

WARRNAMBOOL

DESTINATION ACTION PLAN

2024 - 2029



Acknowledgements

Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Ltd acknowledges the Peek Whurrong peoples of the Eastern Maar Nation as the traditional custodians of Warrnambool. We pay our respects to their Ancestors and Elders, past, present and emerging. We recognise and respect their unique cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship to their traditional lands.

The development of the Warrnambool Destination Action plan has been facilitated by Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Ltd.

The process brought together representatives from stakeholder groups that benefit from the visitor economy, local government, industry and the community to develop an agreed plan that supports the vision and aspirations for growing the return from the visitor economy of Warrnambool.

Specifically, we would like to thank the individuals that participated in the plan development process.

Facilitator: Leith Thomas

Destination action plan workshop/review participants:

Lydia Kippe – Lady Bay Resort

Zita Tattersal – Deakin University

Bronwyn Patel – Olde Maritime + Clovelly Restaurant

Gene Seabrook – Deep Blue Hotel and Hot Springs, Downtown, and Mid City

Lauren Orero – Deep Blue Hotel and Hot Springs

Lydia Murnane – Lady Bay Resort

Paul Thompson – Warrnambool City Council

Ashley Ansell – Warrnambool City Council

Mary Ellen Watson – The Pavilion

Andrea Lawson – Warrnambool RSL

Naomi Slape – Quest Warrnambool

David Kitto – Quest Warrnambool

Charmaine Hopgood – Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation

Lucas Reid – The Cally Hotel

Michael Parry – Premier Speedway

Ellen Troitzsch – Join ET

Janet Hunter – Lockology Escape Room

Jo Birley – Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism

Liz Price – Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism

Workshop 2:

