

### VISITOR CENTRE STATISTICS

Visitation to our visitor centres from July to December 2016 of 4,265 visitors was a pleasing result. The wet Spring with heavy rains and widely publicised 'flooding' and reports of mosquitoes have contributed to the decline of 19% or an average of 5 visitors per day compared to 2015. This follows an extremely busy first half of 2016 where visitor numbers were up 62% from the same period in 2015. Overall a great result for 2016 with an extra 1,581 visitors through our visitor centres. A terrific team effort!

### RV CAMP STATS

The Kerang RV Camp has now been operating for some months and reports indicate that it is being well utilised. This is the 5<sup>th</sup> RV friendly camp within the shire, providing free campers multiple places to stay in the region. Feedback from locals is that Reedy Lake RV camp is being well utilised giving visitors an opportunity to be out of town and enjoying beautiful lake frontage.

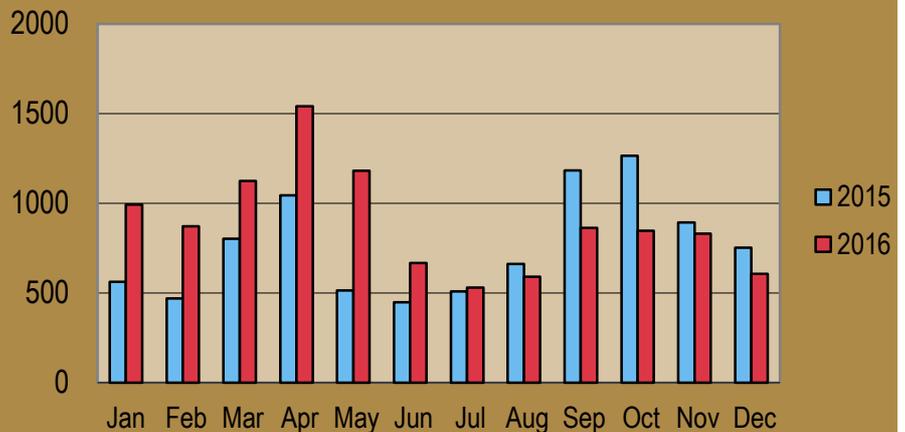
Cohuna RV has seen an average of 91 vehicles per month and with an average spend of around \$130 per day per RV it is a significant addition to retail businesses within the town. Minor landscaping will be undertaken with plantings to reduce the visual aspect of campers in the area.

The Leitchville RV camp continued successfully with an average of 55 RV's per month. The all-weather access was a bonus during the very wet July and September and hosted more campers than Cohuna.



The Leitchville RV camp continued successfully with an average of 55 RV's per month. The all-weather access was a bonus during the very wet July and September and hosted more campers than Cohuna.

### Visitor Centre Statistics Gateway & Library



### STORYTELLING FOR MARKETING EFFECT

A growing concept in content marketing is 'storytelling'.

The art of storytelling is creating an emotional connection. It can inspire and move people to engage with the storyteller or business.

Social media has been a growing forum for businesses to share their stories. The stories need to be authentic, be about people, use empathy and know the elements of a good story; topical, relevant and unusual.

Tips for great storytelling:

- Message 1<sup>st</sup>, selling 2<sup>nd</sup>
- Be clear and direct
- Use a positive authentic voice
- Be generous & helpful-offer value
- Be unique, share information
- Don't sacrifice grammar & spelling
- Consider timing
- Always add links (inbound & external)
- Use photos to drive engagement
- Make calls to action
- Use hashtags (5) to increase your post reach.
- Be active – comment, comment, comment

### VISITOR GUIDE

On the eve of Christmas the new Visitor Guide arrived ready for business.

The Visitor Guide is our number 1 promotional tool and the new look format has been warmly received. The content has been updated to showcase our nature based tourism assets.

It's great to have all our tourism products and hospitality businesses presented in the one document that visitors can use to create their experience or extend their stay.



IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO REGISTER YOUR INTEREST IN A **STORYTELLING** WORKSHOP PLEASE CONTACT JODIE 5450 9333

## VISITOR COMMENTS

The range of visitor comments collated at Gateway show a growing trend of appreciation of the beauty of the area and their plans to return to explore more.

