



# VICTORIA'S HIGH COUNTRY

## DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

2023–2033

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands and waters that are Victoria's High Country and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and future.

We honour their stories, songs, art and culture, and their aspirations for the future of their people and these lands.

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## ACRONYMS

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| ARV   | Alpine Resorts Victoria                              |
| CALD  | Culturally and Linguistically Diverse                |
| DEECA | Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action |
| DMP   | Destination Management Plan                          |
| IVS   | International Visitor Survey                         |
| LGA   | Local Government Area                                |
| NVS   | National Visitor Survey                              |
| RDV   | Regional Development Victoria                        |
| RMB   | Resort Management Board                              |
| RTB   | Regional Tourism Board                               |
| TNE   | Tourism North East                                   |
| TRA   | Tourism Research Australia                           |
| VFR   | Visiting Friends and Relatives                       |
| VIC   | Visitor Information Centre                           |
| VEP   | Visitor Economy Partnership                          |

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Day Trip Visitor      | Those who travel for a round trip distance of at least 50 kilometres, are away from home for at least 4 hours, and who do not spend a night away from home as part of their travel. Same day travel as part of overnight travel is excluded.                                 |
| Overnight Visitor     | People aged 15 years and over who undertake an overnight trip of one night or more and at least 40 kilometres away from home are referred to as overnight visitors. Only those trips where the respondent is away from home for less than 12 months are in scope of the NVS. |
| International Visitor | A person is defined as an international visitor to Australia if they are currently a resident overseas, have been in Australia less than one year and are aged 15 years or over.   |



This is a place **far away from the everyday**. Where the mountains rise higher, the air is clearer and the **horizons stretch** out in 360° opportunity. **The more you put in here, the more you'll get out.**

Whether it's cycling new trails or trying alpine inspired craft ales. Or braving the ghost of Ned Kelly and his despicable tall tales. Re-thinking art **perspectives** on silos or galleries. Trying wines of new kinds in rustic villages or world class valleys. The opportunities to grow are as **limitless as our horizons**.

We are Victoria's High Country. **GO ABOVE AND BEYOND.**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### TOURISM NORTH EAST OVERVIEW

Tourism North East (TNE) is the Visitor Economy Partnership for Victoria's High Country, which encompasses the Shires of Alpine, Benalla, Indigo, Mansfield, Murrindindi, Towong and the Rural City of Wangaratta, and the four major alpine resorts of Falls Creek, Mt Hotham, Mt Buller and Mt Stirling.

Charged with developing the strategic tourism direction for the High Country, Tourism North East focuses on uniting its diverse stakeholder base in a common development path to optimise visitor economy outcomes.

This work includes delivering a broad range of strategic supply and demand tourism initiatives including regional marketing, product development, strategic planning, industry development, investment prioritisation, research and advocacy.

These efforts are focused on the High Country's five recognised product strengths in Cycle, The Victorian Alps, Nature-Based Tourism; Food, Drink and Produce and; Arts, Cultural Heritage and Events.

In 2023, on the expiry of the original High Country Destination Management Plan (2013–2023),<sup>1</sup> Tourism North East conducted a comprehensive review and refresh of the plan to serve the region for the coming decade.

Aligned to the Victorian statewide tourism strategy 'Experience Victoria 2033',<sup>2</sup> the High Country Destination Management Plan 2023 – 2033, focuses on priority initiatives that are best positioned to leverage the region's collaborative efforts and to deliver positive tourism results for the High Country.

### VICTORIA'S HIGH COUNTRY DESTINATION SNAPSHOT

Located in the north-east of the state, Victoria's High Country forms a significant part of Australia's Great Dividing Range. From Kinglake to Corryong, from Mansfield to Rutherglen, this region is unlike any other in Victoria.

It boasts mountainous, alpine and lowland terrain, picturesque villages, rich farmland, world-class wineries and thriving rural towns.

Renowned for its physical beauty as well as a rich diversity of visitor experiences, the High Country boasts beautiful landscapes, big blue skies, clear starry nights and clean, fresh air.

Victoria's High Country is a high reward destination with flourishing produce, exceptional 'new world' wines including local heroes Prosecco and Muscat, a thriving arts and culture scene, epic snowfields and is known as Australia's Premier Cycling Destination.

In 2022, the High Country attracted 5 million visitors who stayed 7.1 million nights and generated \$2.3 billion in direct visitor spend.

#### Language Statement

Tourism North East recognises the diversity of First Peoples living throughout Victoria's High Country. As such, we have used the term 'First Peoples' to include all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of the High Country region.



1. DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN BACKGROUND





## 1.1 ABOUT TOURISM NORTH EAST

Tourism North East (TNE) is one of twelve Visitor Economy Partnerships (VEPs), established at the directive of the Victorian State Government.

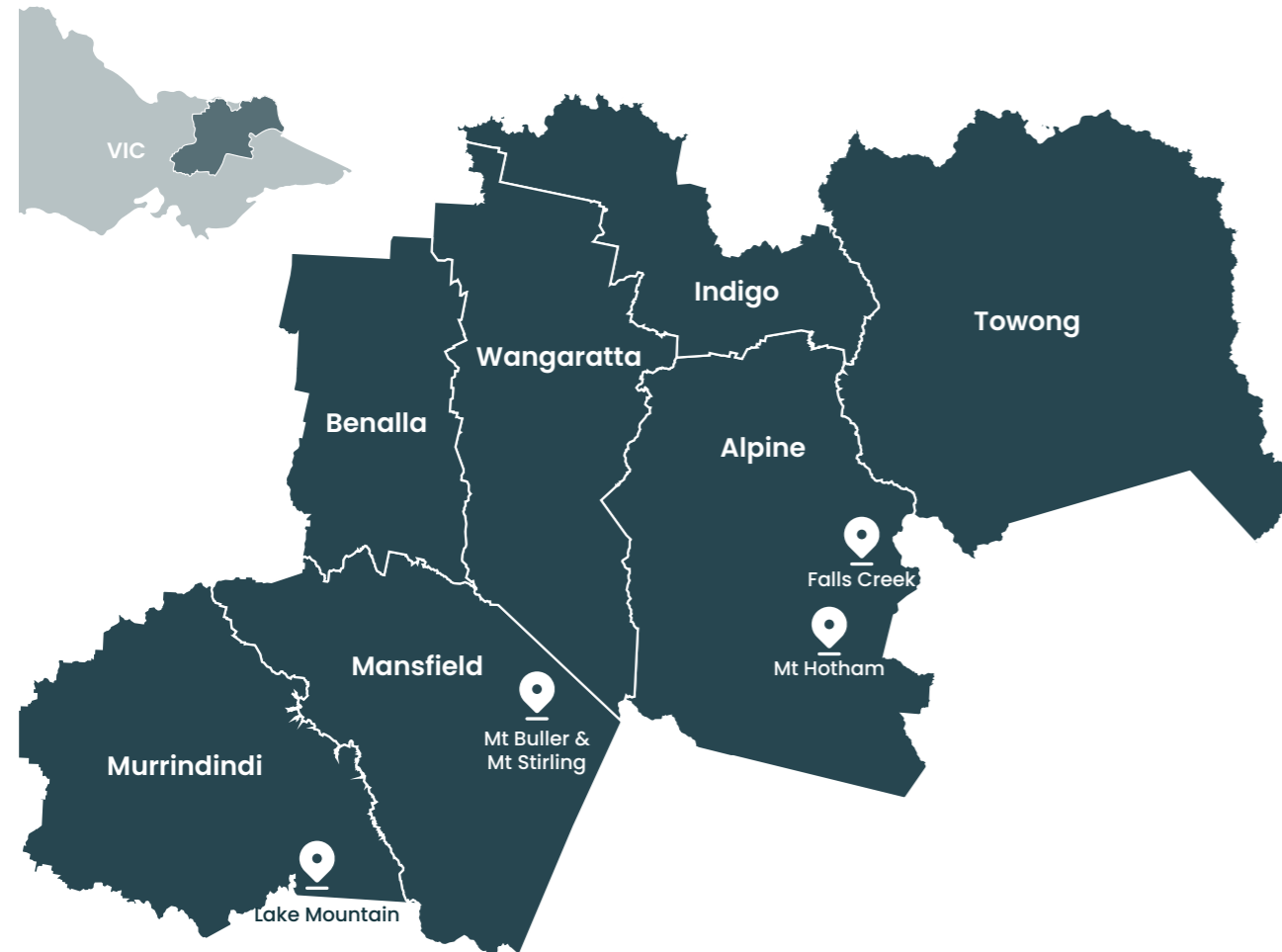
Tourism North East is the peak tourism organisation for north-east Victoria, the region known as Victoria's High Country. The region encompasses seven local government areas, including Alpine, Benalla, Indigo, Mansfield, Murrindindi, Towong and Wangaratta, and five of the six Victorian Alpine Resorts, including Falls Creek, Mt Buller, Mt Stirling, Mt Hotham, and Lake Mountain.

The efforts of Tourism North East are guided by the vision:

*"To sustain and elevate Victoria's High Country as the lead regional tourism destination in Victoria, with a thriving visitor economy based on destinations of choice, and a compelling range of tourism products and experiences."*

This will be achieved through working collaboratively with government and industry stakeholders, driving strategic tourism efforts across the areas of research, strategic planning, destination marketing of scale, product and industry development, investment attraction and advocacy.

### FL. HIGH COUNTRY REGION





## 1.2 ROLE OF TOURISM NORTH EAST

TNE is charged with developing the long-term and overarching strategic vision and direction for the High Country region, ensuring a platform for future tourism growth. These efforts are associated with several key areas across both supply and demand activities:

- **Regional marketing** – Developing regional campaigns that drive awareness, dispersal and yield opportunities for the region.
- **Product development** – Identifying gaps in the regional tourism offering and working with local government and industry partners to fill them, particularly in areas where the High Country can achieve differentiated product strengths.
- **Industry development** – Working with tourism operators to enhance their offering and ensure long-term sustainability, delivering a high-quality and consistent regional tourism product.
- **Facilitating tourism investment** – Identifying infrastructure and investment opportunities and/or partnerships among private and public entities.
- **Research** – Collaborating with local government and industry partners to determine common research requirements that can generate insights used for strategic planning for the region.
- **Advocacy** – Lead advocacy efforts across a variety of areas including funding support, legislative and policy issues.
- **Strategic planning** – Lead the strategic direction of the visitor economy for the region as well as providing consultation on Federal and State based tourism plans and programs.

Included in Tourism North East’s scope is the development of a Destination Management Plan that looks to identify regional priorities over the coming decade, unifying government and industry in a common development path.

## 1.3 TOURISM NORTH EAST GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

Tourism North East is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that is a partnership between the Victorian State Government, Local Government, Alpine Resorts Victoria, Visit Victoria and the High Country’s tourism industry.

Industry engagement includes working with a wide variety of stakeholders and agencies across the tourism ecosystem including but not limited to Parks Victoria, Registered Aboriginal Parties, Local Tourism Associations, Statewide Tourism Associations and private enterprise.

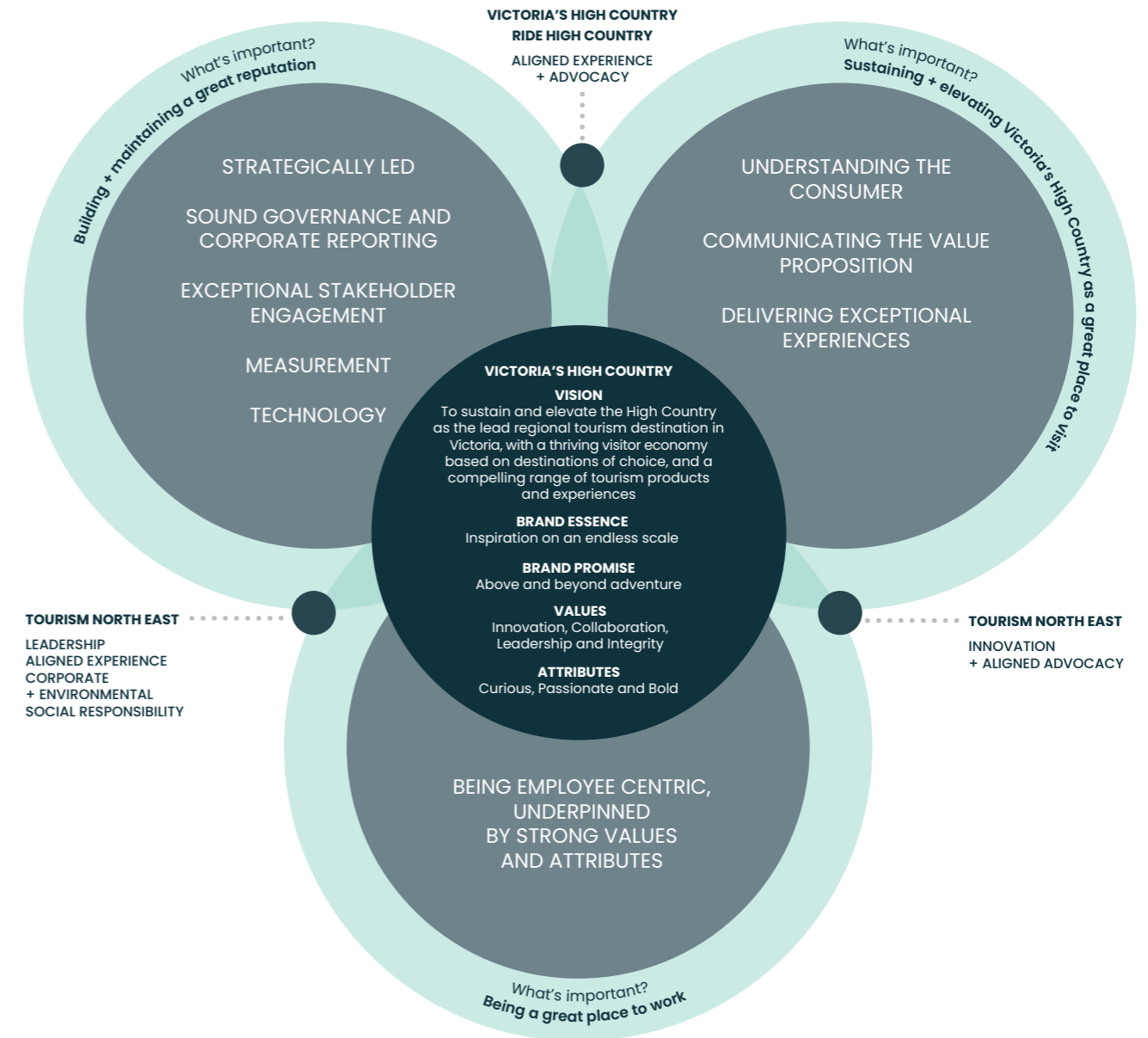
F2. THE TOURISM NORTH EAST STRUCTURE



## 1.4 TOURISM NORTH EAST OPERATING FRAMEWORK

As an organisation, Tourism North East strives to employ best practice governance and operating standards to ensure the entity is well respected and is an employer of choice. This approach is based on continuous improvement, adaptability, and a genuine commitment to the wellbeing and success of employees.

