

Northern Grampians Event Strategy, 2023-33

FINAL



Acknowledgement:

Northern Grampians Shire Council acknowledges Traditional Owners; Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia, Jupagalk and Dja Dja Wurrung peoples who are the Traditional Custodians of the land we call Northern Grampians Shire.

We pay our respects to the Elders both past and present and extend that respect to our other Aboriginal clans.

We express our gratitude in the sharing of this land, our sorrow for the personal, spiritual and cultural costs of that sharing and our hope that we may walk forward together in harmony and in the spirit of healing.

Version	Date	Author	Reviewer	Rationale
V.1.	31 October	Stu Speirs, Silver Lining Strategy	Northern Grampians Shire Council Officers Justine Kingan, Manager Economic and Community Futures and Kate Kirkpatrick, Events Specialist.	Draft for public comment
V.2	30 November	Stu Speirs, Silver Lining Strategy	Northern Grampians Shire Council Officers Justine Kingan, Manager Economic and Community Futures and Kate Kirkpatrick, Events Specialist.	FINAL Draft for ELT approval

This document has been prepared by Silver Lining Strategy on behalf of Northern Grampians Shire Council.



Contents

1. Introduction and context	4
a. Strategy parameters	5
b. The defining question of this strategy	6 - 7
2. The Northern Grampians events calendar – Classifying NGSC’s role in events	8 - 9
3. Our leverage and nurture approach in action	10
a. Leverage existing, mature events – Use the platform they provide	10 - 12
b. Nurture new and emerging events, or event ideas – Find our next major event	12 - 14
c. Community Events	14
4. Two year action plan and Ten year strategy – Defining success for NGSC	15
a. NGSC’s core roles in supporting events	15
b. How we will define success in delivering this strategy	16
c. Two-year action plan	17 - 18
d. Evaluation framework	19
e. Ten-year strategy – Overarching principles	20
5. NGSC’s townships, event hosting assets, points of difference and event ideas	22 – 26
6. Appendix	27 - 48
I. Event by event audit – Insights and recommended approach for our existing major events	
II. Assessment of potential investment approaches against Economic Development Strategy	
III. Objectives and Strategic Direction	
IV. Major Events Calendar	
V. Questions for inclusion in post-event surveys	
VI. Methodology and Consultation	

1. Introduction and context

NGSC recognises the role that events play in uplifting economic wellbeing and quality of life within our community.

This event strategy has been written to deliver on the Council Plan, 2021-25 and objectives, strategic direction and aligned KPIs in the Northern Grampians Shire Council's Economic Development Strategy (EDS) and Action Plan, 2021-2030.

Objective

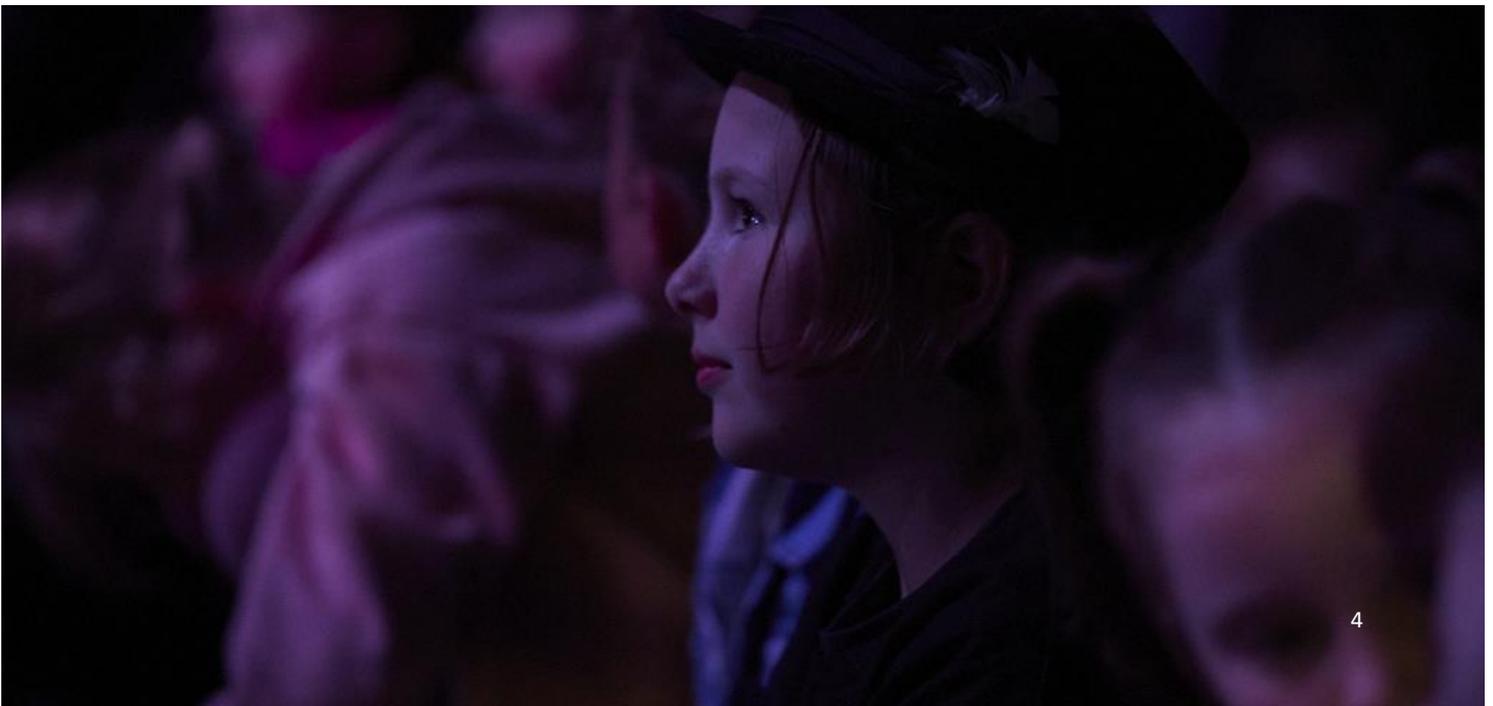
The strategy will guide council's work to grow the Northern Grampians Shire (NGS) calendar of tourism events and extend visitor length of stay by:

- Ensuring NGS offers diverse, unique, high quality and enriching experiences, that are dispersed appropriately throughout NGS.
- Protecting, enhancing, and celebrating our natural, cultural and heritage assets.
- Providing access to a diverse range of offerings, including arts, culture and entertainment.

Deliverables

A 10-year strategy and implementation plan that:

- Provides a framework and recommendations for how NGSC could best enable, along with event stakeholders, the growth of events for the economic and social benefit of the NGS.
- Identifies the capacity and capabilities of the NGSC to host existing events in both current owned venues and assets and external venues.
- Provides an assessment of existing events in the NGS, including opportunities, challenges and barriers.
- Identifies events that align with our current offering as our target market – e.g., nature based, cultural, agriculture, wine and produce events.





a. **Strategy parameters**

Important points to understand and provide context include:

- I. **“Major Events”** to be included in the scope of this strategy are defined as those that attract, or have the potential to attract in time, 500 or more attendees.
- II. **“Community Event”** means an event managed and delivered by a not-for-profit organisation for the purpose of education, fundraising, social, fun and entertainment value, civic and ceremonial events for the local community, but may attract patrons from outside the region. These events are generally run by volunteers.
- III. On an annual basis, NGSC will have the following resources to invest in events:
 - Financial support and sponsorship in events
 - In-kind support (e.g., road closures, traffic management and waste management) to a level judged on an event-by-event basis
 - Permit Concierge.
- IV. The existing **community events stream** administered by the Community Futures team will remain. Doing so will see it continue to fill the need for Council to provide visible support to local, volunteer run organisations, and the community events they run. Using our “three fundamentals” framework (see page 14), we will work to identify events that could grow to become major events.

b. The defining question of this strategy

With the above parameters in mind, the core question that needs answering to inform the overriding direction of our strategy is:

How do we invest our limited financial and human resources into events?

In broad terms, there are two directions available for us to take:

1. Event sourcing and acquisition
This direction would focus on how NGSC should attract and host events in existing venues and places, leveraging existing assets. That is to say, attracting existing events and external event deliverers with event content and ideas.
2. Leverage and nurture events that speak directly to who we are as a shire
This direction would focus on how NGSC should leverage existing events, and nurture nascent events or ideas that are true to place and have the potential to grow into "major events"

Whilst it would be ideal to pursue both, our limited resources simply don't allow us to do so.

A full analysis of merits of each approach can be found on pages 43-45 of the appendix, but by way of summary, the most compelling arguments for pursuing each approach when viewed in the context of the Economic Development Strategy are:

1. Event sourcing and acquisition

By acquiring events that have existing content and established audiences, we would be more likely to drive visitation to events in isolation, particularly in the short term. As such, our return on investment in a pure visitation and economic impact sense would likely be more immediate. Further, by pursuing a focus on acquisition, we would likely undertake initiatives and work that would make us "an easy place for event owners to invest". This would align with our core commitment to "ensure Northern Grampians is an easy place to invest".

2. Leverage and nurture local events

By taking this approach we will align our approach to the core commitments of "developing a culture that recognises economic development is a whole of community business" and "Fostering economic development outcomes that 'grow from within'...".

As this "leverage and nurture" approach depends upon local relationships, and in some cases, building from the ground up, the downside of this approach would be the likely lack of tangible quantitative results (such as significant attendance and visitation) in the early stages of the strategy.

