of stay is higher in the summer months. The actual visits made to holiday homes are generally steady through the rest of the year.
- Holiday home owners spend approx \$72 million in the shire annually.

### 3.3 Tourism Product Key Product Features<sup>20</sup>

#### Parks and Reserves

##### *Wilson's Promontory*

Wilson's Promontory is the most Southerly point on the Australian mainland and has been reserved as a National Park since 1898. The natural beauty and undeveloped nature of the Prom has attracted approximately 365,000 visitors annually for many years. The Prom has a very diverse landscape that lends itself to many outdoor activities including bird watching, boat tours, bushwalking, canoeing / kayaking, coach/bus tours, coastal walking (Marine Parks-Marine Sanctuaries, diving, fishing, sea kayaking, snorkelling, and surfing/surf education.

##### *Strzelecki Ranges*

The Strzelecki Ranges are a relatively undeveloped tourism product, however are an exceptional natural resource within the northern boundary of the South Gippsland Shire. The ranges are comprised mainly of private landholdings and State Forrest. The range has been a source of hardwood Mountain Ash for many years. Large tracts of the range are still set aside for logging purposes. The Strzelecki Ranges are linked by the Grand Ridge Road which is mostly unsealed, however as a touring route provides outstanding views South to Bass Strait and the Great Dividing Range to the North. The Range provides a backdrop for exploration of the rainforest for mountain bikers and hikers. There is great potential for the Grand Ridge Road to become one of the great touring routes in Victoria; however, major road works would be required for this to eventuate.

#### Ocean Beaches

The Prom Country region is exposed on its Southern boundary to Bass Strait, where many popular ocean beaches can be found for activities such as, swimming, surfing, fishing and sunbathing. Key ocean beach product includes: Venus Bay, Waratah Bay, and Sandy Point, as well as those beaches within Wilsons Promontory National Park.

Corner Inlet and Andersons Inlet provide sheltered water bodies with beaches that aren't affected by large surf and more appropriate for families. Both inlets are also popular for fishing, boating and windsurfing activities.

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<sup>20</sup> Draft Prom Country Sustainability Tourism Development and Marketing Plan (Dec 2005)

## Villages

South Gippsland Shire has a number of villages each with their own cultural heritage and point of difference. Villages in the region vary from inland dairy and former coal towns to coastal and beach destinations. Villages in the Prom Country region that have developed some tourism product and have potential for further development include Loch, Korumburra, Leongatha, Meeniyan, Foster, Fish Creek, Mirboo North, and Port Welshpool, Toora, Yanakie, Sandy Point, Waratah Bay, Venus Bay and Koonwarra. These villages offer various themed and cultural experiences and including arts and crafts, heritage, cafes and restaurants, events and activities.

## Food and Wine - Farming and Agriculture

### *Farming and Agriculture*

Prom Country region has some of the highest quality soils in Victoria suitable for a range of agricultural uses. Dairy and beef production has long been one of the key agricultural products in the region, however fruit and vegetable production are growing industries.

### *Food and Wine/Boutique Beer*

There are a number notable wineries in South Gippsland that are open for wine tasting and sales. In addition, the Grand Ridge Brewery (boutique beer) is rapidly becoming a reputable export product of Prom Country region and is open for tastings and dinner.

There are only a small number of notable cafes and restaurants in Prom Country region.

## Events

There are a number of events and festivals held across the region throughout the year. Some key festivals and events include:

- Stony Creek Cup
- Port Welshpool Sea Days Festival;
- Quilt Hanging Festival at Loch;
- Annual South Gippsland Golf Classic;
- Mossvale Park Music Concerts
- Prom Country Challenge

An increasing number of events are showcasing the local food and wine product in the region. These include;

- The Gippsland Slow Food Festival;
- South Gippsland Farmers Markets;
- Tastes of Prom Country;
- Stony Creek Gourmet Gallops
- The Southern Gippsland Wines Summer Starter Festival

### **3.4 Tourism Development and Product Strengths**

Data collected from the Economic Impact of Tourism, Prom Country Report, undertaken by Urban Enterprise (March 2004) indicates that natural attractions are the primary tourism product in South Gippsland Shire with 72% of travellers visiting a National Park, 56% of travellers going to the beach and 43% of travellers go bushwalking. This data also highlights the importance of Wilsons Promontory National Park as the key destination in Prom Country.

A secondary product strength as indicated by visitor activities was food related experience, with 35% of visitors eating out, 21% visiting food producers, 19% of visitors having a picnic and 15% visiting wineries.

Third ranked tourism product in South Gippsland is adventure – sports related, with 43% of visitors bushwalking, 12% of visitors fishing, and 11% participating in other outdoor activities.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

The majority of the visitors to the region are from Melbourne and would be accessing the main destinations in Prom Country (including Wilsons Promontory National Park) via the South Gippsland Highway, the main link between South Gippsland and Melbourne. The VIC should be located in an area that is visible and readily accessible to the majority of visitors from Melbourne on their way to Wilsons Prom.

Wilsons Prom is the most significant tourism product in South Gippsland. The majority of accommodation stock is located close to Wilsons Prom in the southern part of the Shire. Accommodation is mainly located in the villages along the main roads between Melbourne and Wilson's Promontory (Foster, Yanakie, Leongatha, Fish Creek and Korumburra). Beach towns also have a portion of the accommodation stock (Walkerville, Sandy Point, Waratah Bay).

## 4. STRATEGIC PLANNING POLICIES

There are a number of policies and strategies at the local, regional and state level relevant to the provision of visitor information and the location of VICs. These include:

### Local Policy

- Municipal Strategic Statement within the South Gippsland Planning Scheme;
- Prom Country Sustainable Tourism Development and Marketing Plan
- Visitor Information Centre Business Plan 2004 – 2006 (draft);

### Regional Policy

- Gippsland Regional Tourism Development Plan 2004 – 2006, prepared by Tourism Victoria.

### State Policy

- Victoria's Tourism Industry Strategic Plan 2002-2006;

## 4.2 Local Policy Framework

### 4.2.1 Municipal Strategic Statement

The Municipal Strategic Statement sets in place the Shire Council's position in terms of development, the environment and the community.

The Municipal Strategic Statement for the South Gippsland Shire Council identifies the following key influences that relate to tourism development:

- The need to continue to promote the region as a major tourism destination through its natural beauty and the lifestyle opportunities that it offers;
- The strong contribution of the tourism industry to the local and state economies;
- The steady increase in the number of tourists visiting the area;
- The significance of natural and cultural environment and natural based activities for tourism;
- The lack of a large tourist accommodation facility in the area, particularly in the vicinity of Wilsons Promontory.

Apart from these references, the tourism industry is not discussed in detail in the Municipal Strategic Statement. There are no specific directions in the MSS relating to the VIC.



## 4.3 Local Policies

### 4.3.1 Prom Country Sustainable Tourism Development and Marketing Plan 2005-2010<sup>21</sup>

The Prom Country Sustainable Tourism Development and Marketing Plan has been prepared by Urban Enterprise aimed at building a sustainable tourism industry through:

- Increasing visitor nights;
- Growing high yield segments;
- Improving industry skills;
- Building awareness of the region;
- Diversifying and strengthening a range of regional products;
- Leveraging against Destination Gippsland Inc and other tourism Victoria projects;
- Creating greater cohesion and business co-operation;
- Developing a visitation or position statement; and
- Increasing visitation during off peak seasons.

The key issues identified in the report regarding the existing Prom Country VIC are as follows:

- The current VIC is located off the South Gippsland Highway and direct access is not available from the Highway (the future highway bypass will mean that the VIC will not be visible from the South Gippsland Hwy and will require a number of turns to access the VIC).
- The VIC is totally obscured from passing traffic on the South Gippsland Highway by heavy vegetation planted along the Highway frontage. Despite the presence of the “i” sign, it is likely that many passing visitors are unaware of the existence of the VIC, or are unsure of its exact location and hence are discouraged from diverting from the Highway.
- External signage visible from the South Gippsland Highway gives the impression that the VIC is located within, or is part of, the Coal Creek Historical Village. This could deter visitors who are not interested in visiting Coal Creek;
- The building is relatively small, adding to its lack of visibility.
- The location of the VIC is not central to the tourism product strengths of the region, i.e. natural attractions (Wilson's Promontory, coast, Strzelecki Ranges)

In addition, an enlarged sign promoting Coal Creek further obscures the views to the VIC from the Highway.

The following strategy was developed and included in the Prom Country Sustainable Tourism Development and Marketing Plan to address these key issues:

- Improve the usage of the VIC by

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<sup>21</sup> Prepared by Urban Enterprise (currently in draft form)

- (A) Increasing its current exposure to vehicles travelling along the South Gippsland Highway by removing of vegetation currently impacting the visibility to the centre; and
- (B) Undertaking an independent study into the VIC location in the short term.

#### 4.3.2 Prom Country Tourism Business Plan 2003-2005

The Prom Country Tourism Business Plan 2003 – 2005 is a three year plan which provides strategic direction for the Council's tourism unit by linking the vision with actions, shaping economic development through leadership and direction and providing effective decision-making and an understanding of the competitive environment and stakeholder needs.

