

9.5.1 DESTINATION BRAND IMPLEMENTATION AND DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN QUARTERLY REPORT, MARCH 2024

File No: 20.00299

RECOMMENDATION:

That the information be noted.

REPORT:

Council, at its meeting held 13 December 2017, resolved to receive quarterly destination brand strategy implementation progress reports, outlining the performance monitoring data as described in the report. Implementation of the strategy is the responsibility of the Bathurst Visitor Information Centre acting as the Destination Management Organisation for the Bathurst region.

The 2023/24 financial year has seen the region performing well against the backdrop of consumer uncertainty generated by rising inflation, interest rate rises and macro-economic uncertainties. All regions have been forced to respond to these challenges to discretionary spending. The Bathurst region maintains an ongoing advantage in having a diverse experience base and in being a comfortable daytrip or overnight destination from Sydney with Western Sydney remaining the most important geographic visitor catchment area. BVIC's strategies have continued to raise awareness of the natural and cultural advantages to the region. The following information is provided as an update on the implementation of the Destination Brand Strategy and Destination Management Plan as at 1 April 2024.

Destination Brand Implementation	Action
Destination Website	<p>The Bathurst region destination website has continued to grow in usage in 2024. BVIC staff update content daily and have developed new elements in 2024 including an increasing range of interactive embedded maps and event micro-sites. Additional heritage information including the former dedicated Cobb & Co website is also now hosted on the destination site. Year on year figures (YTD) are:</p> <p>USERS = 130,593 (+11.1%) PAGEVIEWS = 313,809 (+15.1%) BOUNCE RATE = 32.8% (-34%)</p> <p>The website is to be upgraded in 2024/25 including improving online booking functionality and event promotion.</p>
Online Booking	The "Bookeasy" booking engine continues to assist operators and

Destination Brand Implementation	Action
Platform	<p>events to increase sales, and to provide a direct booking option for Bathurst region accommodation. Sales have been strong, though negatively impacted by algal blooms at Ben Chifley Dam affecting Chifley Cabin Bookings</p> <p>2023/2024 financial year to date sales of \$78,375 have been achieved, being a 0.5% decrease over the previous year.</p> <p>In addition, BVIC provides a free ticketing service to community and non-profit group events including the Spring Spectacular, Autumn Colours Heritage Festival and Rockley Gardens and Art Festival.</p>
Curated Online Content	<p>BVIC is responsible for ongoing content creation with an overarching content strategy completed. New content generated in the last quarter includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New Bridle Track imagery and video - New regional cycling images and video - New town highlights promotional video - New event images – Bathurst Heritage Trades Trail
Marketing Plan	<p>A 3-Year Marketing Plan was completed by BVIC to set the priorities for the next three years and was adopted by Council in February 2021. The Plan reflected an approach that encompasses the challenges and the opportunities presented by, and subsequent to, the COVID 19 outbreak. 34 of the 39 priority areas have commenced and are either complete or ongoing as at 1 April. A new Marketing Plan is currently being developed by BVIC staff.</p> <p>A key opportunity identified in both the DMP and Marketing Plan was the growth in the business events, conferencing and incentives market. Council's Tourism Marketing Coordinator and Manager Tourism & Visitor Services attended the Australasian Incentives & Meetings Event in Melbourne 20-21 February 2024, engaging in 32 meetings with buyers and Professional Conference Organisers (PCOs). Three quotations have subsequently been prepared for prospective conference bookings, with a familiarisation visit funded by Destination NSW for PCOs scheduled for April 9-10.</p>
Signage	<p>Priority area 4 of the Destination Management Plan calls for the 'development of a strategic approach to tourism signage'. A brief was prepared by BVIC and quotations requested in August 2021 for a suitable agency to prepare a Tourism Wayfinding and Signage Strategy including an audit of all tourism signage and extensive consultation. Specialist company 'Wayfound' was selected to undertake this project. The draft strategy was reviewed by BVIC and the Final Strategy received in December 2022. A draft implementation plan was subsequently developed.</p> <p>Work was delayed by the need to prioritise road and bridge repair</p>

Destination Brand Implementation	Action
	<p>following the flooding of late 2022, but implementation commenced in June 2023 with removal of old and redundant blue fingerboard signs and application to Destination NSW and TfNSW to install new brown tourist signs on the Great Western Highway, for which approval is still pending.</p> <p>Priority areas for the coming period include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Removal of all identified obsolete fingerboard signs - New trail-head signage, Bridle Track - New Mount Panorama/Wahluu brown signs redirecting Highway traffic along Havannah Street. - New Town Centre brown signs on Havannah Street directed up Keppel Street - Consultative village meetings to determine local signage priorities and concept entry statements. <p>The re-skinning of four highway billboards (located on Mitchell Highway, Orange Road, Blayney Road and Marangaroo), in collaboration with Events and Economic Development will be reviewed in the new financial year.</p>
Touring Trails App	<p>There have been 26,876 uses of the Bathurst 'Step Beyond' app to date. The Rockley Progress Association has expressed interest in developing a walking tour of Rockley Village, however budget constraints have delayed implementation until 2024/25.</p> <p>Incorporation of this technology has also been proposed in the Mount Panorama Boardwalk interpretation plan.</p>
Brand Awareness Campaigns	<p>Consumer eDMs (electronic direct mail) continue to provide a monthly newsletter and event information to 4000+ subscribers.</p> <p>Bathurst was invited to profile the city and region at the 21st General Assembly and Scientific Symposium of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) to be held at the International Convention Centre, Darling Harbour, from September 3rd to 9th. For the first time, a General Assembly of ICOMOS featured a 'Heritage Trades Fair', displaying traditional craftsmanship immediately outside the entrance to the International Convention Centre with five artisans from the Bathurst Heritage Trades Trail demonstrating to both convention attendees as well as the general public. Bathurst Regional Council was also invited to profile the region at a stall in the public Heritage Exposition Hall where the best of Australian cultural heritage was showcased to visiting professionals and to the Sydney public.</p> <p>In partnership with several local businesses, an "Off Track Tourist Trails" initiative raised awareness of the offerings of the region across the period of the recent 'Superfest' events centered on</p>

