

YARRA VALLEY AND DANDENONG RANGES

EVENT STRATEGY 2024-28





Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Bunurong and Taungurung peoples of the Kulin Nation as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters of the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges on which we live, work and play and pay our deepest respect to Elders past and present.

Contents

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT <i>Executive Summary</i>	00
THE STAGE <i>Destination Profile</i>	04
PRESENTED BY <i>Strategic Partners & Collaboration</i>	06
BEHIND THE SCENES <i>Strategic Context</i>	07
WHAT'S ON <i>Event Snapshot & Seasonality</i>	08
HEADLINE ACTS <i>Competitive Advantages</i>	10
OUR FANS <i>Target Markets</i>	12
BACKSTAGE <i>Case Studies</i>	14
REHEARSAL <i>Challenges & Opportunities</i>	18
FUTURE ACTS <i>Collective Aspirations</i>	21
THE MAIN EVENT <i>Vision, Goals & Strategic Approach</i>	22
HITTING THE HIGH NOTES <i>Critical Success Factors</i>	24
THE PROGRAM <i>Action Plan</i>	36
APPLAUSE <i>Consultation Process</i>	37
SUPPORT ACTS <i>Survey Findings & Background Paper</i>	38

Program Snapshot

[EXECUTIVE SUMMARY]

544

**ATDW LISTED
EVENTS**

167

**FOOD & WINE
EVENTS**

12

**MAJOR
EVENTS**

The Headline Acts



**World-famous
Wine Region**



**Food & Drink
Destination**



**Flowers &
Horticulture**



**Spellbinding
Nature**



**Creative
Community**



**So Close, yet
a World Away**

Strategic Approach

The strategic approach is to firmly position Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges as an event friendly destination, increase the quality and capacity of home-grown events and attract new events that showcase the destination's competitive advantages.

Redefining traditional measures of event success, the destination moves beyond mere visitor numbers to focus on the quality and impact of events. Instead of mass attendance, the emphasis is on hosting high-yield signature events that not only entertain but also celebrate and preserve the essence of the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges. This strategic shift ensures events are not just fleeting moments, but a lasting tribute to the destination's natural beauty, culture, and heritage, delivering long-term overnight visitor expenditure, return visitation and community benefits.

Vision

A nationally recognised specialist event destination, renowned for signature events inspired by spellbinding nature, world-famous wines, produce and creativity, igniting visitor senses and imaginations.

Goals



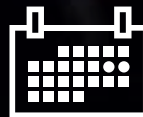
DRIVE ECONOMIC BENEFIT

Drive overnight visitor expenditure, increasing length of stay and spend, during during off-peak and shoulder seasons.



SHOWCASE DESTINATION

Showcase our signature attributes, positioning the destination as a leading specialist event destination.



IGNITE YEAR-ROUND EVENTS CALENDAR

Facilitate a year-round calendar of events that ignite visitor senses and imaginations.



INSPIRE CREATIVE COMMUNITY

Inspire community creativity and innovation, fostering collaboration among artists, producers, growers and makers through active event participation.

Critical Success Factors

1

Year-Round Calendar of Events

2

Develop Signature Events

3

Event Friendly Destination

4

Grow Return on Investment

5

Facilitate Home-Grown Events

The Stage

[DESTINATION PROFILE]

A stunning natural playground of gourmet eateries and farm gates, quaint villages and world-famous vineyards boasting over 80 wineries and cellar doors, the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges lies within just one hour of Melbourne city yet feels worlds away.

Home to over 220,000 residents dispersed through the many towns and villages of Yarra Valley Council and Nillumbik Shire Council, the wider region attracts over 5 million visitors annually, dominated by day-trippers and Melbournians seeking weekend escapes.

Its spectacular natural experiences include the iconic Tree Fern Gully and forests of towering mountain ash to the home to Victoria's highest 82-meter drop waterfall and biggest tree.

From Montsalvat, Australia's oldest artists' colony to the Tarrawarra Museum of Art to cutting-edge modern artists, the region

literally oozes creativity. Open studio events, artists in resident, live music, galleries and arts events of all shapes and sizes.

Featuring over 30 conference and meeting venues catering from groups of 5 to 500, the region hosts numerous business and incentive events throughout the year.

Embracing her stunning natural backdrop, creative community and agricultural production, the region hosts over 500 events attracting visitors annually, ranging from food and wine, floral and horticulture, arts, music and lifestyle to cycling and outdoor trails.

The Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges certainly provides a stunning stage and backdrop for hosting events.



Kinglake

Marysville ▲ Lake Mountain

Steels Creek

Dixons Creek

Melbourne Airport

APPROX. 1 HOUR

Hurstbridge

Yarra Glen

Tarrawarra

Healesville

YARRA VALLEY

Diamond Creek

Yering

Gruyere

DON VALLEY

Mt Donna Buang ▲

Eltham

Coldstream

Wandin

Yarra Junction

Warburton

APPROX. 1 HOUR

Lilydale

Woori Yallock

MELBOURNE CBD

Ringwood

DANDENONG RANGES

Olinda

Belgrave

Emerald

PORT PHILLIP BAY

to Phillip Island

Presented By

[STRATEGIC PARTNERS & COLLABORATION]

The Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Events Strategy was developed and will be implemented in collaboration with strategic partners and stakeholders, including, but not limited to:

Event Stakeholders	State	National
Event organisers/owners	Visit Victoria	Major event organisers/owners
Event sponsors and suppliers	Business Events Victoria	Business Events Australia
Venues, accommodation and tourism operators	Creative Victoria	Tourism Australia
Industry associations e.g. Wine Yarra Valley	Victoria Tourism Industry Council	Tourism Research Australia
Volunteers and local community		
Media partners		

Tourism Event Focus

For the purpose of the strategy, the focus is on events that have a tourism orientation with the best potential to stimulate visitation from outside the region, as opposed to community events who's primary purpose is to appeal/attract local residents.