The vision for tourism outlined in the plan is "to build and nurture a sustainable tourism industry which co-exists and complements the Shire's unique natural environment and draws upon the culture of the region."

The mission statement for Prom Country Tourism is "to facilitate economic growth in the Prom Country region through the development of a competitive tourism industry."

The role of local government identified in the Business Plan includes:

- Provision of Strategic Tourism Services
- Supporting destination marketing programs through Prom Country Regional Tourism;
- Provision of visitor services through the Prom Country Visitor Information Centre and staffing;

Specific strategic objectives related to the development of tourism in South Gippsland include:

- To develop a communication system for the statistics gathered from the Prom Country Visitor Information Centre (this is an on-going activity).
- To continue to develop foster and grow a sustainable and professional tourism industry in South Gippsland (this is an on-going activity)
- To ensure effective communication and consultation with the tourism industry in Prom Country (this is an on-going activity).
- To take an active leadership role in improvement and rationalisation of signs within Prom Country.
- To ensure a co-ordinated industry approach to external marketing in conjunction with Prom Country Regional Tourism (on-going)
- To increase awareness of Prom Country as a visitor destination through a comprehensive public relations and marketing program in conjunction with Prom Country Regional Tourism (on-going);
- To work in conjunction with Prom Country Regional Tourism, Destination Gippsland Inc and the Sydney - Melbourne Coastal Drive committees to promote the region as a competitive visitor destination by carrying out the actions of the respective marketing plans (on-going).

### 4.3.3 Visitor Information Centre Business Plan 2004 –2006

The Visitor Information Centre Business Plan outlined the core aims, strategies and objectives for the years 2004 – 2006. These objectives have been met and are outlined below:

#### Information provision

- Improve the online central booking service;
- Streamline the provision and distribution of local, regional and interstate brochures;
- Develop the Foster Information Centre;
- Improve the Satellite outlets.

#### Statistic collection & correlation

- Maintain a range of statistical information relating to Prom Country Visitor Information Centre activity;
- Develop a program to monitor visitor satisfaction with Prom Country Visitor Information Centre services.

#### Marketing Goal

- Increase website marketing;
- Increase merchandise sales;
- Increase advertising potential between the information centre in conjunction with Prom Country Regional Tourism;
- Develop & maintain a program of familiarisation tours for operators, staff the media & tourism industry partners.

#### Industry Support

- Increase the opportunity for tourism business promotion through the Centre;
- Increase merchandise sales.

## **4.4 Regional Policies**

### 4.4.1 The Regional Tourism Development Plan, Gippsland 2004-2007 (including the 2005 Update)

The Regional Tourism Development Plan for Gippsland was prepared as part of the statewide tourism industry Strategic Plan and aims to increase awareness of Gippsland and its destinations and attractions as a tourist region.

In regard to the VIC's in Gippsland the plan outlines the following:

*Gippsland has a strong network of VICs with good support from local government. There is potential for a gateway VIC at Genoa for visitors coming for NSW and a level three at Cann River, possibly combining with the current Parks Victoria information centre. Additional VICs planned for the future include one along the Great Alpine Road, possibly an upgrade of the existing VIC at Omeo, and a level three VIC at Walhalla. The current Visitor Centre at Wilsons Promontory needs improvement.*

The following key strategy has been prepared to direct the development of VIC in Gippsland:

*Further strengthen the visitor information centre (VIC) network.*

This will be achieved through the following key action:

*Undertake a feasibility study for adding to the number of VIC's in the region, for example one along the Great Alpine Road, Walhalla, Genoa and improvements to the Cann River and Wilsons Promontory information centres.*

#### 4.4.2 Implications

The Regional Tourism Development Plan identifies that the existing Wilsons Promontory Visitor Centre is inadequate and needs improvement. The centre currently offers services to visitors in the Prom with no reference to tourism services and facilities including attractions outside the national park gates.

The location of the Prom Country Information Centre should aim to strengthen the current Gippsland VIC network.

### 4.5 State Policies

#### 4.5.1 Victoria's Tourism Industry Strategic Plan 2002-2006

Victoria's Tourism Industry Strategic Plan provides state wide directions and strategies for the tourism industry. Key issues include that have been identified in the Plan, which relate to the local of VIC are:

- Rationalising and centralising visitor services within major regional centres;
- Spatial distribution of centres at each level;
- Better integration of centres with the communities in which they are based by co-locating them with other local government and business services.

These are supported by the following key actions:

- Evaluate the geographical distribution of visitor information centres in relation to gateway locations, visitor flow patterns, key destinations, stopovers and touring routes. Facilitate the development or upgrading of centres where required.

#### 4.5.2 Implications

When assessing the optimal location of the VIC the spatial distribution of existing VICs in the wider region should be considered. Further, the location of the VIC should be linked into local government and business services.

## Other Visitor Information Centres Located throughout Gippsland

### Level 1

- Phillip Island Visitor Information Centre - Newhaven
- Latrobe Visitor Information Centre – Traralgon
- Central Gippsland Visitor Information Centre – Sale
- East Gippsland Visitor Information Centre- Lakes Entrance
- Bairnsdale Visitor Information Centre - Bairnsdale

### Level 2

- Wonthaggi Visitor Information Centre

### Level 3

- Inverloch Visitor Information Centre –Inverloch
- Yarragon Food & Wine Store – Yarragon
- Metung Visitor Information Centre - Metung

## **5. EXISTING SITUATION**

### **5.1 Visitor Information Centre- Korumburra**

A Level 1 Visitor Information Centre is located on the South Gippsland Highway adjacent to the Coal Creek Historical Village in Korumburra.

The Visitor Information Centre provides the following services:

- Accommodation booking service;
- Display of promotional material including product brochures;
- Display of local arts and crafts;
- Sale of maps and postcards;
- Visitor enquiries.

There is 1 full time staff member, 2 part-time staff (4 days per week), 2 casual and 3 volunteers currently operating the centre.

### **5.2 Existing Building**

The existing VIC has a floor areas (gross ) of 105.8 m<sup>2</sup> (including the toilets and office space). There is very limited storage and office space.

The centre has the following features:

- Brochure stands,
- Wall displays,
- An undercover veranda,
- Maps of the area,
- A television,
- Staff toilets,
- A water tank; and
- A kitchenette.

The VIC adjoins a play ground with play equipment, a public toilet, four undercover benches and an undercover barbeque. The park benches are currently in a poor condition.

There is a large car park that can easily accommodate buses and caravan parks and is shared with the Coal Creek Heritage Village.

Recent works undertaken on the existing centre include upgrading of the computers, oiling of the walls and replacement of the roof.

An enlarged sign advertising Coal Creek has recently been erected between the VIC and the South Gippsland Highway. There is also heavy vegetation visually blocking the VIC from people approaching the centre from the Highway.

### 5.3 Tourism Satellite Outlets

- Prom Country VIC maintains brochure stands in Loch (Hard Loch Cafe), Leongatha (Citizens Advice Bureau), Mirboo North (Mobil Service Station), Meeniyan, Fish Creek (Roo Fuel), Sandy Point (General Store), Tarwin Lower (General Store), Venus Bay (General Stores), Welshpool (Transaction Centre), Foster (Stockyard Gallery).
- The Foster information outlet is manned by Stockyard Gallery volunteers only. It is currently open: Tue, Thurs, Fri, Sat, Sun from 10:00am - 4:00pm. Prom Country VIC staff are in attendance at the Stockyard Gallery brochure outlet for a two week period over the summer season (Christmas/ New Year Period).
- The Prom Country VIC restocks the above stands once a month and additionally during busy periods.
- There is also a visitor information available at the Shell service station on the South Gippsland Hwy at Lang Lang, which provides visitor information on Prom Country but this is not operated by the Prom Country VIC. The VIC provides the Lang Lang visitor information stand with touring maps and visitor guides upon request.
- Parks Victoria operates a visitor centre at Tidal River in Wilson Prom. This information centre focuses on visitor information relating to the National Park.

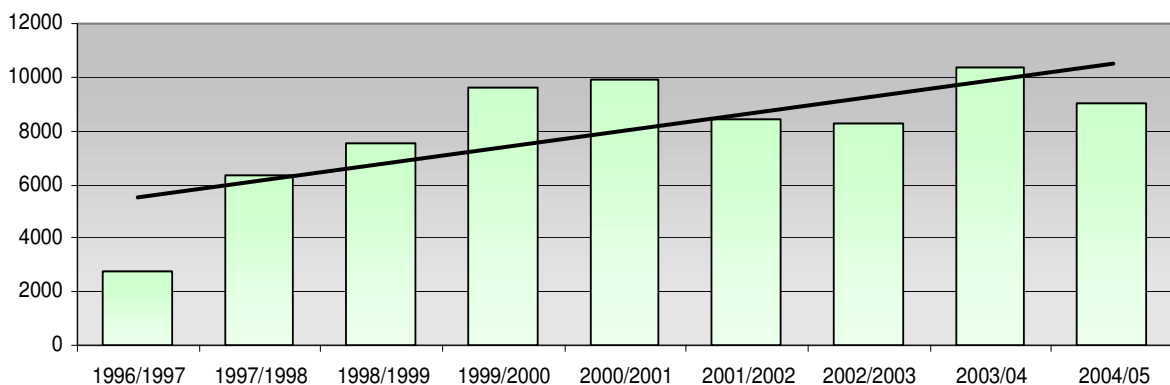
### 5.4 Usage

Telephone enquiries and accommodation bookings have progressively increased since 1996. The introduction of the regional website – [www.promcountrytourism.com.au](http://www.promcountrytourism.com.au) in November 2002 has seen a huge increase in the hits to the website. However, walk-in visitation has remained flat.