Ashley Price, Stephen Hoy, David McIntyre, Luke Coughlan – WCC

Meg Deyell – Lighthouse Theatre

Linda Close – Botanic Apartments

Vanessa Thornton – The Beach Kiosk

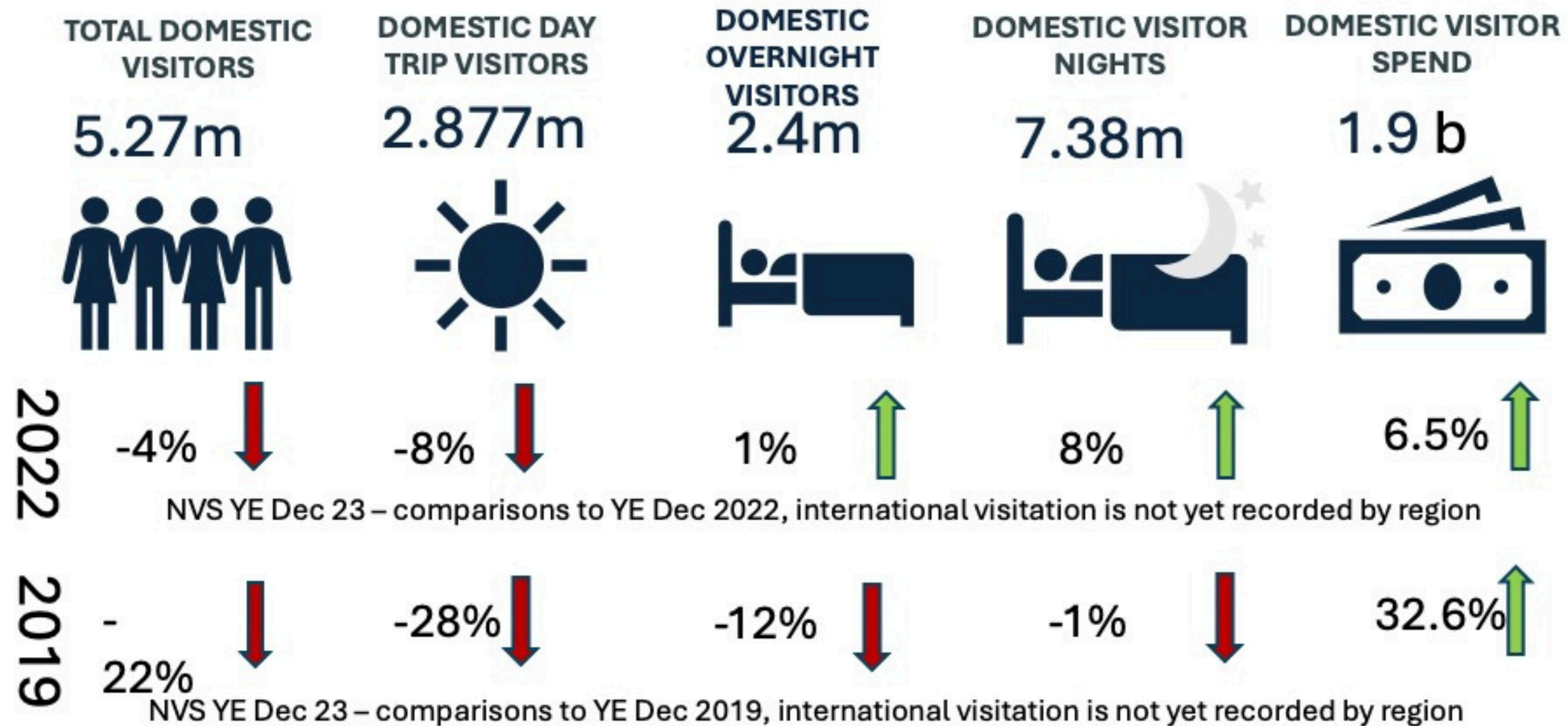


Introduction

This Destination Action Plan for Warrnambool identifies priority strategies and actions which, if implemented over the next three to five years, will enhance the competitiveness of Warrnambool within the Great Ocean Road region and beyond. These strategic actions will also be reflected in the Master Plan for the Visitor Economy for the region to facilitate regional collaboration and cooperation.

The Warrnambool Destination Action Plan has been prepared through a facilitated workshop process involving business and community representatives who considered and reached consensus on challenges to address and tourism development, marketing and management opportunities. The group has identified and agreed upon the key priorities and actions that will make a positive difference to the growth and sustainability of the Warrnambool visitor economy and experience.

The Visitor Economy – Great Ocean Road region visitation



The Visitor Economy – Warrnambool visitation

LGA Visited ²	Visitors				Nights			Spend			
	Domestic Day Trip	Domestic Overnight	International Overnight	Total	Domestic Overnight	International Overnight	Total	Day Trip Visitors	Overnight Visitors	International	Total
Warrnambool City	497k	394k	14.6k	905k	1.0m	57.3k	1.1m	\$122.5M	\$239.0M	\$11.3M	\$372.8M

NVS YE Dec 23

Additional Visitor Economy data for Warrnambool YE 2023

- Average monthly occupancy in Warrnambool is 57% (higher than regional average 47.5%)
- Average length of stay (all visitors) in Warrnambool is 1.13 nights (regional average is higher at 1.45 nights)
- 66% of visitors to Warrnambool come off-peak between April and November (more than the 57.7% of visitors to the region who come off-peak)
- 44% of visitors to Warrnambool stay overnight (on par with 44.5% for the region)
- 7.6% of jobs in Warrnambool are in the tourism sector (similar to 7.9% for the region)

Warrnambool's top ten visitor source markets (by \$ spend) for FY 23/24

*'Visitors' from neighbouring LGAs are likely to be using Warrnambool as their service centre, which significantly increases spend

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Moyne Shire* | 6. Corangamite* |
| 2. Southern Grampians* | 7. Colac Otway* |
| 3. Greater Geelong | 8. Ballarat |
| 4. Melton | 9. Mount Gambier |
| 5. Wyndham | 10. Glenelg* |



Objectives

Visitor economy objectives for the Great Ocean Road Region are to:

- Increase visitor length of stay
- Increase visitor expenditure
- Increase visitor dispersal (geographically and seasonally)
- Increase visitor satisfaction – build a visitor servicing culture
- Increase industry and community engagement, participation and support

Additional destination objectives for Warrnambool are to:

- Grow the product offering
- Diversify accommodation options
- Attract new markets seeking cultural, sustainable and nature-based experiences
- Increase accessibility to key natural attractions
- Increase cooperation and collaboration within the sector

Our vision

Warrnambool is a vibrant and enticing destination from which visitors can explore the Great Ocean Road and beyond.