Destination Brand Implementation	Action
	<p>Mount Panorama/Wahluu.</p> <p>BVIC was successful in applying for funding through the Destination NSW “Flagship Events” fund to secure \$20,000 to promote the 2024 Bathurst Heritage Trades Trail. The autumn period has seen a focus on the region’s cultural heritage, as well as aesthetic beauty with an autumn photographic competition proving highly popular, particularly with the local community.</p>
BVIC	<p>The ‘BRAG Art Fair’ feature display window was replaced in February by the Bathurst Rotary Gravel Cycling event.</p> <p>A new design and quotes for the rear counter and display have been received with current budget constraints necessitating a delay in construction.</p> <p>YTD retail sales through BVIC of \$75,329 have been achieved, currently –10.3% below equivalent 2022/2023 result.</p>
Public Relations	<p>PR activity has focused on generating earned media across all platforms, particularly targeting family focused publications, outdoors and active and heritage angles. A collaboration with Australian Geographic Magazine begun in April 2023 resulted in a major publication and online feature in February 2024 with an equivalent advertising value of \$147,631 and Public Relations Value of \$442,893. Bathurst has also featured in ACM, Holidays with Kids, Australian Traveller, RV Daily, The Wanderer and Harper's Bazaar. BVIC works with specialist agencies in delivering public relations activity to promote the Bathurst region.</p> <p>Bathurst’s success in the 2024 Wotif Top Aussie Towns generated strong media coverage and positive sentiment.</p>
Destination Guide and supporting print publications	<p>The Bathurst Region Destination Guide is distributed locally to businesses as well as nationally through the network of accredited visitor information centres (AVICs). 20,000 copies of the 2023 edition were printed with the publication also available online as a flipbook or a PDF download. 19,600 copies have now been distributed with a new publication designed by BVIC staff working with a local designer and printer. Industry support for this new publication has been strong with an increase of 52% in total advertising revenue to \$27,262. The new edition will be released in April.</p> <p>A new publication showcasing the region’s villages, also written and designed in house, and first printed in August 2020 has proved exceptionally popular and was reissued as a sixth (revised) edition in June 2023. The seventh (revised) edition is currently being prepared.</p>

Destination Brand Implementation	Action
	<p>A new Bathurst and region padmap has been designed by BVIC staff working with Spatial Services and was printed in late 2023 providing the most accurate city and regional map available. New maps of the Bridle Track and Hill End fossicking areas have been highly popular.</p> <p>A new range of heritage brochures has been designed to complement the existing range of 'Outdoors and Active' information brochures available at BVIC.</p>
Destination Management Plan	<p>The Destination Management Plan 2019-2024 was adopted by Council at its December 2019 meeting and is being implemented according to the priorities identified in the strategic action plan. To date, 71 of the 104 priority actions identified have been completed or are in progress as at 1 April 2024 representing 68% of all actions. Work will be undertaken throughout 2024 to shape a new strategic Destination Management Plan. This project will be detailed to Council at the May Ordinary Meeting.</p>

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Funding for this item is contained within existing budgets.

BATHURST COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN – OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES:

Objective 1: Our sense of place and identity.

- Strategy 1.1 Respect, protect and promote the region's Indigenous heritage assets.
- Strategy 1.2 Protect, enhance and promote the region's Non-Indigenous heritage assets and character.
- Strategy 1.3 Enhance the cultural vitality of the region.

Objective 2: A smart and vibrant economy.

- Strategy 2.1 Support local business and industry.
- Strategy 2.2 Grow local employment, investment and attract new businesses skills by nurturing and supporting entrepreneurs, partnerships and local skill development.
- Strategy 2.3 Develop Bathurst as a Smart City.
- Strategy 2.5 Support Mount Panorama Wapitani as a premier motor sport and event precinct.
- Strategy 2.6 Promote our City and Villages as a tourist destination.

Objective 4: Sustainable and balanced growth.

- Strategy 4.3 Ensure services, facilities and infrastructure meet the changing needs of our region.

Objective 5: Community health, safety and well being.

- Strategy 5.2 Help make the Bathurst CBD, neighbourhoods and the region's villages

attractive and full of life.
Strategy 5.4 Make our public places safe and welcoming.

Objective 6: Community leadership and collaboration.

Strategy 6.1 Communicate and engage with the community, government and business groups on important matters affecting the Bathurst region.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

01 **Inform** - to provide the public with balanced and objective information to help them understand the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.

ATTACHMENTS:

Nil

MINUTE

RESOLUTION NUMBER: ORD2024-97

MOVED: Cr M Hogan SECONDED: Cr W Aubin

RESOLVED:

That the information be noted.