YARRA VALLEY AND DANDENONG RANGES

WORKFORCE PLAN

DECEMBER 2023 V1.0

YARRA RANGES TOURISM

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.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Labour Shortage Challenge

Labour supply issues are currently a major challenge for many, if not most, Yarra Valley Dandenong Ranges (YVDR) tourism businesses as highlighted in the stakeholder consultations of the Destination Management Plan. This reflects the loss of many staff to other industries due to COVID-19 impacts. These impacts were much more severe in the tourism industry than in other sectors particularly, with the strong bounce back in visitor demand being experienced in the last year. Furthermore, these factors were more pronounced in the YVDR than in other areas of regional Victoria, due to YVDR being included in Melbourne lockdowns.

Staff shortages in general, and also in the industry, have resulted in a shift in power in the employer/employee relationship in favour of employees. Wages have increased, and more supportive and flexible conditions are being offered, increasing costs for employers. More time

and cost have been incurred by employers in recruitment and training, with the potential ability to do the job (based on character and personality), often prevailing over qualifications and credentials.

Staff have also faced increased work pressures of understaffing, while customers have faced declining quality of service.

A 'minimalistic' approach to training and education has been adopted by some employers for lower-skill jobs (i.e., on-the-job, short courses including mini online courses). One question is whether this form of industry skilling in the longer term is sufficient to propel the YVDR region to claims of 'best practice' status?

Some of the structural changes facing industry employment will be for the long-term benefit of the industry's image, such as the recent reduction in wage theft and other underpayments. However, overall

there has been a broad trend of declining interest in tourism and hospitality industry jobs, as:

- Opportunities are seen as interim options and not career-building
- The industry is not viewed as a highly skilled profession despite there being many careers in the industry that are academically skilled.

In terms of the outlook for staff shortages in this region, ongoing growth in immigration with a strong return of international students and a slower from working holiday makers is slowly easing these challenges.

However, a shortage of affordable accommodation and poor public transport to and through the YVDR, will extend the impact of staff shortages longer than in the Melbourne tourism region.

Six Key Recommendations

The six key recommendations to ameliorate the YVDR labour supply and workforce challenges, and support and facilitate the current and future tourism and hospitality workforce in the region – both their capability and capacity – include the following.

1. Source Under-Utilised Workforce Segments:

- Promoting an increased use of the large cohort of more mature aged residents (i.e., + 55 years in age) in the YVDR tourism industry

  Note: This offers the important side benefits of lifting social license for the industry and reducing the need for housing and accommodation.

  While there may be an impact on pension payments for some people, it will not be an issue for others. There was a temporary increase of the work bonus from 1 December 2022 that lifted the amount of work that could be undertaken without affecting pension payments. This is however, scheduled to revert back to previous levels at the end of December 2023.

2. Deliver Skills:

- Continuing to support and contribute to building a training and skills ecosystem that ensures all key skills needed for a thriving tourism industry are provided to employees who need it.

3. Recruitment and Retention:

- Supporting a workforce that lives and works in the local community
- Support a range of initiatives by Local Government Council's, various education providers and Commonwealth and State Governments, aimed at enhancing employment opportunities and skills development in the region.

The relationship between YRT and Council's is pivotal in achieving the above recommendations and unlocking opportunities in improving workforce management practices, particularly in recruiting and retaining staff.

4. Transport and Accommodation:

- Advocating for improved public transport links to and from Melbourne suburbs/Metro train terminal with distribution throughout the region
- Encourage specialised staff accommodation in the YVDR, recognising that demand in this region is less seasonal than the remainder of Victoria

5. The Ongoing Leadership Role of Yarra Ranges Tourism

YRT is part of the 'glue' that binds various stakeholders together (i.e., employers, employees, Registered Training Organisations, Local Government Authorities, Government, State Government, education and training providers) towards the development of a sustainable workforce, capable of delivering quality services to the tourism and hospitality industry in the region. None of these entities in isolation are able to address current and future workforce challenges.

Whilst YRT doesn't have any direct authority over these stakeholders, it nevertheless has a significant leadership influence over their respective activities in coordinating and optimizing workforce capability outcomes. Therefore, many of YRT's actions involve advocacy, support, collaboration, connection, partnering and information exchange. The organisation can play a role in that by adopting a leadership position, potentially as a 'clearing house' for 'best practice' employment and workforce issues.

6. Future Outcomes

Over the 10 year term of the Destination Management Plan (DMP), the staff shortage problem is expected to improve, particularly in the next two years, from its current crisis condition. However, from a staff perspective, the reputational damage to the industry, including the outlook for career paths by the COVID-19 downturn, will be slow to heal.

Notwithstanding, assuming the successful implementation of key recommendations of the DMP, the visitor economy will evolve with the following workforce implications:

- More predictable and longer shifts for food and beverage workers, which nevertheless will include some evening and night shifts
- More regular weekday employment, as opposed to a weekend focus
- A shift from casual status towards permanent status
- A more age-diverse workforce with the addition of more mature workers
- More jobs in visitor accommodation and visitor attraction
- The emergence of some interesting job opportunities with the advent of new visitor experiences and nature-based activities and new digital technologies

- A higher investment in the training and development of staff particularly older more experienced staff
- An increased local supply of workers, but at the same time, an increased catchment of workers to draw upon with improved transport to the region.
- Reduced turnover.

There may not necessarily be a need for more people, but jobs will be better (in terms of their conditions) with a more stable workforce (i.e., lower turnover).

These outcomes also support the following Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria and United Nations Sustainable Development Guidelines detailed in the DMP.

GSTC® Global Sustainable Tourism Council

SECTION A:
Sustainable Management

SECTION B:
Socio-Economic Sustainability

SECTION C:
Cultural Sustainability

UNSDG Impacted

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

5 GENDER EQUALITY

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

13 CLIMATE ACTION

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

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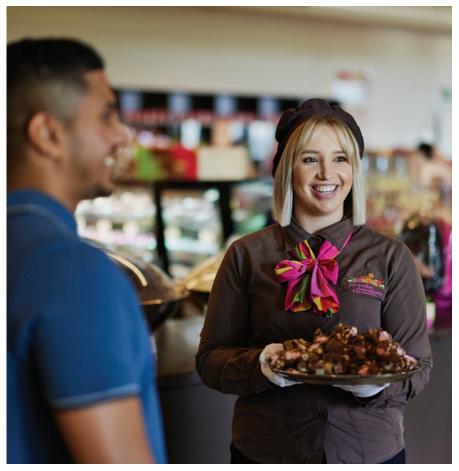
1. PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 BACKGROUND

The YVDR Workforce Plan (Workforce Plan) has been developed in the context of the recent emergence from the turbulence of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the shutdowns, restrictions on business and people movements, and the associated adverse impacts on the tourism and hospitality industry. This industry is still in recovery mode. Historical data, including trends, have been significantly distorted over the past three years with job losses having been very significant.