A regional city by the sea, Warrnambool is a place of cultural depth offering visitors layers of possibilities to uncover. The warm and welcoming community proudly shares its unique and diverse cultures through food, art and events, while the natural beauty of the coast and surrounds present endless opportunities for adventure all year round.

The tourism sector is forward thinking and collaborative, driven by a focus on sustainability and innovation. This produces a range of compelling accommodation, hospitality and activity options appealing to all market segments.

Always offering something new, visitors return to Warrnambool again and again as there is, quite literally, always something for everyone.



Our Values

Excitement Vibrancy
Active
Culturally rich
Pride Welcoming
Affordable
Engaged Accessibility
Family friendly
Special Connection
Commercially viable Cohesion
Nature-focused
Year-round Eco-friendly
Sustainable Collaborative
Multi-cultural

Opportunities

- Promote Warrnambool as a hub or base from which to explore the Great Ocean Road region, leveraging its regional city status
- Celebrate the breadth and accessibility of Warrnambool and the region's offerings, showcasing the spectacular natural assets, rich culture, vibrant events, and welcoming community
- Embrace the weather and develop offerings and initiatives designed to showcase as a winter destination and grow year-round visitation, leveraging year-round experiences like Deep Blue Hot Springs
- Establish supporting infrastructure and services to capitalise on improved public transport connections from Melbourne and improve accessibility around Warrnambool
- Improve communication, knowledge sharing, and collaboration between operators to better leverage and communicate the depth of offerings to visitors
- Promote Warrnambool's multicultural communities through festivals and events focused on culture and food, and attract visitation from those cultures
- Leverage Warrnambool's innovative and sustainable industries to grow eco-conscious and industry-based visitors
- Develop new products and offerings at existing assets, like the Warrnambool Art Gallery, Flagstaff Hill and Shipwreck Bay Holiday Park
- Work with local producers to develop agri-tourism experiences
- Promote Eastern Maar cultural awareness and support Eastern Maar in the development of new cultural tourism experiences

Challenges

- Lack of communication, connection and collaboration among local operators creates a knowledge gap about initiatives and activities, leading to missed opportunities developing packages and leveraging investment
- Limited year-round activities, particularly in the colder months, creates an uneven visitor economy that hampers development and growth
- Consumer perceptions of Warrnambool are limited to natural assets and activities and do not reflect the breadth of cultural offerings available
- Limited youth-focused activities constrain market growth
- The long distance from Melbourne limits the attraction for short-stay and weekend visits
- Operators face challenges attracting and maintaining suitably qualified staff
- Economic environment affecting visitation, workforce maintenance, and commercial viability have created a resistance to change among some operators
- Poor connectivity between precincts ie. the city and beaches, limits the city's overall vibrancy by separating activity zones
- Limited transport options across the city limit the mobility of visitors without cars
- Limited range and supply of accommodation options constrains market expansion and visitor diversification
- Limited interaction, relationship building and engagement with First Nations peoples

Action Plan Implementation

The following section outlines activities stakeholders can undertake collaboratively to achieve the vision articulated in this Destination Action Plan. A Reference Group will be formed to assist with facilitating this work and review its progress. Where appropriate, primary organisational responsibilities have been identified. As additional resources may need to be secured to implement the Plan, it may be appropriate and necessary to involve other organisations and to seek funding for specific projects.

The Plan does not commit any organisation to the actions proposed but is a guide to pursuing priorities and actions which will make a positive difference to the achievement of the tourism objectives noted above.