Behind the Scenes

[STRATEGIC CONTEXT]

The Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Event Strategy has been developed in strategic context of local, regional, state and national strategies.

Austrade

Thrive 2030

The reimaged visitor economy

Visit Victoria

Experience Victoria 2033

Regional Event Fund Guidelines

Victoria's Visitor Economy Master Plan

Creative State 2025

Yarra Ranges Tourism

Yarra Valley & Dandenong Ranges
Destination Management Plan

Yarra Valley Racing Event Attraction Report 2014

Yarra Valley Business Events Planners Guide 2023

LUNA Business Case 2022

YRT Tourism Events Grant Program

Yarra Ranges Shire Council

Yarra Ranges Economic
Development Strategy 2022-2032

Yarra Ranges Creative
Communities Strategy 2018

Yarra Ranges Recreation and
Open Space Strategy 2013-2023

Yarra Ranges Council Plan 2021-2025

Yarra Ranges Council Grant Policy

Nillumbik Shire Council

Nillumbik Economic
Development Strategy 2020 – 2030

Nillumbik Arts and
Culture Strategy 2022-2026

Nillumbik Recreation and
Leisure Strategy 2022 - 2030

Nillumbik Shire Council Plan 2021-2025

Nillumbik Events Policy 2022

What's On

[EVENT SNAPSHOT]

544 ATDW LISTED EVENTS



319
ONE-OFF
EVENTS

100 food & wine

96 concert/
performance

20 community events

43 classes, lessons,
workshops, talks

39 exhibitions/shows



104
ANNUAL
EVENTS

44 food & wine

22 festivals &
celebrations

4 community events



167
FOOD + WINE
EVENTS

12 MAJOR EVENTS P.A.¹

Tesselaar Tulip Festival 120K

KaBloom 80K

Rochford Wines Summer Concert Series Australia touring artist concert (6-8,000 tickets), international artist (10-12,000 tickets). Up to 8 events per year.

Herb and Chilli Festival 7K+

Belgrave Lantern Festival* 10-12K

Eltham Jazz, Food & Wine Festival* 7K+

Hurstbridge Wattle Festival* 16K

¹ Business events/conferences not included. Major Event defined as 5,000+ external visitors in attendance.

ATDW: Australian Tourism Data Warehouse.

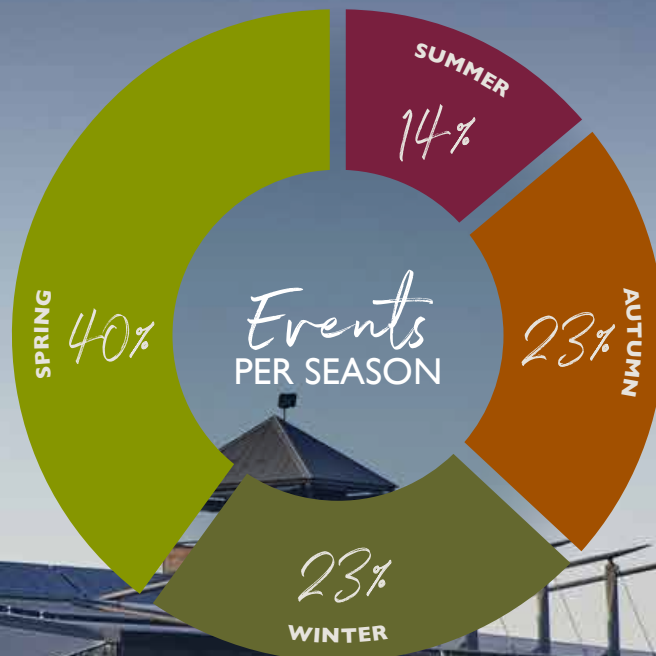
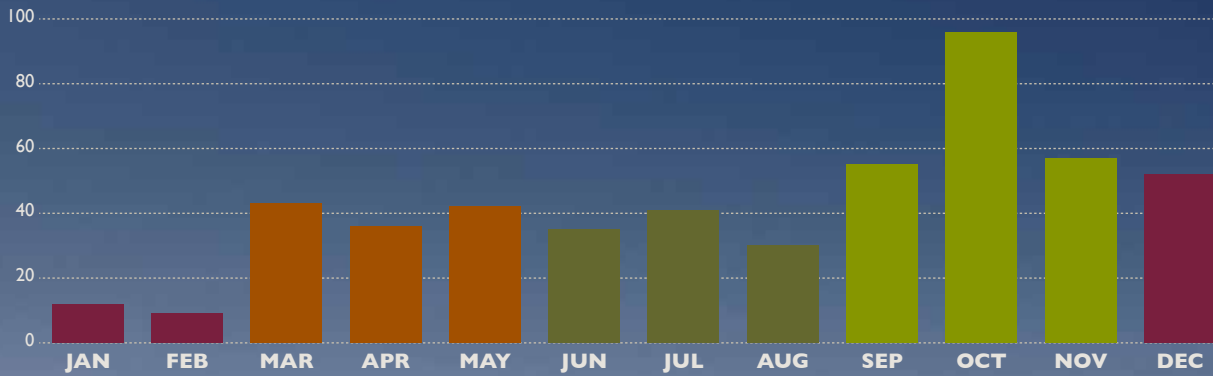
* Non-profit incorporated associations

Seasonality

Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges host events year-round with the majority staged during Spring, with shoulder season of Autumn and Winter, and low season being Summer.