F3. TOURISM NORTH EAST OPERATING FRAMEWORK



F2. & F3. Source: Tourism North East, 2023

## 1.5 DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN OVERVIEW

Tourism North East has developed a Destination Management Plan (DMP) for Victoria's High Country to replace the expiring DMP (2013 – 2023). The DMP serves as the overarching 10-year strategy to guide investment in priority supply and demand initiatives, best positioned to leverage collective efforts of the region to deliver positive outcomes for the High Country's visitor economy.

Urban Enterprise was appointed to undertake a review of the expiring Destination Management Plan, facilitate engagement, and support development of a new 10-year strategy for the region. This plan has been developed collaboratively, with Urban Enterprise working alongside Tourism North East, stakeholders and the High Country's tourism industry.

### INFORMING THE DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Destination Management Plan for Victoria's High Country follows the Guide to Best Practice in Destination Management, as developed by the Australian Regional Tourism Network (ARTN). This will ensure TNE can support growth in and the sustainable management of the visitor economy.

### BEST PRACTICE DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

Successful destination management is a holistic process that ensures tourism adds value to the economy, social fabric and ecology of our communities. It is achieved through strong leadership with consideration of the three following factors.

### THE 3 KEY ELEMENTS OF DESTINATION MANAGEMENT



#### PLACE

Defining the destination in the eyes of the visitor and communities of interest and understanding the visitor journey to and within the region.



#### PEOPLE

Cohesive governance and strong leadership, engaged industry and qualified and experienced workforce.



#### PRODUCT

Motivating products, quality infrastructure and experiences on offer that draw visitors and provide to visitor needs.

## 1.6 PROJECT METHOD

This plan has been informed by in-depth engagement with visitor economy stakeholders to ensure the plan is grounded in place-based needs and aspirations.

The following process was undertaken to prepare the Destination Management Plan.

|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Research</b>                    | Background documents reviewed<br>Macro analysis of global and national consumer trends<br>Statewide strategic documents reviewed. i.e. Experience Victoria 2033   |
| <b>Engagement</b>                  | Internal TNE workshop<br>Tourism Industry and Stakeholder workshops<br>4 workshops based on geographical location<br>Targeted 1:1 workshops<br>Stakeholder survey |
| <b>Framework</b>                   | Establish a strategic framework<br>Establish overarching principles, objectives and vision  |
| <b>Project Assessment</b>          | Project list preparation<br>Project prioritisation (assessed against DMP objectives/criteria)<br>Stakeholder engagement   |
| <b>Destination Management Plan</b> | Preparation of DMP report   |



2. THE HIGH COUNTRY VISITOR ECONOMY







## 2.1 REGIONAL PRODUCT PILLARS

The High Country is defined by its product strengths – five product pillars that are shared across the region and unique to the local offering:



### CYCLING

Cycling is a true strength of the region, particularly associated with the disciplines of mountain biking, recreational cycling, gravel and road cycling, which are available throughout the High Country. A robust bike infrastructure network, supported by an unparalleled natural environment and high-quality cycling experiences that are integrated with other key product pillars, ensure that this offering delivers strong tourism benefits to the High Country.

Ongoing investment is required into cycling products, experiences and infrastructure to ensure the High Country retains an ownership position in the space.



### VICTORIAN ALPS

The Victorian Alps are a unique environment in the context of the Australian landscape. Offering a vast array of snow-based activities in the winter and a compelling suite of experiences in the green season, the Victorian Alps are an attractive year-round destination for visitors. However, this product requires further development to ensure that the region delivers immersive, memorable and suitable experiences to visitors of all abilities.

Dedicated product and experience development as well as investment into core infrastructure is required to ensure that the Victorian Alps and more specifically the Victorian Alpine Resorts can realise their potential as iconic Victorian destinations of choice.



### NATURE

The High Country's unique alpine environments and rich fertile valleys make it a popular nature-based tourism destination. Visitors can participate in fishing, boating and watersport activities on rivers and inland waterways, enjoy hiking, biking and trail running across the peaks and throughout the valleys, and also take advantage of other adrenaline focused experiences such as abseiling, caving and gliding.

Supported tours, rich experiences, hire services and unique accommodation in sympathy with nature are now required to unite this great diversity of activities within dedicated nature-based tourism hubs.



### FOOD, DRINK AND PRODUCE

The food, wine, beer and distillery products are mature and diverse, encompassing winery cellar doors, world-class restaurants, seasonal farm gate experiences, rich local produce, cooking schools, craft breweries and more. This product range plays a vital role in placing the High Country in the minds of visitors as a destination of choice, and is important in that it acts as an anchor across all of the other product pillars.

Ongoing innovation within this sector is required if it is to maintain its strong position and continue to meet changing customer expectations.



### ARTS, CULTURAL HERITAGE AND EVENTS

Visitors associate the High Country with culturally enriching experiences that draw from the history and culture of the area. First People's heritage, the rich gold mining history, the legend of Ned Kelly and the story of the Man from Snowy River are all iconic cultural heritage aspects of the region.

Ongoing product evolution and attraction is required to ensure that the High Country continues to build the region's creative community and cultural offering.



## 2.2 HIGH COUNTRY DESTINATION PERFORMANCE

Since the preparation of the 2013-2023 strategy, Victoria's High Country has experienced extraordinary growth. This reflects the region's growing product offering, the unified approach to marketing, and the resounding brand in the eyes of the consumer.

This section draws on Tourism Research Australia (TRA) data, the widely accepted Australian Government data source tracking visitation across Australia. Unless stated otherwise, this data has been presented for the region for the 2022 calendar year.

## 2.3 HIGH COUNTRY VISITOR ECONOMY SNAPSHOT 2022

In 2022, the High Country attracted 5 million visitors. At present, the region attracts an even proportion of day trip visitors as overnight visitors. The visitors market is primarily comprised of 2.5 million day trip visitors (50%) and 2.5 million overnight visitors (50%) with a small proportion of international visitors, approximately 9,000 visitors (>1%).

Expenditure of domestic visitors to the High Country totalled \$2.3 billion in 2022. Domestic overnight visitors generated the greatest proportion of this visitor expenditure, spending approximately \$1.9 billion in the High Country (83%). At present, the High Country is primarily a weekend getaway destination, with overnight visitors staying 2.9 nights on average in the region.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>5M</b><br>Visitors to the High Country                         | <b>Domestic Day Trip Visitors</b><br><br><b>50%</b> of domestic visitors to the High Country<br><b>\$154</b> spend per day trip visitor<br><b>17%</b> of domestic visitor expenditure   |
| <b>\$2.3B</b><br>Domestic visitor expenditure in the High Country | <b>Domestic Overnight Visitors</b><br><br><b>50%</b> of domestic visitors to the High Country<br><b>\$766</b> spend per overnight visitor<br><b>\$264</b> spend per night<br><b>83%</b> of domestic visitor expenditure<br><b>2.9 nights</b> , average length of stay |

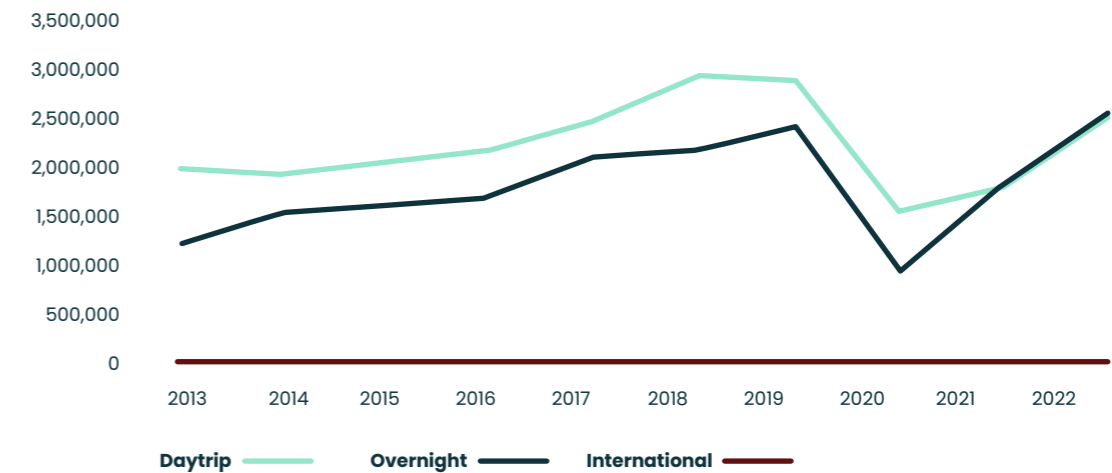
## 2.4 HIGH COUNTRY VISITATION TRENDS

In 2022, the High Country attracted 5 million visitors, made up of 2.5 million day trip visitors (50%), 2.5 million overnight visitors (50%) and 9,000 international visitors (>1%).

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (2020 – 2022), visitation to the High Country region increased by an average of 7% per annum.

The COVID-19 restrictions imposed during 2020 and 2021 greatly impacted the region's visitor economy, with a sharp decline in visitor numbers in 2020. However, with restrictions easing, visitation to the High Country bounced back in 2022.

F4. HISTORIC VISITATION

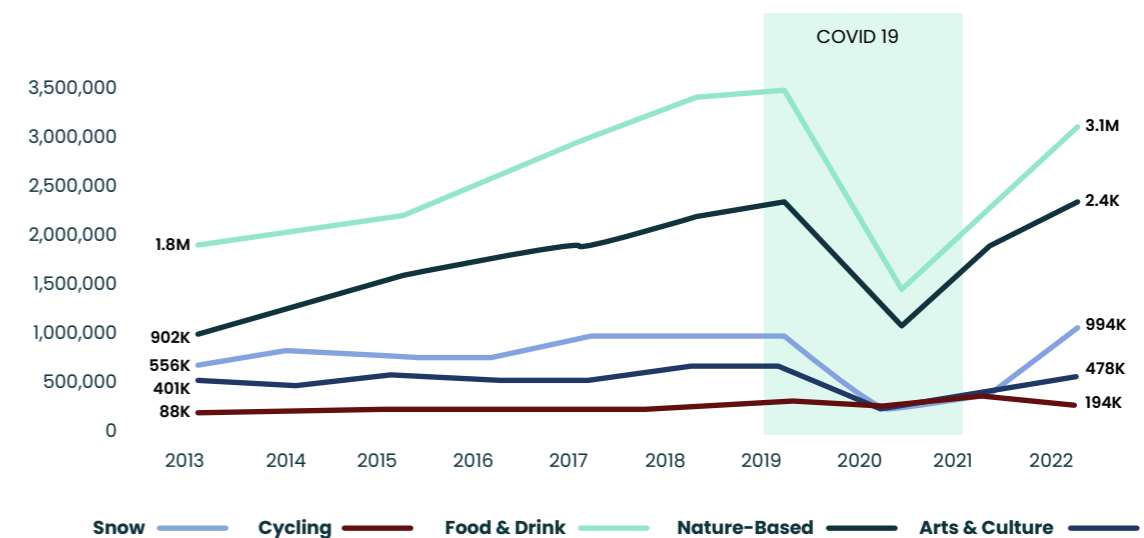


Source: Tourism Research Australia, National Visitor Survey and International Visitor Survey, calendar year 2013-2022

Engagement with activities and experiences within the High Country's product pillars since 2013 is highlighted in the figure below (Figure 6). Engagement with food and drink experiences, as well as nature-based activities, has accelerated the most since 2013, most likely due to the abundance of natural assets within the High Country and the growing number of food and beverage establishments within the region.

Visitation to the Alpine Resorts was greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, with the Resorts shut for businesses during their busiest times of the year. Visitation to the Alpine Resorts during the winter season bounced back in 2022, with built up demand the likely cause for the strong return of visitors together with a strong snowfall season.

F5. ACTIVITY CONSUMPTION BY PRODUCT PILLAR



Source: Tourism Research Australia, National Visitor Survey, calendar year 2013-2021  
Snow activity consumption based on ARCC visitor numbers in snow season



## 2.5 VISITOR DISPERSAL

The scale of visitation throughout Victoria's High Country is highly varied. The Destination Management Plan will play an important role in ensuring visitors are dispersed throughout the High Country to a variety of destinations.

