

ST ARNAUD TOURISM ACTION PLAN 2022-2032



DRAFT



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Northern Grampians Shire Council Staff.

Images Provided by Northern Grampians Shire Council

INTRODUCTION



ABOUT THIS PROJECT

ST ARNAUD, a township of approximately 2,200 people, located in Victoria's Wimmera – Southern Mallee region and administered by the Northern Grampians Shire Council (NGSC). Originally settled in the mid 1850's during Victoria's Goldrush, the town has a deep connection with heritage and is one of the best examples of Victorian and Federation architecture in the Grampians region. St Arnaud is a service centre for the agricultural community in the region and tourism has not previously been considered a priority industry. From a tourism perspective, St Arnaud has been considered a 'break in journey' town due to its proximity connecting Melbourne with Horsham enroute to Adelaide.

In the past 5 years, the Wimmera region has attracted a new visitor segment as a result of the Silo Art Trail; Australia's largest outdoor gallery, spanning an area of over 200kms through small rural communities. St Arnaud is ideally located as a hub for visitors to explore the region, owing to its supply of accommodation and visitor amenities. In addition, local artist Kyle Torney has painted multiple outdoor murals throughout St Arnaud, including the St Arnaud Silos. This beautiful work complements the visitor experience of the Silo Art Trail and serves to fulfill the expectations of visitors embarking on this trail.



Figure 1: Northern Grampians Shire



Figure 2: St Arnaud Assessment Area

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

The St Arnaud Tourism Resilience Action Plan (SATAP) is required to set out the vision and aspirations for the visitor economy of St Arnaud and surrounds over the next four years. Preparation of the action plan is an essential step to ultimately growing the visitor offering and building resilience in the Northern Grampians economy. Importantly, the SATAP will contribute to informing an overall tourism strategic direction for the NGSC, identifying commonality in experience themes in the Northern Grampians, areas of competitive advantage and opportunities to leverage major tourism projects in the wider Grampians region.

The NGSC objectives for this project are:

- To diversify Northern Grampians visitor offering to reduce impact of National Park closures following fire events.
- To establish a shared vision of St Arnaud and surrounds visitor economy and enable the coordinated delivering of key actions.
- To increase the competitiveness of St Arnaud as a visitor destination and enable strong promotion by leveraging off existing opportunities.
- To grow jobs and visitor spend in Northern Grampians
- To unlock and facilitate opportunities for private sector investment in the tourism offering

METHODOLOGY

The NGSC appointed external consultants DTM Tourism to work collaboratively with the St Arnaud and surrounding communities to identify priority needs and opportunities. Engagement included:

- 17 x Stakeholder Interviews
- 3 x Site visits to ST ARNAUD tourism attractions
- 2 x Online community surveys (45 responses)
- 4 x Project Control Group (PCG) meetings
- 1 x ST ARNAUD community workshop

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The development of a four-year Tourism Action Plan will provide a road map to guide NGSC and the St Arnaud community in valuing its visitor economy as the community transitions to consider tourism as an economic driver. The plan is underpinned by a reimagined approach to enabling engagement with St Arnaud's heritage, whilst establishing foundations for the emergence of creative enterprises.

Throughout the process of assessing the tourism opportunity for St Arnaud and surrounding communities, project consultants DTM Tourism, have maintained a clear focus to identifying projects which will be ACHIEVABLE and AFFORDABLE tourism priorities over the next 10 years.

In this context, it has been determined that establishing a clearly defined visitor-focused plan for St Arnaud will provide the best opportunity for flow-on visitor dispersal in surrounding communities. Recommendations made in this STAP strategically align to 3 **priority focus areas identified in the St Arnaud Community Plan 2020** being:



PLACE

- Preservation of existing green spaces
- Preservation of heritage (built & narrative)
- Fostering opportunities for the creative community



ECONOMY

- Branding, wayfinding and communications



ENVIRONMENT

- Nature and outdoors activities contributing to wellness

Specifically, the recommendations of the SATAP, align to the direction identified in the **Northern Grampians Economic Development Strategy**.

2. SUSTAINED ECONOMIC GROWTH

a. Iconic Destinations

- Ensure our visitor economy offers diverse, unique, high quality and enriching experiences and dispersal across the Northern Grampians
- Protect, enhance and celebrate our natural and heritage assets

In addition, the development of visitor experiences have been considered to meet the demands of visitors to the wider Grampians region. **'Lifestyle Leaders' are the priority visitor segment for Grampians Tourism**, accounting for 29% of Australia's population. Importantly, this group buy into regional short breaks, with a focus on nature, food and wine, providing an opportunity to:



- ✓ Position St Arnaud within the consideration set of this priority audience segment
- ✓ Build a sense of intrigue around St Arnaud's authentic visitor experience and capitalise on St Arnaud's competitive advantage
- ✓ Leverage region-wide strategic focus, including Grampians Cycle Tourism, Wine and Culinary tourism in the Grampians-Pyrenees, Arts and Events
- ✓ Positively influence current perceptions of the visitor experience in St Arnaud
- ✓ Build awareness of St Arnaud through quality communication and the development of a unique tourism brand

It is recommended that outcomes of the SATAP be captured through the measurement of key performance indicators and reported to Council and community in annual reports. An annual review will ensure the SATAP is up-to-date and relevant with the changing environment in the Shire, broader region and the tourism industry.

A FUTURE-FOCUSED TOURISM VISION



The future for St Arnaud's visitor economy will capitalise on the town's rich heritage both built and told; 'one and only' visitor attractions, and unexpected, artisan experiences. We aim to connect visitors, inspired by adventure in the Grampians and the culinary delights of the Pyrenees Wine Region, to make St Arnaud a central base to explore and experience life in an agricultural town with a difference.

Over the next 10 years, visitors will be attracted to St Arnaud through inspiring imagery, intriguing stories and new visitor experiences. Visitor servicing commitments will ensure that St Arnaud is open for business and visitors are welcome. Young families, with an increased interest in rural and regional areas as an alternative to metropolitan living, will recognize that St Arnaud is a vibrant, colourful community which offers a safe and friendly place to stay and play.

WE WILL

- Value our HERITAGE and its preservation
- Create a community where ARTISANS can thrive
- Immerse ourselves in NATURE and wellbeing
- Embrace new opportunities to establish an AGRITOURISM future

TOURISM SNAPSHOT



VISITOR SUMMARY

VISITOR NUMBERS

Tourism Research Australia (TRA) is the federal government authority which collates tourism statistics as a division of Austrade. The last LGA profile report for the Northern Grampians was produced in 2019 and is an unreliable indicator of visitor numbers for St Arnaud specifically. Accommodation operators in St Arnaud are not sizeable enough for room nights to be captured under Australian Bureau of Statistic (ABS) reporting. However, a product audit of St Arnaud's accommodation operators indicates capacity for approx. 200 visitors per night – 70,000 overnight visitors per year. Anecdotal, most operators report that approximately 60-70% of occupants during the week are business travellers.