Most events are staged on weekends, with year-round off peak being mid-week.

Events PER MONTH



SOURCE:
Seasonality data based on ATDW listings. Percentage figures pertain to number of events, not number of event visitors/attendees.



Headline Acts

[COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES]

Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges competitive advantages align closely to those identified in the YVDR DMP and the Experience Victoria 2033 product pillars including, Arts & Culture, Food & Drink, Nature. The secret of success will be encouraging events to further amplify these “headline acts” through event programming and marketing.



World-famous Wine Region

Birthplace of Victorian wine industry with 170-year legacy, the world-famous Yarra Valley is Victoria’s most popular wine region with over eighty vineyards, boasting wineries and cellar door experiences.



Food & Drink Destination

Premier food and drink, epicurean destination, often referred to as ‘Melbourne’s Food Bowl’. Strong local food and drink culture. regional food and taste trails. Food and drink identified in the YVDR DMP as a primary consumer travel motivator.



Flowers & Horticulture

Well-established floral and horticulturally based events attracting significant event attendees.



Spellbinding Nature

Stunning landscapes and iconic locations from the forest giants, the towering mountain ash (native to Victoria and Tasmania), Tree Fern Gully and Victoria's highest 82-meter drop waterfall. The natural environment makes way for incredibly beautiful and inspiring soft adventure, epicurean and well-being event experiences.



Creative Community

Inspired by spellbinding nature, landscapes, wine and culture, a leading creative community of all art genres, traditional and contemporary, has evolved. From cutting edge architecture, galleries, museums and local studios, inspiring year-round arts and cultural events.



So Close, yet a World Away

Proximity to growing population of Melbourne and airport for future interstate and international visitation, providing great opportunity for events if managed sustainably and promoting overnight stays.

Our Fans

[TARGET MARKETS]

Geographic Source Markets

Throughout consultation, Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges (YVDR) event organisers cited the main geographic sources of their event attendees to be:

1. Melbourne
2. Local Area
3. Neighbouring Municipalities
4. Interstate
5. Other Regional VIC
6. International

Victoria is Australia's fastest-growing state in terms of population, with Melbourne projected to overtake Sydney to be Australia's largest city, with Metropolitan Melbourne LGAs projected to experience an average annual growth rate of 2-4%, with growing Asian and Indian migration.

YVDR events are perfectly positioned to capitalise on the projected population growth by creating event experiences unique to YVDR to encourage Melburnians to take an overnight event short break.



Market Segments

To ensure greater economic impact for events and the local community, curating events to cater for the needs and desires of high-value visitors will be essential.

In line with Visit Victoria's key domestic target market, Lifestyle Leaders, and Tourism Australia's international target market, High Value Travellers, YVDR events have the potential to develop existing and new event experiences to meet what these markets want.

LIFESTYLE LEADERS

- High discretionary spending
- Early adopters and tech-savvy
- Educated, professional and progressive
- Diverse group
- Responds to social media and influencers

What They Want

- Unique and immersive experiences
- Strong connection to place
- Quality food and wine, local produce
- Culture in all its forms
- Nature and wellbeing experiences

HIGH VALUE TRAVELLERS (HVTs)

- Empowered and worldly
- Above-average spenders
- More likely to disperse further
- Seek out travel content online
- Travel to expand their horizons

What They Want

- Food and wine experiences
- Nature and wildlife experiences
- To learn about a destination
- Authenticity and life as a local



HVTs are empowered and increasingly knowledgeable about the world around them. HVTs view knowledge about a destination as fundamental to an enriching travel experience. HVTs prefer authentic holidays where they experience the local culture and everyday life. They want to experience everything from the local cuisine to the natural surroundings.

Lifestyle Leaders represent more than 30 per cent of the Australian population (5.95 million Australians). They are professionals or managers with an average annual household income of \$130,160. They spend more when they travel and travel more than the average population. They like to shop, particularly online, and are open to trying new things. When they travel, they like to stay active, experience the local culture and see nature. Lifestyle Leaders and HVTs can be leisure tourists, working-holiday makers, visiting friends and relatives, or business travellers.

VICTORIA'S VISITOR ECONOMY MASTER PLAN DIRECTIONS PAPER

Backstage

[CASE STUDIES]

The following event case studies provide insights for YVDR, selected as events based in destinations with similar ‘head-line’ acts, e.g. wine, food and drink, creative communities and close to a major capital city.

MAJOR VICTORIAN WINE EVENT

Grampians Grape Escape

The iconic not-for-profit Grampians Grape Escape is a weekend of regional wine, food and music. A gated event, staged at a recreation reserve in Halls Gap, the event celebrated 31 years in 2024, raising their glass to the district’s hardworking producers and makers.

Attracting approximately 8,000 visitors over the three-day festival, they create a village of some 100 stalls, from wine and whiskey to food and crafts, featuring masterclasses, cooking demonstrations, live music, guest chefs, and free children’s entertainment.