The consultation with key stakeholders including key Council staff, event owners and community groups for this strategy's development found that leveraging and nurturing of local events would likely deliver outcomes more effectively and with greater effect.



Further, it's worth reflecting on the origins and history of our two most significant events, Grampians Grape Escape and The Stawell Gift.

- Grampians Grape Escape was started 30 years ago by five local winemakers that came together with a shared desire to showcase their product to a wider audience,
- The Stawell Gift was started 140 years ago by passionate community members whose presence in Stawell can be attributed to our town's history as a gold mining community.

In the early years when visitation and economic impact from these two events was limited, taking an acquisition investment approach would likely have meant that neither event would have been invested in by local or state Government in their nascent years. So, if a key outcome of this event strategy is to add long-term sustainable major events to our region's annual calendar, by definition, we must take a different approach.

To conclude, when putting together the direction and core commitments of Council's Economic Development Strategy, key stakeholder feedback, the limited legacy of an acquisition focused approach, along with what has delivered long-term, sustainable results for our region in years gone by, our event strategy must revolve around a "leverage and nurture" approach.

In simple terms, by taking the 'leverage and nurture' approach, we are investing with two goals in mind:

1. Investing in our mature existing events to help them remain sustainable, grow, and/or with specific NGSC focused outcomes in mind, and
2. Finding and nurturing an event in its early stages that has the potential to become our next major event

2. The Northern Grampians event calendar - classifying NGSC's role in events

Classifying each event on our calendar helps clarify the role Northern Grampians Shire Council will play within our “leverage and nurture” approach.

To that end, each event on the calendar (see next page) has been categorised as either: a. Mature major events, b. Nascent events, or c. Community events. For each of these three, NGSC's overarching objective of working with them can be seen in the table below.

Event category	Definition	NGSC investment intent	NGSC investment intent
a. Mature major events	Existing events that are commercially viable for the foreseeable future. As such, they provide NGSC with an opportunity to partner with them to drive specific Economic Development KPIs	Leverage	Invest to drive specific objectives aligned with the EDS, namely KPIs 1, 2 and 5
a. Nascent events	Events that are in their early years (less than five years old) or new event concepts, and are still developing into long term commercially sustainable events	Nurture	Invest in events with potential to become major events in time. Assess that potential using our “3-fundamentals” assessment framework (See page 13-14)
a. Community events	Events such as race days and agricultural shows that most Australian towns host (and therefore don't have a point of difference that will drive visitation), yet attract significant local attendance and as such are important to the community	Support	Continue to support community groups in delivering the events important to their organisations and the wider community

A top-line assessment of each event on our annual calendar of events highlighted how each event is positioned, their growth aspirations and the role NGSC could potentially play in helping them realise that growth.

The outcomes each event's top-line assessment, and next steps for NGSC can be found in the appendix of this report.

Event *	Month	Township	Event category	NGSC investment intent
Seppelt Great Western Cup	January	Great Western	Community	Community
Grampians Texture	March	Halls Gap	Mature	Leverage (KPI 5)
Stawell Gift	April	Stawell	Mature	Leverage (KPIs 1&2)
Stuart McGregor Stawell Gold Cup	April	Stawell	Community	Community
Easter Carnival Umbrella**	April	Various	Community	Community
Grampians Grape Escape	May	Halls Gap	Mature	Leverage (KPIs 1&2)
Run the Gap	May	Halls Gap	Mature	Leverage (KPIs 1&2)
Lights On	June / TBC	St Arnaud	Nascent	Nurture
Victorian State Merino Field Day	July	Marnoo	Nascent	Nurture
Pacific Islander Talent Show	July	Stawell	Nascent	Nurture
Wonderland Run	August	Halls Gap	Mature	Leverage (KPI 5)
Grampian Brushes	September	Halls Gap	Mature	Leverage (KPI 5)
Annual Spring (Orchid) Show	September	Stawell	Community	Community
Weirs St Arnaud Cup	October	St Arnaud	Community	Community
St Arnaud Show	October	St Arnaud	Community	Community
Stawell Show	October	Stawell	Community	Community
Grampian Lakes Fishing Comp	November	Lake Fyans	Community	Community
Wild Horses***	December	Carapooee	Mature	Leverage (KPIs 1&2)

* This calendar includes major events (ie: those that attract 500 people or more). It does not include civic or ceremonial events such as Christmas celebrations, Australia Day activities, NAIDOC week celebrations, local sporting club events and other small community event

** As per 2022, all public events staged anywhere in the NGSC LGA included in the Carnival and associated promotional materials should they wish

*** Wild Horses will be excluded from the public facing annual events calendar (see Action Plan) due to its specific audience that includes few, if any locals

3. Our 'leverage and nurture' approach in action

a) Mature Major Events – leveraging the platform they provide us

Depending on the individual dynamics of each event, NGSC will invest in each of them with a specific objective(s) in mind that feed in to one of the following three KPIs in our EDS.

KPI In EDS	How NGSC's investment in an event can feed in to KPI
KPI # 1 Population growth	Communicating with a large existing audience For events with a significant existing audience, use our relationship with event owner to communicate directly with that audience about the benefits of living in the relevant township
KPI # 2 Reduce median age	Communicating with a younger audience For events with a large younger audience (or specific ambition to appeal to a younger audience), use our relationship with the event owner to help them grow that audience and/or communicate directly with that audience about the benefits of living in the relevant township
KPI # 5 Grow GRP year on year	Increasing visitation to an event Investing in an event to help them grow the size of their audience. That would likely include highly targeted above the line marketing, or enhancement of the event experience

The complete analysis of each major event and suggested next steps for NGSC can be seen in pages 19-31 in the appendix. By way of summary, below is the approach NGSC can take to investing in each in a way that will directly help deliver on the three KPIs outlined above.

By way of example, four of our region's most significant events, and the age profile of the visitors each deliver can be seen in the table below.

Event	Total number of unique attendees	Number of attendees from outside of NGSC LGA		
		Under 37	Aged 37-48	Aged 48+
Run the Gap	1,434	493	287	224
Grampians Art (x2 events)	703	53	300	350
Stawell Gift	5,955	1,233	1,310	2,816
The Grape Escape	6,059	1,158	1,549	2,806

**Grampian Arts – including
Summer Brushes (January),
Grampians Texture (March), and
Grampians Brushes (September)**



Key insight	GrampianArts want to grow their audience by specifically targeting a younger audience
NGSC key action	Invest with GrampianArts to help them extend their marketing plan that specifically targets a younger audience.
NGSC outcome	Increased visitation to Halls Gap and overnight visitor spend (KPI 5)

The Stawell Gift (Easter weekend)



Key insight	The event delivers a large audience via at event attendance and television/online broadcast
NGSC key action	Invest in: a. Race sponsorship that is picked up in the television broadcast, and b. an at event presence (stall or something of the like).
NGSC outcome	Raise awareness of Stawell as a potential place to live, work and invest (KPI 1)

Grampians Grape Escape (May)



Key insight	The event delivers over 2,500 out-of-region visitors aged under 50, up to half of which would likely consider moving in the next year
NGSC key action	Invest in: a. Sponsorship that is picked up in the event marketing campaign, and b. Invest in an at event presence (stall or something of the like), where a local community representative can talk to people potentially interested in moving to Halls Gap (and surrounds)
NGSC outcome	Raise awareness of Halls Gap as a potential place to live, work and invest amongst younger consumers (KPIs 1 & 2)

Run the Gap (May)



Key insight	Event (and Halls Gap) is almost at capacity in terms of participant numbers, so growth in participants is secondary
NGSC key action	Invest in an at event presence and communications with participant database positioning Halls Gap as a place to move.
NGSC outcome	Raise awareness of Halls Gap as a potential place to live, work and invest amongst a younger demographic (KPIs 1 & 2)

Wonderland Run (August)



Key insight	New event owner has strong connections and audience in South Australia. Interstate visitors likely to stay longer
NGSC key action	Invest with organiser to ensure marketing and communications in South Australian Trail Running community is strong.
NGSC outcome	Drive interstate visitation to Halls Gap, in turn delivering increased overnight visitor spend (KPI 5)

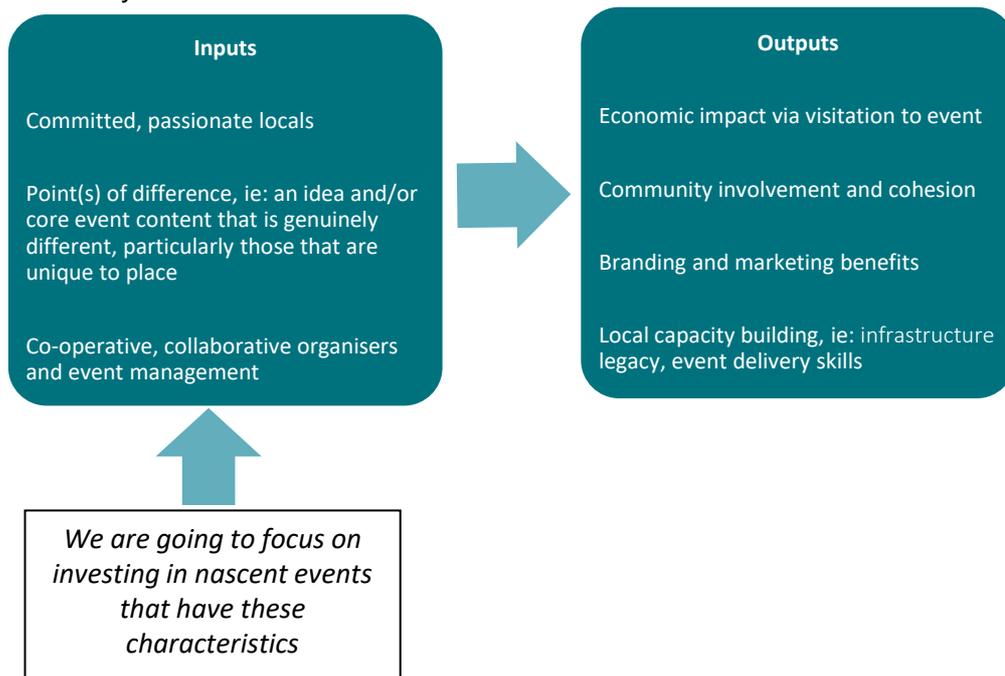
Wild horses (December)