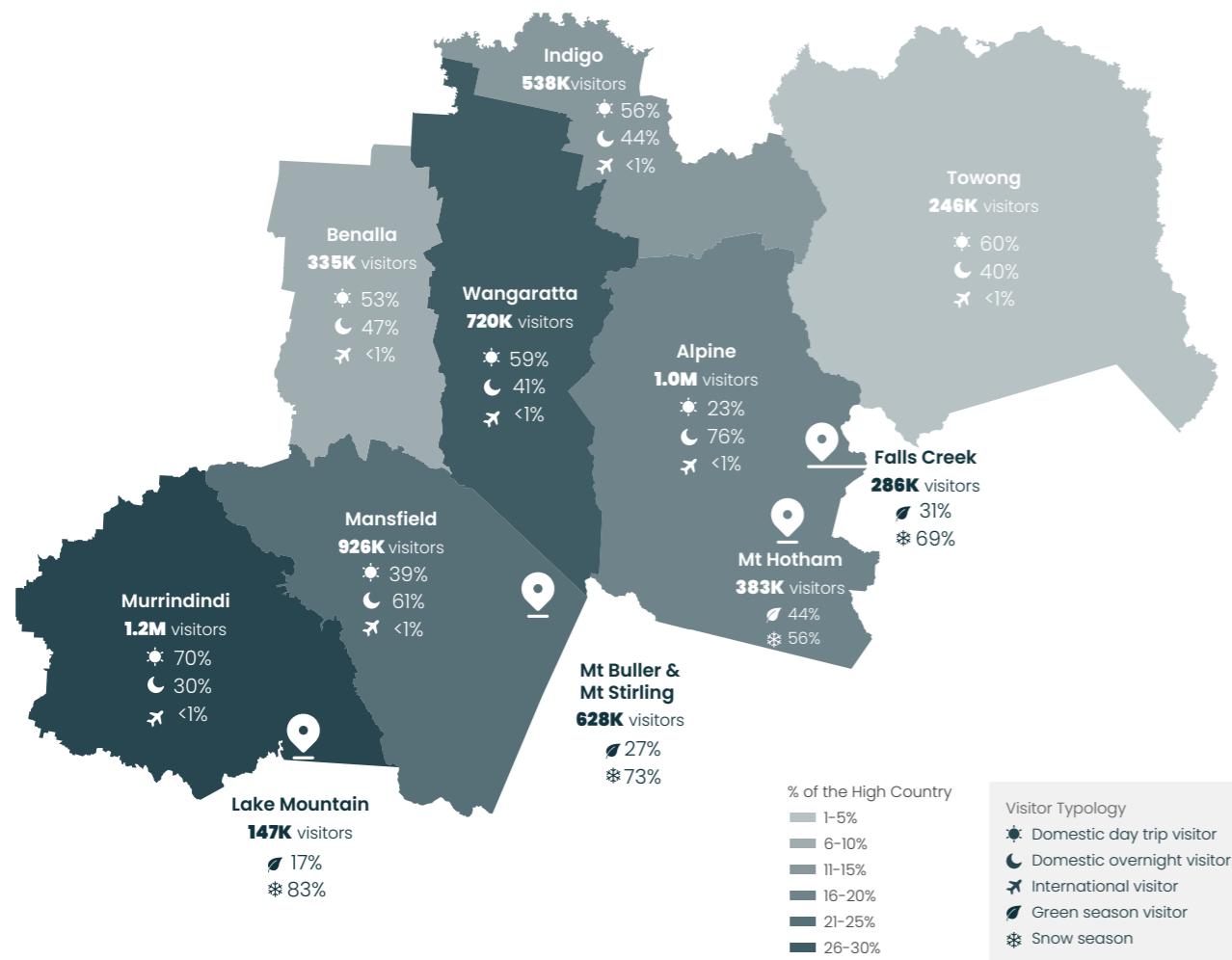
Murrindindi Shire contributes the greatest to regional visitation, attracting 1 million visitors in 2022. The majority of these are day trip visitors (82%). High day trip visitation is mostly attributed to the Shires proximity to Metropolitan Melbourne, as well as the lack of commercial accommodation in the townships of Marysville, Kinglake and Yea.

Alpine, Wangaratta, Indigo and Mansfield municipalities contribute strongly to regional visitation, due to their vast product offering, such as the Alpine Resorts and the well-known wine regions such as the King Valley, Rutherglen and Beechworth.

Alpine and Mansfield benefit greatly from their proximity to the Alpine Resorts, seeing high proportions of overnight visitors who are likely staying in the foothill townships during the winter season.

Of the Alpine Resorts, Mt Buller attracts the highest number of visitors, approximately 560,000 in 2022. Falls Creek and Mt Hotham see a greater proportion of overnight visitors due to their distance from Metropolitan Melbourne.

F6. VISITOR DISPERSAL, 2022



Source/s: High Country LGA data from Tourism Research Australia, National Visitor and International Visitor Survey, Calendar Year 2022. Alpine Resorts visitor data from Alpine Resorts Victoria visitor data, 2021.

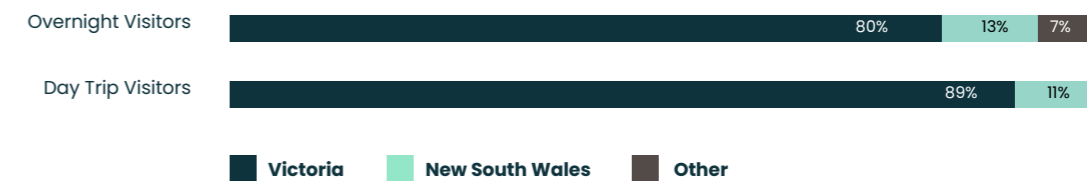
## 2.6 DOMESTIC VISITOR PROFILE

### VISITOR ORIGIN

Victoria is the largest source market for the High Country visitor economy, making up 80% and 89% of day trip and overnight visitation respectively. Visitors from Victoria primarily originate from Metropolitan Melbourne.

A small proportion of visitors are from interstate, primarily NSW (11% of day trip visitors and 13% of overnight visitors). There is opportunity to increase visitation from NSW, leveraging the region's close proximity to population centres such as Albury and Wagga Wagga, as well as visitors to the Kosciuszko National Park.

F7. VISITOR ORIGIN BY STATE

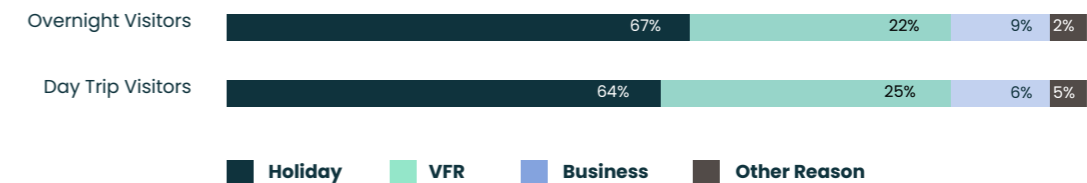


### PURPOSE OF VISIT

Domestic visitors are primarily travelling to the High Country for holiday and leisure purposes (66%). This reflects the high number of tourism products and experiences that attract holiday makers, as well as unique products the region has to offer, such as the Alpine Resorts, which attract a large number of holiday visitors during the winter season each year.

A high proportion of visitors to the region are visiting friends and relatives (VFR) (24%). This presents an opportunity to engage locals to act as ambassadors for their local area and promote local products, attractions and experiences to their visiting friends and relatives.

F8. PURPOSE OF VISIT

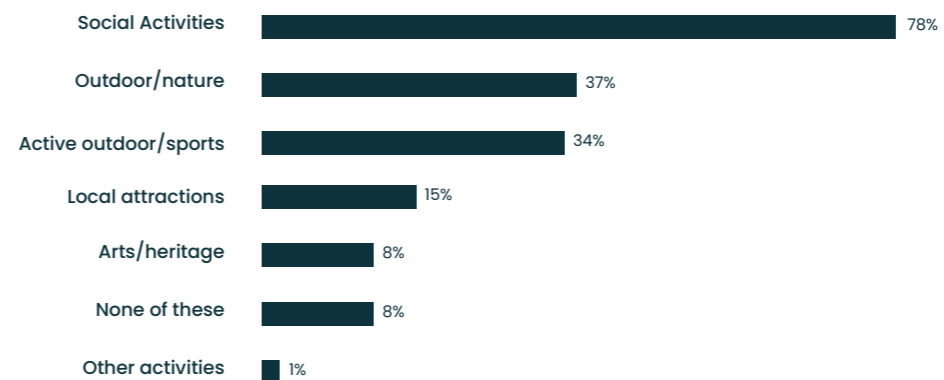


### ACTIVITIES

Social activities are among the most popular activities engaged in by visitors to the High Country (78%). This includes activities such as dining out, visiting friends and relatives, general sightseeing and visiting pubs and clubs.

Engagement in nature-based experiences and active outdoor activities makes up 37% and 34% of activity consumption. There is an opportunity to increase engagement with the natural landscape of the High Country through increased activation of waterways and the development of new tourism products and experiences.

F9. ACTIVITIES



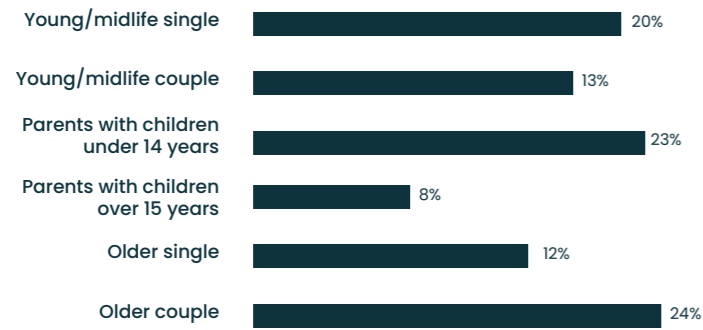


## DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

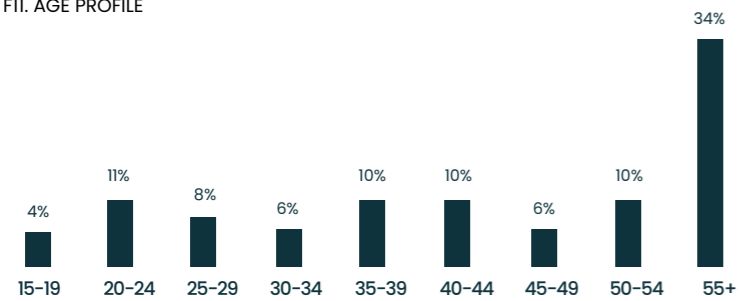
Visitors to the High Country are diverse. Older couples (24%) and families with children under 14 years of age (23%) make up the greatest proportion of domestic visitors to the High Country. The age profile of visitors to the High Country is generally evenly spread, with those 50 years or above making up the greatest proportion (44%).

The varied demographic profile of visitors to the High Country highlights the importance of accessible tourism products and experiences to cater for a range of abilities, including older people and young families with children.

F10. LIFECYCLE GROUP



F11. AGE PROFILE

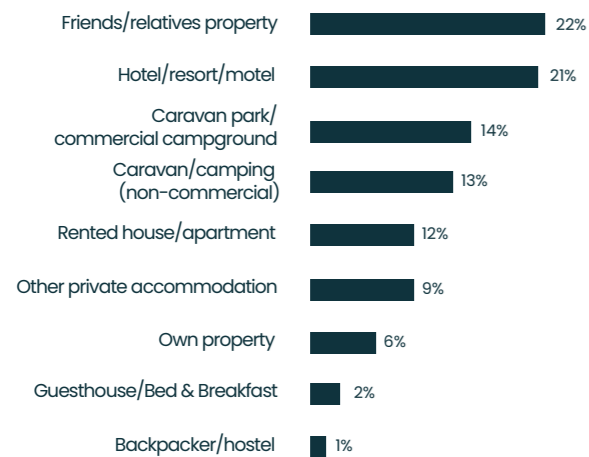


## OVERNIGHT VISITOR PROFILE

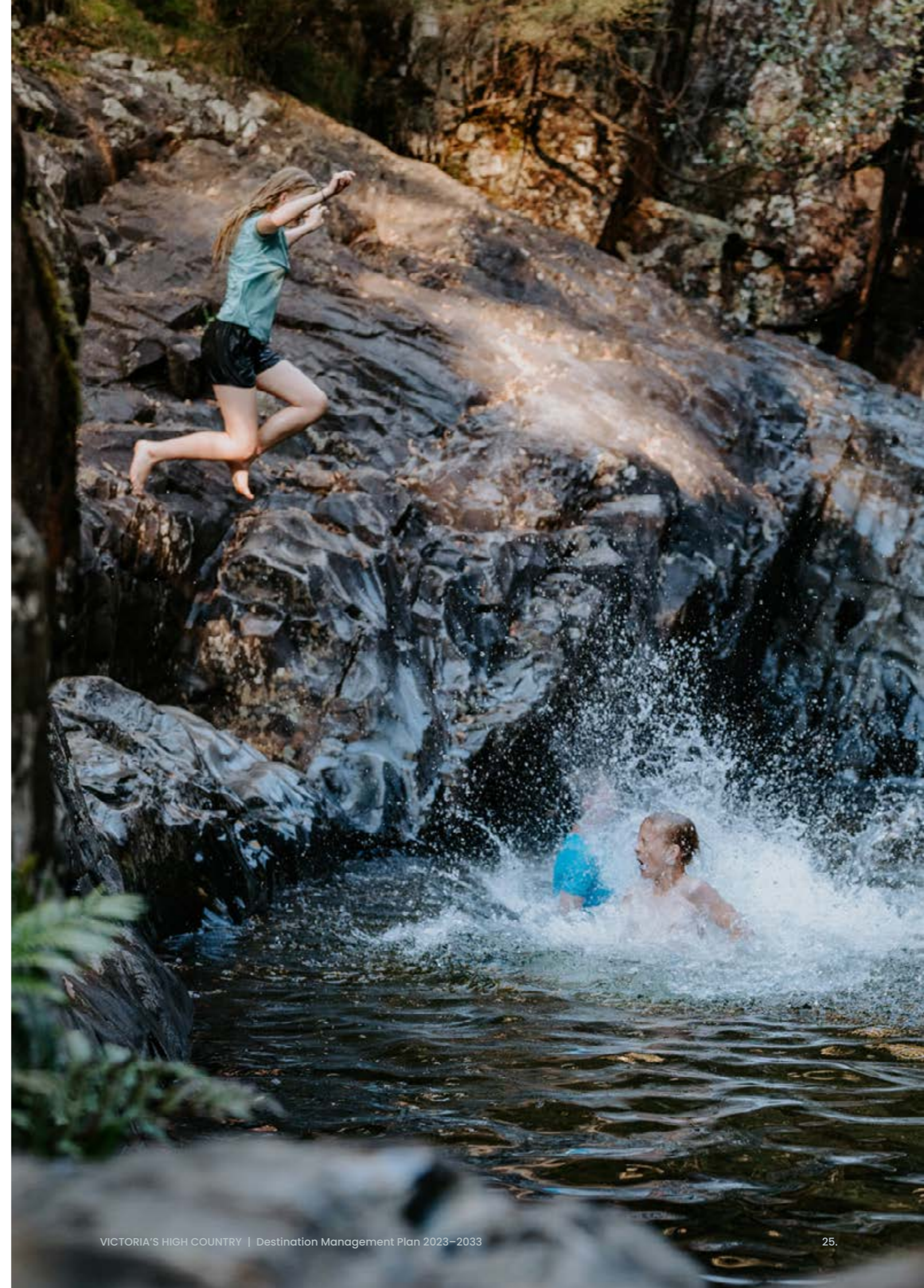
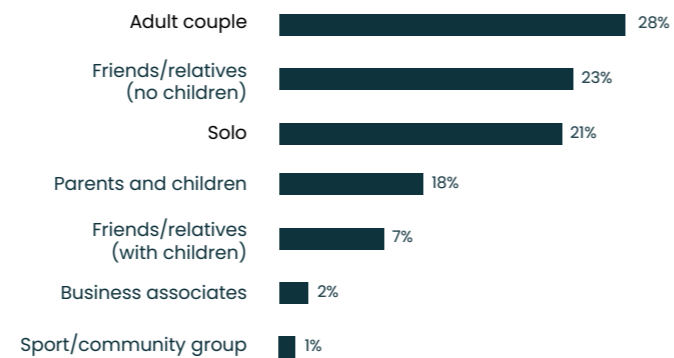
The average length of stay for an overnight visitor to the High Country is 2.9 nights. During their overnight stay, a large portion of visitors will stay with their friends and family (22%). This is reflective of the large VFR market and the lack of commercial accommodation available throughout the High Country.

