

GIPPSLAND ACCESSIBLE TOURISM PLAN 2013-2015







INTRODUCTION

Gippsland recognises the importance and benefits of building the region as an accessible tourism destination. The Gippsland Accessible Tourism Plan is a collaborative approach between Destination Gippsland, all six Local Governments in Gippsland, Tourism Victoria, Department of Human Services – Office for Disability and relevant partners to ensure Gippsland's diverse tourism product can be enjoyed by all. It will complement the Tourism Victoria Accessible Tourism Plan and be the first Accessible Tourism Plan in Regional Victoria. The Plan is an outcome of the Gippsland Accessible Tourism Workshop held on 18th October 2012.

The Plan discusses the challenges and opportunities the Gippsland tourism industry faces in becoming more accessible and recommends future actions in the areas of tourism product, marketing, training, advocacy, policy and management. Implementation of the plan will be the responsibility of a proposed Gippsland Accessible Tourism Partnership led by Destination Gippsland and made up of organisations with a role and interest in accessible tourism. Please note funding and policy commitment are not confirmed at this point. Additional resources will be required for this plan to be fully implemented and achieve its stated objectives.

As outlined in the Gippsland Marketing Plan 2012-2015, accessible tourism enables visitors with additional access requirements to more easily access tourism products and services. Within Gippsland's tourism industry there is a need to increase knowledge around access requirements and the concept of universal access or access for all. In Australia there are four million people (over 20%) of the population that have one or more disabilities (ABS, 2009). Of this group 88% take a holiday each year. The number of people with a disability (access requirements) increases to 35% of our population when you include people with temporary disabilities resulting from injury or illness. Together with their families and friends, the number of people affected by disability is bigger still; along with seniors and other travellers with access needs such as parents with young children. In addition, the market for accessible tourism will continue to increase as Australia's population ages.

Note: This plan refers to 'accessible' tourism which is a visitor experience that is welcoming and inclusive of people of all ages and abilities. In particular, the context refers to people who have additional access requirements when they travel. This is a broad definition that includes those with a recognised disability, seniors with restricted capacity or parents with young children. The term 'accessible' is used where others may use 'inclusive', 'universal', 'barrier free' or 'access' tourism.



VISION

Gippsland will be widely recognised as a region with a significant range of accessible tourism products that grow visitation and enhance the tourism experience for all visitors to the region.

OBJECTIVES

The following objectives guide our priorities and key goals:

- Communicate the 'Good Access is Good Business' message to the tourism industry
- Increase visitor numbers, expenditure and dispersal of visitors with additional access requirements
- Position Gippsland as a leader in accessible tourism experiences that aligns with State strategies
- Raise the profile and priority of accessible tourism in Gippsland amongst all government, industry and community stakeholders
- Increase visitor satisfaction and repeat visitation from people with additional access requirements in Gippsland.

KEY PRIORITY AREAS

To achieve our vision and guide our objectives and goals we will pursue five priority areas over the next three years:

- Accessible Tourism Product
- Marketing to Visitors with Additional Access Requirements
- Industry Success in Accessible Tourism
- Advocacy and Policy
- Governance and Management.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

Three challenges or barriers have been identified as the most important to address the key goals and actions:

1. Limited understanding of the benefits of the 'Good Access is Good Business' message across the Gippsland tourism industry.

There is a need to provide business owners with the tools to understand the link between providing good access and increasing their patronage and visitor experience.

2. Fear Factor and limited understanding of 'access for all' requirements.

Many businesses are apprehensive about providing infrastructure and other business investments to cater for people with additional access requirements and instead do nothing to address access issues.

3. Communication between government, the community and tourism industry regarding access issues can be improved.

There is a need to develop stronger partnerships between all stakeholders on accessibility issues to generate lasting change.





OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACCESSIBLE TOURISM IN GIPPSLAND

Three opportunities have been identified as priorities to address the challenges:

1. Improve the industry's confidence and standards of customer service to attract visitors with additional access requirements through co-ordinated and targeted education programs.
2. Encourage businesses to take steps to become more accessible. We need to make it easier to start the process and overcome any barriers to become an accessible tourism business. Opportunities exist to utilise the new Tourism Victoria/Office of Disability resource kit to educate businesses and encourage them to take the first step.
3. Create an accessible tourism network across Gippsland to include accessible tourism in industry policy and decision making.

PRIORITY AREA 1 – ACCESSIBLE TOURISM PRODUCT

Key Goal: To ensure Gippsland is effectively positioned to encourage and facilitate investment in accessible tourism infrastructure and development.

Action	Approach	Measures	Timing
1. Produce an Accessible Tourism Brochure and online content outlining Gippsland's best accessible tourism products and experiences.	Selection criteria established, content provided by Councils and Tourism Associations. Destination Gippsland to project manage brochure and online content in accessible formats.	Brochure completed and available for consumers online and in Visitor Information Centres and distribution networks.	By September 2013 and online version updated annually.
2. Encourage investment in infrastructure to improve accessibility standards.	Promote the opportunities for businesses to invest in accessible infrastructure and improvements via the 2013/14 Community Building Grant Scheme. Advocate for future grant funds to be made available for similar purposes.	Number of business supported and the quality of improvements made.	By December 2013.
3. Facilitate infrastructure improvements in key Gippsland National Parks.	Support Parks Victoria to continue making parks more accessible with infrastructure improvements such as beach ramps and all terrain wheelchairs such as those available at Wilsons Promontory.	Improved accessibility in key National Parks in Gippsland.	By June 2015.
4. Facilitate infrastructure improvements in key local government assets.	Advocate for Gippsland Councils to improve accessibility to key visitor attractions and experiences such as museums, galleries, parks and Visitor Information Centres.	Improved accessibility at key attractions.	By June 2015.
5. Develop accessible tourism audits (mystery shopper program).	Negotiate the opportunity to develop accessible tourism audits (mystery shop program) with suitable service providers. The purpose of the audit would be to give businesses an understanding and assessment of their accessible visitor experience.	Auditing tool created and utilised on businesses.	By June 2014 then annual process.

Action	Approach	Measures	Timing
6. Create Accessible Tourism packages and itineraries.	Explore the potential to package complementary accessible products with transport providers and other relevant visitor services.	Number of accessible packages and itineraries developed.	By June 2014 then annual renewal.
7. Develop partnerships and networks involving Access Workers and the tourism industry.	Create opportunities and channels to meet and share information between Access Workers, Council Tourism Officers, Tourism Associations and Visitor Information Centres.	VIC's are informed to answer all questions about accessibility in their town / region.	Ongoing relationships between Councils and VIC's.
8. Develop an annual Gippsland Accessible Festival.	Learn from the Bass Coast/South Gippsland '2012 Cowes Beach Festival' to create a similar accessible event in other parts of Gippsland. Explore the opportunity to incorporate accessible activities and services in existing events on the tourism calendar.	Minimum would be to hold one accessible event in Gippsland each year.	Annual (Cowes beach festival held in December).

PRIORITY AREA 2 – MARKETING TO VISITORS WITH ADDITIONAL ACCESS REQUIREMENTS

Key Goal: Develop marketing activities and communication tools which focus on accessible tourism as a means to increase visitor numbers, length of stay and dispersal for Gippsland.