The advent of COVID-19 has been a major disrupting event that has changed some traditional thinking, customs and practices on people management practices and the workforce. Assumptions have been made regarding workforce projections in the tourism and hospitality sector as to the speed and extent of the recovery to the 'new normal'.

1.2 PURPOSE

The aim of this Workforce Plan is to support and facilitate the current and future tourism and hospitality workforce – both their capability and capacity - in the Yarra Ranges Region, for the next 10 years. It complements the Destination Management Plan (DMP) that has been developed in parallel for the YVDR region, and as such, should be read in conjunction with this Plan.

This Plan includes an analysis of four key elements of the employee life cycle and addresses the key issues of workforce shortfalls, skill needs, and the engagement of under-utilised segments of the population. It addresses the workforce challenges currently impacting the tourism and hospitality industry across the region. Finally, this plan identifies the key actions that the region can take to create a more sustainable and local workforce to support a growing sector in the future.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

Overall Methodology

AWS has adopted each of the following steps in conducting this Project:

1) Reference to relevant documentation including: The Nous Report, REMPLAN data, TRA data, ABS data, OELLEN: Environmental Scan 2022 Report

2) A review of industry and community research by ODIN360

3) Analysis of industry best practice

4) Interviews with key stakeholders seeking information and feedback from three main sources: Business Owners, Education Providers, and Government Agencies.

More specifically, these interviews have included:

• Known industry business leaders (Balgownie Estate, Blackvice Café and Roastery, Edenvale Community Environmental Farm, Fondata 1872, Four Pillars Gin, Golden Hills Brewery, Healesville Sanctuary – Zoos Victoria, Levantine Hill, Montsalvat, Nillumbik Estate, Puffing Billy Railway, RACV Healesville Country Club and Resort, St Huberts Winery, The Grub Club, Yarra Valley Chocolaterie and Ice Creamery)

• Local Council representatives, Yarra Ranges Tourism representatives and State Government representatives involved in the tourism and hospitality industry (YRT, Manningham Council, Yarra Ranges Council, Nillumbik Shire Council, DEWR – North-Eastern Region)

Photo: Visit Victoria

- Education providers and network representatives (Box Hill Institute, CIRE, OELLEN, Typsy).

5) Economic analysis of the YVDR visitor economy and workforce including the impact of COVID19 – both short and long term

6) Consideration and engagement with the Destination Management Plan for the YVDR regionn.

Two Workforce Models

Two workforce models have been incorporated in AWS's approach to the development of this Workforce Plan:

- A skills-based workforce segmentation model:
  - Lower-level skills (e.g., waiters, food attendants, kitchen hands, housekeepers, shop assistants)
  - Medium-level skills (e.g., supervisors, managers, chefs)
  - Specialist skills (e.g., Puffing Billy Railway train drivers, sommeliers, fine dining chefs)
  - High-level skills (e.g., senior managers, executives)

- The employee life cycle model including:

Attraction and recruitment

Engagement and retention

Skills training

Career development

Photo: Visit Victoria

2. BUSINESS CONTEXT AND ENVIRONMENT

2.1 THE REGION AND SUB REGIONS

The Region

The YVDR region, which has a population of approximately 340k, boasts a diversity of attractions including, its natural beauty, food and beverage, outdoor activities, native flora and fauna, art and culture and other tourism experiences. Considering this diversity, the region is not homogeneous in respect of the Visitor Economy (VE) (e.g., tourism and hospitality), hence the requirement for a more 'fine-grained' analysis into four sub-regions (see below), each with its own characteristics and features. These sub-regions have been determined largely on a geographic and tourism and hospitality business activity basis.

Prior to COVID-19 impacting the industry, the VE provided employment for approximately 7,277 jobs or 7.6% of the region's employment (direct and indirect jobs). It ranks behind Construction, Education/Training, Health Care/Social Assistance and Retail Trade as a source of jobs in this region. The employment range of options is diverse, from frontline service roles to knowledge-based workers requiring higher levels of educational attainment.

Sub-Regions

These four sub-regions are as follows:

1) Western Yarra Valley, which incorporates the Nillumbik region, has a small number of tourism and hospitality businesses, is attached to outer Melbourne surrounding suburbs at the northwest of the YVDR region. This sub-region experiences relatively low visitation compared to the other sub-regions.

2) Yarra Valley, which has the highest level of day trips, comprises four major tourist attractors (1) approximately 70 wineries, some with fine dining and wedding services, (2) resort accommodation, (3) the Yarra Valley Chocolaterie & Ice Creamery at Yarra Glen, and (4) the Healesville Sanctuary.

Partly because of the sub-region's proximity to Melbourne, overnight accommodation is somewhat fragmented, but notwithstanding, includes three major accommodation venues - the RACV County Club at Healesville (120 rooms), Yarra Valley Lodge (102 Rooms) and Balgownie at Yarra Glen (80 rooms). All venues cater for events and conferences.

This sub-region has limited public transport, making it difficult to travel around without a vehicle. The main public transport service to the sub-region is the rail line to Lilydale, which lies at the entrance to this sub-region.

3) Upper Yarra Valley, which includes the picturesque town of Warburton, has the Lilydale to Warburton rail trail snaking through the valley. This sub-region is relatively small in population and business activity compared to the Dandenong Ranges and the Yarra Valley sub-regions.

An upcoming development to create a significant Mountain Bike Destination for the area will see a greater need for new roles in traditional tourism careers including adventure tourism.

4) Dandenong Ranges, which is the closest to Melbourne and the most populated of the four sub-regions, with reasonable public transport access (rail to Belgrave and buses). The main tourist attraction is the iconic Puffing Billy Railway, which is operated as a Not-For-Profit entity, with a cadre of volunteers. Overnight accommodation is spread widely in smaller-scale properties in this sub-region. Key metrics for each subregion are overpage.