#### Telephone Enquires

Figure 1 below indicates an increase in the number of telephone enquiries in the VIC since 1996. The number of telephone enquiries has increased from around 2,500 per annum in 1996 to around 10,000 per annum in 2004. There was a drop in visitor enquiries in the 2004/05 year as a result of the bushfire at Wilsons Prom. This trend is continuing in the 2005/06 financial year.

**Figure 1 Number of Telephone Enquiries– Korumburra VIC, 1996/97– 2004/05**

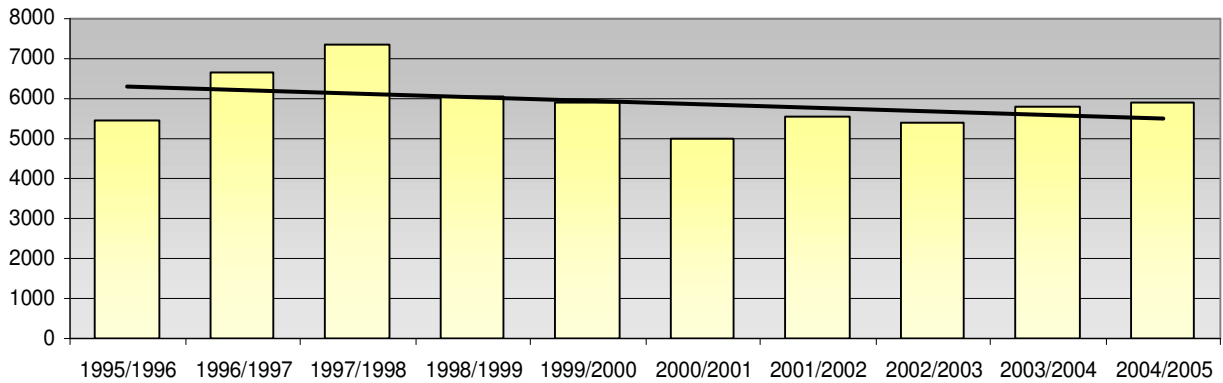


Source: Prom Country Visitor Information Centre

### Walk-In Visitors

Figure 2 below indicates that there has generally been no increase in walk-in visitors to the VIC since 1996. Walk-in visitors to the VIC were around 7,000 in 1997/98 and around 6,500 in 2004/05.

**Figure 2 Number of Walk in Visitors - Korumburra VIC, 1995/6 – 2004/05**

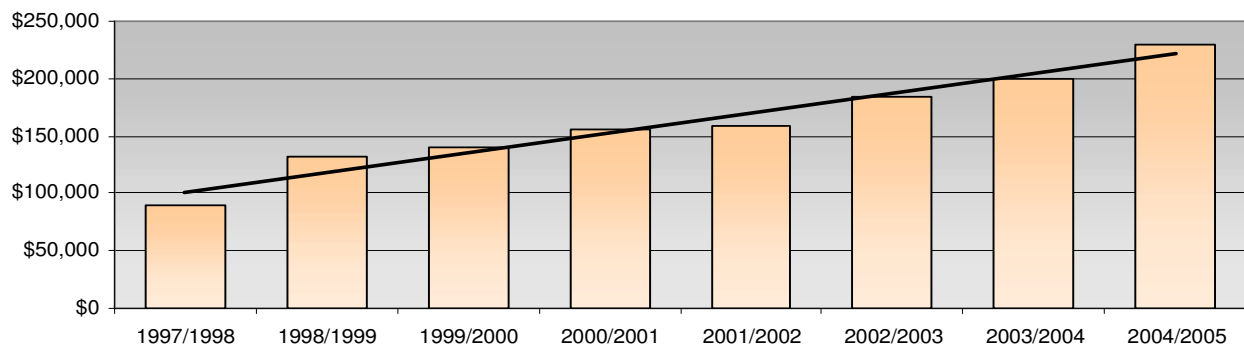


Source: Prom Country Visitor Information Centre

### Accommodation Bookings

Figure 3 below shows that the gross value of accommodation bookings through the VIC has increased steadily since 1996. The value of bookings has increased from around \$90,000 in 1996 to around \$210,000 in 2004/05.

**Figure 3 Gross Value of Accommodation Bookings - Korumburra VIC, 1997/98 – 2004/05**



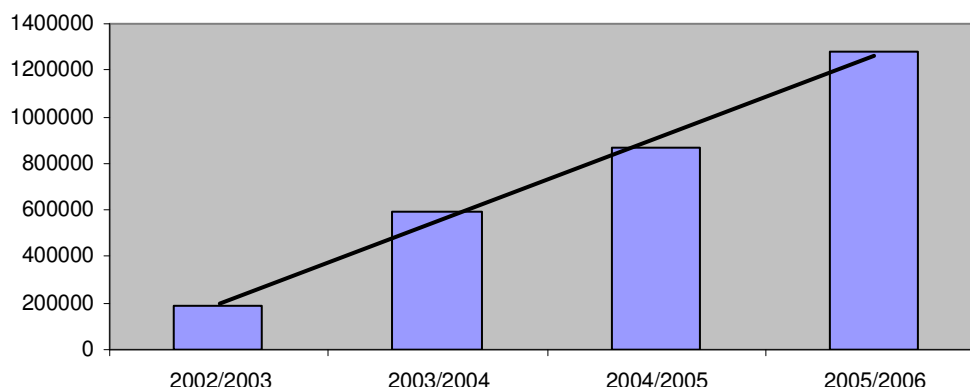
Source: Prom Country Visitor Information Centre

### Website Statistics - [www.promcountrytourism.com.au](http://www.promcountrytourism.com.au)

Figure 4 below shows the increase level of usage of the website since it was introduced in November 2002. In the 9 months of 2005/06, the website had received nearly 1.3 million hits, compared to 870,000 hits received in 2004/05.



**Figure 4 Prom Country Tourism Website Hits – November 2002 – April 2006**



Source: prepared by South Gippsland Shire VIC

### Temporary VIC in Foster

A temporary VIC is run by the Prom Country VIC, Prom Coast Tourism and Stockyard Gallery volunteers in Foster during the peak summer period. Walk-in visitor statistics indicate higher visitation to the temporary VIC in Foster than the permanent Level 1 VIC in Korumburra for the same period.

The Table below provides a summary of the survey results undertaken over the Christmas/New Year period for the Foster Vic and the Korumburra VIC.

**Table 1 Walk in visitation comparison: Korumburra/Foster from Dec 28 – Jan 9**

<b>Korumburra / Foster Walk in Visitation Comparison</b> (2 week period beginning Dec 28)				
	<b>2002-2003</b>	<b>2003-2004</b>	<b>2004-2005</b>	<b>2005-2006</b>
Korumburra VIC	421	456	609	493
Stockyard Gallery	878	914	1084	796

Source: South Gippsland Shire VIC survey results, 2001-2003

### Comparison with selected Visitor Information Centres

Table 5 below compares the level of walk-in visitors in other Visitor Information Centres in Gippsland and other parts of Victoria.

The Level 1 VIC in Newhaven, Phillip Island attracts around 150,000 visitors per annum compared with 6,500 at Korumburra. Phillip Island receives approximately 25% more visitors than the Prom Country region and is recognised as an international destination.

The Visitor Information Centres at Wonthaggi and Traralgon attract almost double the visitors as the Korumburra VIC.

The Visitor Information Centre in Sale attracted 36,000 visitors in 2004. Sale is not a primary tourism destination, however generally captures visitors on their way through Sale. Sale attracts a much larger number of visitors than the current Visitor Information Centre at Korumburra.

The Wangaratta VIC was relocated in 2004 to the CBD, which accounts for the huge increase in visitor numbers to the VIC between 2004 and 2005.

**Table 2 Walk in Visitors to Gippsland Visitor Information Centre**

Visitor Information Centre	Estimated Visitor Numbers 2000/2001	Estimated Visitor Numbers 2001/2002	Estimated Visitor Numbers 2002/2003	Estimated Visitor Numbers 2003/2004	Estimated Visitor Numbers 2004/2005	Estimated Visitor Numbers 2005/2006
Prom Country VIC, Korumburra	6,185	6,081	5,852	6,634	6,815	6,636
Phillip Island Visitor Information Centre	N/A	151,652	152,385	154,939	152,667	146,010*
Traralgon Visitor Information Centre	N/A	N/A	14,080	16,240	15,502	14,965
Sale Visitor Information Centre	26,697	30,916	33,873	33,611	36,654	N/A
Wonthaggi Visitor Information Centre	12,441	13,071	11,933	11,855	11,673	12,811
Peninsula Visitor Information Centre, Dromana	33,918	30,371	32,057	33,948	37,215	34,972
Wangaratta Visitor Information Centre	N/A	N/A	25,364	26,761	27,618	40,761

Source: Bass Coast Shire Council, Wellington Shire Council. Latrobe City Council

\* It should be note noted that a second information centre was opened in Cowes on Phillip Island in September 2005, which would have had an impact on the visitor numbers for 2005/2006.