Overnight visitors to the High Country are primarily travelling as couples (28%), with their friends and family, but no children (23%) and solo (21%). Diverse commercial accommodation is needed to satisfy the various travel party typologies that frequent the High Country.

F12. VISITOR ACCOMMODATION



F13. TRAVEL PARTY





## 2.7 TARGET MARKETS

High Country visitors are characterised by two key segments – Lifestyle Leaders, who account for 40% of the region’s visitors, and Habituals who make up 28% of visitor numbers.

Lifestyle Leaders are progressive, educated and professional individuals who actively seek out new experiences. They enjoy an active social life and have extensive social networks in which they are viewed as trusted advisors and influencers. They are higher in affluence and discretionary expenditure than the average Australian, so travel frequently and spend more when traveling.

The Habituals are travellers who come to the High Country each year (sometimes many times a year) and tend to return to a consistent location and often travel with the same group. They are heavily influenced by the recommendations of friends and family members, prioritise value for money, and are often motivated by familiarity with a destination. Both Habituals and Lifestyle Leaders are primarily self-drive markets.

The High Country primarily focuses on Lifestyle Leaders as their propensity to travel, experience new things and consider multiple destinations when they travel means that there is a strong ability to influence them with focused and motivating marketing communication and effective product development. Furthermore, the size of the segment and the yield it can drive within region by way of its higher natural spend also defines it as the most valuable market with the potential to drive greatest return on investment for the High Country.

It is also worth noting that the Lifestyle Leader market is a focus for Visit Victoria and strongly aligns to Tourism Australia’s High Value Traveler (HVT) audience.

As such, Tourism North East is well placed to collaborate with both Visit Victoria and Tourism Australia on statewide and national demand driving tourism strategies.





## 2.8 DESTINATION BRAND HIERARCHY

F13. VICTORIA'S HIGH COUNTRY BRAND HIERARCHY



The Victoria's High Country Master Brand is designed to encapsulate the essential attributes of the region's personality, as well as ensure strong positioning and messaging. Furthermore, it guides how the region's tourism industry operators can align their products and service to deliver on the brand promise of 'above and beyond'. All consumer-led marketing is guided by either the Master Brand of 'Victoria's High Country' or the region's cycling brand 'Ride High Country'.

Victoria's High Country's Master Brand both builds and borrows equity from individual destinations across the region and communications activity is often co-branded to drive awareness and recognition of the regional proposition.





## 2.9 MACRO TRENDS AND IMPACTS

There are a range of macro-economic trends impacting Victoria's visitor economy, as well as regional and local trends. These have been summarised below as they relate to Victoria's High Country.



### RISE IN REMOTE-WORKING AND THOSE SEEKING A TREE CHANGE

The COVID-19 pandemic increased the flexibility of the workforce and allowed for an increase in remote working. This significant shift in the behaviour of the workforce has increased the potential for mid-week travel to the High Country region, given the correct mechanisms are in place for visitors.

The rise in remote working also provides visitors with more flexibility to travel for more nights and not be constrained by annual leave or public holidays. The ability of destinations to capture these markets will depend on the availability of high-speed internet and accommodation with appropriate remote working facilities.



### CHANGE IN ACCOMMODATION PREFERENCES AMONGST VISITORS

Growth in the use of self-contained accommodation, such as Airbnb and Stayz, has outpaced investment in new hotels and motels. In 2017, the number of nights stayed in Airbnb and Stayz in Australia grew 9.6% whilst conventional hotels grew only 5.6%.<sup>3</sup> Airbnb accommodation provides privacy for guests, who often do not interact with the accommodation operator during their stay. Short-stay accommodation is highly suited to families, offering entire homes with kitchen and laundry facilities, allowing visitors to be self-sufficient during their stay. Short-stay accommodation continues to play an important role in the accommodation space due to the limited traditional commercial properties available for holiday makers.



### CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE MARKET INCREASINGLY EXPLORING REGIONAL VICTORIA

The culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) market is a key growing segment for tourism within Australia.

Typically this audience segment gravitates to nature-based environments, seeks an established destination which is 'popular for a reason', and often travels with a group.<sup>4</sup>

It is important for both destinations and the tourism operators to understand the needs of this market to meet expectations and support growth in this segment.



### SHIFT TOWARDS A PREFERENCE FOR NATURE-BASED VISITOR DESTINATIONS

Nature-based tourism has long been a motivating driver for visitors to explore Victoria. Growth trends in nature-based activity consumption have outgrown every other activity in Victoria in the past ten years. This trend has been exacerbated by the pandemic, with COVID-19 restrictions increasing people's desire to be amongst nature substantially.

The High Country is well placed to leverage the growing demand for nature-based destinations and experiences through the numerous assets located within the region, such as the Victorian Alpine Resorts, Alpine National Park and the number of significant waterways.



### A NEED TO ENSURE DESTINATIONS ARE INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE

Accessible tourism, also known as inclusive tourism, ensures that travel and tourism activities are accessible for people of all abilities and diverse access needs. It involves removing barriers and making adjustments to accommodation, transportation, attractions, and services to create an inclusive environment.

By employing universal design principles and promoting equal opportunities and social inclusion, accessible tourism benefits both individuals and the tourism industry.



### COST OF DOING BUSINESS

Victoria's tourism industry is facing increased pressure as the cost of doing business increases.

Inflationary pressures such as Interest rate rises, increased penalty wages and the climbing cost of general goods and services are putting pressure on profit margins and on consumer facing prices. Forcing businesses to find operational efficiencies (i.e. close on public holidays or reducing service offerings) and/or charge rates at the top of what is an acceptable price bracket.

Additionally, bushfire presents a major hurdle for investment and business operation in the High Country. Much of the High Country is affected by a bushfire management overlay, whilst insurance in bushfire prone areas for property and businesses adds substantial cost to operators in the region and in some cases is unattainable.

The economic headwinds, increased land tax and pending short-levy tax are also additional considerations which may impact or limit private sector investment into the future.



### A NUMBER OF WORKFORCE AND HOUSING CHALLENGES FACING THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

The tourism workforce in Australia grapples with housing challenges that hinder their access to suitable and affordable accommodation. The high cost of housing in popular tourist destinations presents affordability issues, particularly for workers with lower incomes or those employed seasonally.

The seasonal nature of tourism employment further complicates matters, as short-term housing options aligning with employment periods are limited. Additionally, competition with tourists for available housing due to the higher-yielding short-term rental market exacerbates the shortage of affordable options. Geographically isolated regions with remote tourism destinations face an even greater scarcity of housing.

Additionally, challenges associated with the planning, funding and implementation of foundational infrastructure, such as sewerage is constraining growth in residential supply.<sup>5</sup>



### DECLINE IN VOLUNTEERISM

Australia has experienced a decline in volunteerism over a sustained period, and the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this trend. The decline is due to factors such as a change in demographics, increased workforce participation, family commitments and in some cases cost. Volunteering Victoria found that the average cost of out-of-pocket expenses associated with volunteering amounted to approximately \$1,500 per year (fuel, meals, training).

Despite an overall decline in volunteerism, there is a macro-trend of people moving away from structured volunteering to 'informal volunteering'. However, this cultural shift presents challenges for the tourism industry which has traditionally relied on volunteers to staff visitor information centres, festivals and events.<sup>6</sup>



### ROLE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a game-changing technology with far-reaching implications across various industries. In recent years, AI has begun to reshape the travel and tourism sector, enabling enhanced personalisation, streamlined operations, and improved customer experiences.

By harnessing the power of data and machine learning, AI will reshape how we explore and experience travel, opening up a world of possibilities for tourists and creating unforgettable travel experiences.

In the realm of tourism, AI is poised to revolutionise the way we explore.<sup>7</sup>





## CLIMATE CHANGE

For destinations like the High Country, with tourism product that is dependent on the strength and diversity of its natural environment, climate change poses a real and significant threat, particularly through frequent bushfire events, high rainfall and flood events and declining snowfalls due to increase in average temperatures. Severe weather events are becoming more frequent, and it is critical that adequate emergency response is provided to these events. In addition, ensuring industry are resilient and that businesses plan for interruptions in trade will be important for sustainability of the visitor economy in the High Country.

### Bushfires

Bushfires are an ongoing risk for the visitor economy in the High Country, the severity and occurrence rate has increased substantially over the past twenty years. Bushfires have had a significant impact on the visitor economy, tourism infrastructure and other assets in the High Country, with six major bushfires affecting parts of the High Country since 2003. It is difficult to prevent bushfires, however industry and residents need to ensure best preparations are made in the potential event of bushfire.

### High rainfall, flood and storm events

There has been an increasing number of high rainfall, flood and storm events which have had major impacts on the High Country in recent years. High rainfall events have some benefit in filling the region's lakes, however impact on infrastructure such as roads, bridges are detrimental and costly. High rainfall in 2022 caused the Falls Creek landslide and resulted in closure of the road and restricted access to Falls Creek over the 2022/23 green season.

### Declining snow falls

CSIRO modelling shows that snowfall is likely to continue to decline over the next 30 years with an increase in global temperatures. Historic tracking of snow levels also highlights trends in declining snowfall. Alpine Resorts in the High Country contribute over \$1 billion in expenditure to the region and this significant part of the High Country visitor economy is at threat with declining snow falls. Continued investment in snow making infrastructure and development of green season product is needed to strengthen the sustainability of the High Country's Alpine Resorts and ensure Alpine Resorts continue to drive the region's visitor economy.



## SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Sustainability in the High Country needs to consider environment, economy and community. The impacts of tourism need to be managed to ensure a triple bottom line approach to tourism is achieved to ensure long term longevity of the tourism industry.

### Environment

Environmentally sustainable tourism aims to minimise negative impacts on the environment from the visitor economy. A large part of the High Country region is constituted of bushland, rivers and alpine areas that are unique ecosystems of exceptionally high environmental value. Managing visitor impacts on the environment is important for the long-term preservation of the pristine nature within the High Country and to support visitors into the future.

### Economy and Business

When we consider sustainable tourism in the context the economy, ensuring business financial sustainability is the key elements to this. The tourism industry is built on micro and small businesses in the High Country, which are often vulnerable to external impacts. Reducing impacts of sustainability, having a skilled workforce available and a supportive business community are all important for enhancing sustainability of visitor economy businesses.

### Community

One of the risks to the visitor economy is the impact on community liveability, some locations in the High Country have exceptionally high peaks in visitation which create congestion, over demand for services, retail and infrastructure. Permanent and affordable housing is also critical for supporting sustainable communities. Strengthening year round visitation to the High Country, reducing peaks in visitation and focusing on visitor yield are ways to reduce risks on the community from the visitor economy.





3. DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN FRAMEWORK



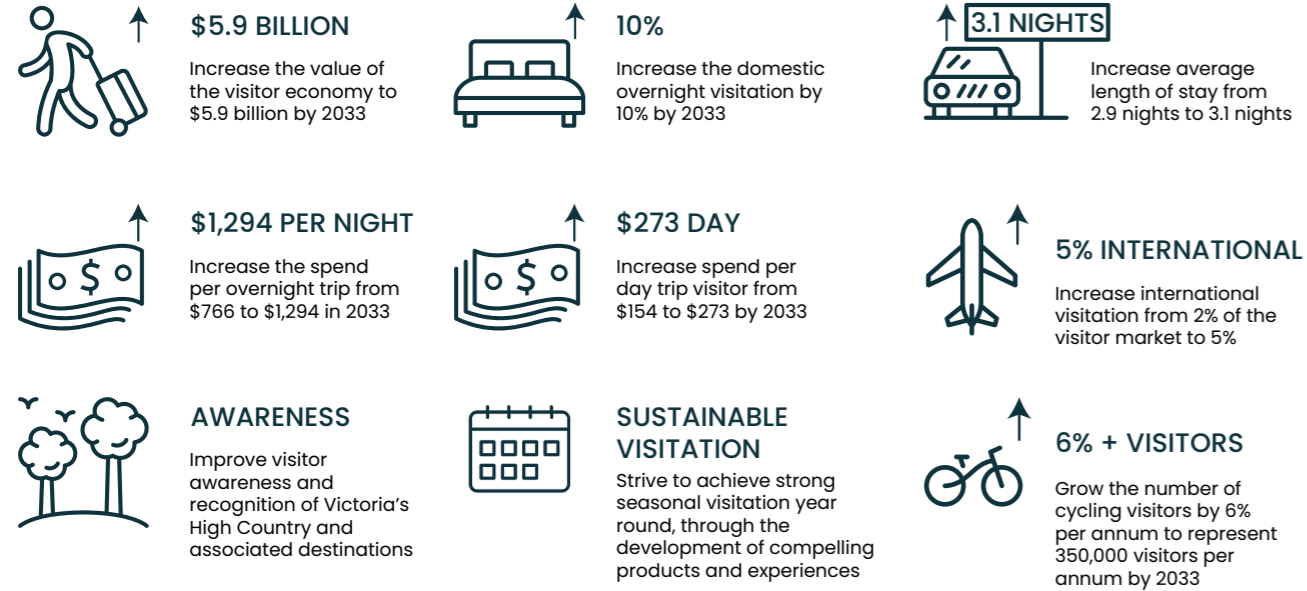


### 3.1 OBJECTIVES AND REGIONAL PRIORITIES

The Destination Management Plan looks to deliver on several key objectives over its 10-year lifespan.

At its core, the plan aims to shift Victoria's High Country from a mini-break destination into a true holiday offering, increasing the percentage of overnight visitors, sustainably growing the length of stay and average spend across all markets.

#### OBJECTIVES



The realisation of these ambitious objectives will be reflective of the tourism efforts of the entire region, and will require significant investment in infrastructure, technology, marketing and product development.

To this effect, the Destination Management Plan process has been used to identify a limited number of priority tourism projects for the region that are aligned to the High Country's defined product pillars and have the potential to deliver the strongest collaborative outcomes.