ST ARNAUD VISITOR CENTRE

The St Arnaud Visitor Centre is open daily from 10am to 4pm and whilst it is currently managed by Grampians Tourism under contract to the NGSC, the Shire will take back visitor servicing in August 2022. The visitor centre will be overseen by a new Tourism Manager role in the Shire.

Visitor servicing is currently undertaken by volunteers and whilst this model capitalises on authentic, passionate local ambassadors, it is a challenge to maintain consistency and sustainability in an aging community such as St Arnaud.

The most successful visitor centres exist where they are co-located with a major attraction and are intrinsically connected to their LGA or RTB to support destination marketing.

In line with the NGSC's aspirations for St Arnaud's role as a regional hub, Shire management of the VC is likely to achieve positive outcomes in establishing activation within the VC precinct. Accreditation will contribute to quality assurance and implementing visitor data tracking will assist in decision making for visitor amenities.

Anecdotal, the SVC reports that leisure visitors are motivated by the Silo Mural and are discovering the street art on arrival

GRAMPIANS VISITOR STATISTICS

TRA statistics for the wider Grampians region indicates that although day trip and overnight visitors are down approximately 35% compared to pre Covid-19 arrivals in September 2019, the average length of stay has grown and domestic overnight spend is up by 16%, indicating that a new customer is finding the Grampians for a short break. This is an important consideration for the SATAP as it demonstrates the opportunity to grow the value of tourism when visitors have an understanding of the destination, which encourages them to plan to stay overnight.

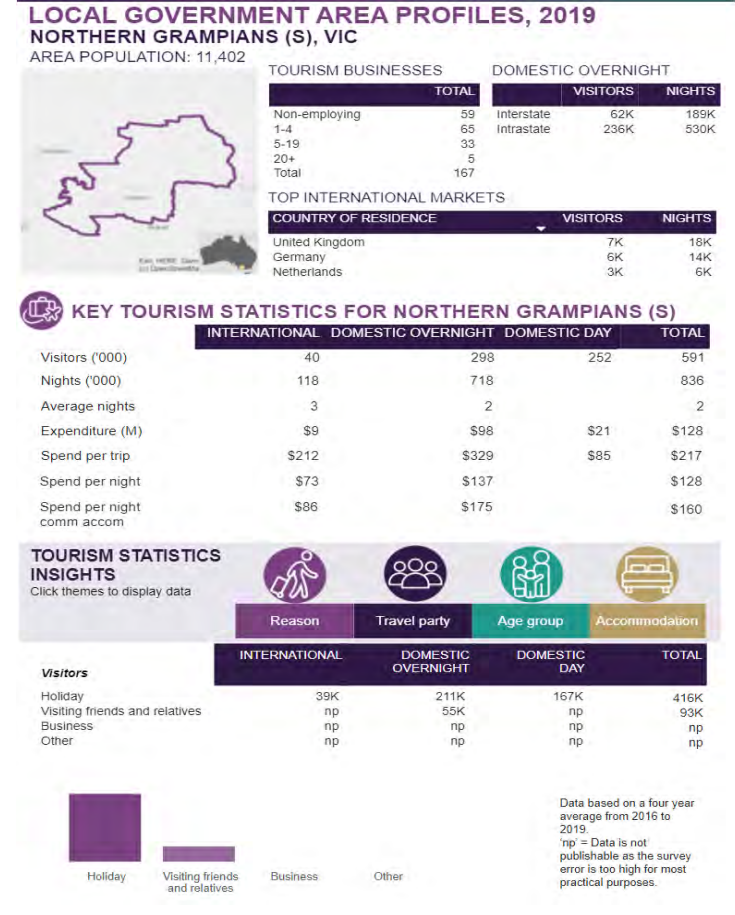


Figure 3: NVS LGA Profile Northern Grampians
 Source = <https://www.tra.gov.au/Regional/local-government-area-profiles>

VISITOR ECONOMY PROFILE

Growth in tourism has a significantly positive economic and social effect across a region like the Northern Grampians. Tourism supports industry and employment across a number of sectors from agriculture and manufacturing through to healthcare, retail, and education. Businesses gain from tourism spend, ultimately increasing economic returns, and subsequently resourcing community infrastructure and enterprises.

In the short term, the supply of tourism services is sufficient to meet visitor demand. However, the intent of the St Arnaud Structure Plan (currently under development) is to grow St Arnaud as a regional hub. Accordingly, tourism services will need to be assessed to meet growth aspirations. Currently, tourism in St Arnaud delivers:



86 Jobs



\$16.9m in Annual Revenue



\$7.9m in Added Spend



5 Motels



1 Caravan Park



3 AirBnB's



2 Pubs



16 Cafe/Dining



2 Tour Operators

[Source = Remplan Economy Jobs and Business Insights St Arnaud](#)



MAJOR STRENGTHS

ACCESS

St Arnaud is positioned on two highway routes connecting major regional centres in Central Victoria. Its proximity to the Pyrenees Wine Region in addition to Rupanyup, where Victoria's Silo Art Trail begins, indicates that St Arnaud has a primary opportunity to be considered a hub from which to explore these two regions. It is the opportunity to leverage market awareness of these 2 profile regions.

HERITAGE ARCHITECTURE

According to project managers for the Central Victorian Goldfields World Heritage Bid, St Arnaud represents the best example of a complete, gold heritage town in the Grampians region. There are currently approximately 500 records of significance listed on the Victorian Heritage Database for St Arnaud. Investing in heritage preservation will be vitally important to establishing a place brand.

- The Crown Land office, St Arnaud, is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria.
- Toddington Shearing Shed & Homestead is of architectural, historical, social and scientific significance to the State of Victoria
- St Peter's Church at Carapooee is of architectural and historical significance to the State of Victoria.
- St. Arnaud Railway Station is historically and architecturally significant to the State of Victoria.

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES – 'Only in St Arnaud' attractions can be drivers of visitation

- The oldest fire station in Victoria
- The only known public garden designed by revered landscape designer, Edna Walling
- Largest township collection of Silo and Street Mural Art in Australia
- Locally crafted ornate wrought-iron lacework
- St Arnaud Railway Station the most intact example of the largest standard station building designs, erected during the 'light lines' era (c.1869 - c.1884).



CHALLENGES TO ADDRESS

There is significant tourism value in St Arnaud that when harnessed effectively, will have a positive impact for livability in the community and the visitor economy. To achieve tourism growth, priority attention is need in 4 focus areas.



LEADERSHIP

- There is a perceived gap in coordination of project information at NGSC with plans for visitor servicing, tourism suppliers and community groups.
- The tourism community in St Arnaud needs an endorsed leadership role connecting SCAN and the NGSC.
- A committee of council including tourism representation can achieve consideration of the visitor economy in Shire planning.
- Built heritage preservation has been undervalued at NGSC and a heritage overlay is needed in the St Arnaud Structure Plan.