## 5.5 Conclusion

There has been a steady increase in the number of phone enquires made to the Prom Country VIC and large increases in hits to the regional website. This suggests that there has been an increase in awareness and interest in travel to the Prom Country region, however, this has not been reflected in the number of walk in visitors. The number of walk in visitors has remained low.

Only a small proportion of visitors to the Prom Country are using the VIC. A similar situation is occurring with the Peninsula VIC. Relative to the number of visitors coming to the region, only a small percentage of these visitors are using the Peninsula VIC (the Peninsula VIC is also located in a fringe area, that is difficult to access from the main entry points to the region).

The importance that location can play in attracting visitors to the centre is evident from the dramatically increased visitor numbers to the Wangaratta VIC. The relocation of the Wangaratta VIC from a city fringe location to a CBD location has had a significant impact on the number of visitors coming to the centre. The location for the VIC in the commercial and retail centre has therefore significantly increased visitor's usage of the centre.

Compared to similar VICs throughout Victoria the Prom Country VIC has very few walk-in visitors. Further, visitors to these other VICs have generally been increasing in their number, compared to the static use of the Prom Country VIC.

## 6. CONSUMER PREFERENCES

### 6.1 Introduction

To gain a further insight into visitor patterns a visitor survey was prepared by Urban Enterprise and used to interview visitors to the Prom Country Region (carried out by the Prom Country Visitor Information Centre). The aim of the survey was to identify:

- The origin of VIC visitors;
- The directional flow of visitors to the South Gippsland Shire;
- The expectations of visitors with respect to visitor information facilities and services;
- The satisfaction of visitors with visitor information facilities and visitor services.

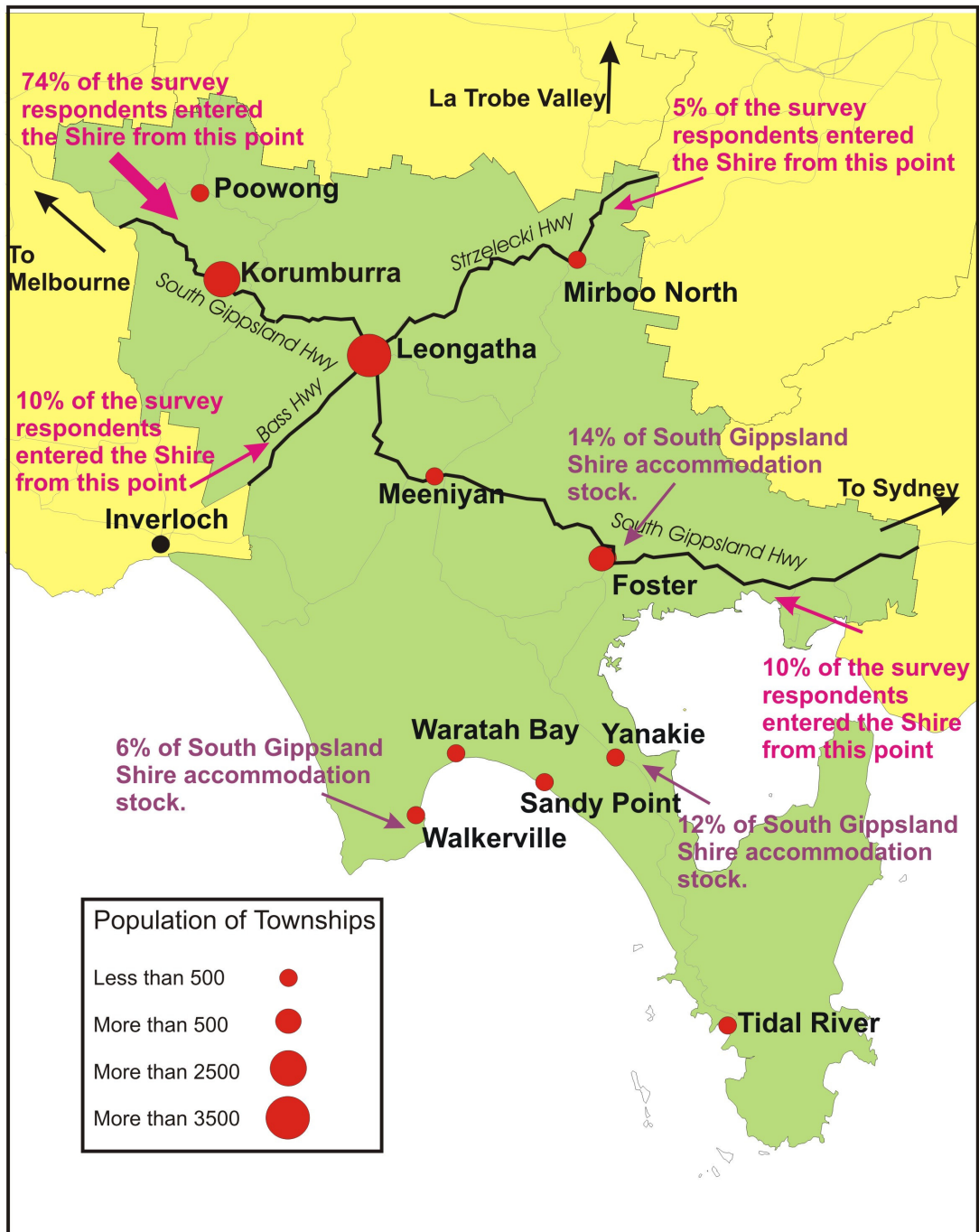
### 6.2 Survey Results

Overall, 91 people visiting the Shire were interviewed during March and April 2006. Table 2 shows the locations where visitors were interviewed. Generally, the surveys were carried out over an equal distribution across the Shire.

**Table 3 Location and number of surveys completed**

Korumburra	53	58%
Yanakie	20	22%
Foster	6	7%
Fish Creek	3	3%
Tidal River	2	2%
Coal Creek	2	2%
Wilson's Prom	1	1%
Waratah Nth	1	1%
Waratah Bay	1	1%
Sandy Point	1	1%
Not answered	1	1%
Total number of surveys completed	91	100%

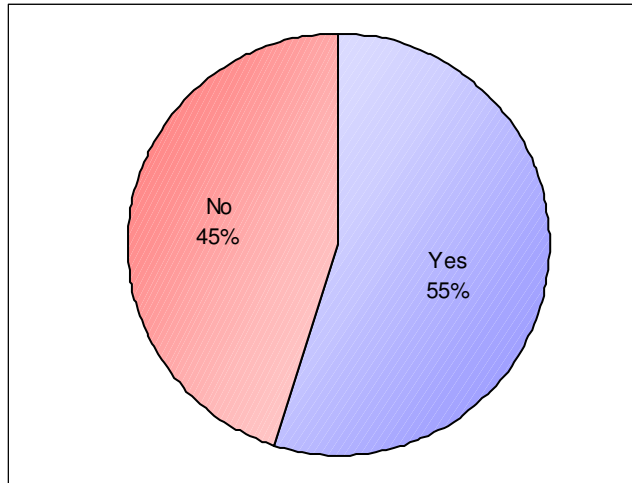
Figure 5 Map of the Prom Country showing main visitor entry points



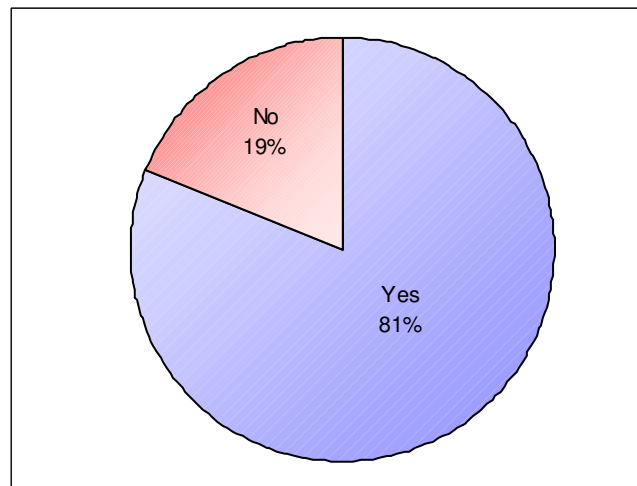
Main Points

The main entry point for survey respondents to South Gippsland Shire was via the South Gippsland Highway (74%) from a westerly direction (Melbourne). 10% of survey respondents entered the Shire from both the Bass Highway (from Phillip Island) and South Gippsland Highway from the eastern side of the Shire. 5% entered from the Strzelecki Hwy.