Key insight	Audience almost entirely made up of visitors to the region. Demographic skews younger and creative
NGSC key action	Invest in an at event presence (eg: stall), where a local artist or creative from St Arnaud can talk to people potentially interested in moving to the area
NGSC outcome	Raise awareness of St Arnaud as a potential place to live, work and invest amongst demographic younger (KPIs 1 & 2)

b. Nascent events – Investing to nurture and develop our next major event

Where our investment in mature existing events is focused on driving specific outcomes, when it comes to nurturing a nascent event (young event or event concept), we will focus on investing in events with core fundamentals that are at the heart of long-term event sustainability.



This approach reframes these outputs as outcomes of getting the inputs right, as opposed to them being the primary focus of investing in an event in the first place.

Event ideas, or those in their first five years, as they build awareness and brand equity, will rely almost solely on local support to be successful. To that end, the assessment framework below is our decision-making tool designed to identify nascent (young) events that have potential to become “major events” over time.

Fundamental 1 – Local ownership	
Extent to which the event is owned and driven by a locally-based individual, organisation or group of individuals/organisations	
Score	Definition
5	Wholly owned by NGS local/s and event aligns strongly with core business/activity of the event owner/s
4	Wholly owned by NGS local/s. Event stretches event owner/s slightly beyond their core business/activity
3	Wholly owned by NGS local/s. The event does not comprise part of the event owner/s existing core business/activity
2	Ownership lies with individual/organisation in surrounding council areas that have interests in NGS town/s
1	Ownership lies with individual/organisation outside of NGSC and surrounding council areas

Fundamental 2 – Point of difference / Unique selling proposition	
Extent to which the event centres on a genuine point of difference within our community that they are proud to call their own	
Score	Definition
5	Highlights a community asset that is genuinely different from elsewhere, and represents something the broader community is proud to own and to be known for
4	Few other events of its type exist in Victoria. Contains some genuinely unique content that is true to place
3	Contains unique content, or content that would appeal to a specific audience. Not necessarily reflective of place or wholly aligned to the values locals aspire to.
2	Contains content comparable to that of other events. Isn't necessarily reflective of, or unique to place. Has limited potential to attract visitation or deliver branding benefits.
1	Similar events with comparable content already exist in surrounding areas. Contains content that is not aligned with the community value set.

Fundamental 3 – Spirit of collaboration

Extent to which the event owner has, or has the potential to have, positive and constructive relationships with others in the community

Score	Definition
5	Well established in the community, with a strong reputation for being collaborative and constructive to work with
4	Well known in the community for being collaborative, or in the case of a new resident/organisation, are collaborative and constructive in their spirit
3	Known in the community for having the ability to be collaborative when the circumstances suit. For those new to the community, show signs of being collaborative
2	Rarely seek the assistance or guidance of others, and generally protective in their decision making. Have shown signs of potentially being collaborative
1	Not known for being collaborative. Protective and centralised in their decision making.

The complete assessment of each nascent event using this framework and suggested next steps for NGSC can be seen in pages 35 – 37 in the appendix. By way of summary, the scoring for each can be seen in table below.

Event	i. Local Ownership	ii. Point of difference	iii. Spirit of collaboration	Total (out of 15)
Gatherings Festival	2	4	3	9
Victorian State Merino Field Day	5	4	4	13
Pacific Islander Talent Show	4	4	4	12

c. Community events – Supporting major events that are important to our communities

The community events funding program has been successfully implemented in recent years and has a good reputation amongst key events. Suggested NGSC actions for each of these events can be seen on Pages 38 – 40.

4. Two-year action plan and ten-year strategy – Defining success for NGSC

NGSC's core roles in supporting events

There are four overarching roles for NGSC to play in maintaining and growing a healthy, sustainable calendar of events.

1. *Leverage*

Invest in existing events to:

- a. help them remain financially and operationally sustainable,
- b. drive key outcomes in the Economic Development Strategy. Specifically, KPIs 1, 2 & 5.

2. *Uncover, nurture and collaborate*

Uncover our various communities' genuine points of difference. Explore and invest in how these points of difference can be used in the creation of events.

3. *Support*

Continue to support community and civic events that are of importance to key organisations within NGSC townships and their broader communities

4. *Welcome and facilitate*

Be open, amenable, and collaborative with any event owners that make contact with Council looking to host their event in the region.



To provide short term focus within a long-term framework, this event strategy is being done with two specific time frames in mind, namely:

- **Two years – An action plan that details specific actions that feed into the broader direction detailed in this strategy, and**
- **Ten years – Broadly aligned with the Economic Development Strategy’s timeframe (2021-2031)**

How we will define success in delivering this strategy

In two years, we will have been successful if:

- a. Clear plans for investment and partnership with mature major events are in place. In these plans, NGSC’s role in their ongoing health is clear, as are the outcomes NGSC is looking to drive by investing in them,
- b. We have focused the majority of our major event funding on a select number of events. These events will have been selected using either:
 - Their ability to help NGSC deliver on KPIs 1, 2 or 5 of the EDS: A review of existing events and their potential to drive NGSC objectives, prioritising KPIs 1, 2 & 5 from the Economic Development Strategy,
 - Nascent events evaluation framework: The “three fundamentals” assessment criteria,
- c. We have agreements in place with each of the selected events, and wherever possible, have multi-year agreements in place as a reflection of a “whole of community” approach that is done in a spirit of true partnership.
- d. We have actively engaged with each of our 8 biggest communities (Great Western, Halls Gap, Stawell, Marnoo, Glenorchy, Navarre, St Arnaud and Stuart Mill), and they understand our “three fundamentals” framework for investing in new event ideas.
- e. We publish annually our Shire’s events calendar (suggest this is done in October – Early November of each year), and actively communicate with the community as to how they can get involved with events (eg: key contacts if they’d like to volunteer for or sponsor an event, suggestions on how businesses can get involved with and/or leverage the event)

In ten years, we will have been successful if:

- a. NGSC played an active role in nurturing two events to become annual recurring major events on our annual calendar. These events will have either not existed, or will have been in their infancy (ie: less than five years old) at the time of this strategy being published in early 2023,
- b. We have actively engaged with our mature major events and played our role in helping them remain sustainable and/or grow,
- c. We have invested with selected mature major events in a manner that focuses specifically on leveraging the platform they provide to drive specific KPIs within our Economic Development strategy,
- d. We have measured the Return on Investment that has been delivered by NGSC’s investments in events.

With those objectives in mind, below is the detailed two-year action plan

Two-year action plan

Time period	Action
<p>First 6 months (Feb – Jul 2023)</p>	<p>Set budgets for two streams of funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stream 1: Mature and Nascent events fund • Stream 2: Community events fund <p>nb: Funding for Stawell Gift and Lights On will come from separate pools of funding specific to each event</p> <p>Review and refine process for supporting of Community events. Feedback from a number of existing events included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation of event permit often takes weeks to come through, or on occasion doesn't come through at all • Simplify the administration required for venue hire, particularly for events that hire the same venue year after year • In-kind support in the following areas would greatly assist generally: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Collection and sorting of rubbish and recycling ○ Traffic management ○ Venue hire <p>Proactively engage with each of the event on the annual calendar to map out partnership, individual actions from 2023 onwards, and where relevant, table a multi-year agreement</p> <p>Agree on event evaluation framework and start measuring the impact of each event on the calendar.</p> <p>See next page for KPIs and methodology to measure each</p> <p>Hold "town hall" meetings in each of the 8 townships to provide an overview of the events strategy, with the primary focus of the session being on how NGSC will invest in new event ideas using the "three fundamentals" framework</p>
<p>6-12 months (Aug 2023 – Jan 2024)</p>	<p>Compile and publish 2024 annual event calendar via NGSC channels</p> <p>Develop guide that details how the community can get involved with events on the annual calendar. Derived from meetings with each event, this may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who to contact if a community member would like to volunteer at a specific event • Who to contact if a community member, business or organisation would like to contribute content to an event and/or sponsor an event • Ideas as to how businesses can get involved and/or leverage specific events <p>Engage with Stawell Amateur Athletics Club and the Stawell Athletics Club with a view to taking a united front and overarching strategy to engaging with state and national athletics bodies. Connect and nurture relationships with events managers at Athletics Australia, Little Athletics Victoria and Athletics Victoria with a view to securing events for North Park once the track is established as an eight-lane venue. Take a long-term view to how the venue and events are leveraged to add to the legacy of the Stawell Gift.</p> <p>Re-visit the 8 townships to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide update on event calendar, • Show results from measurement of impacts of major events, • Provide the guide outlining how the community can get involved with an event on the calendar, and • Discuss/develop new event ideas in each community

Time period	Action
12-24 months	Re-engage with each event on the annual calendar to discuss results of most recent event, impact of NGSC's investment and next steps
	Compile and publish 2025 event calendar via NGSC channels
	Update events guide detailing how community can get involved in events
	Re-visit the 8 townships to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide update on event calendar, • Show results from measurement of impacts of major events, • Provide updated guide outlining how the community can get involved with an event on the calendar, and • Discuss/develop new event ideas in each community
	Using the results derived from our evaluation framework, report on the impact of events in NGSC area over the past two years. Take that report to Grampians Tourism, and our economic development colleagues at Ararat Rural City, Horsham Rural City and Southern Grampians Shire Councils with a view to developing a region-wide events calendar that can be pushed by Grampians Tourism

Event evaluation framework

Critical to any meaningful evaluation of the impact had by events is the ability to compare like with like. As such consistency in the way it is measured year-to-year and across events is key. The table below outlines the suggested KPIs for each of our three event categories along with the suggested methodology to collect the relevant data.