#### VISITATION

Forecast visitation for the High Country is based on Tourism Research Australia data for the 2019 calendar year, which has been used as the 2023 data point to demonstrate a business as usual scenario, taking into account the impacts of COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021.

Visitation forecasts are based on the midpoint of historic regional Victorian population growth (1.4%), LGA population growth and High Country visitation growth (4.2% daytrip, 9.1% overnight and 7.7% international). LGA population growth rates used to build up the High Country visitation forecast include:

- Alpine Shire Growth (8.8% daytrip, 9.9% overnight and 14.5% international)
- Benalla Growth (3.7% daytrip, 8.3% overnight and 8.3% international)
- Indigo Shire Growth (5.6% daytrip, 13.4% overnight and 13.9% international)
- Mansfield Shire Growth (-1.5% daytrip, 9.7% overnight and 8.7% international)
- Murrindindi Shire Growth (5.6% daytrip, 9.7% overnight and 1.5% international)
- Towong Shire Growth (3.6% daytrip, 11.0% overnight and 2.8% international)
- Wangaratta Growth (-0.6% daytrip, 2.9% overnight and -5.1% international)

Targets adopted relate to these projections in order to present a realistic scenario for future visitation.

#### Visitor Expenditure

Spend per visitor has been calculated using the historic growth in visitor spend as published by Tourism Research Australia. Overall visitor expenditure has been calculated by applying the average spend per person to the number of visitors.





## 3.2 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

### VISION

To sustain and elevate the High Country as the lead regional tourism destination in Victoria, with a thriving visitor economy based on destinations of choice, and a compelling range of tourism products and experiences.

### OBJECTIVES

Shift Victoria's High Country from a mini-break offer into a true holiday destination.

1. Increase the value of the visitor economy to \$5.9 billion by 2033
2. Increase domestic overnight visitation by 10% by 2033
3. Increase average length of stay from 2.9 nights to 3.1 nights
4. Increase the spend per overnight trip from \$766 to \$1,294 in 2033
5. Increase spend per day trip visitor from \$154 to \$273 by 2033
6. Improve visitor awareness and recognition of Victoria's High Country and associated destinations
7. Grow the number of cycling visitors by 6% per annum to represent 350,000 visitors per annum by 2033

### FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

To support the region create a future-proof visitor economy that delivers on the High Country brand promise: *Above and Beyond Adventure*, the following design principles will apply to all product and experience development initiatives.

- **Accessible and Inclusive:** Delivering accessible products and experiences to all
- **Visitor Centric:** Put the visitor at the heart of all product and experience design and strive to exceed their expectations at every touchpoint
- **First Peoples:** Endeavor to integrate First Peoples culture when developing products and experiences, and seek co-creation and co-design opportunities in addition to supporting self-determined initiatives.
- **Environmentally Sustainable:** Employ sustainable practices to deliver outcomes that are positive for the environment, economy and community.
- **Socially Conscious:** Prioritise initiatives that have a positive outcome for the visitor economy and community alike

### REGIONAL PRODUCT PILLARS

- **Cycling:** Reinforcing Victoria's High Country as Australia's Premier Cycling Destination through continued marketing and product development in road cycling, mountain biking, recreational and gravel cycling
- **The Victorian Alps:** Strengthening the year-round appeal and experiences of the Victorian Alps through activating green season and capacity building for white season
- **Nature:** Delivering outstanding nature experiences through the region's iconic National and State Parks, compelling walk product, activated water assets and adrenaline-filled adventure recreation
- **Food, Drink and Produce:** Lifting the quality, access and provenance of local food and produce, exceptional wines, breweries and distilleries to drive innovation and deliver unique High Country food, drink and produce experiences
- **Arts, Cultural Heritage and Events:** Driving visitation and strengthening experience of the region through galleries, artisans, first nations experiences, goldrush and pioneer heritage, and "only in High Country" events

### FLAGSHIP PROJECTS

Flagship projects are initiatives that are aligned to the High Country's defined product pillars and have the potential to deliver game-changing outcomes to the High Country's tourism offering:

- **Ride High Country**
- **Activating King Valley Prosecco Road**
- **Developing the visitor economy of the Victoria's Alpine Resorts**
- **Lake Eildon Master Plan**
- **Creative Industries Invigoration**
- **First People's Collaboration**
- **Optimising The Visitor Experience**
- **Workforce Attraction, Retention And Access To Appropriate Housing**

### PRIORITY PROJECT FRAMEWORK

The following table details how projects within 2023 - 2033 DMP progress will be measured.

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Concept</b>        | Discussed as a potential initiative with no supporting work yet delivered.   |
| <b>Scoping</b>        | Moving the concept to a developed project, which may include scoping work, preliminary design, business case, feasibility study, market research etc.  |
| <b>Funding</b>        | Seeking implementation funding once scoping work is completed.   |
| <b>Implementation</b> | Funding has been secured and the project has commenced, potentially including detailed design work, stakeholder engagement, planning, permits, work on the ground, construction, program roll-out etc. |
| <b>Completed</b>      | Implementation has finished and the project finalised.   |
| <b>Abandoned</b>      | An initiative that is no longer viable and therefore will not be pursued.  |



### 3.3 FLAGSHIP PROJECTS

Captured within the DMP are a limited number of flagship tourism projects. These are projects that are aligned to the High Country's defined product pillars and have the potential to deliver game-changing outcomes to the High Country's tourism offering.

#### 1. RIDE HIGH COUNTRY

Victoria's High Country holds a true leadership position in the cycling space, and not only because of the range of cycling trails and routes available. The cycling offering in the High Country is in the enviable position of being supported by a range of industry operators who recognise the value of this product, a dedicated group of cycle tourism industry operators, a natural landscape that cannot be replicated by any other region plus complimentary food, wine, walking and cultural experiences.

A leadership position across all disciplines of cycling will be maintained through strategic investment into compelling products and experience development and the region's established consumer cycling brand Ride High Country, which is key in driving consumer awareness and product conversion.

#### 2. ACTIVATING KING VALLEY PROSECCO ROAD

Located 283km from Melbourne, the picturesque King Valley is situated on the King River between Wangaratta and the Alpine National Park in Victoria's High Country. Known as the cultural home of Prosecco in Australia, the King Valley is home to 56% of all Australian Prosecco plantings, making Prosecco the single largest grape variety in the King Valley. The region has become globally synonymous with the production of high-quality Australian Prosecco.

As such, there is an opportunity for the King Valley to take ownership of the continued growth in Prosecco sales by tying the premium Australian Prosecco message to the region. This project looks to not only establish the King Valley as a category leading wine region and sought after destination, it aims to drive innovation in the food, and drinks industry.

#### 3. DEVELOPING THE VISITOR ECONOMY OF THE VICTORIA'S ALPINE RESORTS

The Victorian Alpine Resorts are a significant economic contributor to Victoria. The sector supports over 10,000 jobs and generates over \$2.5 billion in total economic output per annum (as at 2021).

The Victorian Alpine Resorts attract visitors in the winter months for snow-based activity as well as mountain bikers and hikers in the green-season.

This project looks to harness and elevate the Victorian Alpine Resorts to reach their potential as year-round destinations, appealing to a broader visitor market, through the development of:

- Vibrant, accessible and diverse alpine villages
- Motivating green season products and experiences
- Infrastructure to enable sustainable growth
- Compelling, quality winter experiences for all visitors

#### 4. LAKE EILDON MASTER PLAN

Lake Eildon is located an hour and a half from Melbourne. Originally established as a water source for regional agricultural and horticultural production, the lake has evolved into a significant recreational and tourism asset. Well known as a destination for four-wheel driving, camping and water-based activities, the Lake Eildon region currently welcomes over 800,000 visitors per year - generating a total economic impact estimated to be worth \$486 million in output, supporting 2,500 jobs.

Despite already welcoming an established visitor base, there is an opportunity to grow Lake Eildon's visitor economy and to establish the lake as Australia's premier inland water and nature-based destination. As detailed in the Activating Lake Eildon Master Plan, growth will attract new markets to support the activation of the Lake and its surrounding towns and villages - creating a spectacular year-round destination.

Through targeted investment in strategic high-quality tourism products and experiences Lake Eildon has the opportunity to contribute a further \$469 million in output and an additional 2,500 jobs.







## 5. CREATIVE INDUSTRIES INVIGORATION

The High Country has a rich cultural heritage but fails to offer the breadth of immersive and experiential products that visitors are looking for. This project aims to activate the region's creative offering. This includes supporting infrastructure works like the Benalla Art Gallery redevelopment, Wangaratta Cultural Precinct Project, as well as the development of highly engaging products associated with local First People's culture, the Ned Kelly story and a dynamic calendar of "only in High Country" cultural events.

## 6. FIRST PEOPLE'S COLLABORATION

Victoria's High Country forms a significant part of Australia's Great Dividing Range. From Kinglake to Mt Buller, from Marysville to Rutherglen, the region is unlike any other in Victoria and its connection to country is just as unique.

This project aims to elevate collaboration with First Peoples to both support products and experiences that are developed and delivered by First Peoples, as well as identify opportunities to collaborate with indigenous Australians to develop cultural tourism products and experiences that highlight the High Country's cultural history through:

- Cultural respect
- Education
- Building trusted relationships
- Collaboration and consultation
- Active listening
- Openness
- Inclusive language
- Respectful engagement
- Understanding community priorities
- Continuous learning

## 7. OPTIMISING THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

To effectively compete for an increased share of the visitor's time and wallet in an ever changing environment, it is imperative that the journey of dreaming, planning, booking and exploring is optimised at each touchpoint. This project aims to deliver continuous improvement across the visitor journey, working with Industry operators, Visitor Information Centres and Local Government to ensure that the visitor journey is optimised to deliver timely and relevant information, and support a dynamic on-ground holiday experience. Making it as easy as possible for people to dream about, book and explore Victoria's High Country.

## 8. WORKFORCE ATTRACTION, RETENTION AND ACCESS TO APPROPRIATE HOUSING

A shortage of both skilled and unskilled workers is a long-standing issue and continues to act as a drag on the High Country's regional economy. In a workforce review completed in 2021, it was estimated that skill shortages dampened the economic output of the region by approximately \$160 million annually.<sup>8</sup>

Further to the workforce review the analysis found that the High Country failed to attract and retain workers because of:

- A lack of awareness of the opportunities to live and work in the region
- The prevalence of unattractive, casualised, seasonal and part-time work
- A lack of appropriate housing

For the High Country's visitor economy to fulfill its potential, innovative intervention and strategic investment into building attractive jobs and appropriate housing for key workers is needed. Furthermore, investment into support services and enabling infrastructure to unlock residential and commercial capacity is imperative to the viability of the visitor economy and community alike.

This project aims to deliver tangible outcomes that support investment into more attractive jobs and key worker housing across the High Country region.



## 4. THE PIPELINE







## 4.1 CYCLING

Vision: **To maintain and strengthen Victoria’s High Country as Australia’s premier cycling destination.**

Victoria’s High Country holds a true leadership position in the cycling space, and not only because of the range of cycling trails and routes available. The cycling offering in the High Country is in the enviable position of being supported by a range of industry operators who recognise the value of this product, a natural landscape that cannot be replicated by any other region plus complementary food, drink, walking and cultural experiences.

A leadership position across all disciplines of cycling will be maintained through strategic investment into compelling products and experience development and the region’s established consumer cycling brand Ride High Country which is key in driving consumer awareness and product conversion.

| Priorities           | Detail  | Status  | Lead Agency    |  |
|----------------------|---|---|----------------|--|
| Road Cycling         | Road safety enhancements                            | Continued investment in road safety enhancements for road cyclists including investment in road shoulders, road safety signage and cycle friendly towns.  | Concept        | LGA Partners   |
| Recreational Cycling | Murray to Mountains Rail Trail Enhancements Project | Delivery of Murray to Mountains Enhancements Project.   | Implementation | Rural City of Wangaratta<br>Alpine Shire Council<br>Indigo Shire Council |
|                      | Murray to Mountains Trail Connection                | Trail extensions connecting existing recreational cycle trails to central Bright township, increasing visitor experience and safety.<br><br>Stage one; extend Murray to Mountains from entry to Bright along Ovens River to Howitt Park.<br><br>Stage two; extend trail from Centenary Park to Bennetts Trail along Morses Creek.<br><br>Stage Three; extend trail from Centenary Park to Great Valley Trail along Ovens River. | Scoping        | Alpine Shire Council   |
|                      | Bright Cycle Hub and trailhead for all disciplines  | Develop a business plan to create a cycle hub in central Bright with adequate signage, parking and space for cyclists to begin their ride safely. This will become the trailhead for cycle disciplines close to the CBD.  | Concept        | Alpine Shire Council   |
|                      | High Country Rail Trail Expansion                   | Delivery of the High Country Rail Trail Masterplan including improvements to existing trail and extension of trail through to Corryong.   | Funding        | Towong Shire Council   |
|                      | Wayfinding Improvements                             | Implementation of a wayfinding network to improve the user experience across key recreational products.   | Funding        | Tourism North East<br>LGA Partners                                       |
|                      | Great Victoria Rail Trail Enhancements              | Delivery of the Great Victorian Rail Trail strategic plan.  | Implementation | Mansfield Shire<br>Murrindindi Shire<br>Mitchell Shire                   |
|                      | Marysville to Buxton                                | Trail to connect existing townships, tourism infrastructure and access to key attractions. Stage one; development of a concept plan including route options and initial costing.  | Concept        | Murrindindi Shire Council  |
|                      | Tracks and Trails Masterplan                        | Develop and deliver a Tracks and Trails Masterplan and business case which will include the Delatite trail. The Tracks and Trails Masterplan is about connecting Mansfield with the outlying towns including the alpine resorts.  | Concept        | Mansfield Shire  |



| Priorities                       |  | Detail   | Status         | Lead Agency                        |
|----------------------------------|--|--|----------------|------------------------------------|
| Gravel Cycling                   | Gravel Cycling Network                                 | Develop a network of gravel cycling loops.   | Implementation | Tourism North East                 |
|                                  | Wayfinding Improvements                                | Implement a wayfinding network to improve the user experience across key gravel products.  | Implementation | Tourism North East<br>LGA Partners |
|                                  | Secure an annual flagship Gravel Cycling Event         | Support the growth of gravel cycling events across the High Country region.  | Implementation | Tourism North East                 |
| Mountain Bike Riding             | Mt Buller & Mt Stirling Mountain Bike Trail Expansions | Expand the current network by extending the current flow trails and adding a return trail from Howqua Gap that increases the number of green season visitors.  | Funding        | Mt Buller Resort / ARV             |
|                                  | Falls Creek MTB Trail Network Expansions               | Continue expansion of the Falls Creek MTB network through preparation of a Mountain Bike Masterplan.   | Implementation | Falls Creek Resort / ARV           |
|                                  | Mitta Mountain Bike Park                               | Deliver on stage one of the Mitta Mountain Bike Masterplan including trails and township enhancements to support visitation growth.  | Implementation | Towong Shire Council               |
|                                  | Eildon Bike Park                                       | Undertake a masterplan and business case for improvement and expansion of the Eildon Bike Park.  | Concept        | Murrindindi Shire Council          |
|                                  | Mount Elliot Trail Network                             | Develop the Mount Elliott Adventure Park Masterplan including new trail network.   | Concept        | Towong Shire Council               |
|                                  | Marysville Mountain Bike Trail                         | Develop a mountain bike network through the State Forest near Marysville, designed to support the green season and extend the duration of visitation.  | Funding        | Murrindindi Shire Council          |
| Industry and Product Development | North East Victoria Cycling Optimisation Plan          | Undertake a comprehensive refresh of North East Victoria Cycling Optimisation plan, with consideration of market expectations and new product opportunities. Including a comprehensive cycling event strategy to support the region's cycling credentials through demand driving activity. | Concept        | Tourism North East                 |
|                                  | Relaunch the Ride High Country Preferred Program       | Reinvigorate the Ride High Country preferred program to entice businesses to improve their bike friendly offering.   | Funding        | Tourism North East                 |
|                                  | Ride High Country Product Development                  | Develop and deliver product design programs to grow bookable cycling product within the region. Aimed at bike transport, tours and experiences.  | Funding        | Tourism North East                 |
|                                  | Cycling friendly accommodation                         | Support development and private sector investment into cycling friendly accommodation.   | Concept        | Tourism North East                 |
| Marketing                        | Ride High Country                                      | Invest in the Ride High Country brand to build awareness and consideration of the High Country as a cycling holiday destination  | Funding        | Tourism North East                 |