**Figure 6 Percentage of survey respondents that had previously visited the VIC**



**Figure 7 Percentage of survey respondents staying overnight in the Prom Country**



**Main Points**

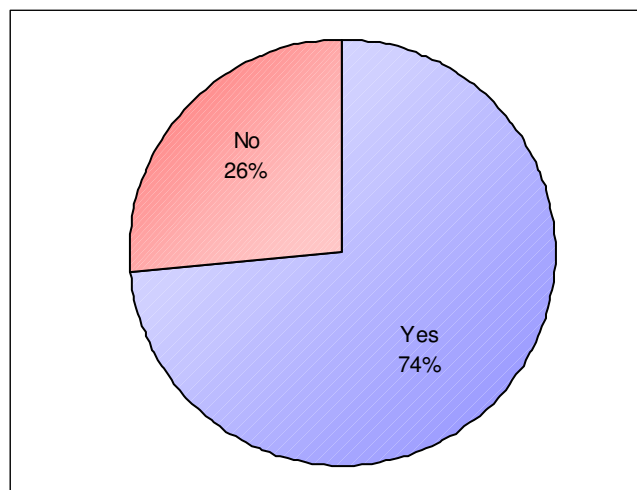
Over half the survey respondents (55%) had previously visited the VIC.

Over 80% of survey respondents intended to stay the night in Prom Country, while only 19% were on a day trip.

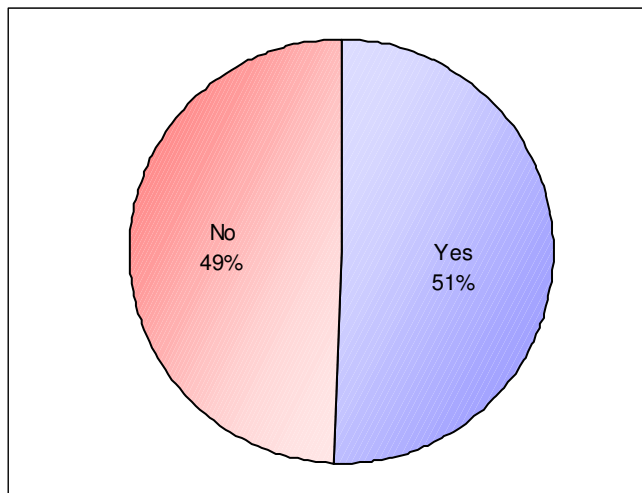
**Table 4 Location of stay**

Yanakie	23	25%
Foster	10	11%
Korumburra	6	7%
Tidal River	4	4%
Leongatha	3	3%
Waratah Bay	2	2%
Sandy Point	2	2%
Wilson's Prom	1	1%
Waratah North	1	1%
Walkerville	1	1%
Toora	1	1%
Port Welshpool	1	1%
Port Albert	1	1%
Nyora	1	1%
Korumburra South	1	1%
Fish Creek	1	1%
Buln Buln	1	1%
Bear Gully	1	1%
No answer	30	33%
Total	91	100%

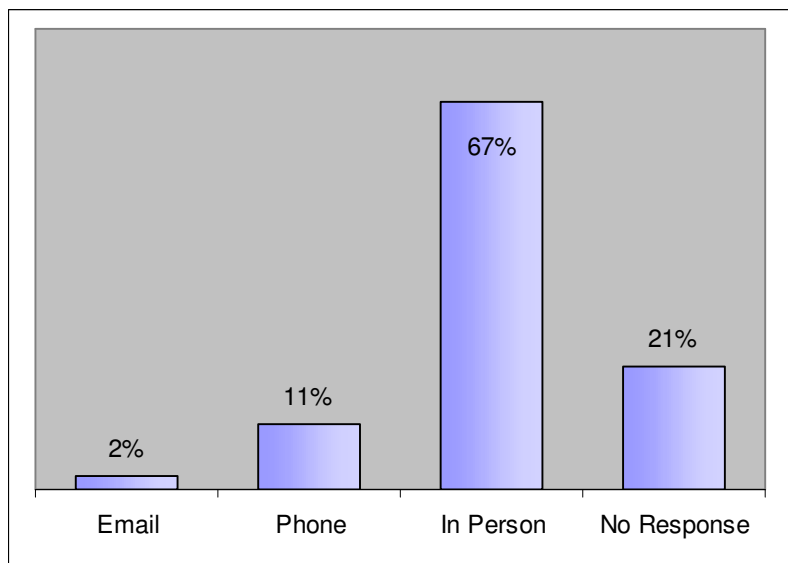
**Figure 8 Percentage of survey respondents that normally use Visitor Information Centres to plan their trip**



**Figure 9 Percentage of survey respondents that used the Prom Country VIC to plan their trip**



**Figure 10 Survey respondents contact with the Prom Country VIC**



### Main Points

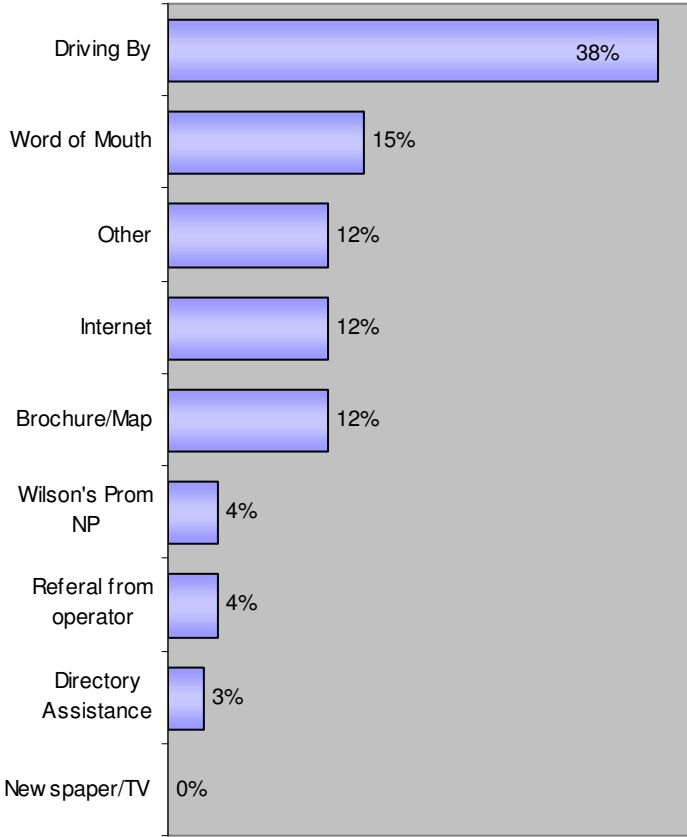
Of the survey respondents staying the night, 25% were staying in Yanakie, 11% in Foster and 7% in Korumburra. 33% did not answer this question.

74% of the survey respondents normally plan their trips using VIC, however only 51% actually used the Prom Country VIC to plan their trip.

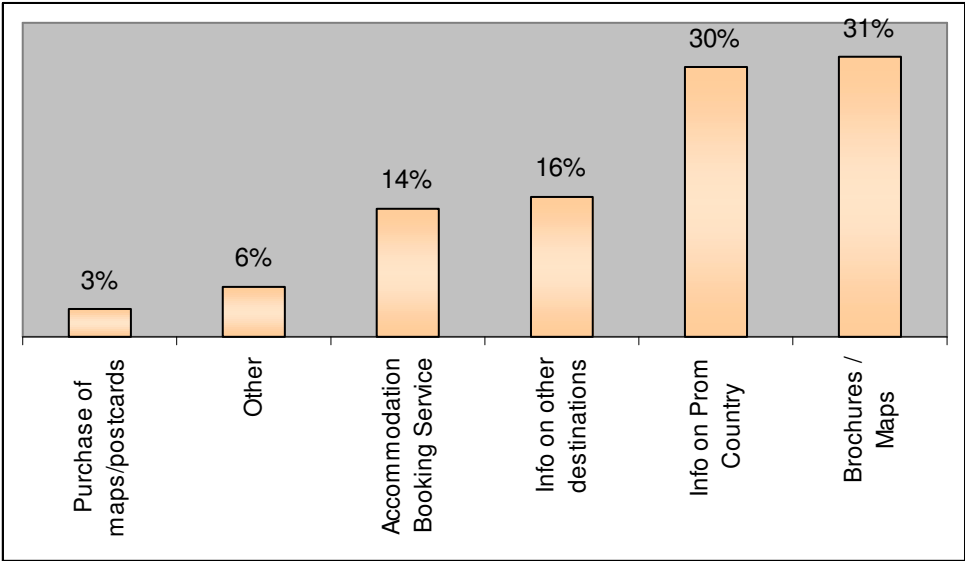
The main form of contact survey respondents had with the Prom Country VIC is face to face (37%). 11% of the people surveyed contacted the VIC by phone and 2% by internet. 21% of the people surveyed did not answer this question.