2. BUSINESS CONTEXT AND ENVIRONMENT

Sub-Region	Population Aug 2021 Census	Population Estimate 2032	Visitor Economy Jobs (VE Jobs), Share of Total YVDR Visitor Economy Jobs and Share of Total Area Employment in 2018/19 (pre-COVID-19)s	Estimated # of Jobs in 10 years Without the benefits of DMP delivery
Western Yarra Valley	62,895	66,040 (1%pa)	652 VE Jobs 9% (share YVDR) 4.5% (WYV area jobs)	795 VE Jobs + 143 (cf. 18/19) + 416 (cf. 20/21)
Yarra Valley	73,373	80,710 (1%pa)	2,381 VE Jobs 33% (share YVDR) 10.5% (YV area jobs)	2,905 VE Jobs + 524 (cf. 18/19) + 1,519 (cf. 20/21
Upper Yarra Valley	16,799	18,479 (1%pa)	1,033 VE Jobs 14% (share YVDR) 30.0% (UYV area jobs)	1,261 VE Jobs + 227 (cf. 18/19) + 659 (cf. 20/21)
Dandenong Ranges	144,429	166,093 (1.5%pa)	3,041 VE Jobs 42% (share YRT) 8.7% (DR area jobs)	3,710 VE Jobs + 669 (cf. 18/19) + 1,940 (cf. 20/21)
Total	340,793	396,259* (1.5%pa)	7,277 VE Jobs 100%** 7.6% (YVDR region jobs)	8,878 VE Jobs + 1,601 (cf. 18/19) + 4,642 (cf. 20/21)

*The balance of the YVDR region population outside of the 4 sub-regions is 64,937 (19%pa)

**The balance of the YVDR region outside of the 4 sub-regions areas has only 170 VE Jobs, 2% of YVDR VE jobs and 1.2% of Balance area jobs.

Sources:

- ODIN360 estimates of population using Victorian Government population by LGA forecasts for 2036

- ODIN360 estimates of visitor economy jobs derived from allocating visitation across the five areas using Tourism Research Australia (TRA) data for 2018/19 beside the last pre-COVID-19 regional satellite account data for the Yarra Valley and Dandenong TRA region

- ODIN360 estimates of visitor economy jobs in 2032, estimated using TRA national forecasts, but with only half the growth in jobs (i.e., 22%) as forecast for real visitor spending to reflect increased hours by existing workers, more day trips rather than more high yield and labour intensive overnight stays and increased labour productivity over the decade.

The two sub-regions of Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges have the larger numbers of visitor economy jobs (75% of the VE jobs), but Upper Yarra Valley has the visitor economy with the highest share of total jobs. Nillumbik which has a more diverse economy has a lower reliance on visitor economy jobs.

Business Profile

The number of tourism and hospitality businesses with various numbers of staff, by LGAs in the YVDR region, is shown below. Please note that the Yarra Ranges LGA includes the sub-regions of Yarra Valley, Upper Yarra Valley and part of the Dandenong Ranges. The remainder of the

Dandenong Ranges is captured with the Cardinia sub-region.

Staff Employed Number of Businesses: Nillumbik LGA Number of Businesses: Yarra Ranges LGA Number of Businesses: Cardinia LGA.

Staff Employed	Number of Businesses: Nillumbik LGA	Number of Businesses: Yarra Ranges LGA	Number of Businesses: Cardinia LGA
Non-employing	317	701	363
1-4 staff	233	510	275
5-19 staff	98	242	121
+20 staff	23	59	24
Total	645	1,473	774
Employing Businesses	328	772	441

Source: TRA Local Government Area Profiles https://www.tra.gov.au/Regional/local-government-area-profiles

2.2 COVID-19 IMPACTS AND RECOVERY

General

This Workforce Plan should be interpreted against the background of the major dislocating event of the COVID-19 pandemic, and its' impact on business and the workforce, including the emergence and recovery from this pandemic. Some of these impacts will be long-lasting in terms of changed mindsets, people management practices and ways of working.

As indicated previously, the preparation of this Report has included a review and consideration of the NOUS Report and how it might apply to the YRT region. Whilst the advent of COVID-19 has resulted in a significant disruption to the market since that Report was prepared, applicable key relevant principles have been included in this report.

Job Losses

A few tourism and hospitality businesses have been relatively unaffected, but most have suffered some staff losses due to shutdowns, reduced visitor activity, reduced shift hours, and other staff turnover due to uncertainty in the industry. Job losses were very significant from 7,277 in 2018/19 to 4,236 in 2020/21 (i.e., 42% loss). Many of these businesses are still in recovery mode.

Due partly to the closing of international borders during the pandemic, and the curtailment of overseas students, the backpacker workforce and migrants, people shortages are being experienced by many businesses in the tourism and hospitality industry.

Recruitment Imperative

The general immediate overriding imperative for many of these businesses has been addressing staff shortages, and the recruitment of staff, ramping up to pre-COVID-19 activity levels. This recovery has been occurring over the past 6 months or so.

Worker Losses

Many of the lost employees in the visitor economy over COVID-19, found jobs in other industry sectors. Furthermore, this past season has seen more sickness, against the backdrop of COVID-19, which has contributed to some staff shortages. Some staff have moved on to their primary careers and completed their education, including tertiary degrees. Some staff were lost from front line roles because of their refusal to be vaccinated. Other impacts of COVID-19 included in some cases a lack of motivation among youths staying in their rooms playing video games, and not returning to school or their part-time jobs.

The iconic Puffing Billy Railway, being one of Australia's largest tourist employers (including a large voluntary workforce), is in slow recovery. Because of the unique knowledge and skills associated with some aspects of the operation and maintenance of the railway, staff shortages have been, and are currently being experienced due to:

- Some staff not returning to work because of life changes, including an ageing workforce with many having retired.
- Difficulties (including delays) in recruitment within a highly regulated working environment, including compliance requirements (e.g., police checks, working with children, National Rail Regulations compliance).

Note. It takes between two to three years to upskill train drivers, and currently, there is only capacity to operate one train during the week and three trains during weekends, compared to six trains that operated daily pre-COVID-19.

Many businesses have also reported losing key personnel to major state infrastructure projects that are also seeking low skilled workers.

Investment Affected

Investment has also been affected (e.g., rebuilding the Gembrook Hotel has stalled) by increased operating costs and the prospect of continued staff shortages.

The Reputation of the Tourism and Hospitality Industry has Suffered

The reputation of the tourism and hospitality industry has been damaged by the impacts of COVID-19, with:

- The volatility of the industry (i.e., on-again and off-again business activity and changing shift operations, unsociable shift hours) and perceived insecure work.
- More fulfilling jobs and higher remuneration available outside of the industry to deal with cost-of-living pressures.

Interest in jobs in the sector is reported to be low for school leavers, with minimal OELLEN student placements in the industry.

Overall, there has been a broad trend of declining interest in tourism industry jobs, as:

- Opportunities are seen as interim options (i.e., the 'landing platform syndrome') and not career-building (i.e., a place of last resort).
- The industry is not viewed as a highly skilled profession. Hence parents aren't necessarily encouraging the career options in tourism for their children if they live local. Or they see it as just hospitatilty and not the breadth of professional skills and careers.

