

Since the start of the bushfires in our region Tourism North East (TNE) has been working closely with industry, stakeholders and relevant government agencies on response, recovery and advocacy.

With the immediate threat of fires subsiding, and our focus turning solidly to recovery, we thought it timely that we give you a snapshot of what activity has been, or is being, undertaken on behalf of each and every tourism business in our beautiful region. We are actively working to ensure the best possible outcomes for our businesses, our community and our industry.

Economic Impact Statement

At the onset of the fires Tourism North East engaged Urban Enterprise to prepare a statement on the economic impact of the fires to tourism in the region. It is estimated \$180 - \$208 million, and up to 630,000 visitors will be lost over the summer period. This data has been used to advocate for support services and funding with appropriate agencies.

State and local government advocacy

Senior staff have been meeting regularly with State and local government representatives to advocate for support and financial assistance for the tourism industry in the region. The impacts of the fires on the High Country economy has been widely acknowledged. Meetings have included:

- Regional Tourism Manager and CEO, Visit Victoria
- Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions
- Regional Development Victoria
- Ken Lay, Bushfire Risk Victoria
- Chief of staff for Minister for Tourism, Martin Pakula
- The Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade, Adem Somyurek
- State Member for Eildon, Cindy McLeish
- Federal Member for Indi, Helen Haines
- Department of Jobs, Innovation and Trade

Financial support

As a result of our advocacy efforts, TNE received a \$200,000 grant from the State Government. This is being used to subsidise free ATDW listings for new and renewing High Country businesses, giving them exposure on official marketing channels across regional, state and international platforms. Head to tourismnortheast.com.au for more information.

Industry support

We've had direct contact with over 130 industry members and over 280 members responded to the economic impact survey. We've incorporated these results into the Economic Impact Survey.

The digital team has been working with operators to support their sign-up for ATDW listings and further digital training workshops are planned to help operators leverage online opportunities.

Public relations / confirmed media activities

TNE has been working closely with regional, state and national media since the fires began. We have provided information and created interview opportunities including the 'open for business' messaging and have secured significant exposure as a result. High-profile media includes:

- Channel 9's 'Today Show' doing live crosses from Bright and Beechworth
- Channel 9's 'Postcards' running two special segments coming from Beechworth & Bright, highlighting local businesses & experiences
- News Ltd publications of stories featuring High Country businesses, events, experiences
- The Age Good Food in region with a number of pieces planned
- Roadtrip for Good adding a full High Country itinerary to the site, as well as a King Valley Guide.

We have also had positive news stories promoting the region and the 'open for business' message in:

- International: NZ Herald / CNN
- National/Interstate: ABC Radio – national / The Weekly Times / Brisbane Times / Newcastle Herald
- The Australian / Travel & Indulgence, Weekend Australian / Traveller / Lotsa Fresh Air
- State: Herald Sun / Sunday Herald Sun / The Age / Time Out Melbourne
- Local: Wangaratta Chronicle/NE Newspaper affiliates / ABC Goulburn Murray / Border Mail



High Country Comeback 2020

The High Country Comeback, held on Sunday 2 February at The Timber Yard in Melbourne, was a showcase of High Country business. TNE worked closely with the event organisers to secure state government funding, and assist with publicity, media and messaging. Visitor information staff were on hand to provide destination information and take live bookings. The event was hugely successful attracting 6000 attendees who spent around \$500,000 dollars and raised over \$10,000 for charitable donations to the CFA and Wildlife.

Marketing campaigns

Social media campaigns

While business was still finding its feet, TNE quickly identified three high-profile social media campaigns and worked with the owners to ensure the High Country was represented and supported. Opportunities still exist for operators to be involved with these successful campaigns. #roadtripforgood #emptyesky #spendwiththem

Visit Victoria

TNE continues to work closely with Visit Victoria on a range of initiatives and opportunities to promote the High Country within their activities, which includes a range of media in the 'A short stay goes a long way' marketing campaign. Includes:

- Paid social media exposure, editorial in Herald Sun Space Magazine liftout, content partnerships with NewsCorp and Channel 9 (including the Australian Open), the Today Show (two live broadcasts aired - Bright and Beechworth), filming for Postcards
- Visiting journalists from The Age Good Food and other News Limited publications, and regional email newsletters.
- Visit Victoria's social media team will be in region this week for content creation and social media sharing on @visitmelbourne platforms. This includes video interviews with business including wineries and eateries in the King Valley, Milawa, Beechworth and Rutherglen.

Tourism North East existing marketing campaigns

As the fire situation unfolded existing Tourism North East marketing campaigns were halted or altered for appropriateness and rescheduled. When the restriction on marketing was lifted we began an extensive paid social media campaign, promoting our 'open for business' message and featuring destination highlights.

A new media schedule for our existing campaigns (Ride / Walk / Feast) that has a focus on driving autumn visitation will commence shortly across a number of channels. Target audiences have been broadened to include regional markets close to High Country.

TNE has also secured a month of free live read ads on 2AY Albury encouraging locals to visit and support businesses.



Tourism North East region-wide recovery marketing

We have begun advanced planning for a region-wide marketing campaign, the scale of which is contingent on the confirmation of Victorian Government financial support. Further detail will be provided next week, including opportunities for operators.

It is anticipated this campaign will focus on Melbourne metro audiences across a range of media platforms.

Ride High Country marketing updates

In light of the fires a new campaign hashtag and creative has been developed - #RollOnBack – we encourage cycling operators to use this where appropriate. A new television commercial has been shot in region that will be used across social media, YouTube and TV.

The upcoming Jayco Herald Sun Tour provides substantial opportunities for visitation and exposure. TNE has been working with agencies and with the event organisers to ensure the event is successfully delivered and leveraged.



Message from Acting CEO, Sarah Pilgrim

On behalf of the staff of Tourism North East we acknowledge the hardship being endured by many businesses. We are constantly amazed at the resilience displayed by our industry, and by the level of support we have given each other and had shown to us by the wider community.

This can only make us stronger. I look forward to working with you towards a full recovery and ensuring that Tourism North East continues to play a critical role in achieving this.

As always please don't hesitate to contact us should require any further information or to discuss any of the above.

Best wishes
Sarah