DESTINATION AWARENESS

- Quality online content is difficult to find, leading to an undervaluing of the tourism experience in St Arnaud and community group websites are not optimised for search.
- There is a need to tell St Arnaud's stories more effectively online.
- Community group brochures are of low quality and not representative of rich storytelling.
- Establishing a Visit St Arnaud page on the NGSC website is a minimum requirement, with investment in quality images to be shared with Grampians Tourism.

ACCOMMODATION

- Accommodation is consumed by workers leading to gaps in supply and upgrade investment for leisure tourists.
- Accommodation supply study is required to project future needs, aligned to town growth aspirations
- Land at current caravan park restricts growth and a new site should be considered where chalets can be added.

AMENITIES & SERVICES

- Wayfinding is unanimously recognised as a major gap and current interpretive signage is in disrepair
- Signage is urgently needed for the Silo Art and Mural Trail as a major attraction
- Upgrades to walking and cycling paths, public amenities upgrades for all abilities, is needed in public parks to encourage visitors to plan to stop in St Arnaud

DESTINATION MARKETING



Lyn Mackenzie
PHOTOGRAPHY

DOMESTIC OUTLOOK

In 2020, domestic tourism in Australia was impacted by a seismic shift in demand as a result of a 'once in a 100 year' bushfire season and the Covid-19 global pandemic. Over \$10 billion of travel spend was cancelled as borders closed to international travel and across domestic boundaries.

HOW COVID HAS RE-SHAPED THE DOMESTIC MARKET

Like most small regional towns around Australia, St Arnaud is reliant on domestic visitors, mostly VFR holiday makers and regional travellers from within a relatively short proximity. Border restrictions and rising Covid-19 cases in all states of Australia has resulted in Melbourne consumers taking to short roadtrips and exploring regional areas that have not traditionally been in their consideration set. The caravan and camping market has seen significant growth in the last 2 years, particularly for active families. 'Lifestyle Leaders' who would have traditionally travelled overseas are now seeking equivalent quality experiences domestically.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ST ARNAUD?

As 'Lifestyle Leaders' are seeking new experiences closer to home, the opportunity for St Arnaud is to take immediate action to create awareness for existing, quality experiences and rich storytelling. In a recent report released by Urban List, the challenge for domestic destinations like St Arnaud, has been identified as being one of perception:

"We have a job to do to overcome our decades-old cultural cringe, to unpack a pretty deeply entrenched second-best psyche, and undo this preconceived notion that what's going on "over there" (ie. Internationally) is more culturally enriching and worthy of our most precious resources: money and time. We need to convince Australians that our destinations aren't just places — they are cultural experiences every bit as worthy of their investment; experiences that are at their very best in this moment — uncrowded, safe, restorative"

Urban Insights: Wanderlust or Wanderbust; Travel Marketing In Australia 2021

LOOKING FORWARD

Since April 2020, Tourism Australia has been tracking 'Travel Sentiment' for Australian travel consumers, measuring confidence, attitudes to travel and booking intent. As at 25 January 2022, the outlook for Australians to travel domestically indicates:



- The Omicron variant has had a significant impact on consumer confidence
- Fear of contracting COVID is now the biggest barrier to domestic travel and at a higher level than anytime since this sentiment tracking series commenced; however



- 53% of travel intenders cite the need for a holiday is the biggest driver to take a holiday. VFR remains the 2nd biggest driver of intent

In Victoria:



- 34% of consumers are thinking about their next holiday
- 33% are cautious about travelling within Australia for a while
- 46% have an intention to travel domestically in the next 2 years
- 67% are considering to travel domestically in the next 4 years

Overall confidence in flying domestically has declined as a result of the Omicron variant. International travel intent within the next 1-2 years has trended down, with 31% of consumers now not sure/will not travel internationally.

As a drive destination, **St Arnaud has a primary opportunity to attract domestic travellers who are curious** to seek new destinations within the duration of this plan.

<https://www.tourism.australia.com/content/dam/digital/corporate/documents/tourism-australias-travel-sentiment-tracker-australia-19-25-january-2022.pdf>

THE CUSTOMERS WE WANT



ARE TARGET AUDIENCES ARE ADVENTURERS @ HEART!

A renewed tourism direction for St Arnaud will seek to make connections with target audiences across multiple demographics. They will have an appreciation of nature and wellness in the outdoors; a desire to seek out good food, heritage and artisan experiences. Within the 'Lifestyle Leaders' psychographic segment, St Arnaud's primary demographic audiences are:

- Active Couples
- Active Families

Aligned to visitor source markets for the wider Grampians region, visitors will primarily be regional from within a 2-3 hour drive. The target source market for St Arnaud is Melbourne.

Grampians Tourism describe the mindset of 'Lifestyle Leaders' as:

"Lifestyle Leaders come in all shapes and sizes, across varying socio-economic groups and market segments. They have the means and propensity to travel and purchase at local businesses. They are progressive, curious, socially and technologically active, adhere to and seek status, follow trends and love to advocate.

They are socially active with friends and family and are always looking for something better. They view experiences as life enriching and value the great outdoors, adventure and feeling free."

CREATING A TOURISM BRAND

A brand is the collection of associations that people have about a product, business or place. Assumptions are made about people by the way they dress, the behavior they exhibit and their personalities. It is the same process which helps consumers to associate with place brands. A place brand helps determine how visitors feel about a destination, and how they would describe it to others. A brand is more than just a logo.

WHY IS IT NEEDED?

Your brand is uniquely yours. It defines your competitive advantage and speaks your truth. Your brand should be consistent wherever customers interact with your destination. This includes its physical location and its online presence, including your website, social channels, signage and all printed marketing materials. Each point at which the customer engages with the brand is a 'touchpoint' where the brand and its promise is reinforced, and the visitor experience and value perception starts to be built. A consistent brand will help visitors recognise St Arnaud and its visitor experience promise, no matter where they interact or connect with it.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ST ARNAUD?

With the transitionary approach to economic diversification being a priority for St Arnaud, tourism is now coming into sharp focus. Investment in tourism infrastructure and experience development is needed and the expectation of tourism outcomes will be high. However, simply building the infrastructure will not ensure visitors will engage with it. To position itself as a destination of choice, St Arnaud now requires a clear and succinct place brand which it can uniquely own. A place brand for St Arnaud is about the experience promise that St Arnaud can take to market, which defines its competitive advantage.

The development of a place brand for ST ARNAUD will include:

- A memorable tagline
- An inspiring positioning statement
- A compelling story

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Imagine St Arnaud in 50 years' time. How do you hope it will be described?

- Flourishing, Great place to stay and live, has maintained its value in heritage

Stylistically, a place brand for St Arnaud should be complimentary to the visitor experience but designed to appeal to the target audiences of the region developed through a robust process.



EXPERIENCE THEMES



EXPERIENCE AGRICULTURE

We are a farming town. We love our way of life and we're willing to share the fruits of our labour with others

EMBRACE NATURE

National Parks on our doorstep. We are a community that understands wellness in the outdoors

CELEBRATE HERITAGE

Gold is part of our story. We value our history and are committed to preserving our built environment and our shared origins

DISCOVER ARTISANS

We nurture creativity in our community to create a vibrancy for our residents and visitors

Of course, there's much more to life in St Arnaud that will be of interest to visitors. A thorough audit of visitor experiences has revealed 4 priority themes, which will be used to guide tourism development and destination marketing recommendations for St Arnaud over the life of this tourism action plan.