A selection of comments from visitors:

Maldon, VIC commented – They were impressed with our RV friendly campsites and will be back.

Ashburton, VIC – Awesome time. Nature Cruise a Highlight.

Kangaroo Point, Queensland – Beautiful River, Parks & Walks, Town & Service Friendly.

Mandurah, W/A – Love seeing local produce

Geelong, VIC – Fabulous Spot, lovely town, coming back again to look around further.

Melbourne, VIC – Glad we came. Great Place.

A couple from Wollongong NSW commented about our lovely region and stayed at Lake Meran for 3 days. It's a great camping spot with good facilities.

A couple caravanning stopped to have a cuppa on the creek in Cohuna as they headed to Swan Hill. They called into the Visitor Centre and were so impressed with the friendliness and knowledge of the staff and volunteer that they decided to come back for a week. They brought with them 4 other couples from Bendigo & Melbourne who joined them for the week. They booked for golf, headed up the creek to Koondrook, visited Factory & Field, Border Flywheelers in Barham and made day trips to Kerang, Koondrook, etc. They are already planning their next visit and looking to bring other family along.

## VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE SUMMIT

Gateway staff Di, Colleen and Jodie attended the Victorian Tourism Industry Council's Visitor Information Centre Summit in Shepparton. It was a comprehensive day of guest speakers covering a range of topics including storytelling, the value of volunteers and what constitutes a successful VIC.

Information on 'A successful VIC' reinforced the attributes of Gateway; highly visible, high traffic location, contemporary appearance, skilled knowledgeable staff, focus on what's on today, traditional maps and brochures.

Visitors value the personal experience and interaction at a VIC, finding information on-line does not offer this.

## TOWN ENTRY SIGNS

Koondrook, Leitchville, Lalbert, Mystic Park and Macorna will soon be receiving new town entry signs.

The current town entry signs are over 10 years old, faded and in poor condition. These will be removed to allow for the new.

The replacement town entry signs will reflect the current corporate styling and align with the new logo. Installation on Redgum posts will further enhance the connection the shire has to the forest.

The signs will build on the image of the towns and is addressed as an action within the Tourism Strategy.

## VOLUNTEERS BUS TOUR

Morning tea at Busy Bees Gift shop



Lunch at Mystic Park Hotel



## VOLUNTEERS BUS TOUR

A great familiarisation tour was held in December for Gateway staff and volunteers. The tour was aimed to develop and broaden the knowledge of volunteers and as a direct result, increase visitor experiences in the region.

The tour covered the RV site in Cohuna and Kerang, Koondrook Wharf, proposed Koondrook RV site and arts facility, Murrabit Market site and Busy Bees Gift Shop, Benjeroop Hornsby gas suction pump, Lake Charm, Brown Brothers vineyards, the Avoca Marshes, Kangaroo Lake, Mystic Park Hotel, Quambatook Tractor Pull Site and Caravan Park, Lake Bael Bael and the site for the shire's largest solar farm.

It was an extremely informative trip and one of the key actions within the Marketing and Promotion area of the Gannawarra Shire Strategic Tourism Plan.

## MURRAY REGIONAL TOURISM WEBSITE

Gannawarra's tourism website; [www.visitkerangcohunakoondrook.com.au](http://www.visitkerangcohunakoondrook.com.au) is one of the destinations of the Murray Regional Tourism digital platform.

The website showcases our natural assets and we have recently added two vignettes (short film clips).

The first shows the outdoor activities, camping, kayaking, mountain biking, bush walking and birdwatching on Gunbower Island along with cruising on the Wetlander.

The second vignette focusses on watersports on the Kerang lakes. Both feature local residents, who have been generous with their time during filming. It is not easy looking relaxed and natural in front of a camera. We were very fortunate to end up with great results.

The clips have also been adapted and screened as adverts on WIN TV. Such advertising is important in raising the profile of the region.



## GATEWAY HIRE

Gateway will be offering visitors the option to hire mountain bikes & helmets and fishing rods & tackle.

Being able to provide visitors with the opportunity to go mountain biking in Gunbower Forest or fishing in the Murray or creek will allow them to engage with our region's best assets. It may also encourage visitors to extend their stay another day.

We have been able to support local businesses through the purchasing of the hire equipment. Our next consideration will be kayaks to allow visitors to explore the waterways and build the profile of this activity.