Action	Approach	Measures	Timing
9. Develop a tagline to be used in marketing.	Leverage the 'Inspired by Gippsland' or 'You'll love every piece of Victoria' brands for Accessible Gippsland marketing messages.	Tagline decided on and used in Gippsland Accessible Tourism collateral.	By September 2013.
10. Improve the access information in mainstream consumer websites and collateral promoting Gippsland.	This could include the font size, layout, general content, event listings and images used on websites and key collateral such as inspiredbygippsland.com.au and leading Council, VIC and industry association sites and information channels.	Number and prominence of accessible messages on key websites and brochures.	Benchmarks set by December 2013, annual review.
11. Use ambassadors to promote accessible tourism experiences.	Identify potential Gippsland ambassadors such as paralympians, returned servicemen, community leaders, young mothers etc., to be included in Inspired by Gippsland collateral, imagery and interviews to increase awareness of Gippsland as an accessible destination and encourage visitation.	Accessible ambassadors selected to promote Accessible Tourism Gippsland.	By December 2013.
12. Improve the available imagery and video footage of accessible experiences.	Develop a 'shot list' for accessible experiences and products across Gippsland. These shots could be incorporated into future photo shoots and video projects. Examples could include visitors in a range of locations with mobility aides, assistance animals, with children in prams, senior citizens etc.	Agreement and completion of shot list.	By June 2014.
13. Promote and package accessible businesses on inspiredbygippsland.com.au and other digital channels.	Promote opportunities for accessible tourism businesses to have features on the web deals page of inspiredbygippsland.com.au/visitvictoria.com. Distribution channels include using a dedicated email direct mail reaching 30,000 consumers.	Increased number of accessible packages offered to consumers on Inspired by Gippsland / Visit Victoria.	Benchmarks set December 2013, annual review.

Action	Approach	Measures	Timing
14. Explore and reach new target markets with digital and database marketing.	Develop targeted distribution plan for Accessible Gippsland brochures. Explore opportunities exist to promote accessible tourism content on the Inspired by Gippsland Facebook page reaching over 15,000 fans, content on Twitter and “visitgippsland” Instagram feeds. This can extend to other tourism industry stakeholders with similar social media channels. Promote through existing target markets such as Disabled Motorists, Disability Service Organisations, Divine Website etc.	Increased accessible tourism content on social media and engagement from fans.	Once brochure is released by September 2013.
15. Generate PR and media campaigns supporting accessible tourism experiences in Gippsland.	Launch the new brochure and promote our ‘best of accessible experiences’ content in mainstream and travel media.	Media coverage obtained.	By September 2013.
16. Communicate to the Gippsland tourism industry the ‘Good Access is Good Business’ message.	Communicate key messages via industry newsletters, website, industry facebook, Gippsland Tourism Conference, meetings and local PR channels. Use case studies and local examples to demonstrate practical steps and outcomes. Encourage an accessibility category in local tourism and business awards.	Increased awareness amongst Gippsland tourism industry of the importance of accessibility.	Review annually in July.

PRIORITY AREA 3 - INDUSTRY SUCCESS IN ACCESSIBLE TOURISM

Key Goal: Ensure the Gippsland tourism industry is aware of the benefits of becoming an accessible tourism business and provide them with the tools to develop their businesses to cater for this market.

Action	Approach	Measures	Timing
17. Promote the use of the new Tourism Victoria Resource Kit.	Educate and encourage tourism businesses to take the first step to becoming accessible. Post the resource kit and other materials on the destinationgippsland.com.au industry website and include links to it via newsletters and other industry communication channels.	Number of downloads of the resource kit from the website (minimum 100 from Gippsland).	September 2013 – following its release.
18. Deliver an accessible tourism module for the digital workshop series.	Incorporate accessible tourism module into existing digital workshops including topics such as: -‘how to make your website more accessible’ - share iPhone apps that assist people with additional access needs, such as people with vision or hearing impairment.	Improve the skill level of tourism businesses to make their website accessible.	By December 2013 with Traralgon workshop to be the pilot.
19. Provide ‘hands-on’ access awareness training to promote Accessible Tourism and Universal Access to the tourism industry.	Provide experiential learning opportunities for the tourism industry. This could include workshops featuring role playing with participants experiencing the challenges facing people with additional access requirements such as using mobility aides and wearing blindfolds. Explore ways to incorporate into other local government training programs to maximise attendance. - Gippsland Leaders Network are an example of an organisation that can deliver these workshops.	Number of participants attending training and associated workshops (minimum 25).	First workshop to be offered by December 2013.