KPI	Methodology
Mature major events	
Direct overnight spend *	Number of attendees from outside of NGSC x Average length of stay x Average daily spend
Unique attendance (Including breakdowns by postcode and age)	Ticketing and/or registration databases If event is a multi-day event, cumulative attendance to be divided by average number of days attended *
Online statistics	For events where NGSC will communicate with event attendees about moving to the region, eg: grampianslife.com will be monitored during the event and post-event to gauge the impact of the event. Likewise, interaction with social media posts and eDMs to event attendee databases will be tracked and benchmarked
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website traffic Engagement with social media posts and eDMs 	
Number of people interested in moving to township	Qualitative feedback gained from community members on the ground at events
Nascent events	
Local ownership	NGSC subjective, qualitative assessment of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The extent to which “ownership” of the event has been taken on by individuals and organisations within the local community, The extent to which the event aligns with existing activity and business within the community
Point of difference	NGSC subjective, qualitative assessment of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which event content aligns with local community’s values, and is reflective of the community’s points of difference, The extent to which the event contains content that is genuinely different to events in other places within the Shire and beyond
Spirit of collaboration	NGSC subjective, qualitative assessment of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The extent to which the event owner was collaborative and cooperative with NGSC The extent to which the event owner worked with other members of the community to create and deliver the event

KPI	Methodology
Community events	
Attendance (Including breakdowns by postcode and age)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ticketing databases • Organiser estimates

* NGSC to work with event owners to insert key questions into post-event surveys to the event's ticketing and subscriber databases. Questions required to deliver data required for methodology calculation can be seen on page 45 in the appendix.

In addition to the above metrics, NGSC will measure the extent to which event owners have delivered on specific actions agreed to within individual event agreements.

Ten-year strategy – Overarching principles

In order to deliver on our four key measures of success we will apply the following principles.

1. We will work collaboratively with our mature major event owners to find mutually beneficial ways in which to invest NGSC resources into their event.
2. We will take a medium (5 years) to long (10+ years) term view when we invest in our “Nascent events”. As such, we will be brave and invest significant resource into worthy ideas with sound fundamentals in their early years. We will do so knowing that the tangible benefits of that investment will likely only become evident in the medium to long term.
3. We understand that the most powerful marketing tool our events have is the event experience itself, and the repeat visitation and word of mouth that a great experience generates. To that end, we will err on the side of investing with our event partners in a manner that helps them enhance their event attendee experience. This will take precedence over investing in above the line marketing activity. Investing in this manner aligns with our philosophy of investing for medium to long term success.
4. Data and feedback will help us make better decisions. To that end, we will carry out cost effective research in partnership with each of our key event partners. This will give us a more robust understanding of the impact our events have. We'll use this data to:
 - a. present back to the community and illustrate the value of events to our communities, and
 - b. collaborate with our tourism and economic development colleagues in neighbouring Council areas.



5. NGSC's townships, event hosting assets, points of difference and event ideas

Stawell

Stawell has three clear points of difference and event hosting assets on which events could be centred. By basing core content of a festival on these points of difference, we ground the event in place and build an asset that compliments and enhances something that is an existing strength.

1. *North Park sporting facilities*

After recent upgrades to the North Park multi-purpose Sporting Hub and Netball Courts, the precinct continues to go from strength to strength. The next step in the development of the precinct is the anticipated addition of two lanes to the six-lane athletics track. Doing so will see the facility become one of the premium athletics venues in regional Victoria. When ready, it will present the opportunity to strengthen the town's reputation as a home of athletics. Ideally in partnership with the Stawell Athletics Club and Stawell Amateur Athletics Club, establishing and building on relationships with events managers at Little Athletics and Athletics Australia at both a National and State level would likely yield significant results once the track has been upgraded.

Depending on the direction of those discussions, thought may be given to creating an overarching strategy of how the securing of regular athletics events at North Park can connect to and enhance the Stawell Gift.

2. *Dark Matters festival*

The Stawell Underground Physics Laboratory provides a genuinely unique point of difference that has been embraced by the community (Fundamentals 1&2). Exploring the opportunity for it to be the centrepiece of a public facing event is the next step. Gauging the interest of the Stawell Gold Mines and SUPL in deepening its connection with the community (Fundamental 3) via a public facing event, along with identifying what the lynchpin content of that festival would be, are the next steps to explore.

3. *Accessibility*

Stella Young and her legacy provide the Stawell community with a unique opportunity. To our knowledge, a festival that has been built from the ground up to cater to all levels of ability does not exist (Fundamental 2). Further, the existing work the NGSC and a range of local groups are doing around accessibility presents a stream of existing activity that would likely add content to a public facing event that champions people of all abilities. The next step here is to explore what the lynchpin content could be. A comedy festival that showcases exclusively neurally diverse and disabled comedians in tribute to Stella? This exploration of likely event content would likely best be carried out with local disability advocacy groups (eg: Grampians Community Health) and with the state-based Arts Access Victoria.

St Arnaud

St Arnaud has a number of points on which it can differentiate itself. Each of these points represents an opportunity for an event to be created and/or hosted by the community.

1. The creative community – Mural and painted art

With groups and individuals such as the Raillery Gallery, ArtSpace, the St Arnaud Arts Council and Kyle Torney, all doing quality work in either creating or showcasing creative work, the community has a core of passionate people that, if united under an agreed Vision, could produce remarkable results for their township.

Whilst other places have silo and mural art, the consistent greyscale palette and the deep connection to place each piece has sets this art apart from what can be seen elsewhere. In a recent Griffith University report entitled [Australian Silo Art and Wellbeing](#) it is noted that less than a third of the silo art across Australia was done with a level of community consultation that was considered “very good” by the community itself. That lack of consultation has led to many towns having silo art in place that is not grounded in local stories and culture. The importance of this should not be underestimated. Having such public displays of a place’s people and culture is perhaps the most prominent opportunity a place can have to tell the world who it is, and by extension attract them to visit, work and live there. The deep connection to place that the St Arnaud silo and mural art has should be seen as a significant point of difference, beyond simply just having it in the first place.

To that end, an event that highlights and builds on the work done to date, leaving the town with a growing legacy of publicly available art will likely continue to yield results. As the public gallery grows, so too will the word of mouth about St Arnaud as a town.

Light On provides an opportunity to create an event that unites the town’s various creative forces under an agreed vision.

2. The creative community – Music

Stu Robinson, a Stuart Mill local was a very well known and loved “one man band” musician in St Arnaud and beyond across Australia. An online search indicates that there isn’t a festival in Australia that dedicates itself to one-man bands.

Using Stu Robinson’s legacy as a point of authenticity to ground the event in place, NGSC may plant the concept with the likes of Mulligans Music, the well-loved music café in the heart of Napier St. In floating the idea, it should be kept in mind that it does not need to be big in its initial years. Tropfest, which now markets itself as *The World’s Largest Short Film Festival Australia’s* started in the Tropicana Café in Darlinghurst Sydney. In its first year it had 200 people in attendance. In time, it outgrew the café and was moved to a park.

The main street of St Arnaud would be an ideal backdrop to a form of live music performance that perhaps had its heyday in years gone by. By contemporising the definition of a “one man band”, an event grounded in the legacy of a famous local could straddle the divide between St Arnaud’s rich history and a more contemporary future.

3. *Victoria's oldest fire station*

St Arnaud's old fire station, the oldest remaining station in Victoria, along with the state's last remaining bucket and ladder carriage provides two genuinely unique points of difference for the town. Whilst the Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) State Championships are held in different locations from year to year, (which St Arnaud last hosted in 2015), there may be an opportunity to create an event in partnership with the VFBV that leverages these two unique assets. In partnership with the Historical Society and the local CFA, NGSC could connect with the VFBV and have a conversation about what event the town could create and/or host that would deliver mutual benefit to all parties involved.

4. *Concentration of churches and The Bible Museum*

Within two blocks are the Church of Christ, The Immaculate Conception, St Arnaud Anglican and St Arnaud Uniting churches. Coupled with Australia's only Bible Museum on Napier St, this also represents another point of difference for St Arnaud. When the "town hall" meetings are held as part of the two year action place, NGSC may give thought to facilitating a session with representatives from each of the churches and the owners of The Bible Museum to discuss whether they could come together to create a contemporary celebration of the Christian faith and its various denominations.