**Figure 11 How the survey respondents learnt about the Prom Country VIC**



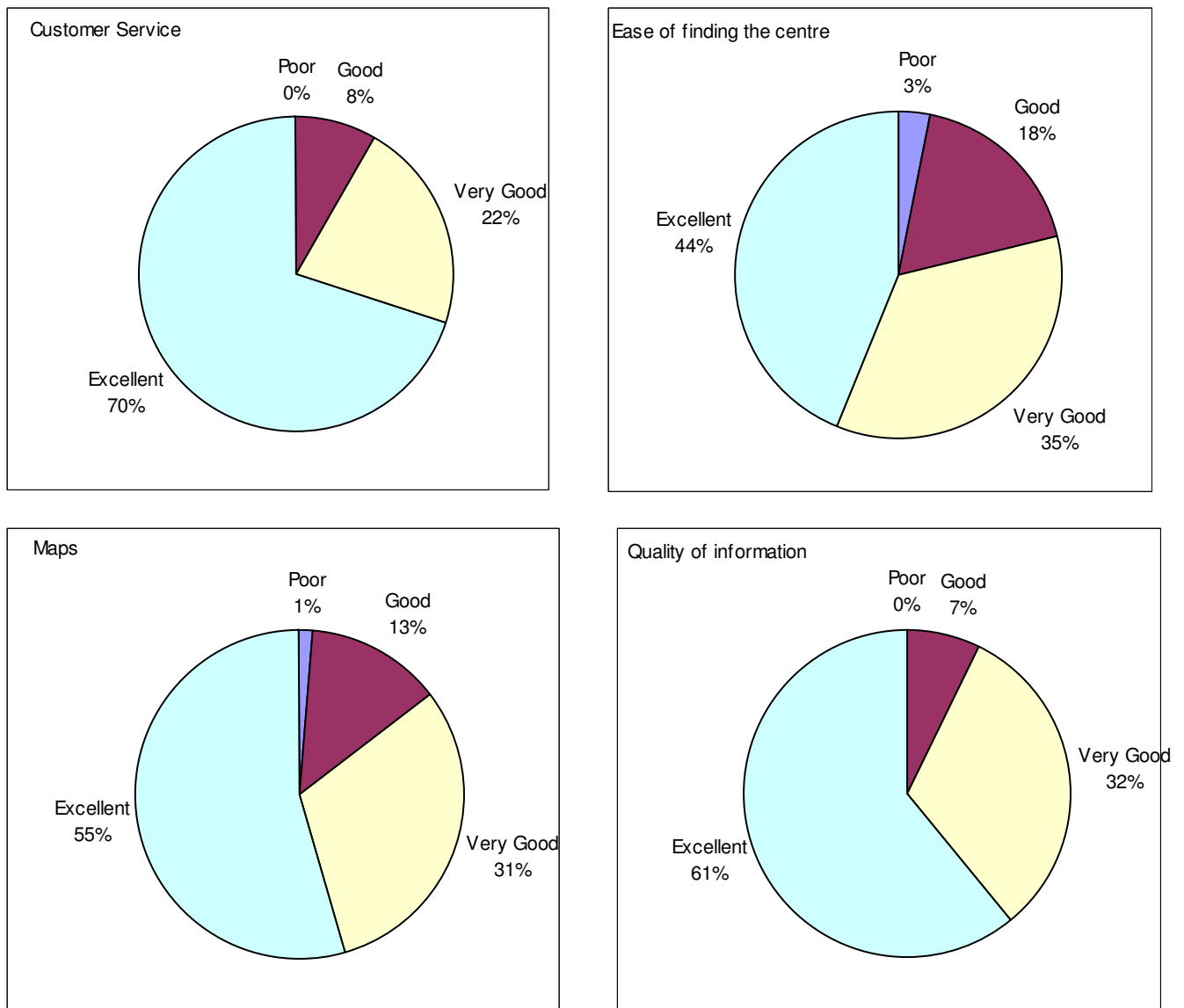
**Figure 12 Assistance that survey respondents received from the Prom Country Information Centre**

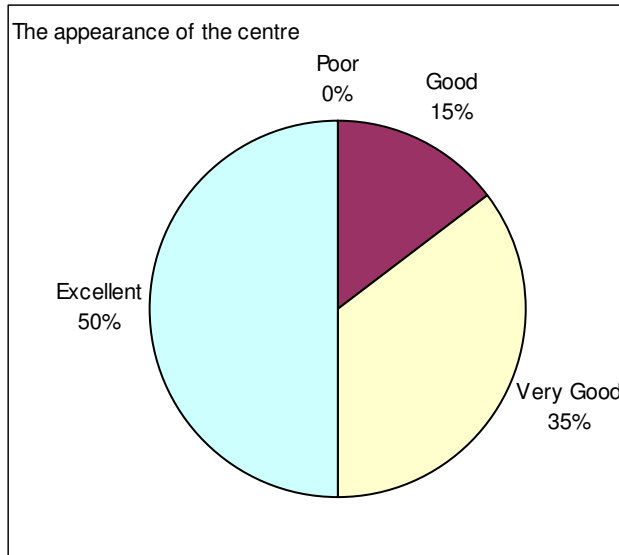
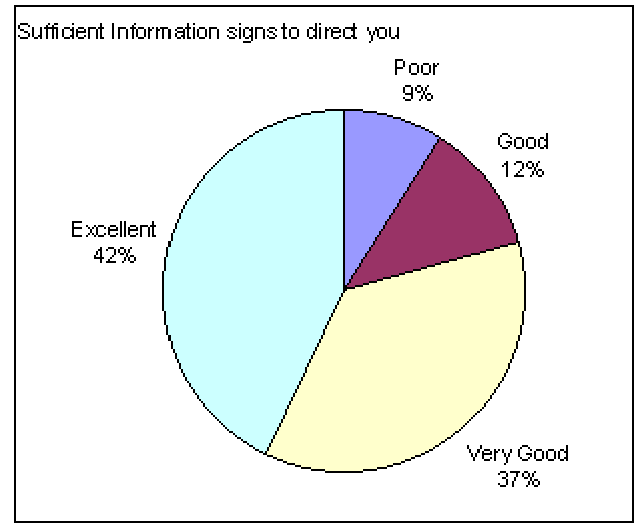
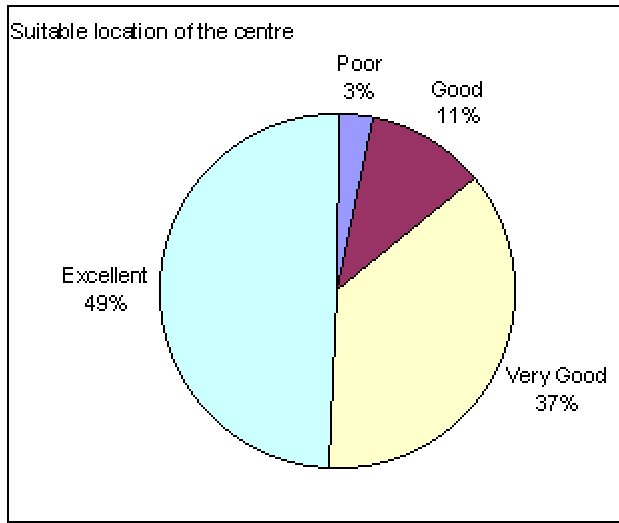


## Main Points

38% of the survey respondents surveyed learnt about the VIC by driving by. 12% learnt about it through the Internet, 12% through brochures and maps and 12% through other means. The main forms of assistance provided by the VIC were through brochures, maps (31%) and information on the Prom Country (30%). 16% of survey respondents received advice on other destinations and 14% received assistance with booking accommodation. Very few survey respondents (3%) purchased post cards or maps.

**Figure 13 Survey respondents ranking of services provided by the Prom Country VIC**





**Table 5 Origin and number of domestic survey respondents**

Origin	Number of Survey Respondents	Percentage of Domestic Survey Respondents
Melbourne and Surrounds	40	56%
Regional VIC	24	33%
Regional NSW	5	7%
Regional QLS	2	3%
Regional WA	1	1%
N/A	1	1%
Total Number of Domestic Visitors	73	

**Table 6 Origin and number of international survey respondents**

Origin	Number of Survey Respondents	Percentage of International Survey Respondents
Germany	4	24%
Canada	2	12%
Sri Lanka	2	12%
United Kingdom	2	12%
Ecuador	1	6%
France	1	6%
Japan	1	6%
Netherlands	1	6%
New Zealand	1	6%
Tiawan	1	6%
USA	1	6%
Total Number of International Visitors	17	

### Main Points

In general, survey respondents were very satisfied with the customer service and the appearance of the centre. No survey respondents felt that these services were poor. Areas rated “poor” by survey respondents felt that the VIC included signage (9%), ease of finding the centre (3%) and the location of the centre (3%).

The majority of domestic survey respondents were from Melbourne (53%) and 86% of all domestic survey respondents were from Victoria. 7% of the domestic survey respondents were from regional NSW. International survey respondents came from a wide range of different countries, including Germany (24%), Canada (12%), Sri Lanka (12%) and the UK (12%).

## **6.3 Findings from the Location of the Ballarat Visitor Information Centre, Feasibility Study (February 2005)**

In February 2005, Urban Enterprise conducted a Feasibility Study for the Location of the Ballarat Visitor Information Centre. The purpose of the study was to develop a comprehensive location solution for the long term, sustainable delivery of tourism services by Ballarat Tourism. The study included a detailed strategic assessment of existing research, planning and consumer preferences identified through a visitor survey. The key findings that are relevant to this study are outlined below.

### The importance of signage to the VIC

Signage was identified as a key feature for attracting visitors. In Ballarat, more than 30% of VIC users experienced problems with signage. Visitors commented on the lack of signage leading to the centre. Signage suddenly stopped once in close proximity to the centre- the very point when visitors required reassurance of direction.