ENGAGING WITH THEMES

There are multiple experiences which align to these themes, however St Arnaud suffers from a distinct lack of online content to allow potential visitors to plan their visit and ideally, stay for a few days. A clear understanding of the visitor experiences within core themes determines the imagery and videography that is needed to promote St Arnaud. The list, whilst not exhaustive, provides topics which can shape a social media plan and highlights gaps where inspiring content needs to be created that includes relevance for priority target audiences in destination marketing.

HERITAGE

- Walking Tours
- Photography Tourism
- Interpretive Signage
- Driving Tours
- Gardens (Eg Pioneer Park)
- Built Heritage
- Natural History
- Pebble Church
- Love's Cottage
- Gold Mining Trail
- Historic Flour Mill
- Gold Prospecting

ARTISAN

- Raillery Hub
- Silo Art
- Cast Iron Lace
- Murals
- Mosaic Wall
- Artists of Note
- Art Show in September
- Orchid Show
- Musicians – Brass band and Pipe band, buskers
- Country Music events and festival

NATURE

- Mountain Bikes Trails
- Kara Kara NP
- Wax Gardens
- Lookouts
- Wildflowers
- Public Gardens
- Geocaching
- Walkers Lake
- Teddington Reservoir

AGRITOURISM

- Redbank Alpacas
- Kara Kara Winery
- Canola Blooms
- Events – Young Farmers
- Agricultural Show
- Farmstay – to be developed
- Harvest Festival
- Uncle Bob's Producers Market
- Olive Groves
- Farmgate Producers

ESTABLISH A CLEAR DIGITAL PRESENCE

SOCIAL MEDIA APPROACH

Social media channels are now a major part of the entire customer journey, delivering content at all stages from Dreaming through to Sharing. As the NGSC plans to take back Visitor Centre operations across the Shire in 2022, inspired social media management is a core capability to effective visitor servicing operations and requires dedicated resources, coordination and a content plan.

To establish a tourism voice online for St Arnaud, it is essential that the NGSC increases both the frequency (volume) and relevance (inspiration) of tourism-related social media content, moving to a coordinated and unified approach. Visual assets are needed as a priority, depicting target audiences engaging with St Arnaud's tourism experience.

Establishing memorable #hashtags and @handles for use by all tourism associations and operators in St Arnaud, will build the point of difference that St Arnaud needs as a unique destination with the known Grampians region. Once established, this can be amplified through planning and leveraging digital marketing budgets.

IMPROVE WEBSITE AND BOOKING CAPABILITY

Website capability is a major gap for St Arnaud's volunteer community groups. Limited time and skill results in a poor online experience for visitors. Online bookings at accommodation properties are in place, but the quality of information loaded into portals is relatively limited. Most are not adequately connected with major distribution partners. There is an immediate need to assist tourism stakeholders with business support to improve the online presence of St Arnaud's tourism experience.

When searching St Arnaud online, very few accommodation properties or attractions generate a 1st page search return on Google. The Silo and mural art does not appear and neither does the NGSC website, indicating that the Shire's site is poorly indexed for Search.

At a minimum, tourism information is needed on the NGSC site. Quality information and storytelling will achieve positive impact in attracting residents and investment. It is not sufficient to include a link to Grampians Tourism as a sole source of information. Linking to GT should be a component of a link strategy that adds value to a visitor experience online.

MOBILE FRIENDLY

Over 70% of travellers have done travel research on their mobile. It is essential that all visitor servicing touch points and information are mobile friendly and functionable. Creating visitor servicing content that includes itineraries, trip planners, booking functionality and location activated prompts ensures a seamless experience for a visitor. Mobile devices also hold a range of intelligence that will enable a deeper understanding of customer flow, their customer profile and track engagement and spend. Accessing this data can provide the quantified information that the NGSC requires for planning.

MANAGING CUSTOMER DATA

Customer data is a key region asset, which needs investment across the NGSC. Being able to continue conversations and build relationships with customers, beyond a single 'transaction', is the key to success. By capturing customer data and insights, then sharing these back with industry bodies and operators to use, new opportunities can be revealed and leveraged to increase repeat visitation, drive experience development and become more efficient in region marketing.

DESTINATION MARKETING ALIGNMENT

Whilst Covid-19 is impacting tourism beyond any destination's control, the reality is that markets will rebound. Australia will be viewed as a 'safe' destination; a country of amazing natural wonders and unique attractions. Attracting sustainable visitor growth means that new markets will need to be explored. Accordingly, the SATAP needs to consider how it aligns to the tourism messages that Destination Marketing Organisations (DMO's) take to market.

TOURISM AUSTRALIA is the National Tourism Organisation (TO) and a division of Austrade in the Australian Government. Their role is to influence travel to and within Australia through marketing inspiring content, targeted to High Value Travellers.

VISIT VICTORIA is the State Tourism Organisation (STO). When Australia is in a consideration set for international consumers, V V's role is to position Victoria as an exciting destination with plenty to do. They partner in market with travel agents to enable bookings.

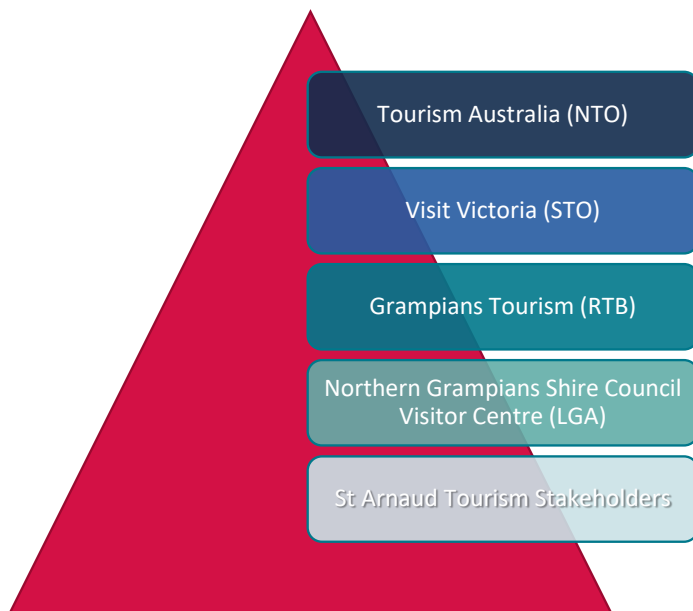
GRAMPIANS TOURISM is the Regional Tourism Board (RTB) in which St Arnaud resides. Primarily, GT's role is to partner with tourism operators and stakeholders to promote inspiring, region-wide itineraries; mostly for a domestic market. Their campaigns channel bookings directly to their members and they provide rich content to support V V's in-market promotions.

