

Echuca Moama
The Murray's living legend

**Echuca Moama Visitor Information Centre
2020/2021 Business Plan**



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1. Vision

“We welcome and inspire visitors, by curating and revealing our region’s hidden wonders to deliver unique, authentic and memorable experiences, creating passionate advocacy for Echuca Moama and District.”

2. Introduction

The Echuca Moama Visitor Centre (VIC) is an accredited VIC through the Quality Tourism Framework (QTF), allowing the centre to use the blue and yellow ‘i’ sign branding.

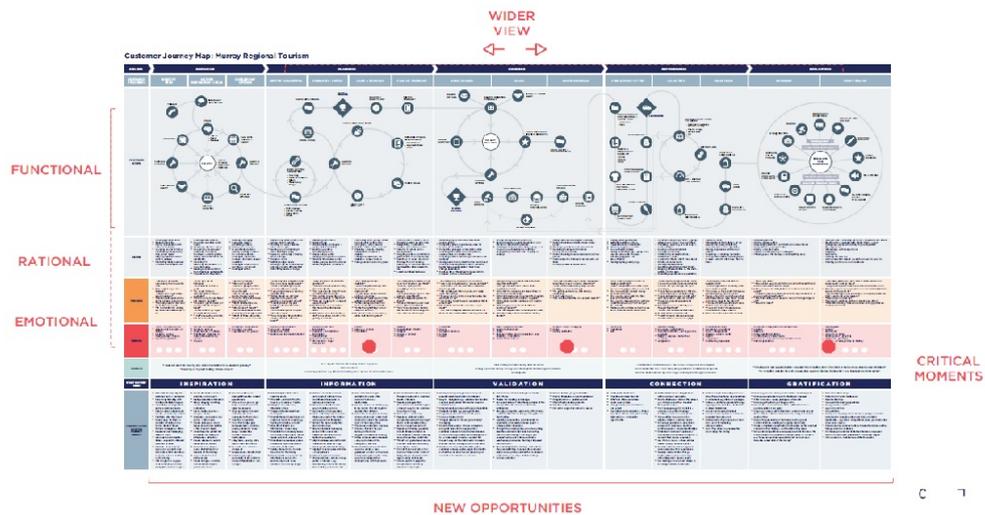
The Echuca-Moama Visitor Centre’s (VIC) role is to enrich the visitor’s experience, encourage visitors to say longer in the region and increase repeat visitation. During the 2019/20 financial year we serviced 42290 visitors.

Due to the COVID19 Pandemic, the visitor centre was closed to the public from Monday 23rd March to Thursday 4th June and again from Monday 8th June to Friday 12th June. There is no doubt that the statistics for Visitor Centre performance in 2019/20 have been severely impacted by the COVID19 Pandemic, impacting the months from March to June 2020.

2020/21 will be a time of transition for the visitor centre, as we review the areas in which we operate. The changing role of visitor servicing will see us assisting visitors prior, during and post visit based on the customer journey trip cycle.

More than a pretty picture

CJM: A PROCESS THAT REFRAMES BUSINESS TO NEW GROWTH



3. Challenges

Currently the tourism industry worldwide is impacted by a global pandemic. Prior to this tourism in Echuca Moama was being impacted by major technological change and Visitor Centres are no exception to this. It is therefore imperative that we must adapt our thinking and practices to the ever-changing landscape. Customers are KEY and driving the change in the industry. As a result of this Visit Victoria and Murray Regional Tourism are involved in Visitor Servicing Transformation Research and looking at the future of these services.

The major challenges are:

- How do we engage with prospective visitors before they arrive?
- How do we better engage with the visitors on their arrival and when they return home?
- How do we become “fit for the future” growing our visitation and increasing sales?
- How do we improve our service delivery to meet the needs of an ever-changing consumer?