5. *The St Arnaud lawn tennis club*

Whilst there are a number of regional towns across Victoria with lawn tennis court facilities, the heritage of St Arnaud and its town centre lends well to tennis events that hark back to yesteryear in tennis. Under the banner of Tennis Victoria, a coalition of lawn tennis clubs has formed an grass court forum. In partnership with the St Arnaud Tennis Club, and potentially local hotels, NGSC could initiate a conversation about bringing lawn tennis court conferences and meetings to town on a regular basis.

Great Western

The wine producers of Great Western are clearly the town's point of difference and unity within the community itself. To that end, any focus on NGSC supporting events in the town should continue to focus on wine events.

In doing so however, looking for a genuine point of difference to other wine festivals should be a point of renewed focus. By way of example, one of the few plantings of an "old" grape varietal Ondenc, exists in Great Western today. Creating a festival around a genuine point of difference like a varietal that simply isn't grown anywhere else, would be a hook that would likely create a cut-through in wine circles.

Meeting with the various wineries of Great Western to get a better understanding of what they have that no one else does may illicit event ideas that NGSC could be able to support via it's Nascent Events three fundamentals framework.

Halls Gap

With the two GrampianArts events/workshops, Run the Gap, Wonderland Run and Grampians Grape Escape, Halls Gap has an impressive existing events calendar that works well within the peak tourism periods it experiences as a tourist hub. Gaps in the visitation calendar arguably exist in July, and from October through until early November. There are a wide range of unique assets and in turn, potential events in Halls Gap. Two of these have been highlighted below.

1. Wildflowers

The recent ceasing of the Grampians Wildflower Show after going for more than 80 years was an unfortunate necessity. Representatives from the show have notified the community that a mobile application is currently under development and due for release in 2023. NGSC would benefit from understanding the design and thought behind the application. If it has functionality that allows smartphones to automatically recognise certain flowers, it may open up an opportunity to create an event around it. See the "Cross regional asset" paragraph on page 26 for more detail.

2. Local business initiatives

Local businesses such as Flame Brothers and Paper Scissors Rock Brew Co are entrepreneurial and inventive in their thinking. Quirky events ideas such as the Brewery's large-scale Rock, Paper, Scissors competition are unique enough to show potential for growth. Any events such as that which have a grounding in stories of the place and the businesses themselves are worth NGSC exploring further.

Glenorchy

The upcoming engagement with the Glenorchy community about the creation of a community plan not dissimilar to that developed by and for Marnoo and Navarre will be the ideal opportunity to raise the idea of events in the township. If there is an interest shown by locals, identifying a point of difference in the township that they can work with would be the starting point for discussions around what sort of event they could create and host.

Navarre

The football club and the local school are the clear pillars in the community. To that end, events that tap into the sense of community and strength they bring should be prioritised.

Given the 37th parallel runs almost halfway between Navarre and Stawell, thought may be given to staging an annual competition that pits the two towns against each other. Whether that be a competition between the football clubs, the netball clubs or two primary schools, creating a centrepiece bit of content to build a large community celebration around could be a starting point for discussion with the community when holding the “town hall” meetings as part of the two-year action plan.

Marnoo

The town’s identity is clearly deeply rooted in Merino sheep. As such, working with the community to build the Field Day (as per the event-by-event analysis in the appendix) and capitalise on the potential it has to grow should be the priority.

Stuart Mill

The proximity to the Kara Kara National Park coupled with the Stuart Mill Conservation Area provide Stuart Mill with the opportunity to be part of a wildflower trail (see Cross-regional assets heading).

Further, the local olive farmers at 4000 olives would be the most obvious local employer that could provide capacity and ideas to create and drive an event that is centred on Stuart Mill.

Cross-regional asset

There are wildflowers to be found in the Shire area’s two National Parks and other conservation reserves that can’t be found elsewhere. Creating a springtime event with wildflowers unique to the area has the potential to be a drawcard for nature and flower lovers across the country. Potentially in collaboration with the Orchid societies, locally based conservation groups and Halls Gap Botanic Gardens, this event could be developed in a way that utilises technology.

A [recent event in Mackay Queensland](#) used the diversity of fish species and types of fishing locations to its advantage by offering prizes and incentives for anglers to “catch them all” via a mobile application. Held over 30 days, it spread out visitation across locations and the thirty days and ensured that the fishing experience wasn’t compromised by crowding.

Taking the same principles, offering a time period in which wildflower lovers could take photos to “collect them all” by hiking across the region to find wildflowers specific to the area, all for incentives or prizes that would likely appeal to that market segment, could deliver significant benefit to the region in time.

6. Appendix

i. **Event by event audit – Insights and recommended approach for our existing major events**

Key observations and the first steps on engaging with and investing in each existing major event are outlined below. These first steps as detailed in the 2-year action plan (pages 17-18) will be explored and adjusted by the NGSC's events and economic development team as the relationship between Council and the event owners evolve.



a. Mature Major Events

Grampian Arts

The logo for GrampianArts, featuring the text 'GrampianArts' in a white, stylized font on a black rectangular background.

Grampians Textures (March) and

Grampians Brushes (September)

Key observations

- A well connected, professionally run organisation
- Its workshops program is well established and one of very few of its type across the country
- With up to 360 participants plus entourage staying for an average of a week, each workshop delivers very strong direct spend (estimated to be between \$500k-\$1M in direct overnight visitor spend for each event) to Halls Gap visitor economy businesses
- They are looking to attract a younger audience and have specific plans in mind to do so
- Willing to look at other spaces in the region to host workshops (St Arnaud with its connection to mural and painted art is an obvious candidate), with the key requirements being an adequate space(s) to run the workshops, and accommodation
- The recent state government commitment of \$6.75M toward the development of WAMA (Wildlife Art Museum of Australia) may present opportunities for collaboration

NGSC next steps

Overarching objective of NGSC investment: Boost visitation to workshops. Aligns with KPI #5.

- Help Grampian Arts start to attract a younger audience, potentially targeting NGSC cash investment directly towards funding advertising in artistic publications with a younger audience (eg: [Galah](#), [Frankie](#)).
- Facilitate conversations between Grampian Arts, and potential partners in St Arnaud such as Kyle Torney, the Raillery and accommodation providers to explore the opportunity of hosting Grampian Arts workshops in St Arnaud and surrounds.
- Connect with WAMA, understand their plans, and identify synergies between their activity and Grampian Arts. Facilitate meetings and cooperation where synergies are identified

Potentially include in any agreement with Grampian Arts the capacity to communicate directly with their database with the objective of positioning the townships of NGSC as ideal places to move to and live.

This would be particularly relevant if NGSC cash investment is directed towards attracting a younger audience.

The Stawell Gift (Easter Weekend)



Key observations

- Attracts over 2,500 people aged under 50 to the region each and every year. As such, it provides an ideal opportunity to present Stawell (and potentially other NGSC townships) to this audience as a place to live and invest in.
- The connection and pride locals feel towards the event could be strengthened.
- There remains an opportunity to leverage and activate the event further throughout the town. Doing so successfully would likely deepen the pride locals feel in hosting the event, and also extend the economic impact delivered by the event into more businesses.
- With naming rights sponsor (Powercor) secured until 2025, and the television broadcast confirmed through until 2024, the short-medium term future of the event is strong.
- As accommodation occupancy in the region is close to, or at capacity over Easter, investment in the event does not need to be targeted at boosting visitation to the event

NGSC next steps

Given the strong short-medium term outlook for the event, NGSC may have the opportunity to target it's in investment in event at initiatives that address the first three observations by:

Delivering targeted messaging to attendees about Stawell and the wider Northern Grampians Shire (and potentially other townships), as a place to work and live.

Communication of these messages could be done:

- Onsite (via a stall that is hosted by a dynamic, enthusiastic community member),
- Via eDMs to the database
- Social media posts
- Signage that highlights a URL (eg: grampianslife.com.au/location/stawell)
- In broadcast placements (eg: on screen logos, postcards) that include a call to action such as mometostawell.com – See examples on following page

Creating content that would likely deepen the engagement of locals.

Initial ideas include:

- A foot race (only open to locals, between The Gift and The National. An idea that taps into the origins of gift racing that is believed to have started in Sheffield as a race between two pubs. A first step here would be to meet with the publicans of each hotel to float the concept.
- An all-abilities event(s) to be included in the event program. Local stakeholders to engage as a first step in exploring this idea would likely include Skene Street Specialist School, those at the heart of the Stella Young project, the Grampians Giants Football team, VALID, and the Stawell Neighbourhood House.