NGSC is the Local Government Authority (LGA) responsible for promoting tourism to St Arnaud and 6

other LGA's. Their role is to promote very localized experiences and demonstrate how a visitor can move through the region, aiming to increase length of stay. Their primary market is Melbourne and regional Victoria.

St Arnaud's destination marketing role aims to share authentic storytelling and local knowledge with all DMO partners to raise awareness for St Arnaud and to leverage their significant social audiences.

Quality destination marketing is the responsibility of every service business in St Arnaud which can have a positive impact on visitors. The aim is to reach, inspire and assist visitors early in their planning, making it a seamless experience to choose to visit St Arnaud.



GAME CHANGER OPPORTUNITIES



CREATING INSPIRED SPACES

Creating new experiences for St Arnaud over the next 4 years resides in a simple proposition. The overarching strategy is to encourage regular visitors passing through St Arnaud to stop and spend. For new visitors to the Grampians, it is about demonstrating a fresh and contemporary visitor experience, that understands visitor needs, and encourages them to return and stay. Four (4) priority locations have been identified as GAME CHANGERS, that when developed, will create inspired spaces that will benefit the local community as a priority and appeal to visitors.

1. NAPIER STREET RETAIL FACADES
2. QUEEN MARY BOTANIC GARDENS HERITAGE PRECINCT
3. RAILWAY STATION / SILO ART
4. TEDDINGTON RESERVOIR



NAPIER STREET FACADES AND RETAIL

CELEBRATE HERITAGE

Gold is part of our story.
We value our history and are
committed to preserving our
built environment and our
shared origins

DESCRIPTION

One of the highlights of St Arnaud is the unique architecture in Napier Street, however, facades, balconies and verandahs have fallen into disrepair. A program of repair creates a first and lasting impression.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

- Restoration of signage for buildings at entry points would lessen the impression that the buildings are rundown
- Illuminated signage would create vibrancy at night – e.g. Farmers Arms
- Hard to implement. Buildings are privately owned. Time is of the essence.

PROJECT PRIORITY - HIGH

Project Managers for the Central Victorian Goldfields World Heritage Bid, have advised that there is a competitive advantage for St Arnaud as a historic town compared to other regions in the Central Goldfields and the Grampians. They regard ~~St Arnaud to be the best example of a complete heritage town in the Grampians.~~ Whilst the town may not have locations that would meet World Heritage assessment criteria, it would be well positioned to fulfill visitor expectations of a heritage town and therefore draw high visitation from the promotion of a World Heritage trail.

A programme of restoration is recommended. The NGSC is encouraged to take a lead role in developing a heritage architectural masterplan, required to source grant funding and private investment. It is recommended that the NGSC leads a visioning workshop to understand the will of current owners to participate in the restoration programme, demonstrating the benefit of façade restoration, contributing to higher quality retail and rents.

St Arnaud Structure Plan - Emerging Themes

Enhance the lifestyle, character and heritage features that make St Arnaud special.

CASE STUDY – HERITAGE FACADES

THROSSELL ST REVITALISATION, COLLIE, W.A.

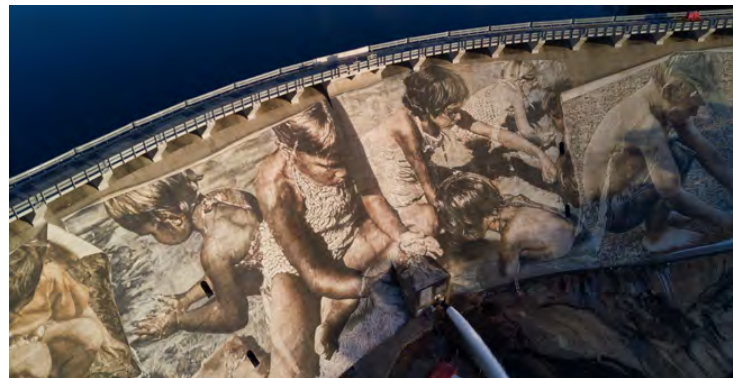
Collie has been undertaking a transformative approach to industry diversification through investment in tourism experiences and infrastructure projects. In 2020-21, The Shire of Collie, in partnership with the WA State Government and local property owners, undertook a streetscape revitalisation project to repair and upgrade historic building façades to boost first impressions for tourists. Heritage architects, H&H Architects, were appointed to design streetscape renders and manage the project delivery to repair and upgrade the façades of 11 buildings. The project involved revitalisation works featuring nostalgic elements including bullnose verandas, ornate detailing and hand-painted signwriting.

BUDGET:

1.1 Million in state funding was contributed to this project, with matched funding from business owners.

OUTCOMES:

The contract for revitalization was awarded to local builders, creating construction and trade jobs for the life of the project. In addition to investments in Mural Art (Collie is home to the largest dam wall mural in the world) and trails infrastructure, Collie is experiencing significant growth in visitors. The facades project has encouraged visitors to stop and wander the revitalized street. In the short to medium term, it is hoped that investors will consider new retail opportunities in response to increased footfall.



QUEEN MARY BOTANIC GARDENS HERITAGE PRECINCT

CELEBRATE HERITAGE

Our story begins in Gold. We value our heritage and are committed to preserving our built environment and our shared origins

DESCRIPTION

The southern end of Napier Street is St Arnaud's opportunity to create a first impression of an attractive heritage town for visitors. Creating a heritage precinct that connects the Queen Mary Botanic Gardens to the Visitor Centre in the Crown Land Office, Courthouse, Shire Hall, Fire Station and Botanical Hotel will create a linger zone for visitors to stop and explore. Activation at night could include projections and food truck events.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

- Landscaping is a priority
- Seating and covered picnic areas are needed
- Story telling interpretive signage is needed throughout the park and adjacent to heritage buildings
- Restoration of the Botanical Hotel façade is needed

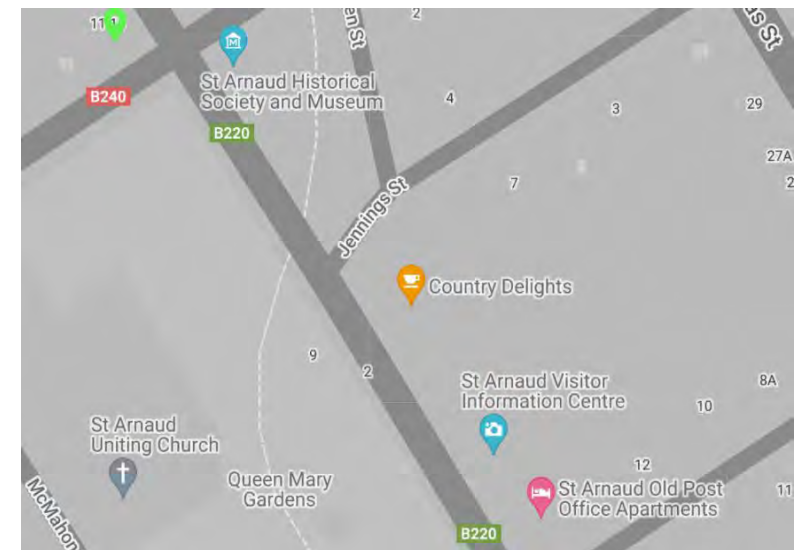
PROJECT PRIORITY-MEDIUM

It is recommended that the NGSC undertakes a beautification and activation plan for the precinct to include additional alfresco seating, landscaping, public art and wayfinding at the primary entry point from Melbourne via Sunraysia Hwy creates a welcoming, first impression to St Arnaud. Visitor Centres are most successful when co-located with an attraction and/or on a primary access route. This area could be an active zone for community as well as visitors. Improving public amenities in the Queen Mary Botanic Gardens is recommended to delineate a heritage zone of interpretive walkways, starting at the Visitor Centre and ending at the Historical Society, encouraging visitors to stop, linger and spend, rather than moving on.