Furthermore, there has been a reliance on external markets (i.e., international students, backpackers etc.), to fill jobs in the past for many businesses.

The Positive Impacts

Some of the old habits of businesses operating in the sector are fading (e.g., underpayments or cash payment, bullying), with a shift in power between employer and employee towards the latter. Eg; traditional autocratic cultures that have been previously associated with hospitality workplaces.

Also the emergence of hybrid working models, from in-person to remote, in some cases provides new flexible work options for staff.

Summary: The Lasting Workforce Impacts of COVID-19

The lasting workforce impacts of COVID-19 include, amongst other things:

- The declining reputation of the tourism and hospitality sector.
- Prejudice against ageism diminishing, partly as a consequence of people shortages, coupled with some temporary relief for mature aged people with an increase of earnings not impacting upon pension entitlements (The Work Bonus Scheme).
- A power shift in the employer/ employee relationship, with a shift towards the employee, and with the adoption of more people-friendly management practices by employers (e.g., more sociable shift arrangements).
- A changing emphasis on skills with a lack of investment in skills acquisition (i.e., a reduced emphasis on qualifications and training as opposed to employing anybody who can do the job), is enabling businesses to survive in the era of people shortages in the short-term but may result in a longer-term decline in service delivery and industry growth which may tarnish the future reputation of the industry.

2.3 CURRENT BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

The Employment Life Cycle: Four Key Elements

These four key elements of the employee life cycle have been analysed below, to assist in maximising workforce outcomes for the region:

- Attraction and recruitment
- Retention
- Skills training
- Career Development.

Attraction and Recruitment

In an era of people and skill shortages, recruitment practices have consisted of a 'shotgun' approach, with employers casting their net far and wide. This approach has included a mix of referrals, word of mouth, postings on job boards (Wine Yarra Valley, Yarra Ranges Council), various forms of advertising (e.g., Facebook, signs along business boundaries, community news/notice boards), open days, other networks, etc. However many report that jobs boards often only see candidates on the Jobseeker allowance who are required to apply for 20 jobs a month and are not always interested in working. No one approach would seem to be more effective than any others, apart from the high rating of referrals from existing employees.

Often assistance with local travel for those younger staff without transport is provided, but ultimately workers are responsible for their own transport to and from work. Typically, most workers live within 20 minutes of driving from their workplace, including peripheral areas (Croydon, Ringwood). Age requirements for serving alcohol and obtaining a driver's license means a focus on +18-year-old recruits (i.e., imposes an age requirement for prospective recruits working in food and wine). Some workers travel further for higher skill level jobs and specialised roles.

Note: The TAC and State Government offer an L2P program program through LGA's to support young people between the ages of 16 and 21 years (and in some circumstances, up to 23 years), who don't have access to a supervising driver or vehicle, in order to gain the 120 hours of driving experience. There may be a range of factors impacting access to a supervisor or car. For example, Nillumbik Shire Council has funding for 45 learners at any one time with current numbers sitting around 35.

Retention

The tourism and hospitality industries have traditionally experienced a higher workforce turnover – estimates vary widely from between 25-80% compared to the average turnover of the Australian workforce (estimated 10-15%). There are a whole host of reasons for this turnover (some of which were referred to earlier) including:

- Lower barriers to entry and exit
- More attractive alternative jobs with more predictable shifts and superior remuneration arrangements
- Poor people management practices (e.g., bullying, wage theft)
- The 'landing pad syndrome' with the reputation of the industry offering a place to work temporarily while job seekers look for better opportunities
- Unsociable work hours, including long work hours in a high-stress environment
- Seasonal or fluctuating industry demands, where the scheduling of work is closely tied to customer requirements or demands
- Employment of people as a second job
- Recruitment of working holidaymakers who regularly change plans as part of their travel plans
- The decline in the reputation of the industry, as referred to earlier.

Consequently, there is a 'revolving door' syndrome associated with the industry, with a need to continually replenish and train staff. With some employers running ongoing recruitment processes each month to cater for the consistent attrition. Typically, turnover is higher amongst younger people (i.e., from late teenage years through to mid-20s) as this cohort find their way in the world.

Improving staff retention represents the highest ROI of any human resources initiative.

One of the keys to retention is self-evident. Those businesses that have treated their staff well, have retained their loyalty following their emergence from the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly those businesses that are well-connected with their communities. Such favourable staff treatment has included, amongst other things:

- Regular staff discussions including skill and career development, with a particular focus on those in more critical or specialised roles where the skills and knowledge requirements are particular to the organisation and its business (e.g., wine connoisseurs and sommeliers).
- Accommodation of the needs of individuals within the capacity of the organisation to do so (i.e., more flexible work practices).
- Less unsociable shift hours.

Furthermore, by employing locals (see later), businesses will derive the benefit of a more stable and integrated workforce (i.e., reduced turnover), as well enhancing the social license of the industry amongst the community.

Skills Training and Career Development:

Reference has been made to a reduced emphasis on qualifications and skills training as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional responsibility has been placed upon management in training and skilling their staff.

Larger businesses are often relatively advantaged as they are more likely to be able to provide cross-training opportunities for staff and career paths for those seeking to further their careers in the sector, as well as career development opportunities in other locations or other parts of their businesses.

Because of the cyclical nature of the tourism and hospitality sector, ongoing training is provided more during the winter, when activity is lower. Finding time for training in the busier seasons coupled with people shortages has been challenging.

Education and training entities in meeting the required skills of the industry have been summarised in Section 2.5.

An analysis of job profiles and skill profiles (according to the skills model referred to in Section 1.3) has been detailed in Section 2.6.

Sustainability

Generally, most businesses place importance on linking and integrating with the local community and serving tourists and locals. This integration enhances the social license for the industry with the community. Those businesses that have treated their staff well, and have engaged in regular communication with them, have retained their loyalty in emerging from COVID-19.

Critical mass (including the scale and diversity of operations) is required for some businesses to sustain a 7 or 5-day-a-week operation, and so provide their workforce with continuity of employment and attractive shifts. However, strong seasonal and weekly fluctuations make retention difficult or challenging, particularly for micro businesses.

Some other businesses have scaled back their business model, continuing to operate a lesser number of days with reduced shift arrangements, rather than revert back to the grind and complexity of a 7-day-per-week business cycle.

People Management Practices

Larger businesses (some of which are owned by large corporations) as would be expected, have established HR systems and processes, performance reviews, regular staff meetings, regular reporting, etc. Many smaller businesses have not, to their disadvantage.