## TOURING MAP

The Touring Map for Kerang, Cohuna and Koondrook is proving popular and a great resource for visitors.

After less than 12 months we are printing another 5000 copies!

## GATEWAY STAFF

Congratulations to Dianne Peace for her appointment to the permanent part-time position at Gateway. Di will continue to service our visitors and support our volunteers in her professional manner. Colleen Shay has decided to stay on in a casual role at Gateway.

We have recently appointed a new staff member to the permanent part-time job share position and look forward to them joining the team in late March.

The Economic Development Unit also welcomes Scott Wishart as Business Liaison Officer. Scott will be providing assistance to businesses across the shire and with Economic Development and Tourism activities.

## BUSINESS AND MARKETING WORKSHOPS



Gannawarra Shire Council's Economic Development Unit, in partnership with Small Business Victoria will again be hosting a number of business development workshops. The workshops, held over a 3 month period, will cover marketing, digital strategy and financial aspects including pricing and health check.

Title	Venue	Date	Price
Your Business in a Digital World	Community Meeting Room, Cohuna	21/03/17	\$20
Develop your Online Strategy	Memorial Hall Supper Room, Kerang	28/03/17	\$30
Understanding Marketing	Community Meeting Room, Cohuna	18/04/17	\$20
Pricing for Maximum Profit	Community Meeting Room, Cohuna	09/05/17	\$20
Financial Health Check	Memorial Hall Supper Room, Kerang	23/05/17	\$20

All business operators are encouraged to register on line through Eventbrite - <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/o/gannawarra-shire-council-9900637705> or for contact Council on 5450 9333.

## KOONDROOK WHARF

The official opening of the Koondrook Wharf took place on 14 November 2016, with a crowd of over 350 there to join in the festivities. It was great to see the wharf working and the entire precinct creating a wonderful space for the event.

The paddle-steamer Alexander Arbuthnot was a wonderful addition to the day. We hope to have it return for regular tours. There are plans to develop cruise boat operations from the wharf on a permanent basis.

The wharf is a catalyst for other tourism developments including the Railway Goods Shed restaurant, Wetlander Cruises and butter factory arts precinct to service a new target market.



The wharf precinct will also serve as an important event space for weddings, activities and the RiverDaze festival in March.

## HOLIDAY HELP

While holidaying in a new and unknown location it highlighted to me that all business operators can play an important role in the quality of a visitor's experience.

As we were purchasing some much needed items and over some friendly conversation we quizzed the shop assistant on where we should venture next. Being able to tap into local knowledge we certainly felt we were in for a wonderful afternoon of discovery. We were not disappointed.

As a retail business you can encounter a visitor any day of the week and your local knowledge to assist in their experience is important. If you're not sure maybe getting to know the contents of our Visitor Guide or Touring Map or a chat with Gateway Visitor staff could help you make a difference.

## KOONDROOK NATURE BASED TOURISM HUB

Gannawarra Shire has submitted a funding application to Regional Development Victoria for development of the NBT hub in Koondrook.

The concept is for glamping tents, a footbridge across Gunbower Creek, walking and cycling tracks and a canoe launching platform together to target the growing outdoor recreation market from Melbourne and regional Victoria. The location for the hub behind the Koondrook Caravan Park creates a whole experience for visitors in a natural pristine environment and connects to the many local tracks and trails.

## KERANG TO KOONDROOK RAIL TRAIL

The Kerang to Koondrook Rail Trail is a priority infrastructure project for Gannawarra Shire Council.

The project is planned to tap into the growing outdoor recreation and mountain biking market. It is also a part of the Murray River Adventure Trail for the whole of the Murray.

The project also proposes to connect Cohuna to Koondrook through the Gunbower Forest and complement the Nature Based Tourism hub by providing an accommodation option for the outdoor adventurers.



## KERANG LIBRARY

The Sir John Gorton Library in Kerang has completed its visitor information upgrade. The library also functions as Kerang's main visitor information centre.

As a part of the revamp the tourist information has been relocated to a more prominent and accessible position within the library. The display stands have been renewed and the information updated to align with Gateway. A range of local produce and merchandise is being sourced to complement the display.

A new Kerang Region promo board has been installed at the highway entrance with new flags to show visitors that tourism information is available within the library.