Signage leading visitors to the Ballarat VIC was considered important, both as a motivator and as a guide.

### Expected Facilities and Services

Users of the Ballarat VIC most commonly expected to find the following facilities and services:

- Reliable information (88%)
- Easy access (59%)
- Free parking (51%)
- Tours and ticketing (47%)
- Accommodation booking (46%)
- Local goods for sale (35%)
- Accommodation booking for all other destinations (30%)

The data indicated that almost all visitors to the Ballarat VIC expected to find reliable information. The provision of high quality information is the primary role of the VIC.

The ability to obtain reliable information was the primary expectation of Ballarat VIC users, with 94% of the users “very satisfied” with the information given to them.

In terms of additional services most respondents indicated that they would have liked to see:

- An ATM (55%)
- A café offering tea/ coffee (49%)
- Internet access (44%)
- Brochures featuring specific activities (41%)
- Seating lounge (31%)
- Visual displays e.g. DVD, video (26%)
- Luggage lockers (19%)

Interestingly, more users nominated a café rather than a “seating lounge”. Further, Internet access was considered more important than brochures featuring special activities or visual displays.

## 6.4 Conclusion

The following issues have been identified in regard to consumer preferences and should be considered:

- 23% of visitors who normally utilise VIC’s to plan their trips are currently not utilising the Prom Country VIC;
- The majority of people using the Prom Country VIC are people who have previously used the centre;
- Signage is crucial in leading visitors to the VIC as it is not only the main form of attracting visitors to the VIC, but is also a significant motivator for visitors to visit the centre. However, signage was the main area where visitors felt the Prom Country VIC lagged. The ease to find the centre and the location of the VIC were also areas that visitors rated as poor.

- The main point of entry for visitors to the Prom Country is via the South Gippsland Highway entering from the westerly direction. This is the main road linking the region with Melbourne. There are also some visitors entering the region along the South Gippsland Highway, from an easterly direction, the Strzelecki Highway and the Bass Coast Highway. Ideally, the VIC should be located in a highly visible area of the South Gippsland Highway to attract the majority of visitors entering the region from Melbourne, whilst also located in an area intercepting visitors travelling from the Bass Coast Highway and the Strzelecki Highway
- Visitor satisfaction with the VIC, may be improved by providing an ATM, a café, Internet access, brochures featuring specific activities, a seating lounge, visual displays and luggage lockers.

## 7. CRITERIA FOR OPTIMAL LOCATION

### 7.1 Introduction

Criteria have been developed from consultation and research to assist in identifying candidate locations for the VIC and guide the assessment of the candidate locations. These criteria address location, siting and economic and financial considerations.

### 7.2 Location Criteria

The VIC should be located:

- **In a location that can capture the key visitor markets:** The VIC should be located along the South Gippsland Highway to attract the main flow of visitors to South Gippsland. It should be located in an area where tourists are likely to visit or pass through on the way to key attractions (i.e. Wilson's Prom). A location where a high yield can potentially be extracted from visitors is preferable (e.g. in a township).
- **In close proximity to local retailers:** It is important that visitors to the Prom Country generate economic benefits for the entire region. Locating the Centre in an area with significant retail activity will help entice customers to go shopping and eat out and consequently provide expenditure benefits to retailers.
- **On a main road and easily accessible:** Ease of access is a key requirement of VIC users. A main road location facilitates access and exposure. As the majority of visitors enter the Shire from the Melbourne side of the South Gippsland Shire it is desirable for the VIC to be located on the South Gippsland Highway. Signage to the VIC is important in facilitating access.
- **In a highly visible location and can be found easily:** The VIC should be in a prominent location. This will assist in attracting unplanned visitation to the Centre. Signage to the VIC is important in facilitating unplanned visits.
- **Close to other attractions but not collocated, to remain impartial:** The VIC should be independent of any specific attraction in Prom Country in order that it is not perceived as part of an attraction and clearly promotes all of the region's attractions and tourism product strengths.
- **Co-located with other local government and business services:** The VIC should be well integrated with the communities in which it is based.
- **The VIC is spatially distributed from other VIC in the wider Gippsland Region:** The VIC should have regard to the location of other Level 1 accredited VICs in Gippsland.

### 7.3 Site Criteria

The site for the VIC should:

- Have sufficient area to accommodate the core functions of the VIC and allow room for expansion.
- Preferably be owned by Council to minimise capital costs.

- Be visible from the major access route leading to the VIC.
- Be close to car parking or accommodate car parking on site.
- Allow for disabled access.

Other desirable criteria include:

- Be available within a reasonable timeframe and not subject to a number of contingent decisions being made.
- Have an indoor/outdoor area for families to relax and children to play.

## 7.4 Economic and Financial Criteria

The location of VIC should:

- **Maximise the economic benefits of tourism to the Prom Country Region:** This includes proximity to other attractions, shops, cafes and restaurants to generate spin-off expenditure by visitors to the VIC. The location should result in an increase in use of the VIC leading to increased length of stay and increased expenditure by visitors.
- **Showcase the natural beauty of the Prom Country:** This could be achieved either through the location/surrounds or through the design of the VIC building or both.
- **Be able to attract capital funding for development and improvements:** The ability to attract funding reduces the reliance on limited Council resources.
- **Minimise capital costs:** Smaller capital expenditure requirements will increase the probability of implementing the recommendations.
- **Reduce spending costs:** Spending costs could be reduced through lower utility costs, reduced double handling of materials or reduced property costs.
- **Increase operating revenue:** This could include retail sales, bookings and other commercial services.

## 7.5 Components/Facilities

### 7.5.1 Core Services

- The Prom Country VIC complies with Level 1 VIC accreditation criteria, however is currently operating below potential. The increase in phone call inquiries and website hits indicates an increase in visitor interest in the region, however visitation to the Centre is not increasing.
- While enhanced facilities would contribute to increased usage, the most important services a VIC can provide are reliable information services.
- Other core components to the VIC include the accommodation booking service, merchandising and Internet access.

## 7.6 Building Area

It is important that the VIC building:

- **Has a sufficient floor area to accommodate core services:**



- Recent proposals for VICs in regional Victoria have comprised around 250-300 square metres of floor area excluding areas to accommodate administration staff.
- Provision for future growth in VIC usage should be made.
- **Has a sufficient floor area to accommodate additional facilities:**
  - Additional facilities currently sought by VIC users could be accommodated where possible.
  - Provision for changes in visitor expectations and changes in the levels of usage of these additional facilities should be considered, where possible.
- **Is prominent and interesting:** The building should be designed to attract attention and draw in visitors.

## 7.7 Layout

The layout of the VIC should address:

- **Displays of brochures and collateral:** Display racks should match the brochure specifications and sufficient wall space should be available for brochure racks.
- **Main desk:** The main desk should not be cluttered (eg separate from retail displays) and should not present as a “barrier” to the visitors entering the VIC.
- **Back-of-house:** An area is needed where staff can hold meetings, work quietly or relax. This should also include a storage area for stock and personal items and a staff room with appropriate amenities.
- **Accommodation booking service:** The booking service should be located to facilitate supervision of the volunteers. Location should also facilitate fulfilment of booking enquires from “walk-in” customers without customers perceiving that they are in the “back of house” area.

## **8. LOCATION OPTIONS**

Visitors to the region mainly access Prom Country via the South Gippsland Highway, from the northwest of the Shire. The main destinations are predominately in the south of the Shire, including Wilsons Prom. Similarly, the majority of the accommodation stock also is located in the southern villages (i.e. Foster and Yanakie). Having regard to the information outlined in the previous section, a location on the South Gippsland Highway (or the equivalent main roads connected to the Highway within the townships, i.e. Foster Road or Main Street, Foster) is preferred.

These factors suggest that the townships of Meeniyah and Foster are the best location for a VIC.

Meeniyah is the most strategically placed town, as the majority of visitors to the region would travel through the town at some point in their journey.

Foster has the advantages that it is a larger township than Meeniyah and is located closer to the key attractions and accommodation stock within the Shire. Through appropriate signage at the major intersection points (in particular the turn off at Meeniyah for Wilsons Prom) visitors could potentially be drawn to Foster as they travel to the key tourism destinations.

### **8.1 Candidate sites**

The following sites have been identified as candidates for the VIC.

Option 1- the existing VIC in Korumburra

Option 2- the Courthouse, Leongatha

Option 3- Meeniyah – Whitelaw Street – Old Health Centre site

Option 4- Stockyard Gallery, Foster

Option 5- Pearl Park, Foster

Option 6- Foster War Memorial Arts Centre (East Wing), Foster

Option 7- The Triangle site- Corner South Gippsland Hwy & Toora Rd, Foster

These sites have been assessed against the criteria outlined in the previous section.

## 9. ASSESSMENT OF SITE OPTIONS

Each of the site options identified has been assessed against the location criteria outlined in Section 7 of this report. Each of the location options is likely to result in a differing set of positive and negative outcomes. To trade off these positive and negative outcomes, each site has been measured against the identified criteria. As some of the criteria are more important than others, a quantitative weight for each of the criteria has been implemented to compensate for the differing levels of importance. Significantly, the location of the VIC in Foster or Meeniyah is a fundamental consideration for the assessment of the individual sites.