In response to the challenges:

1. Through the Murray Visitor Services Transformation Project the Murray Region will work more cohesively to deliver a whole of destination approach to Visitor Services
2. The Visitor Centre needs to review its brand name (through the State strategy – they may be called INSPIRATION CENTRES – this transformation has taken place in Scandinavia) to offer a broader range of concierge services. (Itineraries, ticketing & local & regional experiences.)
3. Need to review visitor arrival points – the current Echuca Moama VIC is a GATEWAY CENTRE or DESTINATION HUB servicing visitors from both States.
4. We need also to consider the Port of Echuca (Pop up/Visitor Servicing hub) And surrounding towns such as Kyabram, Rochester & Mathoura and Deniliquin and as well as all centres along the Murray to build a stronger network. The concept of major centres as satellites or Pop ups and high visitation as outlined in the Visitor Tourism Accreditation Program.
5. Echuca Moama Visitor Centre will become more relevant to the local community showcasing local produce, wines, arts and crafts & local history or specific interest publications. The community segment is important as 38+% of visitors travel to the destination to spend time with friends and relatives (VFR)
6. The Echuca Moama Visitor Centre will increase its web activity talking with visitors before they come, assisting them with the purchase of experiences and communicating with them after their visit.
7. The Echuca Moama Visitor Centre will tailor its merchandise to the visitor audience needs.
8. Increase the number of local Ambassadors, attracting new skills in areas such as retail, special interests as well as youth, special needs and events.
9. Upskill staff and Ambassadors to meet the needs of visitors encouraging them to do one more thing! Going the extra mile – concierge style of service to ensure visitors know what is in Echuca Moama and the region.
10. Customer Service needs to be innovative, leading edge and best practice.
11. Increase our digital assets – a BRICK and CLICK approach to service. (IPADS/Scanners - ticketing)
12. Review hours of service to deliver more timely services.

13. Data Collection – move away from data as numbers through a door and look at interpretation of data

14. Work with Industry – looking at Affiliate link to enable inventory to be bookable by third parties to build capacity. Packaging of tours and inventory.