## 4.2 THE VICTORIAN ALPS

Vision: **Strengthening the year-round appeal and experiences of the Victorian Alps through activating green season and building capacity for white season.**

The Victorian Alpine Resorts are a significant economic contributor to the State of Victoria. The sector supports over 10,000 jobs and generates over \$2.5 billion in total economic output per annum (as at 2021).

Representing only 0.01% of the Australian landscape, the Alpine environment is a rich and dynamic biodynamic landscape that has a deep connection to First Peoples' culture, attracts visitors in the winter months for snow-based activity as well as mountain bikers and hikers in the green-season. This project harness the unique environment of the Victorian Alps and elevate the Victorian Alpine Resorts to reach their potential as a year-round destination appealing to a broader visitor market, through the development of:

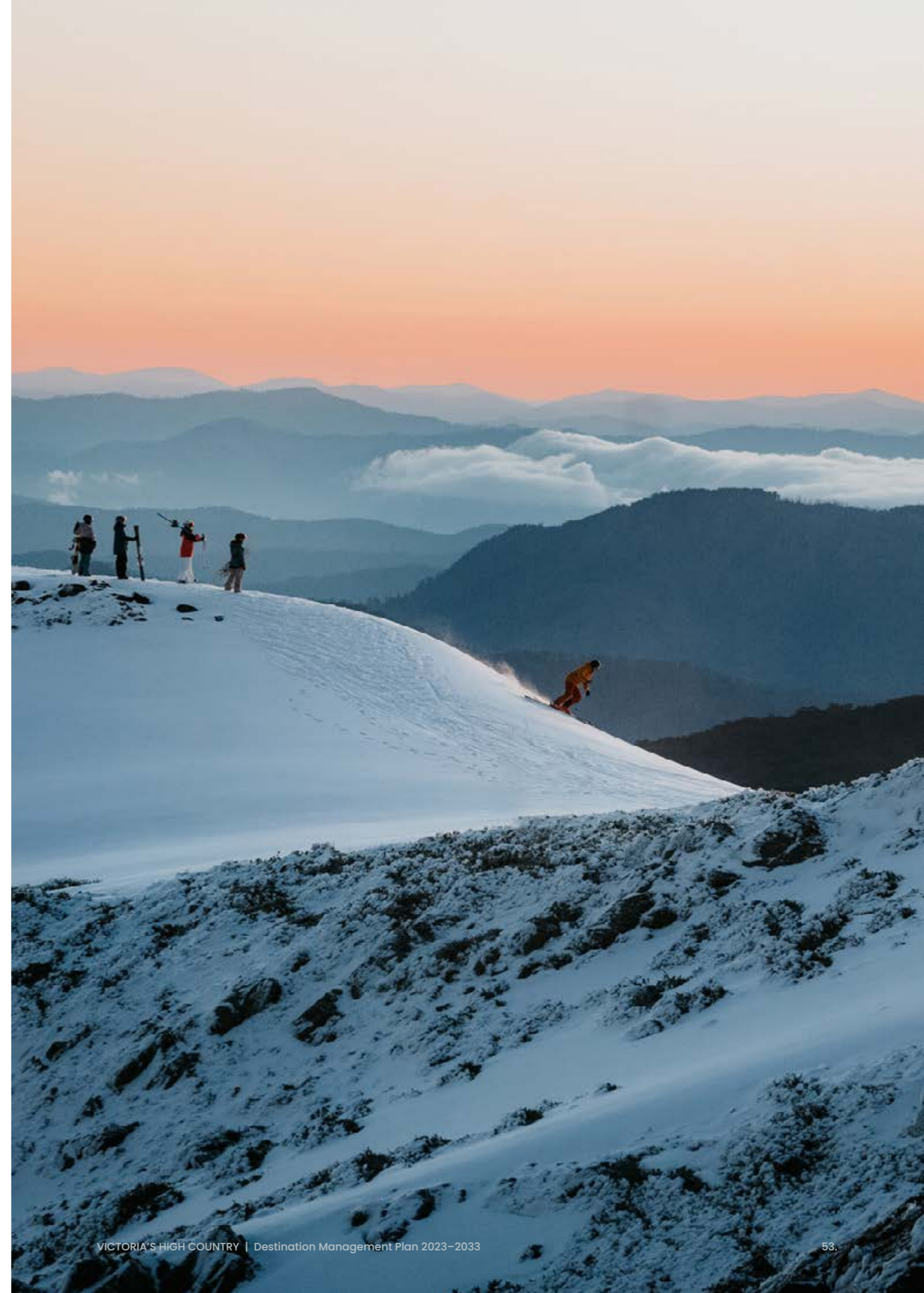
- Vibrant, accessible and diverse alpine villages
- Motivating green season products and experiences
- Infrastructure to enable sustainable growth
- Compelling, quality winter experiences for all visitors

| Priorities                                      | Detail   | Status   | Lead Agency |                          |
|---|--|--|-------------|--------------------------|
| Vibrant, accessible and diverse alpine villages | Falls Creek Village Bowl Landscape                                   | The village bowl is a hub for activity within Falls Creek, however the precinct requires improved amenity and landscaping to realise its potential.  | Concept     | Falls Creek Resort / ARV |
|   | Falls Creek Village Civic Plaza, Village Hub, Commercial Development | As per the Falls Creek Masterplan, there is a need for investment in a new Village Plaza, village hub and commercial development. This will create the focal point of the village and become a key node for summer and winter activation.  | Concept     | Falls Creek Resort / ARV |
|   | Mt Buller Village Square Precinct                                    | As per the endorsed masterplan, there is a desperate need for an enlarged visitor centre to address chronic overcrowding and provide shelter, comfort, services and amenities for the growing number and diversity of day visitors. Bus bays need to be moved underground to improve safety and visitor experience, and the Village Square redeveloped to be the heart of the resort all year round. | Concept     | Mt Buller Resort / ARV   |
|   | Delivery of the Hotham Central Precinct                              | <b>Village Plaza and Commercial Private Sector Development</b><br>The creation of a new commercial and entertainment precinct at Hotham Central in and around the Corral Car Park. The development will deliver retail, accommodation and a central village hub for the resort.  | Concept     | Mt Hotham Resort / ARV   |
|   |  | <b>Business, Visitor and Community Centre</b><br>This Centre will be a multi-storey development that will include a day visitor centre/transit lounge/information services; new commercial offering; new medical centre and ski patrol base; RMB and commercial office space; commercial gym; and a community and activity space to facilitate groups.   | Concept     | Mt Hotham Resort / ARV   |
|   | Redevelopment of the Mt Buffalo Chalet                               | Work with Local, State and Federal Governments, Parks Victoria and the private sector, redevelop the Mt Buffalo Chalet to become a hub for adventure based activity. Including but not limited to a commercial food and beverage offering, accommodation and Visitor Information Centre.   | Funding     | Parks Victoria           |
|   |  |  |             |                          |

| Project   | Detail  | Status  | Lead Agency    |                            |
|---|---|---|----------------|----------------------------|
|   | Hotham Place-making Project / Great Alpine Road Enhancement             | Significant beautification work is required to improve the look and feel of Mt Hotham, enhance the flow of the resort, and deliver a high-quality and seamless visitor experience. This crucial place-making program incorporates works like landscaping, viewing points, artistic features, village lighting, pedestrian walkways and signage.<br><br>To complement the place-making initiative, The Great Alpine Road through Hotham has the ability to become an iconic touring route but requires major work to improve the visitor experience and safety, particularly in and around the Hotham Village. This includes verge sealing, landscaping, gateway improvements, lookout bays, interpretation, signage and amenity improvements. | Concept        | Mt Hotham Resort / ARV     |
|   | Lake Mountain Multi-Level Linkage Building, Including Accessibility Hub | In order to provide greater visitor amenity, retail and services there is a requirement for delivery of a new multi-level building that provides a link between the existing amenity buildings.   | Scoping        | Lake Mountain Resort / ARV |
| Infrastructure to enable sustainable growth               | Mt Buller Transit Hub and Car parking/ Apartments                       | A new transit hub building to be located next to Alpine Central will allow transport operations to be removed from the town centre, creating opportunity to increase the size of the village square.  | Scoping        | Mt Buller Resort / ARV     |
|   | Lakeside Precinct and Car Park Investment                               | There remains a unique opportunity to establish a new lakeside precinct which includes visitor accommodation, food and beverage, lakeside beach and water sports hub.   | Implementation | Falls Creek / ARV          |
| Compelling and quality winter experience for all visitors | Lake Mountain Snow Activity Enhancements and Night Time Activation      | The snow activity areas at Lake Mountain require expansion to support the growing market engaged in this activity. In addition, there is opportunity to improve the types of snow activity and also look at expanding opportunities such as beginner ski area and terrain park.   | Concept        | Lake Mountain Resort / ARV |
|   | Mt Hotham Snow Play and Activity Hub                                    | Development of a new Snow Play & Activity Hub that will transform the Wire Plain Precinct. Central to this development is a new visitor facility that will incorporate: a day centre, café/kiosk outlet, a retail hire offering (toboggans, snow tubes, snow shoes and cross country skis in winter; and mountain bikes and hiking gear in summer); and a commercial counter for activity providers.  | Implementation | Mt Hotham Resort / ARV     |



| Project                        | Detail  |  | Status  | Lead Agency            |
|--------------------------------|---|--|---------|------------------------|
| Industry & Product Development | Building Mt Buller Capacity, Accessibility and Visitation | Address chronic capacity issues that are constraining visitation by developing additional snow play areas for this growing multi-cultural market and an innovative terrain based learning zone where visitors can learn to ski and board while reducing safety risks on the overcrowded Bourke Street ski run. | Funding | Mt Buller Resort / ARV |
| Marketing                      | Annual Winter Collaborative Campaign                      | Develop and deliver an annual collaborative winter campaign across the six Alpine Resorts to encourage visitation.   | Funding | Tourism North East     |
|                                | Market Research   | Investment of commissioned research specifically related to the Victorian Alps, experiences on offer and consumer motivators and trends.   | Concept | Tourism North East     |
|                                | Victoria's High Country Brand                             | Maintain the Victorian Alps as a signature experience in all High Country brand activations and activities.  | Funding | Tourism North East     |







### 4.3 NATURE-BASED TOURISM

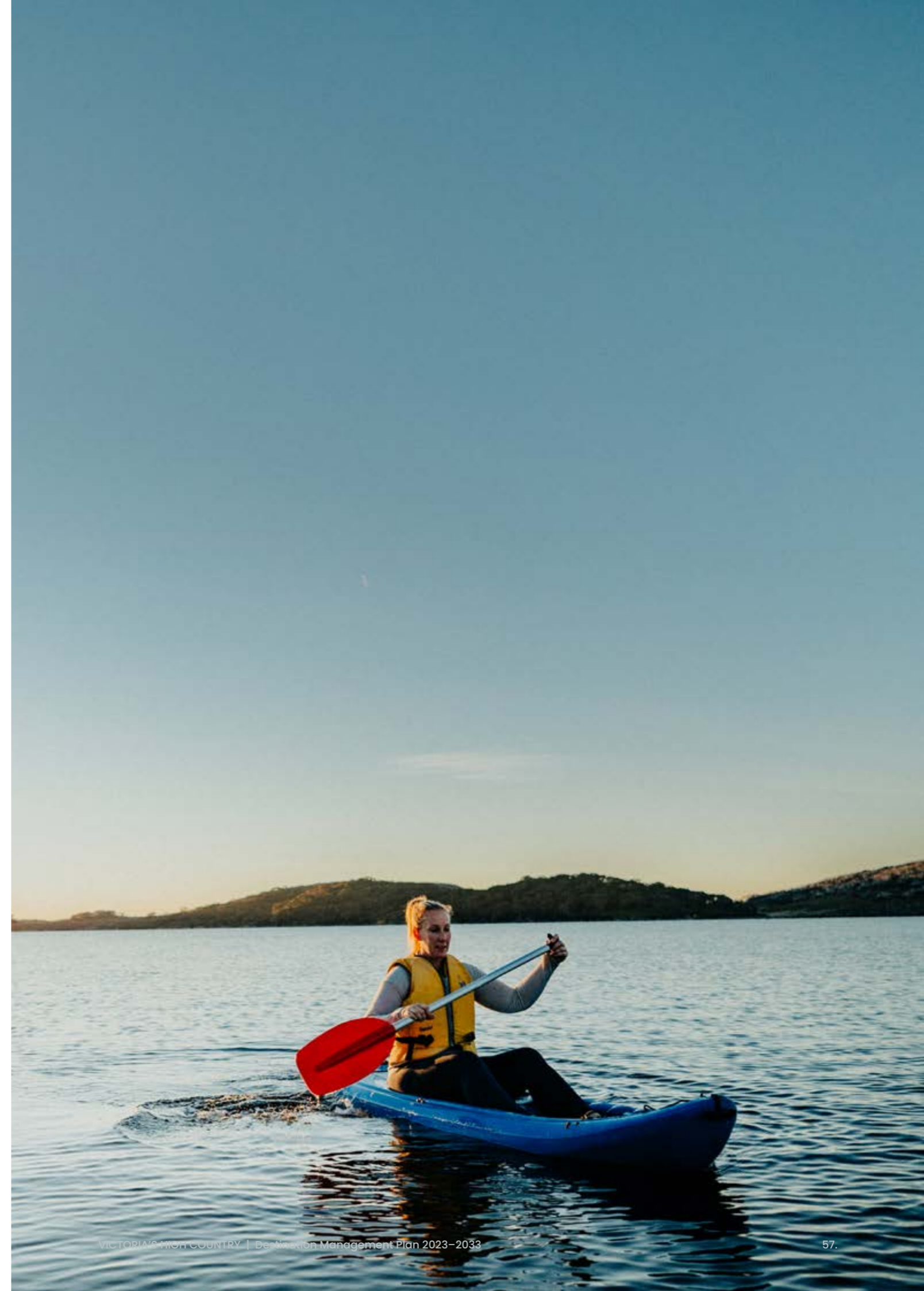
Vision: To position Victoria’s High Country to be synonymous with outstanding nature experiences through the region’s iconic National and State Parks, compelling walk product, activated water assets and adrenaline filled adventure recreation.