The NGSC is encourage to develop a wayfinding trail which will communicate St Arnaud's rich heritage story and drive a high visitor perception and value when linked to the Raillery Gallery and Silo Art in addition to the heritage precinct circuit.

St Arnaud Structure Plan - Emerging Themes

Create the opportunities to expand the network of high quality public spaces.



RAILWAY STATION / SILO ART

DISCOVER ARTISANS

We nurture creativity in our community to create a vibrancy for our residents and visitors

DESCRIPTION

The St Arnaud Railway Station and Raillery Hub has been developed as a gallery for artists to showcase their art and also provides a retail outlet for local produce and handicraft. It is in close proximity to two Silo Art and Street Mural locations, but is currently disconnected as a visitor experience.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

- Landscaping is a priority
- Supportive of precinct development
- Signage is important for all murals in St Arnaud

PROJECT PRIORITY-HIGH

Creating a precinct starting point for the St Arnaud Mural Trail at the Raillery Hub will drive visitors to a key attraction and a linger zone which **defines a core competitive advantage for St Arnaud**, contributing to positive consumer perception and valuing of the creative community.

A wayfinding Mural Trail, creates dispersal through town leading to increased footfall and support for local businesses. As a priority experience for St Arnaud, it is recommended that the NGSC invests in quality images and collateral for distribution at the St Arnaud Visitor Centre immediately.

Collaborating with St Arnaud's artistic community groups to develop a proposal for interpretive wayfinding is recommended as a priority for the NGSC's Tourism Officer. QR coded content for additional storytelling would appeal to target audiences.

St Arnaud Structure Plan - Emerging Themes

Explore opportunities to enhance the 'Gateway Experience' into town



KARA KARA NATIONAL PARK

EMBRACE NATURE

National Parks on our doorstep.
We are a community that
understands wellness in the
outdoors

DESCRIPTION

Water and nature-based tourism activity has been identified by the community as being of high value to enhance livability in St Arnaud and surrounds. Teddington Reservoir is currently being investigated as an opportunity to develop tourism infrastructure, including recognition of its cultural significance.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

- Additional recreational water locations and supporting infrastructure / facilities to cater for the surrounding communities and increased tourism. Walkers Lake is not adequate.
- We need a lake with proper amenities and powered sites- this will provide accommodation and a reason for travelers to hang around.
- Mountain bike track with accomodation more natural bush guiding and camping
- Refill Teddington reservoir

PROJECT PRIORITY—MEDIUM

Parks Victoria have advised an update on the progress on this project. Joint management assessment is underway, however a time-frame is undetermined. The project will include upgrades to camp sites and facilities. Cultural Heritage opportunities exist in the park. 4WD and walking trails are of good quality.

The recommendation is that the NGSC work with Parks Victoria to facilitate water management to the top dam. Improved experience will create an attraction for St Arnaud and Stuart Mill, which will align to core tourism markets for the Grampians region, specifically active families and visitors motivated by Grampians trails awareness.

The management of the National Park is done in conjunction with the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans as part of a land use agreement. This provides the opportunity to introduce indigenous tourism product to the park and to the Region in General. The NGSC is currently progressing the RAP and this could be the vehicle to introduce the indigenous tourism opportunities across the region which are an important pillar in driving visitation and understanding.

St Arnaud Structure Plan - Emerging Themes

Enhance St Arnaud's unique landscape setting connection to the State Parks.

ACTION PLANS



TOURISM ASSESSMENT

The St Arnaud Tourism Resilience Action Plan (SATAP) is designed to guide the NGSC in the process from strategy to implementation over a 4 year period. It recognizes that strategic direction in tourism development projects will originate with this document and marketing actions will be guided by the development of a Tourism Marketing Strategy (TMS).



TOURISM ASSESSMENT MODEL

DTM has developed this model which recognizes 9 key components to drive growth in a tourism destination, within which there are equivalent focus areas which guide activation plans.

Ultimately, activity in each of the focus areas will provide the destination with the best opportunity to implement successful marketing campaigns, which are targeted, visitor centric and can be measured. Inattention in one focus area will have a direct impact on its corresponding plan. i.e without Compelling Experience enacted through a focus on Product Development, Destination Marketing is diluted through lack of destination appeal.

The 2022-26 SATAP provides the rationale for action in each component, with the intent that over subsequent years, action plans will be reviewed, analyzed and updated budgets applied.

1. TOURISM STRATEGY

The inaugural SATAP for 2022-32 is intended to guide destination development considerations for the NGSC. It is intended that this will be a living document where budgets, responsibilities and delivery are considered nimble, to respond to market changes. The actions in this stage are designed to establish a strategic overview for all further actionable tasks.

Implementing the NGSC's tourism strategic direction requires the establishment of **Local Leaders**, which is equally about resourcing clearly defined tourism roles within the NGSC as it is about identifying community leadership. The most effective tourism outcomes in local government are achieved where a **LGA Tourism Officer** is included in decision making across the LGA, to assess impact of council decisions on the visitor economy.

Facilitating economic development and tourism:

- Identifying capability gaps in community leadership to provide operational support
- Working with stakeholders to increase local employment, and support small business development, startups and innovation
- Supporting the development of tourism hubs

REF	TASK	ASSIGNED	SHORT TERM 2022-25	MID TERM 2026-27	LONG TERM 2028-2032
1.1	Establish a defined role for a Tourism Officer in the NGSC and establish a tourism mentoring programme to assist the officer with the execution of the SATAP	NGSC			
1.2	Foster collaboration between community local leadership (SCAN), Grampians Tourism (GT) and the NGSC through the establishment of a Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC) as a function of Council	NGSC			
1.3	'Develop a Visitor Intercept Survey to map the visitor 'information' journey, including their preferred method of visitor information consumption, so that we can reach more visitors that come to NGS/				
1.4	Establish a quantified tourism growth target for the 10 year strategy based on projected accommodation capacity				
1.5	Engage with Yarriambiack Shire to leverage opportunities between St Arnaud's Street Mural Trail, Accommodation Supply and visitor demand for the Silo Art Trail	NGSC			
1.6	Engage with the Pyrenees Grape Growers & Winemakers (PGW) to leverage opportunities between St Arnaud's Street Mural Trail and Visitor Amenities with visitor supply gaps to experience the Pyrenees Wine Region	NGSC			

2. STORYTELLING & PLACE BRAND

Storytelling is the compelling experience that stays with visitors long after they have left a destination. Its also a driver of curiosity which encourages visitors to seek out a destination in the ‘dreaming’ and ‘planning’ phase of the purchase cycle. St Arnaud has a rich story to tell, however, currently its difficult for consumers to engage with online and not adequately told when a visitor finds themselves in town.