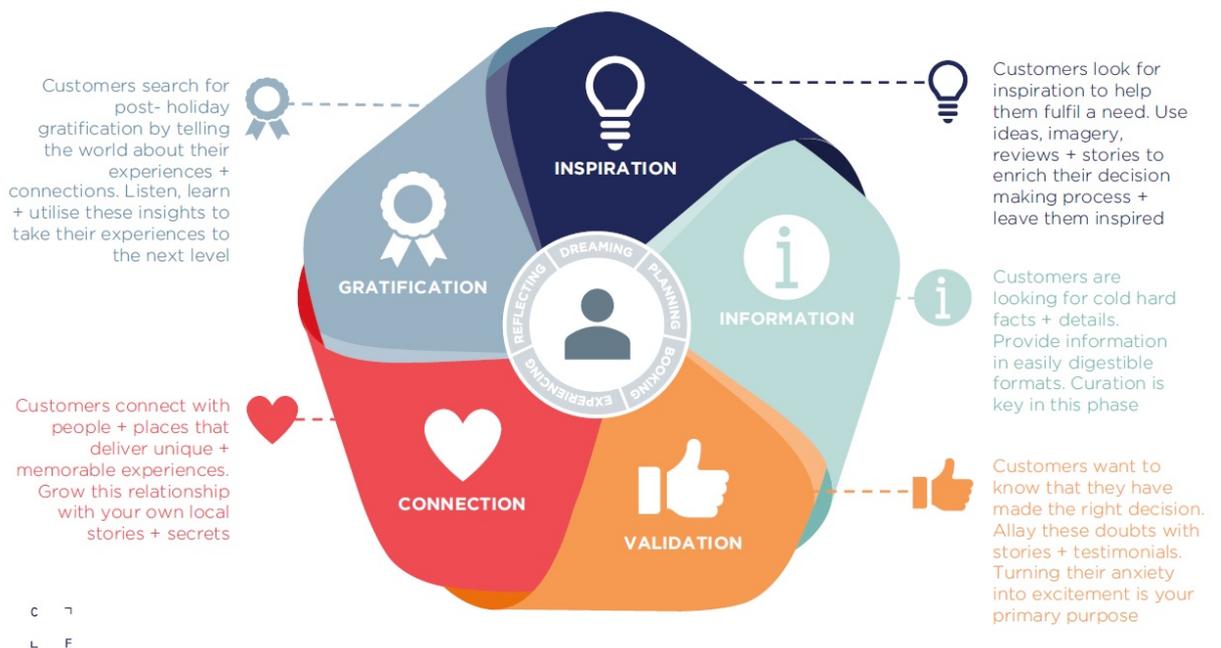
4. Service Delivery

The VIC sells Echuca-Moama as a premier visitor destination, whether it is for business or pleasure. The primary objective of the EMVIC is to validate information for visitors to Echuca Moama and to encourage increased length of stay.

2020/21 will be a time of transition for the visitor centre, as we review the areas in which we operate. The changing role of visitor servicing will see us assisting visitors prior, during and post visit based on the customer journey trip cycle. Currently Echuca Moama Visitor Centre is only operating in the Booking phase and the Experience in Destination. The integration of the Marketing strategy and Visitor Services will enable us to be active in each of the major customer journey stages.

Visitor Engagement Strategy

THE FIVE FOCUS AREAS - BASED ON CUSTOMER NEEDS



Due to the COVID19 Pandemic, the visitor centre was closed to the public from Monday 23rd March to Thursday 4th June and again from Monday 8th June to Friday 12th June. There is no doubt that the statistics for Visitor Centre performance in 2019/20 have been severely impacted by the COVID19 Pandemic, impacting the months from March to June 2020.

Looking at comparative data for the period July 2019 to February 2020 and compared it with the same period the previous year (July 2018 to February 2019); this shows that despite a

difficult summer (bushfires/heat wave) the VIC was on track to meet most of our targets prior to the impacts of the pandemic. In fact, all area's of revenue except accommodation (which was the area most impacted by the issues in summer) were on track for increases on the previous year as at the end of February 2020.

We operate an accommodation reservation service using the Bookeasy program, ensuring that accommodation bookings are available through the VIC 7 days a week and via our website 24 hours a day. Our accommodation reservations staff booked \$323,853.50 worth of accommodation during 2019/20, a decrease of 31% on the previous year.

Pandemic aside, the accommodation reservations service is the area of the business which currently faces the most significant challenges, primarily the competition of multi-national booking platforms. In 2019/20 we launched our new upgraded website and we will work with operators to facilitate the bundling of experiences with niche accommodation. We will also work with accommodation operators to package event ticketing and accommodation.

A variety of attractions tickets including paddlesteamer cruises are sold through the Visitor Information Centre, both online and over the counter using the Bookeasy system. Our staff booked \$83,806.25 worth of attractions ticket sales during 2019/20 a decrease on the previous year of 35%. Primarily this is composed of Cruising Product – in 2020/21 we will be focusing on the remainder of our attractions operators to enable these products to be booked via the visitor centre and online. This will further enhance our ability to create packages with accommodation and events.

Local Merchandise is also available to purchase from the Echuca Moama Visitor Information Centre and during 2019/20, we sold \$40352.01 worth of merchandise, which was an increase of 2.5% from the previous year. In 2019/20 our focus has been on repositioning the Visitor Centre as a showcase of Local Product. In 2020/21 we will continue to work with local producers and artisans to brand ourselves as the place to come for local content.

A range of local event tickets (including Riverboats Music Festival) are sold within the VIC via a manual system. In June 2018 we have introduced a new online event booking system via the Bookeasy program and our new website at www.echucamoama.com This will enable us to ticket many more tourism and community events and this is an area of our business where we expect to see significant returns. In 2019/20 we have sold \$125,139.00 worth of event tickets a decrease on last year's sales of 13.6%

A large range of information and brochures are available for visitors to the region. Services also offered to travellers include free wifi, office services (photocopying, faxing, printing), recharge point for motorised scooters/wheelchairs, access to the moama wharf's pump out facility, fishing licences and miner's rights.