PRIORITY AREA 4 - ADVOCACY AND POLICY

Key Goal: Effectively advocate for policies and strategies to promote the benefits of accessible tourism in Gippsland.

Action	Approach	Measures	Timing
20. Develop an Accessible Tourism Advocacy Plan which includes key policy priorities.	Consult with the Gippsland Accessible Tourism Partnership and stakeholders to develop advocacy plan and priorities.	Advocacy plan approved.	By December 2013.
21. Create wider network of accessible tourism stakeholders.	Approach Parks Victoria, V Line and other government and industry sectors to participate in the Gippsland Accessible Tourism Partnership projects and consultations.	Number of relevant stakeholders included in accessible tourism network.	Review in September 2013.
22. Encourage education institutions to include accessible tourism component into course curriculum.	Approach TAFE and Monash Gippsland tourism departments to include content on accessible tourism in existing tourism courses.	An increased number of tourism graduates with an understanding of accessibility.	By December 2013 and review annually.
23. Influence other Gippsland plans and policies.	Advocate for accessible tourism messages to be included in strategic plans such as the Gippsland Regional Plan and individual Gippsland Local Government Plans. Encourage each Gippsland Tourism Association to address accessible tourism in their Strategic Plans.	Inclusion in all of these external plans.	Review annually in June.

PRIORITY AREA 5 – GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Key Goal: To build an accessible tourism group with sector representatives and set goals and actions for building a more accessible Gippsland.

Action	Approach	Measures	Timing
24. Create a Gippsland Accessible Tourism Partnership (GATP).	There is a need for an ongoing group and collaborative approach to support accessible tourism in Gippsland. This group would include representation from all Councils, DHS, Parks Victoria, Tourism Victoria, Arts Victoria, business and community representatives and transport industry.	Representatives selected and Group meeting held	By September 2013
25. Management of the Gippsland Accessible Tourism Plan.	Destination Gippsland will lead the management and implementation of the plan in partnership with the GATP. This role is dependent on appropriate long term resources being committed to both Destination Gippsland and the plan itself.	Bi-annual reviews of goals and actions	Commence September 2013
26. Pursue funding opportunities to execute the goals of the Gippsland Accessible Tourism Plan.	Identify suitable projects and apply for relevant local, state and federal government grant programs to support the actions of the Gippsland Accessible Tourism Plan.	Successful applications for funding and priorities set	Ongoing

KEY ACCESSIBLE TOURISM RESOURCES

To complement the Gippsland Accessible Tourism Plan please note there are a range of accessible tourism resources available which include:

- Tourism Victoria's Accessible Tourism Plan aims to encourage the Victorian tourism industry to see the social and economic benefits of offering tourism products and services for people with access requirements. The plan can be found by visiting www.tourism.vic.gov.au.
- The Tourism Victoria Accessible Tourism Resource Kit will assist Gippsland's tourism businesses to tap into this important growth market. The kit is a comprehensive guide which will help many tourism businesses through the process of becoming an accessible business. The toolkit will be released in 2013 and available at www.tourism.vic.gov.au and www.destinationgippsland.com.au.
- The Victorian Office for Disability www.dhs.vic.gov.au
- Divine www.divine.vic.gov.au
- Vision Australia www.visionaustralia.org
- To view Good Access is Good Business www.destinationgippsland.com.au
- Travability www.travability.travel
- Travellers Aid Australia www.travellersaid.org.au
- Arts Access Victoria www.artsaccess.com.au
- Liveable Housing Design resources www.livablehousingaustralia.org.au
- Travelling Chair: Making your community accessible www.travellingchair.net

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Gippsland recognises the importance and benefits of building the region as an accessible tourism destination.