Workforce Status and Shift Arrangements

Other workforce strategy initiatives include:

- One significant business is aiming to shift more casuals onto a permanent employment status, because it is easier to manage staff and offer more stable shift arrangements, despite the loss of some flexibility.

- Some businesses are adopting more friendly shift rosters (e.g., closing earlier, 4 days per week), with fewer unsociable hours. Some even take time off in peak visitation times so their teams can take an ideal break too, not that this is helpful to the overall tourism brand of the region.

Note. The tourism and hospitality industry constitutes a prime example of the casualisation of the workforce. However, with the advent of staff shortages, and as referred to earlier, there has been a power shift between employer and employee in favour of the latter, with the adoption of more friendly people management practices, including flexible work practices, more stable and sociable shift arrangements, hybrid working models, etc.

Summary of Recent Examples, Case Studies, Workforce Initiatives and Scenarios

Reference has been made to numerous examples, case studies, workforce initiatives and scenarios by various entities in this document (including those which follow), which have been summarised below. The names of some organisations have been withheld as these interviews were conducted on the basis of confidentiality, unless otherwise cleared.

- Shifting from casuals to permanents, introduction of a 4-day week for chefs (large organisation)
- integration with the local community (The Grub Club)
- Open day to enhance recruitment, exploring bespoke training program with certificate status (RACV)
- Successful age-diverse workforce (St Huberts Winery)
- Employment Awareness and Retention Scheme including a significant job board for the region (Yarra Ranges Shire)
- LGA working group for Commonwealth Government Approval for the wider region to be classified as a Designated Area Migration Agreement
- In-house buses to overcome transport deficiencies in the region, bi-annual food truck program for youth (CIRE)

- Funded training program for disadvantaged youth post-school (State Government/Box Hill Institute)
- Past training initiatives including: a youth scholarship program, marketing and IT consultancy support for business, industry strengthening (YRT)
- Fast recovery from COVID including volunteers (Edenvale Farm)
- Reduced hours of operation post-COVID (Monsalvat, large café)
- Continued staff shortages (large café, large winery and hospitality venue, accommodation venue)
- Slow recovery from COVID because of unique skills (I.e., train drivers and maintenance staff) associated with operating a railway (Puffing Billy Railway)
- Volunteers not returning (NFP events organisation)
- Cost of living pressures including smaller weddings (brewery, NFP events organisation)
- Specialist staff travelling longer distances from Melbourne to Healesville (Healesville Sanctuary - Zoos Victoria)

Many of the above case studies and workforce initiatives refer to the impacts and emergence from COVID-19. In taking a longer-term view (i.e., 10 years), they may not be particularly relevant in the more distant future.

2.4 WORKFORCE CHALLENGES, WEAKNESSES AND STRENGTHS

Challenges and Weaknesses

Transport Challenges:

- Limited public transport options for workers in the YVDR region, particularly in the Yarra Valley sub-region, but also in Western Yarra Valley (Nillumbik).

- Lack of transport availability for younger people to get to and from their place of work particularly for those, who may not yet have acquired a driving licence or own a vehicle.

- Buses not operating on Sundays in the Dandenong Ranges region, posing transport difficulties for some staff. There also hasn't been a wholesale review of bus services by the State Government for region in some 32 years. With some part so the region not have any service changes in this time.

- Staff residing in peripheral areas in the region and having to travel from such locations.

   Note. The YVDR region has three train lines terminating at the Hurstbridge, Lilydale and Belgrave stations. Busses then provide limited passenger services to the outer areas beyond these stations. It is noted that the State Government has not reviewed the bus services to the region in decades despite the changes in population growth.

Housing Availability (the number one challenge to bringing in overseas workers):

- Lack of low-cost housing - the region has one of the lowest percentages of low-cost housing in Victoria.

- Lack of residential supply, partly due to a 'shift to the country' and the advent of hybrid working models. Gone are the days when locals are prepared to rent out a room in their house to an itinerant worker.

- A shortage of rental accommodation with increasing rental costs (i.e., reduced affordability), making it difficult to attract and retain workers

(including migrants and students) to the sector.

   Note. Accommodation availability is important for supporting tourism employment.

Digital Connectivity and Access Challenges:

- Poor internet services to the region, discouraging some of those seeking to move there, or those existing residents working from home.

- Whilst the Yarra Ranges Council job board is significant in connecting businesses and people and providing some education advice, access to other relevant information is fragmented (e.g., availability of government grants and programs, access to education and qualification options). There is no 'one-stop shop', although the Jobs Skills Centre operated by Box Hill Institute provides a comprehensive resource for those seeking career and education advice across all industries. Other tourism specific jobs boards are also being trialled in areas such as Geelong and Great Ocean Road (https://greatoceanroadtourism. org.au/training-and-development/ tourismjobsbank/), however getting these localised recruitment strategies actively used and marketed to local residents can be the inhibiting factor, against major online products such as a Seek.com.au.

Cost Pressure Challenges:

- Inability to operate at capacity (opening for reduced hours/days) due to staff shortages.

- High wage costs for businesses and worker availability, which has led to reduced capacity in the sector.

Sustainability Challenges: Fluctuating Demand:

- High weekend loads with visitor day trips, with the associated high weekend workforce demands, but lower mid-week demands, resulting in shift roster continuity issues and unsociable hours.

Lower Socioeconomic Status of the Region Challenges:

- The lower socioeconomic status of residents in parts of the region with

generational under or unemployment, is challenging in addressing youth unemployment, particuallry in the Outer East. The benefits of working may not be perceived to be worthwhile.

Keeping it Local Challenges:

- 60% of people who work and reside in the Yarra Ranges LGA, are required to travel outside of the area to their jobs, which apart from the obvious inefficiencies, contributes to traffic and transport congestion and the need for additional infrastructure.

   Note. A key workforce and housing initiative of the Yarra Ranges LGA has been the securing of funding for an Employment Awareness and Retention Scheme including:

   (a) An online campaign targeting local employers with a 'Region of Choice Stamp' to demonstrate that they are a reputable employer that has met certain standards (however this stamp doesn't receive any third party auditing and is more a self-reporting tool)

   (b) Establishment of a job board and promotion connecting businesses with educators and prospective staff, with 3-400 jobs posted, 40% of which are typically in the tourism and hospitality sector.

   This scheme also profiles 50 ASX-listed companies operating in the Shire. It has multiple benefits for the community generally, with residents who are able to transfer their employment to a local employer, and less infrastructure investment, etc. However, the funding supporting this program is currently on hold at the federal government level.

Strengths

- Attractive rural area with a more relaxed lifestyle and natural beauty, closer to nature, yet still relatively close to outer Melbourne suburbs and facilities, and the CBD

- A diversification of attractions to cater for a wide range of interests and hobbies outside of work

- A range of relevant training institutions in or close to the region (see next Section).