5. Marketing Strategy

Working in conjunction with Echuca Moama Tourism's Destination Marketing Plan the Visitor Centre will play a key role in servicing visitors service during the three stages of the customer journey - pre, during and post visit, by validating online information and providing local insight. In 2020/21 we will be looking at the role of the visitor centre in regards to the integration of visitor servicing and destination marketing.

6. Key Objectives

- To enhance the visitor experience validating online information and providing a trusted source of local insight.
- To provide excellence in customer service during the three stages of the customer journey - pre, during and post visit, enabling memorable, tailored experiences.
- To promote Echuca-Moama and District as a great place to visit encouraging visitors to do 1 more attraction or stay 1 more night in our region.
- To facilitate regional dispersal of visitors to Echuca Moama within the Shire of Campaspe and Murray River Council areas, as well as along the Murray River Region, through tour and attraction bookings and key events and activities.
- To market the Visitor Centre as a hub for both locals and visitors.
- To upskill staff and ambassadors to provide timely local and regional information and to ensure accreditation standards are upheld and championed – ‘We are the best we can be!’
- To increase the range of services our ambassadors can support, eg: brochure delivery; retail/history experts.
- To increase the role of the Visitor Services staff in industry engagement via training (ATDW support), familiarisations and itinerary planning.
- To deliver a training program to ensure staff and volunteers are well equipped to take the journey from information to inspiration centres as per the Murray Regional Tourism Visitor Transformation Project document attached.



A clear vision

WHY STATEMENT

Developed in collaboration with a cross-section of stakeholders

- Tourism Managers
- VIC Managers
- VIC staff
- Regional tourism organisation reps

7. VIC Structure and Management

Echuca Moama Tourism is the peak tourism authority in Echuca-Moama.

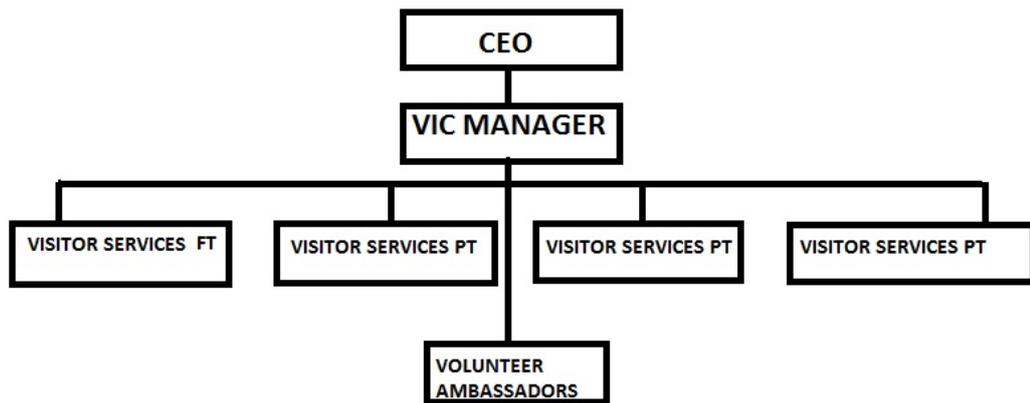
Our role is to:

1. Effectively market the destination and
2. Efficiently operate and maintain the Echuca-Moama Visitor Information Centre
3. Encourage regional dispersal of visitors to Echuca Moama within the Shire of Campaspe and Murray River Council areas.
4. Build and Deliver new and inspiring tourism experiences to grow the appeal of the destination and match target audiences.

EMT provides the overall management and financial control of the Visitor Information Centre.

The Association is a membership based organisation with over 300 financial members.

The current staffing structure for the VIC is as follows:



However, it should be noted that there will be changes to this structure as we roll out the new direction during 2020/21 as staff roles change and are tailored to deliver on the new direction.

In line with the Murray Regional Tourism Visitor Services Transformation Project the focus of visitor servicing will move from Information and Servicing to Engagement, using the five focus areas based on customer needs.