The priority actions have been assigned a priority rating as a guide. These ratings are:

HIGH within the first two years

MEDIUM within two to three years

LOW within five years

Review of priorities and reporting on progress of implementation of the Plan will be undertaken annually by the Reference Group with support from GORRT. This may result in revision and updating of the Plan.

The Plan recognises existing Warrnambool City Council and regional strategies that assist in the delivery of the following actions, including but not limited to: Warrnambool Economic Development Strategy 2023-28, Warrnambool Events Strategy 2024-2028, Flagstaff Hill Re-Imagined Vision and opportunities plan and the Masterplan for the Visitor Economy of the Great Ocean Road Region 2021-2030.

Priority 1

Improve connectivity and access in and around Warrnambool

ACTIONS	Responsibility	Priority
<p>1.1 Explore improved connectivity of precincts and enable better movement around the city through enhanced services, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scooters or e-bike hire • Luggage storage facilities • Improved wayfinding signage • Alternative taxi services (like tuk-tuks) • Hourly car hire services 	<p>WCC, new entrepreneurs</p>	<p>MED</p>
<p>1.2 Enhance the capacity to service visitors in region through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operator education and training • Ambassador program • Interactive maps • Digital itinerary builders • Interpretive signage and digital storytelling (including First Nations living culture) • Greater promotion of events and activities <p>And for the sector, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A content hub collecting promotional assets • Mutual tagging and sharing on social media 	<p>GORRT, WCC, Industry</p>	<p>HIGH</p>
<p>1.3 Investigate major infrastructure options for increasing connectivity to and within Warrnambool, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boardwalk or bridge connections to the foreshore • Shared cycling and walking paths between key areas • Upgrades to the harbour and boat ramps • Airport upgrades to enable commercial flights • Additional train linkages • Linkages to cycling trails • Enhanced access to natural attractions, such as connecting the Warrnambool-Port Fairy rail trail to Tower Hill 	<p>WCC (Strategies and planning) GORRT and Industry (advocacy)</p>	<p>MED</p>

Priority 2

Develop new products, experiences and services to expand and diversify visitor markets

ACTIONS	Responsibility	Priority
<p>2.1 Enhance First Nations cultural experiences for visitors including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Eastern Maar in the development of new product and experiences on Eastern Maar Country – both in Warrnambool, and at Tower Hill and Port Campbell National Park. 	All	HIGH
<p>2.2 Increase the range and supply of accommodation options, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boutique and luxury offerings Glamping Affordable and family-friendly options Farm stay Backpacking Pet-friendly RV-friendly 	New entrepreneurs, existing businesses - supported by WCC, GORRT	MED - ongoing
<p>2.3 Develop new products and experiences, as well as grow sector capacity to service them, in order to develop new markets and support year-round visitation, ie:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Wild' nature-based experiences Food and wine-focused experiences Agri-tourism and farm gate experiences Innovation and sustainability tours, opening up sites like Deakin's Hydro Hub Nighttime economy activities Business events 	New entrepreneurs, existing businesses - supported by WCC, GORRT	MED - ongoing
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Priority 2

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ACTIONS	Responsibility	Priority
<p>2.4 Develop new experiences utilising existing assets and attractions aimed at new market segments, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Festivals focused on food, culture, music, and multicultural communities • Packages blending accommodation and activities at different times of the year, aimed at different markets - leveraging hero activities such as Flagstaff Hill Maritime Village and Deep Blue Hot Springs • Consideration of a new major attraction built around recycled geothermal water • A mountain bike track at Thunder Point • Promote Warrnambool as the ideal HUB for visitors seeking nature and cultural experiences and • Promote Tower Hill and support Eastern Maar as they develop and expand this experience • Support Eastern Maar Tourism Development team to develop new cultural experiences in Warrnambool (eg Moyjil) • Leverage proximity to Budj Bim Cultural Landscape Tourism and the promote packaging and day visitation to the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape 	<p>Businesses, WCC + GORRT</p>	<p>HIGH</p>
<p>2.5 Leverage opportunities around Warrnambool’s major events to generate repeat visitation, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May Race Carnival • Sprintcars • Business and academic events 	<p>Businesses, WCC + GORRT</p>	<p>MED</p>
<p>2.6 Recognising Warrnambool’s role as an education hub</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop programs to support students familiarisation of the destination and region - encouraging Visiting Friends and Relatives market 	<p>WCC, Deakin, SWTafe and businesses</p>	