Success Drivers

- 2024 Event budget \$700k, supported by Victorian Major Events and local sponsors.
- A company limited structure with not-for-profit objectives.
- Ticket prices range from \$12.50 - \$255.
- Site fees for stall holders range up to \$1,000 each.
- Engage significant professional talent from brands to semi-celebrity chefs.
- Event started as a grass roots event by locals 31 years ago.
- Majority of attendees are from regional Victoria.
- Marketing budget of \$150k delivered by the Regional Tourism Board for the event.



LEADING AGRITOURISM EVENT

Eat Local Month

Staged annually in June in Queensland's Scenic Rim, within one hour from Brisbane and the Gold Coast.

Recognising the economic contribution of agriculture and tourism to the shire, the event was launched in 2011 as 'Scenic Rim Eat Local Week' to showcase local growers, producers, makers. Since then, it has grown annually in terms of size and scale with increasing media profile, visitation and participation by growers/producers.

Now a month-long event called 'Scenic Rim Eat Local Month' it culminates in its signature event, the Winter Harvest Festival.

Success Drivers

- Event builds on the strengths of the destination and identified early, the consumer trend and opportunity of paddock to plate, to 'eat local'.
- It started small with real purpose "a celebration of the people whose hard work make food possible". Its growth was organic over a decade, not a fad/overnight success.
- Curated by the Scenic Rim Regional Council working with local producers and businesses. As greater strategic partners came on board, the council engaged professional event director and media and PR specialist who knew events and could also work/engage local community and farmers.
- Partnered and supported by Queensland Government (Tourism & Events Queensland), produce/agriculture sponsors and media, and their regional tourism organisation.



SUCCESSFUL YVDR ARTS EVENT

Rone Empire

Set in iconic mansion Burnham Beeches in Sherbrooke, Victoria, an artist-in-residence, Rone created a series of murals inside the Art Moderne mansion, accompanied by installations open for public viewing, Mar- April 2019.

A unique immersive artistic environment within the derelict building through multi-media. Visitors felt they had entered a beautiful, abandoned space.

Attracting 26,450 visitors across the 49-day exhibition.

Success Drivers

- Provided access to a heritage building not usually accessible to the public.
- Innovative art installation and popularity of the artist attracted new, high-value cultural visitors to region.
- The event aligned with the Arts & Culture product strength of the region.

Opportunities For Growth

- Develop exclusive experiences surrounding the exhibition program to leverage high ticketing demand and increase yield.
- Partner packaging (development and promotion) to attract overnight stays, drive regional dispersal and increase yield.
- Increase promotion of shuttle service to improve accessibility and provide opportunities to showcase the region.
- Improve post-event data collection to better assess event outcomes.



Harry Potter

A Warner Bros. and global live-entertainment company, Fever had planned to bring an event called the 'Forbidden Forest Experience' a light and sound night-time woodland trail experience to Australia.

After being staged in Singapore, the event was to be staged initially in Victoria at a wildlife sanctuary, The Briars Sanctuary in the Mornington Peninsula.

The Challenge

Raising concerns the event could endanger wildlife, more than 20,000 people signed a petition to relocate the 'Forbidden Forest Experience'.

At a unanimous Shire of Mornington Peninsula council meeting, the event was forced to relocate to The Briars Community Forest, Mount Martha, just two months out from the event.

Consideration For YVDR Events

Community – engaging community/interest groups, particularly in a destination where community highly values the natural environment and lifestyle of the region. Appreciating why people move to and visitors come to the area (e.g. natural environment, less crowded, no traffic jams, safe community). Balancing the right type of events in the right locations to alleviate community backlash.

Government – understanding state and local strategies and policies that place priority on the green character, 'green wedge' and special character of each town and village.



Rehearsal

Throughout consultation, the following challenges, opportunities and gaps were identified.

Challenges

Infrastructure

- Inter and intra-regional transport and connectivity.
- Venue and accommodation capacity constraints for larger events.
- Accommodation quantity and quality to suit different event markets.
- Event traffic and parking.
- Difficulty finding event venue information for non-business events.

Seasonality

- Region is already full during weekends with day trippers and weddings.
- Majority of events staged on weekends, while mid-week has few events.
- Summer is low season, with winter shoulder season.
- Adapting event resilience for changing/unpredictable weather patterns.

Proximity

- Event visitors coming predominantly from Melbourne. The proximity makes it easy for event attendees to drive home, limiting potential economic impact/overnight visitor expenditure.

Community

- Limited understanding by some community members of the value of tourism and events.
- Event organisers need to consider and respect the local residents and their desire to protect their lifestyle.

Financial

- Financial sustainability.
- Limited budget to be creative/keep event fresh/unique.
- Increasing cost of operations/staging events.
- Limited major corporations located within region to sponsor events, with major employer in some areas being the local government authority.

Human Resourcing

- Professional/experienced teams required to develop, deliver and promote events.
- Diminishing volunteer base.
- Some events unable to expand events mid-week due to event organisers/stall holders committed with full-time employment.
- Smaller venues/accommodation don't have a key touch point for meeting planners.

Government

- Increasing cost and human resourcing required for regulatory obligations, e.g. traffic management, permits, insurance etc.
- Desire for event organisers for planning regulations to be more 'event friendly'.

Opportunities

Event Curation/Programming

- Curating mid-week, pop-up evening/up-late events e.g. pop-up dining experiences in unique locations, interactive lighting activities, museum up-late events.
- Increase frequency of events, rather than increasing scale.
- Further develop mid-week arts, cultural, food & wine and horticulturally based events e.g. cooking classes, art workshops, gardening/sustainable lifestyle workshops.
- High-value events that hone in on destination strengths.