Storytelling is owned by the community at a granular level, where authentic content needs to be developed. Currently, the quality of content is a major gap for St Arnaud’s community and inadequate to share with Destination Marketing Organisations (DMO). Establishing a

programme of support for St Arnaud’s tourism stakeholders and community groups to understand St Arnaud’s Destination Story, whilst providing guidance on how to engage with the narrative in their own communications, will create a critical mass of awareness for St Arnaud’s visitor experience promise.

REF	TASK	ASSIGNED	SHORT TERM 2022-24	MID TERM 2025-27	LONG TERM 2028-32
2.1	Develop a place brand strategy, including the development of new brand elements & assets	NGSC			
2.2	Develop a Tourism Marketing & Communication Plan	NGSC			
2.3	Develop a local business support program – Visitor Inspiration Partner (VIP) that enables tourism businesses to implement quality storytelling content outcomes in support of St Arnaud’s place brand and destination story	NGSC			
2.4	Implement ‘St Arnaud’s Destination Story’ across all channels and share with DMO partners and tourism stakeholders	NGSC/GT			

3. COMMUNITY BUY-IN

The success of the STAP relies on the local tourism community and residents alike to understand that tourism is an economic driver which will either directly or indirectly affect their prosperity. The message needs to be relatable for residents. Ultimately, visitors want to experience a destination 'like a local'. We want all St Arnaud residents to value their town and welcome visitors with open arms.

The SATAP should therefore align with the NGSC's Communication Strategy which promotes local advocacy. This is the opportunity for NGSC to work closely with SCAN, the St Arnaud Community Resource Centre and the St Arnaud Visitor Centre to co-ordinate the messaging of St Arnaud's community groups, who often work in isolation from each other.

Advocacy needs to be co-ordinated through the Tourism Officer role at NGSC and communicated through all channels including:

- Shire website
- Local Group Social Media Pages
- E-newsletters

AMBASSADORS & VOLUNTEERS

Reliance on volunteers in St Arnaud is challenging due to the availability of time for volunteers still in the workforce and the ageing population of St Arnaud. However, visitors rate the social engagement with roving ambassadors and volunteers as making a valuable contribution to their enjoyment of a destination.

St Arnaud is a highly connected community within niche interest groups and the intent of the SATAP is to harness the knowledge of the community, enable positive ways for the community to share their stories and establish a process of recognition for the vital role that Ambassadors and Volunteers contribute to a vibrant community.

The first step in building strong advocates for St Arnaud is to establish a network of Ambassadors, who positively share St Arnaud's tourism value. Their involvement in engaging with visitors may be adhoc, but they are recognized for their influence in growing St Arnaud's visitor experience. Valuing ambassadors leads to volunteering and commitment of time, which contributes to community wellbeing and positive visitor engagement.

REF	TASK	ASSIGNED	SHORT TERM 2022-24	MID TERM 2025-27	LONG TERM 2028-32
3.1	Release St Arnaud's new tourism direction with community briefings and PR releases.	NGSC			
3.2	Develop a 'Local Legends' Ambassador programme for community members who can add value to visitor experience at key locations eg: the Raillery Hub and Historical Society Museum	NGSC / SCAN			
3.3	Grow the network of NGSC volunteers to experience tourism as a new volunteering opportunity at the St Arnaud VC.	NGSC / SCAN			

4. AMENITIES & SERVICES

The tourism supply eco-system for St Arnaud is aged and in need of revitalization to meet the needs of visitors travelling through the region currently and to preempt the needs of an emerging visitor, motivated by the Silo Art Trail and the Pyrenees Wine Region. The priority in the first year, is to attend to WAYFINDING and interpretive signage. This is the low-hanging fruit opportunity to improve the visitor experience in the short term.

REF	TASK	ASSIGNED	SHORT TERM 2022-24	MID TERM 2025-27	LONG TERM 2028-32
4.1	Undertake a wayfinding audit to include directional and interpretive signage.	NGSC			
4.2	Family-friendly accommodation is a major gap in St Arnaud. An audit of accommodation supply and visitor projections is needed to support new accommodation development prospectus.	NGSC			
4.3	Investigate a location for a 2nd caravan park with intent to include chalet accommodation, meeting the needs of regional workers.	NGSC			
4.4	Develop an annual visitor survey to identify retail, dining and hire services gaps in preparation for a business start up prospectus to attract new business investment in St Arnaud.	NGSC			
4.5	Investigate Community wellness public amenity upgrades to include restoration of walk paths, accessible toilets in public parks, water re-fill stations near major attractions.	NGSC			
4.6	Investigate a pet-friendly exercise park & coffee station in upgrades to Pioneer Park to encourage visitors with pets to stop.	NGSC			
4.7	Establish defined entry statements on major highway approaches to St Arnaud with place branding and sustainable landscaping. Visitors should understand they are entering a heritage town.	NGSC			

5. COMPELLING EXPERIENCES

Developing compelling visitor experiences in St Arnaud starts with understanding the core themes of experience identified in the place brand strategy, assessing the needs of target audiences and identifying gaps.

This section specifically relates to the four (4) identified GAME CHANGERS for St Arnaud, endorsed by community consultation. In addition, St Arnaud has a competitive advantage to drive visitation from niche interest groups:

- Garden Enthusiasts
- Rail Heritage Enthusiasts

For this reason, restoration of the Edna Walling Garden in Pioneer Park is considered a priority opportunity. Followers of architectural garden design would specifically travel to see a restored Edna Walling design – the only known public park example of her work in Australia.

Rail journeys and heritage is also an emerging experience trend globally. St Arnaud's heritage rail station is of STATE significance to Victoria. There is an opportunity to tell the story of the station and leverage it for rail themed events.

<https://foodandwine.events/event/14727346-a/f-o-o-d-train>

REF	TASK	ASSIGNED	SHORT TERM 2022-24	MID TERM 2025-27	LONG TERM 2028-32
5.1	Develop a Masterplan for the activation of the Botanical Gardens Heritage Precinct	NGSC			
5.2	Engage heritage architects to develop renders for Napier St Façade restoration	NGSC / SCAN			
5.3	Facilitate digital storytelling experience development, collateral and image assets for the St Arnaud Mural Trail in partnership with Artspace	NGSC / Artspace			
5.4	Partner with the St Arnaud Historical Society to develop a restoration plan for the Edna Walling Garden in Pioneer Park	St Arnaud Historical Society			
5.5	Support the Raillery Hub to develop an annual rail-themed event for St Arnaud	Raillery Hub Committee			

6. CAPABLE TOURISM OPERATORS

Tourism stakeholders in St Arnaud are relatively misrepresented on major platforms because they need better understanding of consumer behaviour, general marketing skills, and education to establish partnerships in the wider industry. Most accommodation suppliers have online booking systems which allow them to be instantly bookable. However they are not connected to major OTAs. The compounding risk for St Arnaud as a destination is that it is perceived that there is nothing to do.