Maximising the impact of NGSC's signage and branding during the Stawell Gift television broadcast

Currently

Powercor Stawell Gift | Day 3

POWERCOR STAWELL GIFT 2022		VICTORIA
NORTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE COUNCIL 800M HANDICAP - FINAL		
1	COOPER LUBECK	52m
2	MARCUS OVERMAN	52m
3	LONAIN BURNETT	58m
4	LIAM HANRAHAN	62m
5	ALEX JONES	62m
6	JOSEPH BANGURA	66m
7	JORDAN WALKER	68m
8	NICHOLAS CALLANAN	70m
9	SAMUEL SABBATUCCI	84m
10	TIM HALPIN	98m

START LIST



Change to

Powercor Stawell Gift | Day 3

POWERCOR STAWELL GIFT 2022		VICTORIA
grampianslife.com 800M HANDICAP - FINAL		
1	COOPER LUBECK	52m
2	MARCUS OVERMAN	52m
3	LONAIN BURNETT	58m
4	LIAM HANRAHAN	62m
5	ALEX JONES	62m
6	JOSEPH BANGURA	66m
7	JORDAN WALKER	68m
8	NICHOLAS CALLANAN	70m
9	SAMUEL SABBATUCCI	84m
10	TIM HALPIN	98m

START LIST



Grampians Grape Escape (May)

Key observations

- The event keeps growing, evolving and going from strength to strength
- Drives an estimated \$3M in overnight visitor spend to Halls Gap, exhibitors and surrounds,
- It is the ideal platform for local food and beverage producers to showcase their product to a new audience, and in turn, a significant driver of economic benefit beyond the festival itself
- Of the 6,000+ unique attendees, over 2,500 are under the age of 50 and from outside of the region. As with the Stawell Gift, this audience provides an ideal opportunity to present Halls Gap (and potentially other NGSC townships) as a place to live and invest in.
- With a database of close to 8,000 consumers, the event has a large existing audience with which NGSC can engage

NGSC next steps

- Continue to support the event and support it to maintain its reputation and continue to evolve to include new initiatives such as the Friday night activities in 2022
- Leverage NGSC's investment in the event to deliver targeted messaging to attendees as Halls Gap (and other townships where relevant) as a place to live and invest. Like those suggestions under the Stawell Gift, platforms to communicate that message could include:
 - Onsite (eg: via a stall that is hosted by a dynamic, enthusiastic community member),
 - Via eDMs to the database,
 - Social media posts,
 - Signage at the event that highlights a URL grampianslife.com.au/location/halls-gap





Run the Gap (May)

Key observations

- Established to assist with the recovery from the 2011 floods in the township and surrounds, it is an event that has deep roots in the local community
- After ten years, the event continues to attract up to 1,200 participants
- Each participant is generally accompanied by at least one family member or friend, and as such, the event attracts over 2,500 people to the town
- The event attracts young families with more than half of the participants aged under 48 (the threshold age in KPI 2 of the Economic Development strategy)
- There is a fatigue emerging amongst the volunteer run committee and a handover of certain responsibilities would likely safeguard its future
- Key to its success is timing, and more specifically, the Great Ocean Road Running Festival which is also generally held in May
- The strong sense of community and family friendly approach the event has is what sets it apart. Indeed, as a showcase of the Halls Gap community at its best, it has helped attracted previous participants to live in Halls Gap some of whom are on the event committee now.
- Given the origins of the event are in building the Halls Gap community, organisers are open to discussing using their participant database and social media channels to position Halls Gap as a place to live

NGSC next steps

- Leverage the existing audience the event delivers by actively promoting Halls Gap as a place to live, work and invest in
- Engage with organisers to understand how Council can play a role in helping the event to evolve. Initial discussions with organisers have identified the resolution of traffic management issues, enhancing of the “community vibe” with more on-site activation, and highlighting to competitors what else is on offer in the surrounding area as areas that would enhance the event experience, and by extension, help position Halls Gap as a desirable place to live

Wonderland Run (August)

Key observations

- First run in 2015, the event has built up a loyal following and now boasts over 700 participants and enlists the help of 90 volunteers.
- The event attracts an estimated 1,500 people to town after the participants' entourage are accounted for
- The ownership of the event is being passed over to South Australian based company, Adelaide Trail Runners. They are a well-established business that has a number of races on their books, with over 2,500 Facebook followers and 1,200 entrants to their existing events.
- The new event owner sees attracting South Australians to participate as the most efficient way to increase participation in the coming years
- The Wonderland Run has a reputation firstly as a particularly tough, undulating course, and secondly as a visually spectacular run with incredible views.
- Its reputation as an event is still building and it has the potential to become a genuine destination event for trail runners across Australia
- Assistance from Council for road closures, the hire of temporary infrastructure (ie: toilets) and venue hire (Centenary Hall) are the primary needs identified by the new event organiser that Council could assist with

NGSC next steps

- With the most likely growth of participants coming from South Australia (and therefore likely to stay longer in region), there is a genuine opportunity for the event's economic impact to increase in the years ahead
- Connect with new event owner to discuss how Council can best assist their growth plans. Supporting them, particularly to help drive interstate visitation would likely generate significant visitation and economic impact

Wild Horses (December)

Key observations

- Started in 2016, the event and its community continues to grow organically, now capping their attendances at 2,000 people
- On the surface, the culture and audience at the heart of the event has little to no alignment to the culture of the communities in closest proximity to the event site, namely St Arnaud and Stuart Mill
- The community that is at the heart of the event makes a point of their community being respectful and loving. Further, organisers and the community itself makes a point of spending money in local communities wherever possible
- Whilst the event is not an obvious fit for local communities to get involved in and attend themselves, the NGSC's positive engagement with the festival to date ensures that the region is at the very least, welcoming to a younger demographic. This in turn ensures that NGSC are not alienating people that may contribute over time to the increase in the Shire's population, and the decrease in its average age (KPIs 1 & 2 of the EDS)
- The Wild Horses Facebook page is followed by 7,300 people

NGSC next steps

- Continue to work with the event as they develop it over the course of the recently approved three-year permit to run the festival on its current site
- Should an appropriate opportunity arise, work with the festival organisers to communicate with their followers messaging about NGSC's various townships as places to invest in and live



b. Nascent events (ie: events five years old or less, or new event concepts)

Grampians Gatherings – St Arnaud Lights On – St Arnaud

The confirmation of \$48,000 of State Government funding to stage the second year of Lights On presents a significant opportunity for the community of St Arnaud to cement it as an annual fixture on the community’s calendar. The assessment of the event is detailed below.

1 – Local Ownership	2 – Point of difference	3 – Spirit of collaboration	Total (out of 15)
2	4	3	9

- i Local ownership
The delivery of the 2022 Lights On event ACT Natimuk, a local creative group based in the neighbouring Horsham Rural City Council LGA. To maximise the chances of the event becoming a fixture within St Arnaud, ownership of the event’s delivery must be transferred into the hands of locally based organisations (eg: the Raillery Hub)
- ii Point of difference
The silo & mural art and paintings in St Arnaud coupled with local groups such as the Raillery Hub, ArtSpace and the St Arnaud Arts Council provides a concentration of artistic activity that is a clear point of difference for the community.
- iii Spirit of collaboration
Whilst there is great passion within the St Arnaud artistic community, there hasn’t been a recent example of disparate groups in the community coming together to deliver something for the greater good of the township.

NGSC next steps

Establishing the event as a permanent fixture in the community, irrelevant of state government funding, is the primary objective of Lights On 2023. Handing over responsibility for the event’s delivery with a view to fostering a true sense of ownership amongst the community will be at the heart of achieving this.

Through the lens of our three fundamentals assessment framework, we will work to transfer ownership of the event to locals (Fundamental 1) and foster a sense of collaboration within the community and between the community and Council (Fundamental 3).

Doing so successfully will maximise the probability of the community creating an event that leverages a clear point of difference (Fundamental 2).

Pacific Islanders Traditional Talent Show – Stawell

The rapidly growing islander population, primarily as a result of the employment provided by the Frew Foods abattoir, represents an opportunity for Stawell to showcase itself as a welcoming, inclusive community. The successful staging of the first Pacific Islanders Traditional Talent Show in July 2022 proved the concept worked at a local, community level. An initial assessment based on stakeholder interviews and desktop research using our three fundamentals is detailed below.

i. Local Ownership	ii. Point of difference	iii. Spirit of collaboration	Total (out of 15)
4	4	4	12

- i Local ownership
Organisers are passionate about the Islander culture(s) and the community living in the region. In particular they are focused on providing the Islander community with ways to contribute positively during their time living in the region (generally for 3-4 years as per the "PALM" visa). Despite their time living in the community being limited by the duration of their visa, there is a real passion to create a framework that assists newly arrived workers from the Pacific Islands integrate into the community, and by extension avoid the downsides of the "culture shock" that many are prone to experiencing on arrival in Australia.
- ii Point of difference
The local Islander community and its leaders appear to have a drive, passion and capability that sets them apart from Islander communities in other parts of Victoria. They have numerous event ideas grounded in Islander culture ranging from sport through to cultural events. The talent show could be the core of what has the potential to develop into a broad celebration of Islander culture. Highland gatherings provide an example of events with a foreign culture at their core that drive significant visitation. Brigadoon, "the premier Scottish gathering in Australia", each April in Bundanoon, NSW, attracts over 12,000 visitors annually.
- iii Spirit of collaboration
In the short time they've been part of the community, the organisers of the talent show have established relationships with the Pioneers soccer club, several church groups and indeed, the Northern Grampians Shire Council itself.

NGSC next steps

There is significant potential within Stawell's Islander community to have lasting impact on the wider community. The drive and energy they have is evident. Council's role is to harness and provide direction to that energy. More specifically, Council is ideally placed to assist this group in:

- Defining their objectives and a path to realising them, including plans for their event(s)
- Facilitating the creation of incorporated entity that can apply for funding independently and act in an official manner as the representative of the Islander community,
- Helping facilitate meetings with other likely stakeholders including Frews and State and Federal Government bodies

Victorian State Merino Field Day – Marnoo

With an attendance of over 500 people in 2022, the event continues to grow and clearly has potential to continue that growth. The assessment of the event is detailed below.