We have looked at a number of sites that have been proposed as relocation options, however this is not a definitive list and additional sites may be found in the future. Any additional sites that are proposed can also be assessed against the criteria outlined in Section 7 of this report.

Each site is then given a “score” out of ten against each of the criteria.

A summary of the assessment results for the proposed options has been outlined below.

**Table 7 Site Options and Summary of Scores**

Site Option	Total Score
Option 1- The existing VIC in Korumburra	313
Option 2- The Courthouse, Leongatha	313
Option 3- Meeniyah site (adjacent to Hall)	546
Option 4- Stockyard Gallery, Foster	369
Option 5- Pearl Park, Foster	533
Option 6- Senior Citizens Club, Foster	545
Option 7- The Triangle Site, Foster	432

The assessment of site options is included in Appendix A.

### 9.1 Option 1- The Existing VIC in Korumburra

The existing VIC is located next to the Coal Creek Heritage Village on the periphery of Korumburra. The VIC is approximately 105m<sup>2</sup> in area and shares a large car park with Coal Creek. A picnic area with undercover seating and a barbeque adjoins the centre. Essential maintenance is required in the centre including rewiring, painting and floor coverings. The estimated cost for the completion of current and programmed essential maintenance works (rewiring, painting etc.) is \$13,500<sup>22</sup>.

Additional upgrade works would also be required if the VIC remains at the current site. These include:

- Undertaking the essential maintenance works
- Removal of the vegetation to increase visibility to the centre.

<sup>22</sup> Cost estimates are based on the Council report prepared in April 2005. Costs inflated by 10% to 2006 values.

- Repair/ replacement of the benches and tables in the outdoor area.
- Extension to the existing building (to increase floor area providing additional storage, office and display areas).
- Additional signage leading to the VIC.

#### Assessment of Option 1-

The existing VIC scored moderately for the site criteria, but scored poorly for the location criteria and the economic criteria. This reflects the poor location of the site in attracting visitors to the centre, as well as the lack of economic benefit generated by the current VIC.

The VIC also scores poorly due to the limited size of the VIC. The VIC is located outside the commercial centre, which limits the economic benefits that can be generated from visitors.

### **9.2 Option 2- The Courthouse, Leongatha**

The Courthouse is located in the heart of the Leongatha Township on the corner of the South Gippsland Highway and the Bass Highway. The Courthouse was built in 1912 and is currently used by the South Gippsland Brass Band for monthly rehearsals. This option would require fit-out, signage and provision of parking.

#### Assessment of Option 2-

This option scored highly for its central location in the heart of Leongatha. However, vehicle access to the site is very difficult. Parking is very limited and the intersection of the South Gippsland Highway is difficult to navigate.

The building is interesting and prominent, but the location is not optimal for attracting drive by visitors.

### **9.3 Option 3- Meeniyah Site, adjacent to Hall**

The Meeniyah site is located on Whitelaw Street (South Gippsland Highway) in the centre of the town. This proposal would require the conversion of the veranda and an extension to the front of the building to create an area of at least 200 m<sup>2</sup>. Without the additional floor space, the existing building is only 63m<sup>2</sup> (not including the toilets). The cost for redevelopment of the site is estimated at \$280,000. There are adequate public toilets currently operating on the site.

#### Assessment of Option 3-

Overall, the proposed extension of the Meeniyah site scored very highly. The site scored highly for location, which reflects the central location of the site within the Meeniyah Township. The high scores for economic and financial criteria are due to the strategic location of Meeniyah (a township that the majority of visitors pass through at some point in their journey) and the potential for the VIC to attract visitors to stop and spend money in the town.

#### **9.4 Option 4- Pearl Park, Foster**

Pearl Park is located on Main Street in Foster, opposite the Foster Gallery. The site is currently utilised as a park. There is an existing barbeque and undercover area on the site. This proposal would require relocation of the barbeque and in its place the construction of a new VIC with an area of around 250m<sup>2</sup>. There are existing public toilets on the site and some car parking can be provided on site. The estimated cost for development of the new VIC is \$850,000.

##### Assessment of Option 4-

Construction of the Pearl Park site as a new VIC scored very highly for the site, location and economic benefit criteria. However, the ability for the VIC to attract funding is a major limitation for this option.

While offering significant opportunities as a location for the VIC, this option would also require substantial capital investment. It may therefore be suitable as a long-term solution.

#### **9.5 Option 5- Stockyard Gallery, Foster**

The proposal to relocate the VIC to the Stockyard Gallery comprises the partitioning of the gallery foyer for the use of the VIC, incorporating the small adjoining office space and storage room. The proposed space comprises 90.15m<sup>2</sup> and construction works has been estimated at \$198,000<sup>23</sup>.

##### Assessment of Option 5-

The Stockyard Gallery rated very highly for the location criteria. This reflects the suitability and desirability of the location within the Foster Township, as well as the ability to maximise benefits and minimise cost. However, the foyer of the gallery is smaller in size than the existing VIC and therefore would not be sufficient space to adequately function as an Accredited Level 1 VIC.

If an area of around 250m<sup>2</sup> becomes available within the building, the Stockyard Gallery would be a highly desirable location for the VIC to be relocated.

#### **9.6 Option 6- Senior Citizen Club, Foster**

The east wing of the Performing Arts Centre is currently operating as the Senior Citizens Club. The centre is located on Main Street, walking distance to the commercial centre of the town, with ample on street parking out the front of the building. The main access to the Club is via the double doors on the eastern side of the building. There are two small offices and two large partitioned rooms (approximately 200m<sup>2</sup>) that back onto the main performing arts hall. This option would require fit-out and some partitioning work. Cosmetic treatment of the façade would also be desirable (eg. rendering and signage). Cost for these works are estimated at \$100,000. This option would also be reliant on the relocation of the Senior Citizens Club to a suitable location.

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<sup>23</sup> Cost estimates are based on the Council report prepared in April 2005. Costs inflated by 10%.

#### Assessment of Option 6-

This option scored very highly for location, site criteria and economic benefit, as well as building area. The site could be operational with comparatively less capital investment than most of the other options. The location is close to the commercial centre of Foster and could create a good synergy between the VIC and the local shops. The low capital investment required for this option indicates that it could be suitable as a short-term solution.

### **9.7 Option 7- Triangle Site, Foster**

The Triangle Site is located on the intersection from the South Gippsland Highway and Foster Road, on the periphery of the Foster Township. The triangular parcel of land is currently vacant, and is accessible from a side road, which is currently used to access the Foster Motel. Redevelopment of the site is subject to the provision of water and sewerage and would involve the construction of a new VIC with an area of around 250m<sup>2</sup> with onsite toilets and car parking. The estimated cost for construction of this option is \$605,000.

#### Assessment of Option 7

This option scores highly for the site and building area criteria. However, the location of the VIC on the periphery of the township is likely to reduce the ability to leverage economic benefits to the township from the VIC (through greater visitor expenditure in the shops, cafes, restaurants etc.).

## 10. RECOMMENDATIONS

The most suitable location for the Prom Country VIC is within the township of Foster, or Meeniyah. Foster is located close to the major tourism products within the Prom Country and with the support from an appropriate signage strategy most visitors could be drawn to a VIC located in Foster. Meeniyah is also strategically placed to capture visitors as they drive through the Shire.

There have been a number of sites in Forster and Meeniyah, which have been proposed and these have been assessed as part of this study. Of the sites proposed the most suitable include;

- The Senior Citizens Club in Foster,
- Pearl Park in Foster,
- The site in Meeniyah

The Senior Citizens Club in Foster is in a highly visible location within close proximity to the commercial centre of Foster. Locating within the existing building would only require fit out and as a result capital costs would be significantly lower than other relocation options. The proximity close to the commercial centre of Foster also is likely to generate increased spending in the town by visitors. However, this option would be dependant on the relocation of the existing users of the site to a more suitable location and further negotiation would be required.

Alternatively, the redevelopment of the Pearl Park site with a new VIC, which would require significant capital investment, may be a long-term solution. This would depend on major capital investment and is not likely to be possible in the short-term.

The Meeniyah site has the potential to provide a suitable location. However, this alternative would require significant capital investment as it would require an extension to the existing building to increase the floor space.

Clearly, additional feasibility work will be required to investigate the capital costs and use of the proposed options for the relocation of the VIC. This would need to be undertaken prior to determining the site most suitable for the VIC. It should also be noted that if the VIC is relocated to another location, the existing VIC (or the neighbouring Coal Creek Park) should continue to display visitor information. This could be a level 3 VIC or a smaller satellite service.

If none of the above options can be achieved in the short term (i.e. next three years) then it is recommended that rather than relocating the centre to a smaller or less suitable location (such as the Stockyard Gallery) the VIC should remain in its existing location.

However, the following works should be undertaken to improve the VIC:

- Removal of the vegetation to increase visibility to the centre.
- Undertaking the essential maintenance works (rewiring, painting etc.)
- Repair/ replacement of the benches and tables in the outdoor area.

- Extension to the existing building (to increase floor area providing additional storage, office and display areas).
- Additional signage leading to the VIC.





## APPENDICES

## **Appendix A.**

## **ASSESSMENT OF DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS**