The top five St Arnaud experiences on Tripadvisor are:

1. Queen Mary Botanic Gardens
2. Pioneer Park
3. The Bible Museum
4. Wax Garden Conservation Reserve
5. St Arnaud Heritage Trail

HOW TO BUILD CAPABILITY AND INCREASE DISTRIBUTION

Capability Building is about taking a tailored approach to tourism industry training to guide businesses to develop refreshed visitor experiences, aligned to the STAP. The most effective way to build capability is to undertake one-on-one business mentoring to enhance tourism operations and marketing skills which will establish strong foundations to encourage entrepreneurship and grow reach through new partnerships in the wider tourism sector.

Key Objectives of Capability Building are:

- support new and established businesses in product and service development, trade market-readiness, and business diversification and expansion;
- develop the skills and expertise of tourism operators to enhance business productivity;
- encourage and support business collaboration; and
- prepare businesses to aim for 'best in class' quality assurance to achieve tourism accreditation.

WHY DOES ST ARNAUD NEED IT?

Demonstrating that there is plenty to do through distributing purchasable product online, directly increases visitor volume, creating jobs, increasing regional gross product and driving economic transformation by encouraging visitors to stay longer and do more.

REF	TASK	ASSIGNED	SHORT TERM 2022-24	MID TERM 2025-27	LONG TERM 2028-32
6.1	Support Grampians Tourism to introduce a capability building program to mentor tourism operators in the improvement of their online visibility and distribution partnerships	NGSC / GT			
6.2	Establish internal protocols which can assist new tourism startups in the NGSC to navigate LGA and State approvals, and connect with priority tourism support services including Grampians Tourism and VTIC	NGSC / GT			
6.3	Establish a library of visual assets that St Arnaud tourism stakeholders can access for the purpose of sharing quality content for St Arnaud's priority tourism attractions	NGSC			

7. VISITOR SERVICING

A foundation of visitor servicing is to be where customers are. This requires the development of new customer engagement points at key nodes throughout the NGSC region. Visitors don't see boundaries in the way that residents or local governments do. A positive approach to visitor servicing would be to collaborate with all VC teams in the NGSC to knowledge share, creating opportunities for visitor dispersal and increased economic prosperity for all.

A common misconception is that visitors disengage with traditional visitor servicing in preference to seeking visitor information online. The reality is that visitors require quality visitor servicing both online and in-centre. Engaging with authentic locals is a priority need for visitors in new destinations. They seek reinforcement to confirm their online planning from a trusted source. Visitor Centres equally play an important role in welcoming potential new residents to a community.

REF	TASK	ASSIGNED	SHORT TERM 2022-24	MID TERM 2025-27	LONG TERM 2028-32
7.1	Establish processes to manage visitor data tracking. Door counts and simple post code data collection will provide a starting point in year 1 which can be easily managed by volunteers	NGSC			
7.2	Work with local media and community groups to share positive experiences which encourage new volunteers to join the St Arnaud Visitor Centre	NGSC / SCAN			
7.3	Establish a static visitor servicing co- location at the Raillery Hub in partnership with Artspace, engaging local ambassadors to interact with visitors	NGSC / Artspace			
7.4	Evaluate visitor journey data to establish priority distribution locations for visitor information collateral and static displays	NGSC			
7.5	Source merchandise from across the Northern Grampians; specifically art, curios and local produce to generate additional retail revenue for St Arnaud VC				

8. EVENTS

Covid has impacted the ability for regional events to operate since 2020, however, as protocols for event management in respect of Covid are now well defined, preparation for the reintroduction of events, which have the potential to drive visitation, should be considered as part of St Arnaud's marketing strategy.

Events serve the purpose of showcasing a destination experience and spiking visitation at a given moment in time, but with the intent to encourage repeat visitation. Development of tourism events need to align with destination experience themes. Timing should be considered to encourage visitation where accommodation capacity is achievable and/or to leverage awareness of events in neighbouring areas.

Festival of St Arnaud
<http://www.starnaudfestival.com.au/>

St Arnaud Young Farmers – Harvest Event

<https://www.starnaudshow.com/>
 Victoria's only two day horse event. Come and watch the marvelous show jumping and ring events.

PARTNERSHIPS:
 Regional Arts Victoria <http://www.rav.net.au/>

REF	TASK	ASSIGNED	SHORT TERM 2022-24	MID TERM 2025-27	LONG TERM 2028-32
8.1	Support event organisers to assess and co-ordinate local events with all Shire departments, with consideration to tourism outcomes	SCAN / NGSC			
8.2	Establish a communication protocol between SCAN and NGSC to share PR and Events Information through NGSC owned channels	NGSC / SCAN			
8.3	Support niche community groups to plan new event concepts in advance, to take advantage of grant funding opportunities	SCAN / NGSC			

9. DESTINATION MARKETING

As NGSC will resume operations of the St Arnaud Visitor Centre in 2022, tourism communications will need to consider where social posts link back to content on the current NGSC website. A short-term solution for developing a microsite on the existing Shire platform should be explored.

Quality visitor information allows visitors to plan to stay longer, making a direct and positive impact to St Arnaud's visitor economy.

St Arnaud's visitor experiences have a low digital footprint, leading to a perception that there is nothing to do. A quick, simple and effective solution is to create listings for St Arnaud visitor attractions and locations on the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW). This is a content aggregator platform which shares content to state and national tourism partners.

<https://atdw.com.au/distributors/current-distributors/>

REF	TASK	ASSIGNED	SHORT TERM 2022-24	MID TERM 2025-27	LONG TERM 2028-32
9.1	Establish baseline visitor engagement data in year 1 to evaluate success over the life of the SATAP	NGSC			
9.2	Review collateral needs at St Arnaud visitor centre and reproduce with a new St Arnaud place brand, aligned to NGSC style guide	NGSC / SCAN			
9.3	Develop a content plan and assign budget to procuring visual assets, specifically in videography and imagery to target active families and adult couples, which can be shared with tourism stakeholders and DMO's to promote St Arnaud visitor attractions	NGSC			
9.4	Consolidate all tourism content for St Arnaud and consider a network site structure to point a www.visitstarnaud.com.au domain to a St Arnaud tourism microsite. Establish new social accounts as #visitstarnaud and @visitstarnaud	NGSC			
9.5	Develop a content and social media plan, including PPC strategy to increase website traffic	NGSC			
9.6	Continue to engage with Grampians Tourism to share content on www.visitgrampians.com.au and support tourism industry familiarisations	NGSC/GT			
9.7	Implement training for the NGSC Tourism Officer to load content for all NGSC tourism assets and locations on the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW), connecting to Visit Victoria, Visit Grampians and national distribution partners				