1 – Local Ownership	2 – Point of difference	3 – Spirit of collaboration	Total (out of 15)
5	4	4	13

- i Local ownership
Run by local Merino farmers with significant history in the area, the event is wholly aligned with the day-to-day activities of the township’s dominant industry.
- ii Point of difference
Despite only being three years old, the event has an excellent reputation amongst Marino studs in the west of Victoria. The one-day format is tailored to meet their needs as farmers and is a clear point of difference with comparable field days (Bendigo and Hamilton) that demand farmers be in place for several days. Further, organisers heard from studs in attendance that the rapid growth of Hamilton’s *Sheepvention* has seen the focus it used to have on Merinos become diluted. This opens up an opportunity for the Marnoo field day to take ownership of the Western Victoria’s premier Merino event.
- iii Spirit of collaboration
Organisers have a strong reputation and existing relationships with local Merino studs. Further, this reputation extends to studs across the west of Victoria. Continuing to develop relationships with NGSC and the committee that oversee the running Marnoo Recreation Reserve is the next step in developing the event’s spirit of collaboration.

NGSC next steps

Continue to build the relationship with the event owner and support them in building to their objective of surpassing *Sheepvention* becoming the state’s premier Merino event. Steps NGSC can take to ensure the event continues to thrive whilst maximising its outcomes include:

- In cooperation with the Infrastructure and Amenity team, liaise with the community to continue carrying out town maintenance and beautification in the weeks prior to the event
- Invest funding into the event to ensure its growth continues
- Discuss ways in which NGSC can assist or invest in a way that attracts more studs to stay in Stawell and St Arnaud on the night prior to the event
- Discuss and agree on the split of roles and responsibilities between Council and the Reserve committee when it comes to maintenance and capital works at and around the Marnoo Recreation Reserve. Discuss potential future capital improvements with a view to increasing the site’s capacity to host over 1,000 people

c. Community Events

Major events under the Easter Festival umbrella

(Including major events under the Easter Carnival umbrella such as the Great Western Rodeo, Lindsay Kent Memorial Fun Run and the Stuart McGregor Stawell Gold Cup)

Key observations

- The critical mass of events staged across many NGSC communities provides an opportunity to present the region as a hive of activity across the Easter period
- Significant goodwill was created amongst a range of event owners and stakeholders by packaging events in 2022 under the “Easter Festival” banner. This packaging proved it as a concept, and as such, it is worth continuing

NGSC next steps

- Continue to package events under the “Easter Festival” banner and push out via Council channels

Stawell Gold Cup (Easter), Great Western Cup (late Jan) and St Arnaud Cup (Cox Plate Day)

Observations

- All three clubs and their annual race days are steeped in up to 170 years of history
- They all enjoy significant support from local businesses for their premier race days
- The respective days appeal to a broad audience and are important occasions for the community to come together, and welcome visitors to town for the weekend

NGSC next steps

- Maintain relationships where they currently exist. Build relationships where they don't.
- Understand the type of support each club could use from Council



Annual Spring (Orchid) Show

Observations

- Started more than 30 years ago, it is one of the most well-established Orchid Societies in Western Victoria. They are known as pioneers in Orchid circles
- They work collaboratively having helped other communities establish clubs and support their activities
- Active in the community and managing to maintain strong membership numbers
- Benefited greatly from the open house
- The relationship with NGSC is seen as being very positive, and well received. The waving of fees for venue hire, along with grant monies ensure the spring events are viable and can continue to be known in the orchid loving community as one of Victoria's best
- Many of the society's members are wildflower fans, their knowledge of which could present an opportunity to leverage one of our region's great points of difference, our wildflowers

NGSC next steps

- Continue to invest community event grant money in the Spring Show
- Encourage the society to keep networking and being innovative with their programming and events they host and create (eg: Victorian Clubs Challenge)
- Explore potential for collaboration on wildflower events and connections with other parties such as the Halls Gap Botanic Gardens

Stawell Show (Fourth Saturday of October)

Key observations

- With the assistance of State Government grants and a strong year in 2022, the show has recovered losses associated with the COVID disruptions in 2020 and 2021
- Event generally clashes with the Bendigo show and when it does, it has difficulty securing carnival rides and attractions
- In 2022 Bendigo was cancelled and it appeared as though that benefited the Stawell Show
- Part of that benefit was securing the state titles of a woodchopping event

NGSC next steps

- Create a relationship with the agricultural society and see where Council may be able to provide support.
- Assistance with rubbish collection and potentially funding to ensure the return of the state woodchopping titles are the most likely areas where Council assistance could be of benefit

St Arnaud Show (First weekend of October)

Key observations

- 142 years old. The 2022 event drew an estimated crowd of 3-4,000 people
- The event's speed shearing and horse riding events are widely known as some of the state's best and most prestigious
- Frustration with recent development on site. The old buildings that were fit for purpose for the agricultural show's purposes have been removed and replaced with buildings that are designed for use by the sporting clubs, not the agricultural society
- This has led to an overall feeling within the society that the Council isn't interested in the society or the show's ongoing viability
- There is a fear that the show may cease to exist in the near future

NGSC next steps

- Engage with the society face-to-face onsite at Lord Nelson Park with representatives from relevant NGSC departments to understand their frustrations and ambitions

Grampian Lakes Fishing Competition

Observations

- Organisers (Stawell and District Angling Club) are well organised with a committed and well-connected committee
- They hold a strong relationship with VRFish, Victoria's recreational fishing peak body. As a well-resourced organisation, this is a particularly valuable relationship to have in place
- Competition attracts up to 300 entries at this point
- Committee contemplating whether the event should be annual or every two years
- Low-cost entry and camping are a big part of the appeal to visiting anglers and their families. This translates through to the event delivering limited economic impact to local businesses beyond the Angling Club itself.
- Potential exists to create a competition that spans the Shire's five key waterbodies, namely, Lake Batyo Catyo, Lake Bellfield, Lake Fyans, Lake Lonsdale and Walkers Lake

NGSC next steps

- Continue to invest in event as per recent years, particularly in the coming year with the event on April 22, 2023. With VRFish behind the event, it will have a large reach and holds significant potential to raise the awareness of Lake Fyans across the state.
- Explore possible extension of events that take in several locations across the Shire.



ii. Assessment of potential investment approaches against Economic Development Strategy

In weighing up the merits of pursuing event acquisition and comparing them to that of an approach that focuses on investing in events that are grounded in our place(s), comparing how each approach delivers against the EDS's Objectives, Strategic Directions, aligned core commitments and the 2031 KPIs provides important context.

To that end, below is an assessment of the two approaches and the extent to which they align with the Objectives, Strategic Directions and KPIs in our Economic Development Strategy (EDS).

1. Event sourcing and acquisition	1. Leveraging and nurturing of local events
Objectives	
Nil	1. Increased productivity and a prosperous future for all 2. Sustained economic growth 3. Investment in enabling infrastructure
Strategic Directions	
<u>1a. The rural region of choice</u> Ensure diverse and enriching places and experiences that offer an attractive lifestyle alternative	<u>1a. The rural region of choice</u> Attract and retained talented, skilled, and productive people Ensure diverse and enriching places and experiences that offer an attractive lifestyle alternative Foster communities that are inclusive, welcoming and supportive of diversity – where all people feel valued <u>1b. Grow the economic capacity and engagement of our own people</u> ii. To ensure our young people have equitable access to opportunities and support to participate fully in social, economic, educational, and civic life
<u>2a. Iconic Destinations</u> i. Ensure our visitor economy offers diverse, unique, high quality and enriching experiences, disperse across Northern Grampians ii. Protect, enhance, and celebrate our natural, cultural and heritage assets	<u>2a. Iconic Destinations</u> Ensure our visitor economy offers diverse, unique, high quality and enriching experiences, disperse across Northern Grampians Protect, enhance, and celebrate our natural, cultural and heritage assets <u>2b. A magnet for innovation and investment</u> iii. Support businesses to be strong, innovative, resilient, and sustainable
<u>3a. Strong economic development governance, leadership, collaboration, and advocacy</u> vi. Ensure Northern Grampians is an easy place to invest	<u>3a. Strong economic development governance, leadership, collaboration, and advocacy</u> a. Development of a combined voice for leadership that leverages the ability of Government and the power of private investment to move the region in the desired direction b. Developing a culture that recognises economic development is a whole of community business c. Making hard calls on holding an economic development course that reflects a collective vision d. Development of partnerships, communication and networking to impact cultural change that can then drive a strategic direction for a location e. Fostering economic development outcomes that 'grow from within' will ultimately lead to improved wealth distribution for all community members
KPIs	
5. Grow GRP year on year, from a \$730m economy to \$920m	1. Achieve population growth from 11,400 to 14,400 2. Reduce median age to equal the state (from 48 to 37 years) 5. Grow GRP year on year, from a \$730m economy to \$920m 7. Increase (private and government) capital investment

Commentary on the extent to which each approach aligns with the Objectives, Strategic Directions and KPIs in the EDS is detailed below.

iii. Objectives and Strategic Directions



Approach 1 – Event sourcing and acquisition

All three of the above objectives are inherently defined with a medium to long-term timeframe in mind. To that end, they are largely at odds with the event acquisition approach which would demand that Council be continually looking for events to attract to the region. Further, the event acquisition space is extremely competitive. When considering that most peer councils across Victoria and beyond have significantly larger event budgets than NGSC, the dedication of resource to event acquisition would be an inherently short-term approach. As such, there is limited alignment between an event acquisition approach and the three overarching objectives of the EDS.