Attracting New Markets

- Attracting markets that can travel mid-week, e.g. retired/semi-retired, international, corporate/business events, weddings, special celebrations/anniversaries.
- Accessible, solo travellers, pet friendly events.
- Work with Inbound Tourism Operators to develop international weddings, special celebrations and business incentives.
- Further grow business event market for smaller conferences and event incentives.
- Visitors seeking unique, niche events – worth travelling and staying overnight for.

Partnerships

- Greater collaboration and partnerships with events, tourism and community.
- Work with community to grow volunteer base and local business connections.
- Cross-promote complimentary events.
- Further enhance partnerships/relationships with Visit Victoria, Business Events Victoria and industry sector associations.

Financial

- Facilitate existing events to be self-sustainable, not reliable on on grants/public funding to operate.
- Encourage eligible events to apply for grant funding opportunities.

Human Resourcing

- Improve quality of events, engaging professional specialists.
- Increase event organiser capacity through long-term mentoring program, including grant submission support, partnerships.

Event Friendly

- Establish YVDR as an “event friendly” destination.
- Improve information for event organisers e.g. venues, event approved spaces.

Gaps

Events

- Unique YVDR food, wine, creative event with hallmark potential.
- Signature off-season event linked to a national/global franchise to give reach and scale.
- Mid-week, evening and events during shoulder/low season (February, Winter, November).

Event Sustainability

- A blueprint for successful events.
- Sustainable event modelling, particularly to ensure mid-week event viability.

Human Resourcing

- Dedicated Business Events role to promote and facilitate small and medium size business events and incentives.

Capacity Building

- Capacity building program for existing events in the areas of experience development, grant funding, business planning, branding, marketing, ticketing, local business/community engagement and permissions/approvals.

Event Friendly

- Concierge point of contact to assist/facilitate event organisers to meet regulatory obligations and stage events.

Financial

- Promotion and in-kind support for mid-week/overnight event activations.

Partnerships

- Partnerships to support marketing and attendance to reduce risks of staging mid-week events e.g. partnerships with Melbourne, interstate and international organisations.
- Collaboration across the region with events that span multiple venues – hosting international Melbourne based chefs at local venues.



Future Acts

[COLLECTIVE ASPIRATIONS]

Arising from consultation, event organisers and stakeholders were asked how they would ideally envision the YVDR event landscape to look like in the next five to ten years.

Here's their collective aspirations:

Signature off-season events to support destination identity reflecting our nature, wellbeing, food, wine, arts and cultural heritage.

Year-round events calendar with more mid-week, evening and shoulder/low seasons events.

Known as an event friendly destination, working with events and venues of all sizes.

Innovative, creative events that have cut through in a cluttered marketplace, and cannot be easily copied or replicated, i.e. events endemic to YVDR. A 'Dark MOFO' style event in winter.

Events of smaller scale but with higher frequency.

A destination that excels in high-value boutique events.

A reputation in Victoria and Australia as a leading small to mid-scale corporate and special events destination.

Deep desire to keep community on-board and maintain what attracts people to the region to visit and move here.



The Main Event

[VISION, GOALS & STRATEGIC APPROACH]

Vision

A nationally recognised specialist event destination, renowned for signature events inspired by spellbinding nature, world-famous wines, produce and creativity, igniting visitor senses and imaginations.

In Five Years...

In five years, the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges has evolved to a premier specialist events destination, boasting a diverse calendar that captivates visitors year-round. These events offer a tantalizing array of experiences that engage the senses, from the tastes of exquisite wine, produce and cuisine to the fragrant scents of the region's flora, and the breathtaking sights of nature that nourish the mind, body, and soul.

The destination has redefined traditional measures of event success, moving beyond mere visitor numbers to focus on the quality and impact of each experience. Instead of mass attendance, the emphasis is on hosting high-yield signature events that not only entertain but also celebrate and preserve the essence of the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges. This strategic shift ensures that each event is not just a fleeting moment but a lasting tribute to the region's natural beauty, culture, and heritage.

Goals



DRIVE ECONOMIC BENEFIT

Drive overnight visitor expenditure, increasing length of stay and spend during off-peak and shoulder seasons.



SHOWCASE DESTINATION

Showcase our signature attributes, positioning the destination as a leading specialist event destination.



IGNITE YEAR-ROUND EVENTS CALENDAR

Facilitate a year-round calendar of events that ignite visitor senses and imaginations.



INSPIRE CREATIVE COMMUNITY

Inspire community creativity and innovation, fostering collaboration among artists, producers, growers and makers through active event participation.

Strategic Approach

The strategic approach is to firmly position Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges as an event friendly destination, increase the quality and capacity of home-grown events and attract new events that showcase the destination's competitive advantages.

The focus is to develop event experiences that ignite and captivate visitor senses and imaginations, attract significant media attention and grow overnight, year-round, visitor expenditure and return visitation for long-term community benefits.

Hitting the High Notes

[CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS]

1

YEAR-ROUND CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2

DEVELOP SIGNATURE EVENTS

3

EVENT FRIENDLY DESTINATION

4

GROW RETURN ON INVESTMENT

5

FACILITATE HOME GROWN EVENTS



Abbreviations

ATDW	Australian Tourism Data Warehouse
BEV	Business Events Victoria
CV	Creative Victoria
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
LGAs	Local Government Authorities
OVE	Overnight Visitor Expenditure
YRT	Yarra Ranges Tourism
YVDR	Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges
VV	Visit Victoria

The bolded organisation identified in action plan stakeholder column is the lead agency, with other key stakeholders as potential partners.



