



A Quick Snapshot of Australia's Accredited VICs

The role and value of accredited VICs

- Australia has 476 accredited visitor information centres (VICs) that serve more than 10 million visitors per year.¹
- Generally, accredited VICs are open 7 days a week, 56 hours/week, 9am–5pm.
- Over 80% of the accredited VICs are run by local government, with the majority of the others having some kind of local government support.
- VICs employ more than 1400 staff and thousands of volunteers.
- Through their engagement with visitors, around \$180 per adult visitor, or 59% or more additional expenditure, is generated in the community on fuel, food and retail, accommodation and attraction services.²
- Social benefits delivered to the community include employment, information for residents, settlement assistance for new residents, community hubs, support during crises, industry training and resources.

As a key point of distribution once the visitor has arrived, VICs have a capacity unrivalled in their region to disperse visitor expenditure, increase yield and inspire visitors to re-visit and recommend the destination.

Accreditation of VICs is important as it fosters high standards in visitor servicing in the regions, ensuring the delivery of quality information and visitor facilities and the professional development of staff and volunteers.

How to improve the performance of Australia's VICs and ensure their future success

The future success of Australia's VICs depends on their ability to respond to changing visitor and industry expectations and to sustain a clear, relevant and valued role in the tourism distribution chain and their local communities. Four priority areas for action have been identified by the state tourism organisations (STOs).

1. Contemporary VICs

VICs need to engage visitors of all ages both on and off-line as guests into the region, and maintain a clear point of difference from other information providers. Some suggested strategies to be undertaken include:

- Offering an online presence in partnership with their regional tourism organisation (RTO), free Wi-Fi and a basic level of digital technology to help visitors source and book product; in addition the VIC can become the hub for visitors to upload images and stories of their experiences in the region which will assist with regional visibility and currency.
- Providing an online booking service by 2018 via the destination website (RTO or STO), directly or a third party booking site as relevant.
- Positioning VICs in marketing and communications as the place to go when in region, virtually and on the ground, to find out from passionate and knowledgeable locals what to see and experience and how to get there.
- Providing guidelines on measuring a VIC's economic and social contribution to assist local government decision making.

¹As at February 2015

²The Impacts of Regional Visitor Information Centres on Visitor Behaviour in South Australia: Summary of Results, 2011, South Australian Tourism Commission



Bowen Visitor Information Centre

2. Extraordinary visitor experiences

Every touch point a visitor has with VICs must offer the best experience possible so that VICs are recognised and talked about as essential for travel planning while in a destination. Some suggested strategies to be undertaken include:

- Changing the perception of VIC visitors to valued guests and providing a seamless welcome and services to introduce them to the destination.
- Adjusting VIC opening hours and offering additional services (within minimum national standard) to meet visitor demand.
- Introducing a best practice approach to 'front of house' facility and service requirements, including online content and interactive displays, staff and volunteer management.
- Pursuing best practice sustainable business models that maximise outcomes and minimise outgoings, such as partnerships for delivery with compatible businesses, mobile/'pop-up' VICs, and sharing staff costs across businesses.

3. A partnership approach to visitor servicing

Given the many touch points for visitors, VICs need to be actively involved with their RTO and local tourism organisations in destination management planning and well engaged with tourism operators, local government and the community. Some suggested strategies to be undertaken include:

- Encouraging RTOs to identify clear roles and responsibilities for the region's VICs in destination management.
- Increasing local government and industry understanding of the role and benefits of VICs with a local government and industry advocacy programme.
- Establishing an online network forum for VICs that encourages engagement and the sharing of resources and information with each other on visitor behaviour and trends and best practice systems and processes.
- Identifying and collecting visitor data and insights required to support VICs and RTOs in meeting visitor needs and growing visitor yield.

4. A recognised VIC network

To maximise the benefits an accredited VIC generates for a destination, the VIC services must be valued by target audiences, and easy to find, virtually and in person, with the  clearly visible and information accessible. Some suggested strategies to be undertaken include:

- Developing and delivering a national marketing strategy which seeks to raise awareness and create a competitive position for accredited VICs.
- Adopting consistency in the on and offline use of the  brand, marketing messages and collateral such as a profile on state and regional websites, national and state maps, flags, bags, door mats and badges.
- Identifying opportunities for partnership marketing with local businesses and groups to promote the local VIC(s).
- Reviewing VIC locations to ensure they are sited in high visitor traffic areas, with highly visible building and directional signage.

Refer to [*Australia's Accredited VICs: A Strategic Directions Paper*](#) for more information, including further strategies for the national network of accredited VICs. The strategies summarise the findings of reports on VICs in South Australia, Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia conducted variously in 2011–14.



Hobart, Tasmania