2.5 CURRENT RELEVANT TRAINING INSTITUTIONS

Education and Training Providers

There is an extensive network of providers, some of whom are located within or near to the YVDR region, and some who provide specific services to the industry.

Located within or adjacent to the YVDR Region:

- Box Hill Institute (TAFE) (Certificates II, III and IV)
- Melbourne Polytechnic (TAFE) (Certificates II, III and IV)
- CIRE Services (Certificate II)
- Outer Eastern Local Learning and Employment Network (OELLEN) (student placements and youth apprenticeships)
- Worawa Aboriginal College (Indigenous education)

Located outside of the YVDR region:

- Other Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) eg, MEGT
- Online providers of training in the hospitality sector, including micro-learning for businesses and staff (e.g., Typsy)
- Specific industry training - Wine Industry (various providers throughout Australia (e.g., WSET program – see later) or concierge development through Les Clefs d'Or Australia
- Business services (SMEs)

There are also various government-funded business grants and programs (including pay whilst training) available from time to time in the industry.

With the advent of online learning, technology has usurped geography, so location is not as critical as it was previously. An example is the Yarra Ranges Tourism's digital mentor training that has operated through the recovery of the pandemic. This was funded through DJSIR as part of the Industry Strengthening component of the Visitor Economy Recovery and Reform Program.

Box Hill Institute (BHI - Lilydale Lakeside Campus) and Melbourne Polytechnic (Greensborough - located in Western Yarra Valley)

BHI is arguably the most prominent provider of education and training industry needs to the YVDR region, including:

- Cooking - Certificate III & IV
- Hospitality - Certificate, Diploma, Bachelor qualifications
- Tourism - Certificate III

International student enrolments have been slow despite the opening of borders since the COVID-19 lockdowns but have ramped up significantly over the past couple of months.

Through Jobs Victoria's Job Ready Program for selected welfare recipients, BHI has commenced a pathway program leading to a Certificate III in tourism (100 people enrolled thus far).

Recent developments in industry education and training, include the development of a bespoke package tailored for business needs.

In addition to the above, BHI has secured a government contract to operate a Jobs Skills Centre providing career advice to individuals across a range of industries, including the hospitality and tourism industries. This advice includes education and training advice, career pathways, etc.

The service operates independently from the course advice that BHI otherwise provides and delivers.

CIRE Services

CIRE Services is a substantial NFP education and training organisation in the Yarra Ranges, with significant infrastructure and resources (4 schools, 3 centres, 4 early learning centres). This organisation provides a suite of services to children, teenagers and adults, including flexible learning opportunities. In the hospitality sector, CIRE provides Cert II qualifications in tourism and cookery to students and adults.

Amongst other things, CIRE provides holistic care to students with high anxiety, or those who otherwise don't fit in, or who may have been bullied. This organisation has overcome the transport inadequacies or limitations of the region with the provision of 15 minibuses that transport students to their various centres (e.g., from Healesville).

Through a partnership between YRC, Box Hill Institute and CIRE a 'Jump Start for Jobs' program was developed. This was a fully funded pilot program, aimed at upskilling people in their very late teens and early 20's, which includes a food truck initiative servicing the local community. The program incorporates two intakes per annum with 15 students per intake.

Outer Eastern Local Learning and Employment Network (OELLEN)

OELLEN, which is funded by the Victorian Government, initiates partnerships with schools, employers, communities and families to support young people to make positive choices and further engage them in education, training and employment pathways in the local government areas of Knox, Maroondah and Yarra Ranges. The organisation facilitates and arranges for industry work placements for students and apprentices and oversees the same.

Potentially, YRT and OELLEN could seek to be sponsored to share a resource as a tourism industry educational pathway development officer to work more effectively with training providers and industry and employees.

First Nations People Education: Worawa Aboriginal College

Worawa Aboriginal College provides a holistic education and boarding experience under a scholarship scheme for young First Nations girls and young women in the middle years of schooling (years 7-10), who come from Aboriginal communities in urban, regional and remote Australia.

The College aims to produce strong Aboriginal women who will be leaders and role models for their home community and for the wider Aboriginal and Australian communities. The approach is a holistic education, one where the students' educational, cultural, social, physical and emotional needs are catered for.

The College has links with local Tourism and Hospitality entities (e.g., RACV, Zoos Victoria) whereby these students gain work experience. Thus the impact of the College's activities has a wider influence, as opposed to a local influence, on the Tourism and Hospitality industry.

Other Registered Training Organisations (RTOs)

Organisations like Complete Hospitality Training, which is an RTO based in Melbourne, have short courses through to Certificate IV in Hospitality. The William Angliss Institute provides a similar service to BHI, but for the western metropolitan area of Melbourne and beyond.

Online Training Providers: Typsy

Typsy provides micro-learning courses online for both business and their people. It constitutes an alternative to traditional skilling solutions. These courses are not formally recognized as such, but given the increasing emphasis on micro-learning (i.e., learning in smaller bites, typically through online learning), the shortage of people, and the basic skills required for lower-level jobs, it constitutes a valuable vehicle for:

- Individuals wishing to enter the industry, and acquiring some basic knowledge or credentials as part of their job application.
- Speeding up the induction period of new recruits and supplementing on-the-job training.

Put another way, it offers a relatively fast-tracked route for both business and their staff, both prospective and existing, to achieve adequate performance.

Specific Industry Training Needs: Wine Industry

The wine industry has recognised training courses from basic to advanced, that are available online (e.g., WSET). As the region grows towards 'best practice' and taking into account the favourable reputation of Yarra Valley wines, then those wineries with cellar door outlets should be increasingly looking towards their staff acquiring these qualifications and expertise.

Responsible Serving of Alcohol

As per the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation, all licensees and staff involved in the supply of alcohol must complete a Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) training course. This can be undertaken in-person or online. The mandatory nature of this course both increases formal training and ensures that this training is uniform.

Other Short Courses

Other short courses surrounding hospitality such as food handling and Barista/coffee making do not have these same rules, and consequently there is less supply of and demand for these courses.

Business Services

Other services provided for SMEs include online management and coaching programs (e.g., Foodies Coaches).

Previous Training and Development Initiatives by YRT

YRT has previously provided a number of training and development initiatives to businesses and prospective staff seeking employment in the industry:

- A digital marketing skills development workshops for businesses.
- Hands-on consultancy (to businesses) regarding their marketing, including website design.
- Securing of industry strengthening funding with training provided free to businesses for a 3-year program ($88k) for leadership development, human resources, mentoring, etc.
- A scholarship program ($100k funding) for 10 unemployed youth aged 18-25 years, seeking entry into the tourism and hospitality sector.