Year-Round Calendar of Events

Igniting a year-round calendar of events is a critical success factor for the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges, addressing seasonality with a focus on increasing high-yield mid-week, evening and shoulder/low-season events.

Higher Frequency. Higher Value.

In analysis of existing accommodation and venue capacities across the region, the underlying strategic approach is to increase frequency of higher value events, rather than increasing scale.

Mid-Week, Evening & Multi-Day Events

Encouraging and incentivising staging of mid-week, evening, dawn and dusk and multi-day events throughout the year aims to achieve the strategic goal of increasing overnight visitor expenditure and creating a nighttime economy, ensuring long-term sustainable events, businesses and year-round employment.

Off-Peak Season

Further contributing to a year-round events calendar, increasing events in the low and shoulder seasons in February, Winter and November is required. Strategic focus is the elevation of existing events and attracting new events in off-peak seasons that showcase the destination's signature attributes.



Incentive Events

An exclusive event designed to incentivise employees, often to recognise their achievements. A powerful tool for encouraging teamwork and creating positive corporate culture. Desirable locations for incentive events are those easily accessible, but often regionally based in stunning locations offering unique experiences so employees feel like they are on holiday.

Business Events

Business events, incentives and special celebration events are an ideal solution for increasing mid-week visitation, where YVDR could specialise in high-yield business events for 30-80 people.

With a consistent, long-term approach Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges has the potential to solidify its reputation in Victoria and Australia as a leading small to mid-scale corporate and special events destination.



The Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges are in the top two highest referring regions for business events in regional Victoria, YVDR receives 74% enquiries/leads.

BUSINESS EVENTS VICTORIA

Due to its natural visitor appeal and world-renowned wine destination, YVDR could further build its capacity and reputation as a leading boutique incentives destination.

Increased human and financial resourcing will be required for the destination to realise its potential in business events. The role should be sales focussed, engaging with potential clients and driving business into the region.



International business event visitors spend on average twice as much as leisure visitors during their trip to Australia.

TOURISM AUSTRALIA, 2024

Partnerships & Packaging

To increase length of stay and spend, further encourage tourism and event partnerships across the region through networking, bundling and packaging of events with YVDR accommodation and visitor experiences.

STRATEGY	ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS	MONITORING	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028
1.1 Business Events	Rethink participation/funding model to secure dedicated FTE role. Develop targeted business events strategy with sales targets. Long-term business event famil and trade marketing program.	YRT, BEV, business events industry operators	Funding secured. FTE engaged with strategy. No. of partners in program. Enquiries/leads. Value of mid-week event business generated				
1.2 Mid-week, nighttime economy and off-peak season	Encourage events to be staged mid-week, evening/ dawn/dusk and off-peak. Increased marketing and media PR for mid-week, off-peak events.	YRT, LGAs, VV, events operators	Increased number of events in low/shoulder periods and OVE.				
1.3 Multi-day events	Encourage extending one-day to multi-day events.	YRT, LGAs	Number of events length-of-stay extended				
1.4 Partnerships and packaging	Facilitate networking and packaging of events with tourism businesses and experiences.	YRT, LGAs, Tourism and events operators	Evidenced event and tourism partnerships.				



Develop Signature Events

Showcasing signature events that reflect our signature attributes will help to achieve the goal of positioning Yarra Valley and the Dandenong Ranges as a leading event destination, specialising in high-value signature events endemic to the destination.

Understanding many Victorian regional events are targeting Melbourne, intra and interstate visitors with Arts & Culture, Food & Drink, and Nature, curating event experiences that are different and distinctive to the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges will be a key component to remain competitive into the future.

Building on our Signature

Curating existing events with signature potential and attracting new events that showcase our “Headline Acts” will paint a vivid picture of YVDR as an enchanting destination known for its captivating events.

Suggesting a place where event visitors are immersed in a sensory journey, experiencing the

unique blend of spellbinding nature, exquisite wines, culinary delights, and artistic expression.

It conveys a sense of prestige and allure, positioning the destination as a must-visit event location for high-value visitors.

The Headline Acts

- World-famous Wine Region
- Food & Drink
- Flowers & Horticulture
- Spellbinding Nature
- Creative Community
- So close, yet a world away

Attract National/ Global Signature Event

Attracting a signature event linked to a national or global franchise provides the opportunity to significantly increase YVDR's event profile. Identifying potential events linked to the destination's signatures with strategic partners could help solidify profile and overnight visitor expenditure during low season.

Further developing partnerships with Visit Victoria (VV) Business Events Victoria (BEV) and regional, state and industry organisations and associations.

Amplifying The Message

Further amplifying signature event messaging is required to gain greater media cut-through in the crowded event space, encouraging events to:

- Integrate YVDR destination messaging, experiences, images and footage into event marketing.
- Contract professional event photographers and content creators to capture and share their signature experiences and make available to YRT and strategic partners.
- Contract Media PR event specialists to write content, blogs and pitch to media.