Victoria’s High Country offers a diverse and captivating nature-based experience. With majestic mountains, lush valleys, and pristine rivers, this destination invites outdoor enthusiasts to explore ancient forests and bushland, walk scenic trails, and visit stunning waterfalls. Key nature icons of the High Country include Alpine National Park, Mt Buffalo National Park, Lake Eildon and Lake Hume. Continued investment and promotion of natural assets is needed to meet growing demand for nature-based tourism in Victoria’s High Country.

| Priorities |   | Detail   | Status                    | Lead Agency   |
|------------|---|--|---------------------------|---|
| Walk       | Falls to Hotham Crossing  | Complete stage two of the Falls to Hotham Crossing.  | Funding                   | Parks Victoria                                      |
|            | Elevated Walkway (Hotham Heaven Walk)   | Delivery of an elevated walkway and complementary sculptural component within the resort that will act as a signature walk experience for Mt Hotham. This is consistent with the resort’s ambition of being the lead walk destination in the High Country, and an iconic walk destination for the State.   | Funding                   | Mt Hotham Resort / ARV                              |
|            | All Seasons Walks Trail in Dinner Plain   | Create a walking trail through Snow Gums that is accessible throughout the year, including signage and information along the walk highlighting First Peoples and the biodiversity of the Alpine region.  | Concept                   | Alpine Shire Council                                |
|            | Mt Buller & Mt Stirling Huts Trail  | Develop an iconic three-day Stirling / Buller huts walking trail that links High Country heritage huts and includes development of associated low impact camping grounds.  | Concept                   | Mt Buller Resort / ARV                              |
|            | Berrbang Biik Walking Trail   | Approximately 1.8 km-long loop starting and returning from the new town square, welcoming people of all ages and abilities to a stunning part of Australian countryside that has up to now been inaccessible to the public. The trail will be constructed around the Village, leading to picnic spots and picturesque lookouts boasting views of Melbourne’s skyline and Fairy Falls. The name Berrbang Biik means ‘Connection to Country’: a name chosen in collaboration with the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. | Funding                   | Murrindindi Shire Council                           |
| Water      | Waterway activation strategy  | Undertake a strategic plan for water activation in the High Country, with consideration of alpine lakes and streams.   | Concept                   | Tourism North East                                  |
|            | Lake Hume Masterplan Bellbridge, Tallangatta  | <b>Bellbridge Boathouse</b><br>Delivery of the Bellbridge Boathouse as a contemporary recreational and retail outlet that will support activation of Lake Hume.  | Funding                   | Towong Shire Council                                |
|            | Lake Eildon Master Plan Game Changing Projects  | <b>Skyline Road Sealing</b><br>18 kms across Mansfield and Murrindindi Shires between Eildon and Bonnie Doon.  | Implementation            | Murrindindi Shire Council + Mansfield Shire Council |
|            |   | <b>Eildon to Alexandra Shared Trail</b><br>Extend from Eildon through Thornton and connect to Alexandra and the Great Victorian Rail Trail   | Funding                   | Murrindindi Shire Council                           |
|            | <b>Eildon Reserves Redevelopment</b><br>Regional Playground across two reserves in Eildon’s town centre with: Splash park, Flying fox & swing, Accessibility upgrades to amenities, Skate park, Pedestrian links between the two reserves | Implementation   | Murrindindi Shire Council |   |



| Priorities                     |                                     | Detail  | Status         | Lead Agency   |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|----------------|---|
|                                |                                     | <b>Boutique Distillery and Restaurant</b><br>200 person capacity distillery and restaurant attracting the Lifestyle Leader market.  | Funding        | Mansfield Shire Council   |
|                                | Lakeside Precinct                   | <b>Lakeside Precinct</b><br>Development of a waterside precinct including a jetty, pontoon, and trailhead for the Falls to Hotham Crossing.   | Implementation | Falls Creek Resort / ARV  |
| Adventure                      | Mt Stirling Horse Riding Adventures | Build on the growing popularity of horse riding in the High Country by extending the 60km Mt Stirling horse trail network to include an iconic 15km trail from Mt Stirling to Craigs Hut as featured in The Man from Snowy River.   | Concept        | Mt Buller Resort / ARV + Mansfield Shire Council                                |
|                                | Mount Elliot Adventure Park         | Deliver improvements to Mount Elliot to position the destination as an adventure park.  | Scoping        | Towong Shire Council  |
|                                | Mystic Mountain Enhancements        | Deliver improvements to Mystic Mountain which will support hang gliding and paragliding.  | Funding        | Alpine Shire Council  |
|                                | Climb High Country Masterplan       | Analyse climbing precincts in the High Country and identify opportunities to grow and develop the sector. Focus should include consideration of Cathedral Ranges, Mt Buller, Mt Buffalo, Mt Mittamatite.  | Concept        | Tourism North East  |
|                                | Mt Buller Mega Ziplines             | Develop Australia's longest zipline as a feature that attracts visitors all year round to help build summer visitation and mitigate climate change impacts on natural snowfall. This would be complemented by an iconic treetop tour of elevated platforms, suspension bridges and mini ziplines. | Implementation | Mt Buller Resort / ARV  |
|                                | Mt Buller Alpine Coaster            | Implement the second alpine coaster in Australia (after Thredbo) providing a thrilling 1.6km ride that attracts visitors all year round to help build summer visitation and mitigate climate change impacts on natural snowfall.  | Funding        | Mt Buller Resort / ARV  |
| Industry & Product Development | Great Lake Tourism Route            | Develop of Great Lake Touring Route around Lake Eildon.   | Concept        | Tourism North East in collaboration with Mansfield + Murrindindi Shire Councils |
|                                | Cultural Experience Development     | Work with First Peoples to develop nature based cultural experiences that tell the stories of First Peoples and their culture.  | Concept        | First Peoples' individuals and groups in collaboration with Tourism North East  |
|                                | Product Development                 | Develop and deliver regular product development opportunities, targeting industry operators in the walk, water and adventure space, offering product development and investment pathway support when possible and appropriate.  | Funding        | Tourism North East  |
| Marketing                      | Market Research                     | Investment of commissioned research into key drivers of walk, water and adventure based tourism.  | Funding        | Tourism North East  |
|                                | Victoria's High Country Brand       | Maintain the Great Outdoors (incl. walk, water and adventure) as a pillar in all High Country brand activations and activities.   | Funding        | Tourism North East  |
|                                | Walking Master Plan                 | Undertake a Masterplan for walk infrastructure in the region, identifying iconic short, day and multi-day walks in the High Country.  | Concept        | Tourism North East  |







#### 4.4 FOOD, DRINK AND PRODUCE

Vision: **Lifting the quality, access and provenance of local food and produce, exceptional wines, breweries and distilleries to drive innovation and deliver unique High Country food, drink and produce experiences.**

Victoria's High Country boasts a vibrant and diverse food and drink sector. Surrounded by stunning alpine landscapes, the region offers a wealth of local produce. From charming country cafes to award-winning wineries and innovative restaurants, visitors can savour the region's farm-to-table movement. Craft breweries and distilleries also showcase locally sourced ingredients, offering handcrafted beers, ciders, and spirits. With a focus on quality and authenticity, the High Country provides an unforgettable gastronomic experience for locals and visitors. There is opportunity to continue to develop the food, drink and produce sector to meet contemporary visitor expectations through continued innovation and investment across the High Country.

| Priorities                           | Detail                                 | Status  | Lead Agency    |   |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|----------------|---|
| Signature food and drink experiences | Destination Rutherglen                 | Delivery of outcomes from strategic planning from the Rutherglen DMP.   | Funding        | Indigo Shire Council  |
|                                      |  | Delivery of the Rutherglen Walk, Wine and Cycle Trail.  | Implementation | Indigo Shire Council  |
|                                      | King Valley Prosecco Road Master Plan  | <b>Boutique Hotel</b><br>Construction of a boutique hotel in the upper King Valley, including a small events centre and garden.   | Scoping        | Private Sector Investment   |
|                                      |  | <b>The King Valley Trail</b><br>Delivery of a shared path in the King Valley, linking Oxley and Cheshunt.   | Funding        | Rural City of Wangaratta  |
|                                      |  | <b>Town Improvements</b><br>Design and implementation of town beautification interventions in Cheshunt, Whitfield and Milawa.   | Funding        | Rural City of Wangaratta  |
|                                      | Delatite Valley Enhancement            | Undertake a Delatite Valley Masterplan to deliver the potential of the region as a category leading food and wine region.   | Concept        | Mansfield Shire Council   |
| Industry & Product Development       | First Peoples' Indigenous Food Program | In collaboration with First Peoples, develop and deliver an Indigenous food program aimed at educating and inspiring food and drink operators on the use of native ingredients. | Concept        | Tourism North East in collaboration with suitable First Peoples' individuals and organisations. |
|                                      | Accessible Cellar Door Program         | Develop and deliver a dedicated program that supports wineries and distilleries to improve the accessibility and inclusivity of their cellar door experience.                   | Concept        | Tourism North East  |
|                                      | Pedal to Produce                       | Reinvigorate the Murray to Mountains pedal to produce offering, linking cycling friendly businesses and unique experiences.   | Funding        | Tourism North East  |
|                                      |  | Develop a Great Victorian Rail Trail pedal to produce offering, linking cycling friendly businesses and unique experiences.   | Concept        | Tourism North East  |
| Marketing                            | Market Research                        | Invest in commissioned research into key drivers of epicurean tourism.  | Funding        | Tourism North East  |
|                                      | Victoria's High Country Brand          | Evolve the High Country brand strategy to better support growth in the paddock to plate, provenance and marketing of the food and drink offering.                               | Funding        | Tourism North East  |





**4.5 ARTS, CULTURAL HERITAGE AND EVENTS**

Vision: **Diversify the High Country’s creative and cultural heritage credentials to hero First People’s culture, broaden the audience demographic attracted to the High Country and increase dispersal throughout the region.**

The High Country has a rich cultural heritage but fails to offer the breadth of immersive and experiential products that visitors are looking for. This pillar aims to activate the region’s creative industries offering. This includes supporting infrastructure works like the Benalla Art Gallery Redevelopment, Wangaratta Cultural Precinct Project, as well as the development of highly engaging products associated with the local First Peoples’ experiences, Ned Kelly story, and a dynamic calendar of “only in High Country” cultural events.

| Project   | Detail   | Status   | Lead Agency          |                          |
|---|--|--|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Creative Developments   | Benalla Art Gallery Precinct   | <b>Stage 1 Redevelopment</b><br>Deliver stage one of the Benalla Art Gallery Business Case.  | Implementation       | Benalla Rural City       |
|   |  | <b>Stage 2 Redevelopment</b><br>Deliver stage two of Benalla Art Gallery Business Case.  | Funding              |                          |
|   |  | <b>Stage 3 Lake Precinct Masterplan</b><br>Deliver interventions into the Art Gallery lake to create an outdoor creative arts experience.  | Funding              |                          |
|   | Benalla Sash Exhibit   | Develop and deliver a compelling exhibition to display Ned Kelly’s famous green sash.  | Implementation       | Benalla Rural City       |
|   | Wangaratta Creative Precinct   | Stage 3 – Wangaratta Creative Precinct redevelopment implementation.<br><br>Complete delivery stages of Wangaratta Creative Precinct (3-6)   | Funding              | Rural City of Wangaratta |
|   | Flower of the Alpine Sun   | Flower of the Alpine Sun, by Australian artist Giovanni Veronesi. Perched at the top of a rocky outcrop near Cloud 9, the work will invite the viewer onto a walkway that will deliver them into a golden orb overlooking the breathtaking alpine landscape. | Implementation       | Falls Creek Resort /ARV  |
| Implementation of the Beechworth Historic Precinct Experience Master Plan | <b>Beechworth Courthouse Kelly Trials Project</b><br>Activation of the Courthouse, ensuring an immersive, authentic and educative experience for all visitors.       | Implementation   | Indigo Shire Council |                          |
|   | <b>Police Paddocks Activation</b><br>Activation of the Police Paddocks with semi-permanent, seasonal and temporary place making initiatives for community gathering. | Scoping  | Indigo Shire Council |                          |
|   | <b>Town Hall Upgrades</b><br>Refurbishment and upgrade of the Town Hall, including Precinct Hub, Council and business interface and facilities for community use.    | Scoping  | Indigo Shire Council |                          |
|   | <b>Burke Museum Extension</b><br>Extension of the Burke Museum, including new spaces for education, learning and a new accessible entry via Ford Street.             | Scoping  | Indigo Shire Council |                          |