Of the core commitments under each Strategic Direction, the acquisition approach, if focused on leveraging our natural assets, would likely deliver on 1.a.ii, 2.a.i, and 2.a.ii. That said, the event experiences offered by pursuing an acquisition approach would likely be fleeting in nature as the events would not be wholly grounded in place, and as such, may in time find alternative host locations.

The one core commitment that the acquisition approach would likely yield stronger results than the leverage and nurture approach would be 3.a.vi – *Ensure NG is an easy place to invest*. By working consistently with external event owners and delivery experts, NGSC's processes and manner of working with events would likely improve over time.

Approach 2 – Leverage and nurture local events

With Council acting in a role of an investor and collaborator, this approach builds event delivery capacity within our communities over time (as opposed to the acquisition approach which in essence buys in the event delivery capacity of an external party).

To that end, it feeds directly in to the “growing of the economic capacity and engagement of our own people” that sits under our first objective.

The “place-based” spirit inherent to this leverage and nurture approach also increases the likelihood that our assets will be used in a manner that protects and celebrates them in a more authentic way (2.a.ii.).

Finally, the collaborative nature of this approach will help see us deliver on numerous core commitments, namely:

- 2.b.iii. We’ll work with local businesses when pursuing this approach by providing them with the information required for them to activate and deliver content as part of events we help facilitate.
- 3.a.ii. Bringing together numerous stakeholders in the community to contribute to events will provide highly visible demonstrations of the “economic development being a whole of community business” culture in action
- 3.a.iii. By transparently focusing our energies on events with well-defined key characteristics we will be putting in to practice the discipline of “making hard calls...that reflects a collective vision”.
- 3.a.iv. By facilitating and building relationships within the community to deliver our events we will help ensure a place’s unique cultural characteristics come to the fore, and in turn, provide a common point of identity for our communities to unite under.
- 3.a.v. Pursuing a leverage and nurture approach will be an overt illustration of how we are pursuing an event strategy that is about “growing from within”

1.a 

The rural region of choice

- i.** Attract and retain talented, skilled and productive people.
- ii.** Ensure diverse and enriching places and experiences that offer an attractive lifestyle alternative.
- iii.** Foster communities that are inclusive, welcoming and supportive of diversity - where all people feel valued.
- iv.** Foster positive outcomes for our indigenous community.
- v.** Develop a greater understanding of the significance of indigenous culture in Northern Grampians and meaningful partnerships with traditional owners.
- vi.** Tackle climate change and its impacts on health and wellbeing.

1.b 

Grow the economic capacity and engagement of our own people

- i.** To support vulnerable people and ensure our children have the best start in life.
- ii.** To ensure our young people have equitable access to opportunities and support to participate fully in social, economic, educational and civic life.
- iii.** To ensure integrated and diversity of access to health and human services.

2.a 

Iconic destinations

- i.** Ensure our visitor economy offers diverse, unique, high quality and enriching experiences, disperse across Northern Grampians.
- ii.** Protect, enhance and celebrate our natural, cultural and heritage assets.

2.b 

A magnet for innovation and investment

- i.** Ensure land use policy and infrastructure that enables investment.
- ii.** Reduce costs of energy on business and impact on climate change.
- iii.** Support businesses to be strong, innovative, resilient and sustainable.
- iv.** Attract new and emerging rural and resources industries.
- v.** Ensure development is environmentally sustainable and key assets are protected.
- vi.** Attract research and development organisations.

3.a 

Strong economic development governance, leadership, collaboration, and advocacy.

- i.** Development of a combined voice for leadership that leverages the ability of Government and the power of private investment to move the region in the desired direction.
- ii.** Developing a culture that recognises economic development is a whole of community business.
- iii.** Making hard calls and holding an economic development course that reflects a collective vision.
- iv.** Development of partnerships, communication and networking to impact cultural change that can then drive a strategic direction for a location.
- v.** Fostering economic development outcomes that 'grow from within' will ultimately lead to improved wealth distribution for all community members.
- vi.** Ensure Northern Grampians is an easy place to invest.

2031 KPIs

Approach 1 – Event sourcing and acquisition

The KPI that this approach would focus on assisting would be to Grow GRP (KPI 5) year on year. In the short term (ie: 1-5 years), an event acquisition approach would likely provide more immediate boosts to GRP.

Approach 2 – Leveraging and nurturing of local events

By investing in our existing events and the platform they provide to communicate with outsiders, we can directly pursue KPIs 1&2 via our investment in events.

In the case of increasing of GRP, in years 1-5 of this strategy, whilst nascent events are building awareness and equity in their brands, the GRP delivered by this strategy would likely be lower than that of an identify and acquire strategy. However, should our approach add one or more events to our annual calendar on an ongoing basis, their contribution would likely grow exponentially (and more sustainably than the first approach) from years 6-10 of this strategy's lifetime.

Taking this direction may on the surface feel contrary to the status quo when considering the approach various levels of Government take to investing in events. Using the creation of the Victorian Major Events Company (now part of Visit Victoria) as a case study, we see an example of how the ethos of acquiring events has become the dominant approach taken by Government bodies

Case Study – The Victorian approach to major event investment

Victorian **Major Events Company**
Melbourne the world's event city



VISIT VICTORIA

Created in 1991, the Victorian Major Events Company (VMEC) was set up with the mandate: "to identify and pursue major events that are seen to bring economic, broadcast/media exposure, cultural and social benefits to the state of Victoria."

In subsequent years it went on describe itself as "the world's leading event acquisition group". To that end and by way of example, it set itself the objective in the 2000s to secure two major sporting world championship events each and every year.

In 2016, in line with peer organisations in other states, the VMEC was merged with Tourism Victoria to form Visit Victoria. The merge did not dilute the acquisition focused approach to event investment. This is evident in Visit Victoria's investment guidelines for events. In reading these guidelines, events that don't currently deliver visitation, particularly from interstate and overseas, simply don't qualify for support. Any potential an event may have to drive visitation in future years is not taken into account.

To highlight the outcome of this approach, it is worth noting that Melbourne (and surrounds) does not have a major recurring event that has existed for more than 2 years on its annual calendar that was not in place before the advent of the Victorian Major Events Company in 1991.

iv. Current major events calendar

A preliminary assessment of event ideas and events in their first two years has been conducted. Those judged as having potential to grow into major events have been included in *blue italics*.

 JANUARY	 FEBRUARY	 MARCH
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grampians Textures • Easter Program depending on when Easter falls
 APRIL	 MAY	 JUNE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stawell Gift • Easter events (major events under the Easter Carnival umbrella) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Great Western Rodeo - Stawell Gold Cup - Lindsay Kent Memorial Fun Run 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grampians Grape Escape • Run the Gap 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>St Arnaud Lights On (Grampians Gatherings)</i>
 JULY	 AUGUST	 SEPTEMBER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Pacific Islanders Traditional Talent Show</i> • Marnoo Sheep Breeders Show 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wonderland Run 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grampians Brushes
 OCTOBER	 NOVEMBER	 DECEMBER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lake Fyans Fly Fishing Competition • Stawell Show 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Grampians Lakes Fishing Competition</i> 	

v. Questions for inclusion in post-event surveying

Question for calculation of unique attendee figure:

- Which days of the event did you attend?
 - The average number of days attended derived from this question is used to divide by the cumulative attendance figure to calculate the unique attendance figure

Questions for calculation of Overnight Visitor Expenditure

- Where are you from?
 - Northern Grampians Shire Council Area
 - Regional Victoria
 - Melbourne
 - Interstate or Overseas
- Was <<name of event>> a major reason for you deciding to come to <<town>> on this trip?
 - Yes
 - No
- How many nights did you spend in <<town>> during the trip?
- And did you spend any other nights in any of the following towns?
 - Enter other NGSC towns
- Taking in to account all money you spent during your time on this trip, can you please tell me how much money you and your party spent in total on...
 - Accommodation
 - Meals, food and drinks
 - Retail purchases (including petrol, groceries, souvenirs, gifts and so on)
 - Any other expenses
- Including yourself, how many people do these amounts cover?
- Of those people, how many, including yourself, attended <<event name>>?
- What type of accommodation did you stay in?
 - Stayed in home of friend or relative
 - Campsite / Caravan Park
 - Rented house, apartment
 - Standard hotel, motel, motor inn
 - Luxury hotel, serviced apartment
 - AirBNB

vi. Methodology and Consultation

The Tourism Events Strategy has been formed in accordance with a review of existing documents and targeted stakeholder engagement.

As part of the development of the Events Strategy, Stu Speirs, the consultant from Events Strategy firm Silver Lining Strategy met with and held discussions with the below stakeholders:

- Northern Grampians Event Specialist
- Northern Grampians Community Engagement and Futures team
- Northern Grampians Tourism Development Officer
- Northern Grampians Manager Economic and Community Futures
- Northern Grampians Major and Councillors
- Pacific Islander Talent Show and the wider Pacific Islander community
- The Stawell Gift
- Stawell Orchid Society
- Lake Fyans Angling Club
- St Arnaud Raillery Hub
- Marnoo Merino Field Day
- Stawell Gold Mines
- Run the Gap
- Wonderland Run
- St Arnaud and Stawell Historical Society representatives
- General Public from Halls Gap, Stawell and St Arnaud communities
- St Arnaud Agricultural Society
- Stawell Agricultural Society
- Grampians Grape Escape Festival
- GrampianArts
- Grampians Community Health
- Grampians Tourism
- Visit Victoria
- Flame Brothers Halls Gap



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