STRATEGY	ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS	MONITORING	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028
2.1 Building on our Signature	Curating existing events with signature experience	Event organisers YRT, LGAs					
2.2 Attracting Signature Event/s	Investigate potential signature event/s	YRT, VV, BEV	Signature event identification.				
	Bid/attract signature event/s		Attract new signature event.				
2.2 Amplifying the Message	Develop Event Brand Toolkit with YVDR destination and event images, content, experiences	YRT, VV, LGAs, Event organisers	Increased integration of event content in destination marketing.				
	Contract professional event photographers/content creators	Event organisers, YRT, VV	Increased destination content in event marketing.				
	Contract Media PR specialists to increase total media reach (social, tv, radio, print, digital)	Event organisers, YRT	Increased media reach.				



Event Friendly Destination

To achieve the vision to be a nationally recognised specialist event destination, YVDR will need to further develop its reputation as an event friendly destination.

Make It Easier

To attract new signature events and elevate existing events will require making it easier to stage events in YVDR. This will involve thinking from an event organisers' perspective and understanding the needs of different event sectors.

A whole-of-destination, event friendly corporate culture is required, involving event friendly policies and resourcing with local government cross-departmental support and strategic partnerships.

One-Stop-Shop Approach

Continue a collective one-stop-shop 'concierge' approach on their customer journey to stage events in YVDR.

Develop a destination online event portal for event organisers and professional conference organisers that could include a 'clash calendar', event templates, brand guide including destination images/footage, conferencing information, such as unique locations, settings and venues, venue/accommodation capacities and, packages, event suppliers and support networks.

The portal could act as a central, "one stop shop" for event organisers to seek government approvals with links to relevant departments.


Pre-Approved Event Venues, Spaces & Places

To make it easier for events to be staged, pre-approved event venues and locations is recommended to reduce red tape for event organisers and to ensure event compliance for local government.

Potential event sites could include village squares, streets, alleyways, parks, trails and existing/underused public venues.

Identifying potential and existing event venues and locations as event spaces and working cross departmentally with local and state government to get sites pre- approved is a critical success factor to achieving an event friendly reputation.

The process can require undertaking site acoustic modelling, traffic management plans, environmental, licencing etc – to get spaces and venues to pre-approval process based on a Venue Framework of usage, timing, suitability, carrying capacity.



Being event friendly is not about cutting corners or not being compliant. It's about facilitating and assisting event organisers to deliver signature events that meet YVDR event goals encouraging events to plan ahead with more lead time to give them planning reassurance for long-term sustainability.

STRATEGY	ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS	MONITORING	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028
3.1 Make it Easier	Continue to implement an event friendly corporate culture cross-departmentally within organisations.	YRT	Evidenced cross-departmental event friendly policies.				
3.2 One Stop Shop Approach	Establish key point of contact for events within YRT.	YRT	Point of contact person/s established.				
	Secure funding to develop an online Event Portal for destination with links to relevant LGAs		Event portal live.				
3.3 Pre-approved Event Venues, Spaces & Places	Promote pre-approved public and private venues, spaces and places. Include in Event Portal.	YRT	Promote potential event sites/venues.				

Grow Return on Investment

With a strategic focus on high-yield signature events, growing return on investment from events will require a long-term strategic approach with commitment at the local and destination level in partnership with industry.

Align Funding Criteria

It is recommended event funding criteria align to the four event strategy goals to:

1. **Drive Economic Benefit**, specifically overnight visitor expenditure,
2. **Showcases Destination** - celebrate and preserve the essence of the YVDR based on the signature 'headline acts', attracting significant media reach,
3. **Ignite Year-Round Events Calendar**, are staged in low/shoulder seasons and/or mid-week,
4. **Inspire Creative Community**, incorporating local artists, makers, growers and/or producers.

These goals additionally align to the Visit Victoria Regional Event Fund objectives to:

- Drive visitation from outside the region, and the State, and extend length of stay and yield,
- Showcase Victoria's key regional tourism attributes and build Victoria's reputation as an events destination,
- Deliver strong benefits to the host region's community; and
- Develop a sustainable calendar of regional events

Event Evaluation

Using consistent event evaluation tools, such as an event tourism impact model can help to measure the triple-bottom line ROI of events.

Where possible engage 3rd party reporting to assist events and the destination to measure the ROI to make informed funding decisions. Evidenced increased ROI may also assist in securing future funding.

Alignment of event funding criteria and evaluation at the local, destination and state level will help to ensure greater collective ROI from local, regional and state event funding investment.

Event Tourism Impact Model

Tourism Metrics

- The number of direct (event related) visitor nights
- Total attendances and the number of attendees (breakdown of participants, spectators, accompanying persons)
- The visitor profile (breakdown of visitors from intrastate, interstate and overseas)
- Day trip visitors compared to overnight stays.
- The total number of visitor nights (within the host region and other parts of VIC)

Economic Impact

- Event organiser income/expenditure
- Total overnight visitor expenditure
- Direct and incremental spending economic impact of the event to LGA/YVDR/VIC

Community and Cultural Value

- Community pride
- Cultural development

Invest in Business Events

Further redefining the approach to events, increasing funding programs to include business events is highly recommended to grow ROI for mid-week and off-peak seasons.

YVDR is ideally positioned to further capitalise the ROI from business events. with the rise of 'bleisure' tourism, where travellers extend their business trip for leisure.



Business events tend to attract high-yield domestic and international travellers. High-yield travellers, relative to the total visitor pool, spend a comparatively high amount on accommodation, food, recreation services and experiences, making a valuable economic contribution.

AUSTRADE, 2023



YVDR is redefining the traditional measures of event success, moving beyond mere visitor numbers to focus on the quality and impact of each experience.

Multi-Year Funding Agreements

Multi-year funding agreements can be a pathway to sustainable growth for events that exhibit signature event potential, enabling events to undertake longer-term, strategic planning and apply for multi-year sponsorships and state government funding agreements.