Visitor Engagement Strategy

THE FIVE FOCUS AREAS - BASED ON CUSTOMER NEEDS

	DREAMING	PLANNING	BOOKING	EXPERIENCING	REFLECTING
STRATEGY FOCUS	 INSPIRATION	 INFORMATION	 VALIDATION	 CONNECTION	 GRATIFICATION
INTENT	The Murray needs to get on their shopping list at this crucial phase of the journey. We need to educate them that the Murray has 'got what it takes' to fulfil their holiday needs	Once we're in their consideration set, we need to convey what makes us special + what's on offer in the Murray in a clear, distinctive, user-friendly way	They've made their choice, now we need to make sure they feel good about it, assuring them, exciting them + creating that connection that will extend well past coming home	They're here! How do we welcome them, how do we get them to fall in love with the Murray so they have a great holiday, tell everyone about us (advocacy) + come back again?	We need to continue the feeling of goodwill, of connection with the people + places of the Murray, by keeping in touch, encouraging them to share + making them feel special, forever connected
PRINCIPLES	Express the Murray DNA	Be a curator	Connect the industry	Live the Murray DNA	Maintain the Murray DNA
	Consistent positioning	Be their guide	One Stop Murray Shop	Engage + be present	Listen + learn
	Tell stories	Make it easy	Package + upsell	Promote wider connections	Stay connected
	Experience-led itineraries	Proactive online presence	Celebrate their choice	Promote posting	Encourage return
	Create local love	Consistent region messaging	Provide support	Gather insight	Keep them talking

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The current structure of the Board of Directors is as follows:

- Four industry-based members
- Two skills based members
- One representative from the Shire of Campaspe
- One representative from the Murray Shire

The EMT Board has responsibilities in promoting and fostering sustainable tourism and in setting the forward direction of tourism strategies for the region.

Board meetings are held on a monthly basis.

8. Key Measures

Please see Page 7-9: VIC Business Plan 2020/21

9. VIC Budget

Please see attachment 1: VIC Budget 2020/21

2019/20 Visitor Information Centre Business Plan

Goal: To ensure that world's best standards of customised information is delivered to our visitors in the most cost effective manner.

Objective	Strategies/Actions	KPI's	Outcome
To manage the business within the annual budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare and analyse 'budget vs actual' on a monthly basis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing costs and operational expenses do not exceed budget. 	
To maintain status as an accredited Visitor Centre showcasing best practice & leadership during the transition to the new visitor engagement model of visitor service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To adhere to the QTF guidelines and operations for best practice visitor servicing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comply with QTF assessment criteria • To be recognised as a finalist in Victorian Tourism Awards 2021 (subject to awards going ahead) 	
To increase online ticketing for Tourism and Community Events compared to previous year (This is subject to current COVID shutdown ending on 13 th September and no subsequent shutdowns occurring)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach existing tourism events regarding ticketing • Marketing of service to community events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase event ticketing sales on the 19/20 final sales • Staff achieve monthly sales targets. 	
To maintain accommodation bookings and value add accommodation offerings to event and tour bookings (This is subject to current COVID shutdown ending on 13 th September and no subsequent shutdowns occurring)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bundling new and tailored experiences to the customer profiles identified • Promote accommodation bookings while booking event tickets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain accommodation sales based on the 19/20 final sales • Staff achieve monthly sales targets. 	
To increase attraction ticket sales compared to previous year (This is subject to current COVID shutdown ending on 13 th September and no subsequent shutdowns occurring)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase attractions that can be booked online • Work with attraction operators to offer ticket sales 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase attractions sales on the 19/20 final sales • Staff achieve monthly sales targets. 	