  This program, which is currently being evaluated, included a Certificate III in tourism and hospitality, job placements, mentoring, etc. It has been somewhat time intensive because of the need to break generational unemployment in lower socio-economic families.

Overall, the take-up of the first above three initiatives was somewhat disappointing, which may be an indication of either the immaturity of businesses, and/or staff shortages and capacity relating to the recovery from the Pandemic. There needs to be a lift in the maturity of businesses in the YVDR, particularly with respect to training and qualifications of staff from management down to front-line people if the region is to be promoted as 'best practice'. However, this is a challenging aspiration against the background of current staff shortages, as the view of many is that this is a cost to their bottom line rather than an investment in becoming a high performing business with a positive work culture.

2.6 CURRENT WORKFORCE ANALYSIS: JOBS AND SKILLS

Job Profiles

A high percentage of jobs in the tourist and hospitality sector in the region is concentrated in four sectors.

Job losses were incurred mainly in the food and beverages and education areas (with no international students).

It is likely that a similar mix of job types that existed pre-COVID-19 will be projected into the future (i.e., next 10 years), so this future demand will be dominated by food and beverage services. That said, there will be a growth in employment in well-being, leisure, adventure and nature-based activities, but from a lower base.

Skill Profiles

Lower Skill Jobs:

Approximately 70% of jobs in the tourism and hospitality industry in the YVDR region are concentrated in three sectors:

- Food and beverage services: Front-line service roles including bars and cafes (waiters and bar attendants)
- Accommodation: housekeeping
- Retail: shop assistants, service staff

These are lower-skilled jobs where the skills can largely be acquired on-the-job (e.g., soft skills, including people service skills and basic technical skills where appropriate). Subject to the right attitude (i.e., a willingness to learn, basic people service and relationship skills, conscientiousness and curiosity), coupled with some short courses (either online or in-person), and some training and mentoring by management, the required skills can be acquired with experience on-the-job (i.e., a minimalistic approach). This was reflected in the Business Survey from the DMP where soft skills gaps (33%) rather than technical skills gaps (20%) were identified.

	Pre COVID-19 2018/19		During COVID-19 2020/21	
	# Industry Jobs	%	# Industry Jobs	%
Food & Beverages	3,486	43%	2,554	60%
Accommodation	731	10%	299	7%
Retail	1,186	16%	670	15%
Education	785	11%	2	0%
Total Jobs	7,277	80%	4,236	82%

This means more of a focus on management being capable of, including having available time, to provide on-the-job training to new recruits. The potential ability to do the job, and/or learn the job, has overridden education and qualifications and credentials!

> **Note.** It is contended that the often-quoted terminology of a 'skills shortage' is overstated! Often what is described as a 'skills shortage' really refers to a people shortage in the first instance. Hence the need to distinguish between a shortage of people and a shortage of skills.

Skilled or Semi-Skilled Jobs:

These jobs include:

- Chefs, cooks (these roles are much sought after, particularly fine dining chefs)
- Middle management and supervisor roles

> **Note.** Yarra Ranges Council in conjunction with number of adjoining LGAs (to the east of Yarra Ranges) has made application for a Designated Area Migration Agreement for the approval of specialised skills in the regions (e.g., sponsoring of chefs).

Specialist Skills Jobs:

These jobs include:

- Train drivers, fine-dining chefs, sommeliers, vets

Typically a longer initial training or familiarisation time is required for adequate performance. Some of the staff to fulfil these roles are sourced from outside the region.

Photo: Visit Victoria

3. FUTURE WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

3.1 ESTIMATING THE FUTURE DEMAND FOR JOBS

Without a sustainable and suitable workforce development strategy, the tourism industry cannot fulfil its potential in the region.

The demand for jobs in the tourism and hospitality sector for the region has been calculated and projected in order to understand workforce needs by 2032. This calculation has been undertaken using input-output modelling and data on proportional tourist spending. For each dollar predicted to be spent, the industry that this spending will flow to, and therefore the employment inferred by that spending, has been calculated.

As indicated earlier, COVID-19 has seen a dramatic drop in tourism and hospitality jobs. It is estimated that the number of jobs in the region will stabilise with the return of pre-COVID-19 tourism activity by 2024, and then grow broadly in line with population growth. To meet this demand, the industry will need to ensure that the demand for workers is met by the needed supply and with the required skills.

The supply and demand of workers from various sources over the next 10 years have been estimated below. The future workforce demand analysis shows that the number of estimated workers in the VE sector in 2023 is approximately 8,500, increasing to over 11,000 in 2032. This is excluding any proposed increase in needs due to the actions identified in the DMP.

Source of Tourism and Hospitality Workers	Number of Estimated Workers Available 2023	Number of Estimated Workers Required 2023	Number of Estimated Workers Available 2032	Number of Estimated Workers Required 2032
Established local supply	4,000	4,000	4,500	4,600 (in line with population growth)
Working Holiday Makers and International Students	1,000	1,000	2,000	2,000
Other Under-utilised Sources Potentially Available		3,456		4,498
- Mature aged workforce (half 55-75 year old locals)	37,000		50,000 (ageing workforce)	
- Parents (young mothers/fathers in one income households)	7,000		8,000 (in line with population growth)	
Total	49,000	8,456 (for 6,765 positions)	64,600	11,098 (for 8,878 positions)

Refer later in Section 4 to the under-utilised segments of the workforce.

Please also note the following:

- The above estimates assume a 25% annual turnover of the workforce for the industry (i.e., with the estimated worker requirement in excess of total non-full time equivalent jobs)
- There still may be shortages in medium to higher-level skilled jobs.

Note. Whatever the number of jobs that are generated for the region over the ensuing 10 years, the people requirement will be 2.5 times this number, because of the high annual staff turnover in the tourism and hospitality sector. The change in expected total jobs in the industry is a fraction of the recruitment and training challenges facing the industry in this region.

Photo: Visit Victoria

4. GAP ANALYSIS, INITIATIVES AND PROPOSED ACTIONS

4.1 LEADERSHIP

YRT is part of the 'network that binds various stakeholders together (i.e., employers, employees, Registered Training Organisations, Local Government Authorities, Government, State Government, education and training providers) towards the development of a sustainable workforce, capable of delivering quality services to the tourism and hospitality industry in the region. Not one of these entities can address these workforce challenges in isolation, with the responsibility vested in all levels of government and industry. Fostering partnerships between these various entities is therefore critical to workforce initiatives, access to funding and successful outcomes.