Where events have successfully acquitted funding for two or more consecutive years, eligibility to apply for a multi-year partnership agreement could be considered, whereby funding is committed for up to three years.

STRATEGY	ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS	MONITORING	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028
4.1 Align Funding Criteria	Encourage event funding programs to align to the four strategic goals and Visit Victoria events funding programs.	YRT	Updating event funding criteria alignment.				
4.2 Event Evaluation	Encourage consistent post-event evaluation to align at local, destination, state funding programs.	YRT	Consistent post-event evaluation alignment.				
	Investigate possible 3 rd party organisation to undertake post event evaluations as part of signature event funding.		Post event evaluations by 3 rd party organisation.				
4.3 Invest in Business Events	Include eligibility of Business Event applications/bids in event funding program/s.	YRT	Inclusion of business events in event funding program/s.				
4.4 Multi-Year Funding Agreements	Continue multi-year funding programs for signature events that deliver high-value ROI.	YRT, LGAs	Multi-year funding agreement/s in place.				



Facilitate Home-Grown Events

Facilitating home-grown event capacity has the propensity to improve the quality of events to ensure sustainability, incubate community creativity and encourage the development of signature event experiences.

Inspiring a Creative Community

Through facilitating home grown events the YVDR could further develop itself as a hub for community creativity and innovation, fostering collaboration among artists, producers, growers, and makers through active event participation. Events could serve as platforms for local talents to showcase their skills and creations, sparking inspiration and fostering a sense of pride within the community.

From artisans displaying their works, farmers highlighting sustainable practices, and inventive chefs using locally sourced ingredients. By bringing diverse talents together, events in the destination ignite a spirit of creativity and innovation, encouraging cross-pollination of ideas and the exploration of new possibilities.

Through event participation, community members not only share their expertise but also gain exposure to new techniques and trends, enriching their own practices for continuous event evolution.

Capacity Building Program

Many events throughout consultation identified challenges including:

- Financial sustainability
- Creative signature experience development
- Human resourcing and volunteer attraction/retention and succession planning
- Strategic partnerships and sponsors
- Environmental best practice in delivery of events
- Event resilience for changing/unpredictable weather.

Subject to funding and resourcing, a tailored event capacity building program for events with signature potential is recommended. A dedicated program delivered over multiple years would increase the capacity of event organisers to help achieve the destination's event goals.

Comprehensive Event Calendar

Further work with events to ensure listing and maximising their listing of events on the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW).

Publishing an events calendar from ATDW to assist with promotion of What's On, and to act as a clash calendar for event organisers planning future events.

Event Toolkit

Enhance the online Event Portal identified in 3.2 with an event organisers toolkit, including business planning and marketing templates and a best model framework/blueprint for successful signature events. Encourage events to use/embrace the brand toolkit to further showcase YVDR.

Event Campaign

Further elevate YVDR marketing campaigns with dedicated event campaigns per season, partnering with signature events to encourage them to innovate with novel/unconventional promotions, such as guerilla marketing.

!

A vast majority of YVDR event organisers surveyed during consultation did not know their eligibility for the Visit Victoria Regional Events Funding program and over 30% are not listed on ATDW.

STRATEGY	ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS	MONITORING	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028
5.1 Capacity Building Program: pathway to growth	Seek funding opportunities to fund/resource program.	YRT, LGAs, Event organisers, CV	Funding/ resources secured.				
	Identify existing events with signature event potential.		Confirmed events keen to participate.				
	Curate program to suit identified events.		Program delivery with KPIs				
	As part of the YRT Tourism Summit, a pre or post day of programming could be added as part of the capacity building program and to further encourage networking of events with local artists, farmers, chefs, producers and makers.						
5.2 Comprehensive Event Calendar	Partner to encourage more YVDR events on ATDW	YRT, Event organisers, ATDW	Increased no. and quality of YVDR event listings on ATDW.				
5.3 Event Toolkit	Further develop online event portal to include event organiser toolkit.	YRT, Event organisers	Toolkit live. Downloads/ usage.				
5.4 Event Campaign	Dedicated YVDR seasonal event campaign.	YRT, Events organisers	Event participation. Media reach.				
	Innovative, unconventional stunts/promotions to promote events.	Event organisers, YRT					

The Program

[ACTION PLAN]

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028
1. Year-Round Calendar Of Events				
1.1 Business Events				
1.2 Mid-week and Off-peak Season				
1.3 Multi-day Events				
1.4 Partnerships and Packaging				
2. Develop Signature Events				
2.1 Building on our Signature				
2.2 Attracting Signature Event/s				
2.3 Amplifying the Message				
3. Event Friendly Destination				
3.1 Make it Easier				
3.2 One Stop Shop Approach				
3.3 Pre-Approved Event Venues, Spaces & Places				
4. Grow Return on Investment				
4.1 Align Funding Criteria				
4.2 Event Evaluation				
4.3 Invest in Business Events				
4.4 Multi-Year Funding Agreements				
5. Facilitate Home Grown Events				
5.1 Capacity Building Program				
5.2 Comprehensive Event Calendar				
5.3 Event Toolkit				
5.4 Event Campaign				

Applause

[CONSULTATION PROCESS]

We extend a round of applause to all the individuals and organisations who dedicated their time, insights, and guidance towards the development of this strategy.



Support Acts

[APPENDICES]







YARRA RANGES TOURISM



JUNE 2024