| Priorities                     |                                       | Detail   | Status         | Lead Agency   |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|----------------|---|
|                                |                                       | <b>Laneways and Connections</b><br>Upgrade and establishment of connector spaces to contribute to storytelling and better connect the space with its surrounds.  | Scoping        | Indigo Shire Council  |
|                                |                                       | <b>Wayfinding Signage</b><br>Delivery of wayfinding signage (and limited interpretive signage where required) across the Precinct. This would need to have regard to signage locations and content design.   | Scoping        | Indigo Shire Council  |
|                                |                                       | <b>Old Beechworth Gaol</b><br>Development and delivery of a complementary masterplan to add to the Beechworth Historic Precinct, including Ned Kelly Alive and an interactive / experiential learning hub.   | Scoping        | Tourism North East<br>Indigo Shire Council<br>Old Beechworth Gaol |
|                                |                                       | <b>Rutherglen Silo Arts Precinct</b>   | Funding        | Indigo Shire Council  |
|                                |                                       | <b>Glenrowan Heritage Project</b><br>Development of the Glenrowan Heritage Project, including a viewing tower, siege site experience enhanced with virtual and augmented realities and landscaping works around Lions Park.  | Implementation | Rural City of Wangaratta  |
|                                |                                       | <b>Station Precinct Masterplan</b><br>Deliver recommendations outlined within the Station Precinct Masterplan.   | Funding        | Mansfield Shire Council   |
|                                |                                       | <b>Mansfield Heritage Museum</b><br>Development of a new state-of-the-art museum within the Mansfield Station Precinct.  | Implementation | Mansfield Shire Council   |
|                                |                                       | <b>The High Country Hall of Fame</b><br>Activating Merrijig, providing a year round experience, protecting and celebrating local heritage.   | Concept        | Mansfield Shire Council   |
| Industry & Product Development | Regional Creative Industries Strategy | <b>Myrtleford Memorial Hall Creative Precinct</b><br>Delivery of stage two of Myrtleford Memorial Hall, upgrades to the auditorium with the potential to become a creative Precinct.   | Funding        | Alpine Shire Council  |
|                                |                                       | A regional strategy that aims to unlock the potential of creative industries across the High Country region, spanning both physical spaces and programs to engage the creative industries across disciplines.  | Concept        | Tourism North East  |
|                                |                                       | <b>Regional Events Strategy</b><br>Development and implementation of a regional cultural events strategy.  | Concept        | Tourism North East  |
|                                |                                       | <b>Signature Cultural Events</b><br><b>Feast High Country Festival</b><br>A 10-day regional festival that celebrates a fusion of creativity, local produce, food + drink and the natural landscape. Taking place in Autumn, Feast High Country is a celebration of all of the things that makes the High Country so special. | Funding        | Tourism North East  |
|                                |                                       | <b>Beechworth - Lure</b><br>A single day event using the unique Beechworth streetscape as the stage. Stylised performances spill out onto the street as visitors indulge in the best of the best local produce and one of a kind experiences.  | Funding        | Indigo Shire Council  |

| Priorities |                 | Detail  | Status  | Lead Agency             |                    |
|------------|-----------------|---|---|-------------------------|--------------------|
|            |                 | <b>Rutherglen - Wake the Dark</b><br>A 10-day festival in Rutherglen, activating the night-time scene. Leaning into Rutherglen's reputation for bold flavours, Wake the Dark is a program filled with performance spectacles and bold food and drink. | Funding   | Indigo Shire Council    |                    |
|            |                 | <b>Benalla Street Art Festival</b><br>Develop the Benalla Street Art Festival into a signature annual arts event.   | Funding   | Benalla Rural City      |                    |
|            |                 | <b>Lake Eildon Festival</b><br>Expand the Lake Eildon festival to include event hubs in Goughs Bay, Bonnie Doon, and Jamieson.  | Funding   | Mansfield Shire Council |                    |
| Marketing  | Market Research | Investment of commissioned research into key drivers of cultural tourism.   | Funding   | Tourism North East      |                    |
|            |                 | Content Development   | Development of creative content to articulate the cultural offering of the region and support storytelling across the Victoria's High Country brand and marketing activities. | Funding                 | Tourism North East |
|            |                 | Marketing   | Increased creative industries presence in marketing and communication programs, highlighting the cultural proposition of the High Country as a destination.                   | Funding                 | Tourism North East |





## 5. SUPPORTING ACTIVITY

### 5.1 VISITOR SERVICING

Enable decision making by making it as easy as possible for visitors to dream, book and explore the High Country.

| Priorities                         | Detail                             |   | Status  | Lead Agency        |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|---------|--------------------|
| Reimagining the visitor experience | Elevated Storytelling              | Development of a comprehensive content strategy that delivers appropriate product and destination information across an omni-channel environment.                                 | Funding | Tourism North East |
|                                    | High Country Online Stage 3        | Implementation of hard conversion pathways within the High Country Explorer App, enabling users to directly book products and experiences.  | Funding | Tourism North East |
|                                    | High Country Online Stage 4        | Integration of generative AI into the online environment to improve the visitor experience through AI learning, delivering individual preferences to travelers.                   | Concept | Tourism North East |
|                                    | Visitor Servicing Industry Program | Development and delivery of a comprehensive industry education program designed to support High Country industry operators improve visitor servicing within their own businesses. | Concept | Tourism North East |

### 5.2 MARKETING

Deliver marketing initiatives of scale that reflect the High Country's brand personality and experiential benefits to motivate target markets to visit, stay longer and spend more.

All marketing efforts strategically align to both Tourism Australia's nationally focused marketing programs aimed at communicating with international audiences and Visit Victoria's statewide demand driving strategies targeting interstate visitors.

Positioning Victoria's High Country as Victoria's playground for epic adventures, unparalleled scenery and exceptional epicurean experiences.

| Priorities            | Detail                  |  | Status  | Lead Agency        |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|--|---------|--------------------|
| Master brand activity | Ride High Country       | Execution of a renewed Ride High Country campaign of scale that aims to overcome the limited awareness of the High Country as a cycling destination. | Funding | Tourism North East |
|                       | Victoria's High Country | Continued investment into Victoria's High Country master brand across marketing, visitor experience and product delivery and drive conversion.       | Funding | Tourism North East |



### 5.3 INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

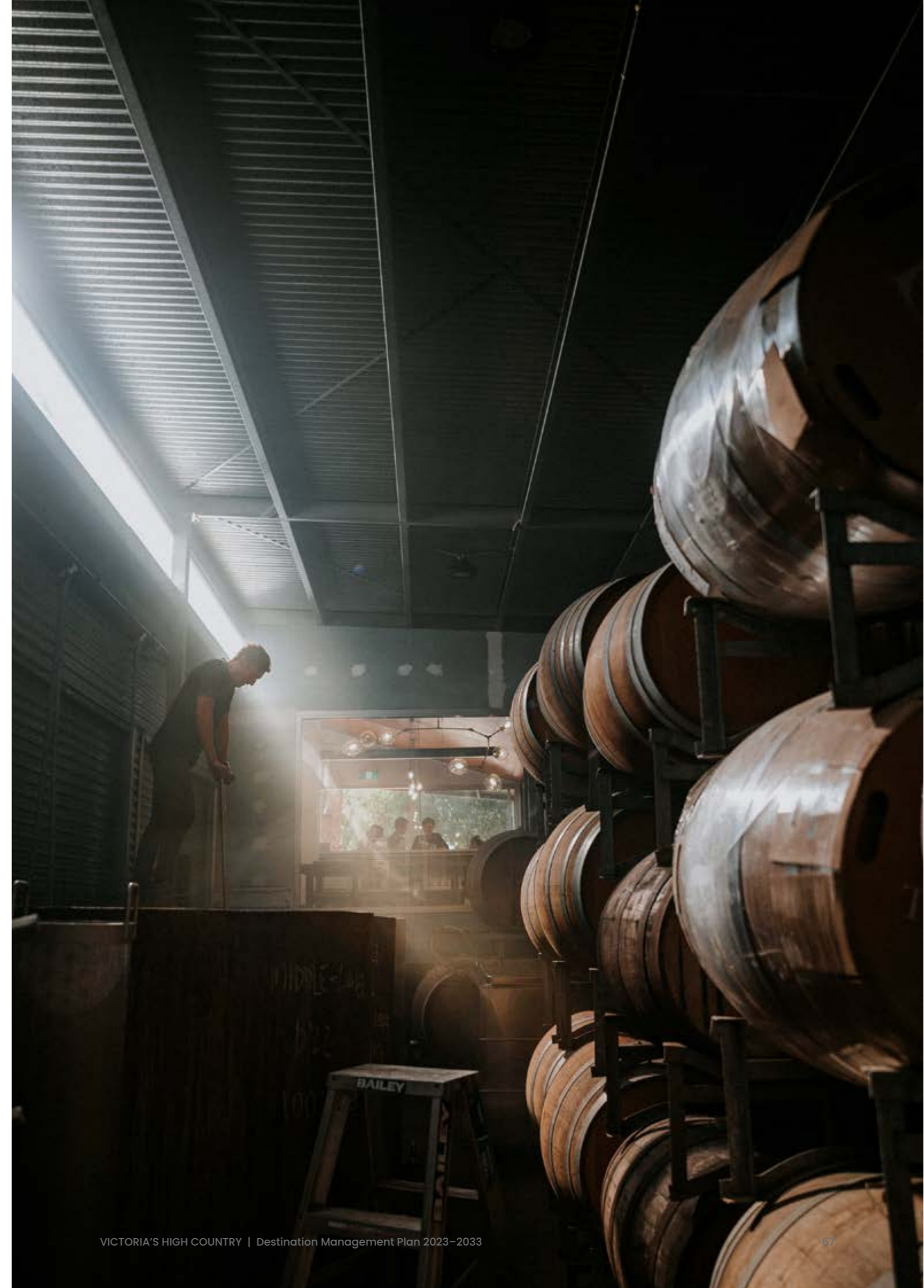
Ensure industry are connected and well equipped to deliver 'only in High Country' exemplary service. Tourism North East will achieve this through the development and delivery of an industry engagement program/s that provide robust customer insights, tactical and practical skills based support, professional services and resources.

| Priorities                         | Detail                                  |  | Status         | Lead Agency        |
|------------------------------------|---|--|----------------|--------------------|
| Product and experience development | Product Design Sprints                  | Design, develop and deliver annual product and experience design sprints for industry operators. Aimed at improving existing products and experiences together with developing new bookable products and experiences.  | Funding        | Tourism North East |
|                                    | Annual Industry and Product Development | Develop an annual plan that supports an always-on approach to industry and product development. Responding to the macro environment, the plan will reflect the current needs and motivators of the modern consumer and appropriately respond to industry requirements. | Annual Funding | Tourism North East |
|                                    | Digital Upskilling Program              | Develop and deliver a comprehensive digital upskilling program for industry operators, focused on implementation of online booking platforms, activation of social media and online accessibility.   | Funding        | Tourism North East |

### 5.4 CAPACITY BUILDING AND SUPPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE

Deliver capacity building projects to support growth of the visitor economy and create positive visitor experiences.

| Priorities              | Detail   |  | Status  | Lead Agency                        |
|-------------------------|--|--|---------|------------------------------------|
| Capacity Building       | NEWMAH   | The North East Workforce Management and Appropriate Housing initiative aims to overcome major the inhibitors of workforce attraction and retention, and access to appropriate accommodation.   | Funding | Tourism North East                 |
|                         | Development of an industry leading sustainability strategy         | Establish a leadership position in respect to triple bottomline sustainability targets through the development of a High Country sustainability strategy. Focused on establishing targets for environmental, economic and social outcomes influenced by tourism. | Funding | Tourism North East                 |
| Enabling Infrastructure | High Country Visitor Accommodation Investment Study and Prospectus | A regional-wide demand supply assessment and investment study which identifies the need for accommodation investment across the entire High Country region. The study will act as an investment prospectus for key accommodation targets.                        | Concept | Tourism North East                 |
|                         | Telecommunications   | Work with the Ovens Murray Digital Partnership to advocate for investment into telecommunications technology across the region.  | Funding | Tourism North East                 |
|                         | Enabling Infrastructure  | Advocate for funding pathways to support enabling infrastructure such as improved connectivity, public transport and road network, and access to water and sewerage.   | Funding | Tourism North East                 |
|                         | Asset renewal and maintenance                                      | Advocate for regional road enhancements and maintenance.   | Funding | Tourism North East<br>LGA Partners |





## 6. MONITORING

### 6.1 PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of all the priority projects requires significant investment from public and private entities. However, collective support of these priorities will focus regional efforts and maximise returns to the local visitor economy. The timeline for the realisation of each of these priorities will vary, which is a reflection of the fact that multiple parties are associated with their implementation and that relevant experience, funding and delivery capability will also differ between projects.

The High Country will work towards meeting the 2033 time frame defined by this plan, with a view to delivering significant tourism gains for the region. Infrastructure and product development and enhancements across all of these projects are expected to provide people with more reasons to visit and travel throughout the region, and engage with an offering that is relevant to their needs. New and enhanced products also provide greater opportunities for market exposure, ensure that visitors have a more enjoyable experience when in-region, and provide additional reasons to visit again.

From a marketing and communications perspective, the collective commissioning of relevant market research and activation of the Victoria's High Country master brand will ensure that the High Country is able to effectively capture customer awareness and interest. Investment in dedicated and high-profile marketing campaigns of scale will also ensure that the High Country and its priority projects sit front of mind with existing and potential visitors, effectively driving conversion among key segments. The combination of these infrastructure, product development and marketing efforts is expected to increase the number of people visiting the High Country, create more opportunities for yield via an increased range of tourism experiences, and provide a breadth of offering that necessitates overnight stays. These efforts will place the High Country in the best possible position to meet its visitation, source market and yield targets, and become a true leader in Victoria's regional tourism space.

### 6.2 MEASURING

Progress against the priority projects noted within the Destination Management Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Tourism North East will coordinate the review, working with LGA Partners and Alpine Resorts Victoria to analyse how they have advanced the Plan initiatives for which they are the lead agency, as well as noting Tourism North East's own efforts in delivering the components of the Plan that it is responsible for.

The progress report will also provide an overview of how the priority projects are contributing to the overarching regional visitation objectives, as well as make recommendations for any broader reviews and updates required of the Destination Management Plan itself.

### 6.3 CRISIS MANAGEMENT

In the event of a crisis (i.e. bushfire, flood, landslide and /or public health emergency) Tourism North East will activate the TNE Crisis Management Plan and work with authorities and government agencies to ensure all communications and actions follow appropriate protocol.

Tourism North East is committed to working with the Victorian Government on preparedness and planning, industry capacity building and visitor centric emergency communications.

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