<p>To increase merchandise sales compared to previous year (This is subject to current COVID shutdown ending on 13th September and no subsequent shutdowns occurring)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Retail Policy with focus on celebrating local content/produce • Approach local producers/artists to display products on consignment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase merchandise sales on the 19/20 final sales • Increase range of locally produced stock by 20% and be a retail showcase for local products. 	
<p>Undertake Data collection and conducting surveys in the VIC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct surveys within the VIC – VIS Survey • Develop additional means of data collection with focus on the customer profiles identified by Murray VS Transformation Project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily Surveys undertaken within the VIC – 5 visitors surveyed daily • Annual Visitor Perception Survey – achieve 90% satisfaction • Establish a process around customer profile based data collection 	
<p>Provide Monthly reports for consideration by the EMT Board</p>	<p>Provide monthly reports of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Origin & Number of Visitors to VIC • Event & Tour/Paddlesteamer sales • Accommodation Bookings • Telephone Enquiries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly reports completed on time with sales and booking data included. 	
<p>Undertake Comprehensive Training Program for VIC Staff and Ambassadors with a view to the transition from information provision to engagement in line with Visitor Services Transformation Project.</p>	<p>Develop and deliver a training program for VIC staff and Ambassadors focussed on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Service • Starting the Interaction • Sales Techniques – inquiry based and concierge style experience • Bookeasy Modules for Staff • Product Updates • Retail Merchandising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of staff to complete Bookeasy Modules Training annually • All Staff and Ambassadors to undertake upskilling program in sales, customer service and local knowledge/hidden gems. • As an Ancillary VIC, Rochester volunteers to be included in industry training programs. • Staff to undertake training with MRTB – Information to Inspiration VIC Training Program 	

Recruit additional ambassadors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement program to recruit new ambassadors for the VIC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the number of Visitor Services Ambassadors by 20% over current levels. Integrate Rochester Ancillary Volunteers into Ambassador Program 	
Increase Local Participation and Awareness of what we do with regard to accessing Echuca Moama's large VFR market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold a Local Community Event/Open Day Market the VIC as a location to host book launches, opening functions etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Community Event/ Open Day held annually at VIC Minimum of 2 local events held at VIC annually. 	
Increase Regional Dispersal within SOC and MRC areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Familiarisation Program for Ambassadors and Industry Servicing Kyabram and Rochester Visitor Centres with brochures and info. Promote Regional Touring Map, Backroads Trail etc Calendar of Events to include events in both local government areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Famil program delivered Undertake Itinerary Planning for Regional Dispersal Develop Itinerary Postcard Series 	
Increase Industry Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Familiarisation Program Support Health Checks for Industry Members Support Industry Functions Support operators with ATDW listings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly familiarisation program for ambassadors and industry Weekly familiarisation program for booking staff (off season) Work with EMT staff to conduct health checks for operators. Work with operators to ensure they are listed on ATDW 	
Evaluation of Visitor Servicing through distribution of an annual visitor survey to evaluate tourism opportunities and challenges across Campaspe Shire.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VIC to distribute annual visitor survey to members (created by Campaspe Shire Council in consultation with EMDTA) to evaluate tourism opportunities and challenges across Campaspe Shire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey (to be created by Campaspe Shire Council in consultation with EMDTA) to be distributed to all EMT Members via email Survey data to be collated and reported to stakeholders 	

<p>Curate Visitor Experiences to assist with the planning phase of travel (MRTB Visitor Engagement Strategy)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Itineraries across the region, specific to the needs of each customer profile (MRTB) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a range of itineraries which meet the customer profile needs • Develop regional postcard series • Training undertaken in itinerary planning 	
<p>Introduction of innovative ways to engage with visitors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake virtual reality trial in conjunction with Murray Regional Tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake virtual reality trial in conjunction with Murray Regional Tourism • Undertake data capture assessing the value of Virtual Reality in visitor centres 	
<p>Show leadership in Visitor Servicing within the Murray Region</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In conjunction with MRTB take a leadership role in bringing together VIC Managers from Murray Region • Represent Murray Region at State Level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate Murray VIS Managers Meetings (3 per year) • VIC Manager to represent Murray Region on VIS Statewide Reference Group (Victoria) 	