Priority 3

Strengthen the sector and grow industry collaboration and cohesiveness

ACTIONS	Responsibility	Priority
<p>3.1 Industry training, development and networking opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop mechanisms to enhance and support industry communication and cohesion ie. newsletters, networking events, networking tools, etc • Enhance the sector’s capacity to be more diverse and inclusive to support being more welcoming to a broader visitor market, ie CALD communities, people with disabilities, younger people, older people, etc • Grow the sector’s capacity to service business events to take advantage of mid-week opportunities • Develop a training program to grow the sector’s capabilities in product packaging, trade/international, visitor servicing, etc 	WCC + GORRT	MED - ongoing
<p>3.2 Grow and maintain engagement with Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation to enhance First Nations awareness in the sector and support the development of cultural tourism products and experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow the cultural capability of all businesses through cultural awareness and other learning opportunities via Eastern Maar • Ensure incorporation of First Peoples perspectives and inclusion at events held or projects on Eastern Maar Country. 	WCC + GORRT in partnership with EMAC	HIGH
<p>3.3 Better information sharing and activity coordination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create networking/online discussion groups for individual businesses to communicate re special events, news or closures, last minute opportunities, or to share assets/resources • Information sharing calendar for local businesses to help identify busy periods or marketing/collaboration opportunities (eg notify large business events) • Utilise existing resources and training programs, including WCC, GORRT and other industry organisations • Grow online footprint and promotion of all businesses in the tourism sector on www.visitwarrnambool.com.au, encouraging business to take up free base partnership with GORRT including web listings • Support initiatives/outcomes of existing and adjacent plans eg. WCC Events Plan, Warrnambool Foreshore Framework plan, Flagstaff Hill futures, GOR Visitor Servicing Strategy 	Businesses, WCC + GORRT	MED - ongoing
Continued		

Priority 3

Continued...

ACTIONS	Responsibility	Priority
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3.4 Grow Industry partnerships, engagement and visitor servicing mindset• Industry familiarisation/ product showcase programs• Develop seasonal packages and mechanism for booking• Develop collaborative marketing opportunities	Businesses, WCC + GORRT	HIGH

Priority 4

Build the sustainability of the sector and community

ACTIONS	Responsibility	Priority
<p>4.1 Support the sector to have a more sustainable workforce:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved connections with Schools, University & TAFE • Improved local access to hospitality courses • Welcome events for international students • Fostering of community connections for newly arrived migrants • Better connections between tourism sector and support services for newly arrived migrants 	Businesses, SWTAFE, DEAKIN, WCC + GORRT	MED - ongoing
<p>4.2 Grow Warrnambool’s capacity to host business events to drive off-peak, mid week visitation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support new and existing venues to cater to the business events sector • Provide training and development, including connecting venues to meetings and events professionals/coordinators and relevant memberships 		
<p>4.3 Advocate for infrastructure to enable sustainable practices, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Way of utilising or recycling hot springs water • Installing compacting rubbish bins • Migrating bus network to hydrogen • Worm and seaweed farms 	Businesses, WCC, GORRT + DEAKIN	LOW
<p>4.4 Support businesses to develop and engage in sustainable practices, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste minimisation • Organic waste to farm practises and partnerships • Connections with community gardens • Wide scale adoption of reusable cups • Food share initiatives • Training and development initiatives to support businesses becoming more sustainable 	Businesses, WCC + GORRT	MED

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This plan was published by Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism and developed in collaboration with Warrnambool City Council and Warrnambool Visitor Economy stakeholders, businesses and the community. This planning process is supported by the Victorian State Government.



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WARRNAMBOOL
CITY COUNCIL