Whilst YRT doesn't have any direct authority over these stakeholders, it nevertheless has a significant influence over their respective activities in coordinating and optimising workforce capability outcomes. Therefore, many of YRT's actions involve advocacy, support, collaboration, connection, partnering and information exchange.

Furthermore, there are a number of programs and initiatives that have been developed and implemented by others aimed at addressing various issues of concern, as referred to in this document. Consequently, there is little point in 'reinventing the wheel', so the YRT's role is to be aware of and support such programs. In particular, Yarra Ranges Council   has already in place, the infrastructure and programs for a number of employment initiatives. YRT can become a clearing house for those initiatives to avoid duplication and a waste of resources.

A clearing house, is an organisation or service that collects, processes, organises, and disseminates information on a particular topic or from various sources. The primary purpose of a clearing house is to facilitate the sharing and exchange of information among interested parties, making it easier for users to access relevant and up-to-date data without having to search through multiple sources.

One of the key overall roles of YRT is to continue to build and support local infrastructure including training institutions, employees, government (including LGAs), and workers (existing and potential).

More positively, the required changed mindset for YVDR region tourism employers of having to compete more actively for staff and being more flexible in their employment sourcing and conditions, promises longer-term benefits to the local industry.

4.2 THE LATENT OR UNTAPPED MATURE AGED WORKFORCE - FIXING THE SUPPLY CHANGE

Age is no longer perceived as strong a barrier to employment as it was even five years ago, with many successful businesses having an increased diversity of experience and age profiles, from the mature aged workforce to school leavers. There appears to be a shift away from the prejudice against ageism that has previously represented a barrier to the employment of more mature aged people. Examples of success stories are emerging of businesses that have employed more mature aged workers in the industry (e.g., Bunnings, Australia Post). Adding to this shift in community attitudes towards ageism, is that the life expectancy of adults and their associated health is increasing.

There is mounting evidence of + 55 year old retirees returning to work, either needing to supplement their income to make ends meet, with the effects of inflation, and/or seeking social interaction given the social isolation that some may be experiencing from retirement. The potential employment of + 55 year old staff constitutes a relatively untapped or underutilised workforce segment to meet the tourism industry skill requirements in the region. This mature aged workforce includes those who may have retired (either partly or fully), or those who may wish to enhance their pension or earnings, or those who may wish to change careers and do something different. Compared to other industries, visitor economy jobs more commonly suit the demands of older residents looking for part-time/casual work, with low skill entry requirements, low physical demands and flexibility of hours.

A recent relaxation of government policy regarding the maximum earning capacity that mature aged workers may earn, without impacting adversely on their pension entitlements, has encouraged increased workforce participation rates of this cohort (the Work Bonus Scheme), and constitutes a timely increased resource to address staff shortages.

The other advantages of this cohort for cafe and pub work include the following:

- Typically they already have basic customer service skills, some business acumen and world experience, and are able to make constructive observations and suggestions for visitors to the region and the business beyond fulfilling their basic role.

- They are not required to undergo any formal training, unless serving at a higher-class restaurant.

- They are typically conscientious and reliable.

- They are not overly motivated by money, but more by the social aspect of mixing with fellow staff and customers, and making a contribution.

In summary, there are huge benefits to having an age-diverse workforce. The heterogeneous mix of skills, knowledge, and experiences allows organisations to generate better decision-making and problem-solving.

Note. There are some examples of organisations in the Yarra Valley Region with age-diverse workforces, that demonstrate the effectiveness of such workforce age demographics.

An analysis of the +55 year old population in the region indicates that there is more than adequate potential to meet the future requirement for lower-level skill jobs (e.g., waiters, bar attendants, retail, etc.). The population aged 55-75 is approximately 75,000 in the region (approx. 17,500 in the Yarra Valley and 29,500 in the Dandenong Ranges sub-regions). Only a relatively minor percentage of this cohort needs to be available for jobs to supplement the estimated supply of local workers to the visitor economy industry. Access to this mature aged latent workforce, potentially largely overcomes the future basic skills shortages and people in the region.

Note.

(a) According to the ABS Census 2021, the Yarra Ranges region had the 16th highest LGA population of the 79 LGAs in Victoria in 2021. Of the 30 Victorian LGAs with more than 100,000 residents, Yarra Ranges had the 3rd highest share of total residents aged 55 to 75 years old at 23.5%. This was only behind Mornington Peninsula (28%) and Bayside (25%). With retirements now for much longer periods, a social challenge is keeping the increasing numbers in these age groups engaged with their community and out of financial hardship.

(b) It may be the case that the Yarra Ranges Council's job board should have specific sections advertising and catering to these cohorts. This could include individual examples of these cohorts who have re-entered the workforce and/or changed careers.

Some of this mature aged cohort is involved in volunteer activities, but their potential contribution to the tourism and hospitality industry is estimated to be relatively minor. Although relatively small in numbers compared to the total industry workforce in the YVDR Region, some organisations have experienced difficulties in filling volunteer positions in the COVID-19 recovery period. Reasons suggested for this difficulty include:

- An ageing cohort
- Changes in lifestyle
- A reluctance to be involved in larger groups.

In summary, capitalising on the opportunity to supplement the visitor economy workforce with this mature aged cohort, means there is no additional requirement for housing and accommodation, which is otherwise in short supply. The added benefits to the region include:

- An increased social license of the sector within the local community, as many older workers in the visitor economy are expected to become strong local advocates for the industry.

- Enhanced local knowledge to address customer enquiries.

- A more stable workforce with lower turnover and associated cost savings.

4.3 OTHER SOURCES OF THE SUPPLY OF WORKERS

Other sources of the supply of workers include:

- Young mothers and fathers in the region, with the introduction of free childcare including 3 year old kindergarten, ensuring more could consider part-time roles (e.g., housekeeping)

- Overseas students and backpackers returning (i.e., from the COVID-19 restrictions), will contribute to a shift of job seekers towards outer metropolitan areas (i.e., on the periphery of the YVDR region).

International students have been seen to be mutually beneficial to businesses with these students, over the short-term, filling labour gaps where there is a shortage of domestic workers. They also drive additional spending in the economy.

Note. There was a temporary relaxation of the rules for the number of hours students could work during COVID-19 according to the visa conditions, but this has since been reversed. From the 1st July 2023, overseas students will be permitted to work up to 48 hours per fortnight.

- Migrants with a review of the Migration System under consideration, including an increase to migrant intake.

Other initiatives to increase supply include:

- Improve participation in the workforce of at-risk and unemployed locals (e.g., Jobs Victoria Jobs Ready Program through BHI leading to a Certificate III in tourism). This includes those unemployed youth and minority groups (e.g., First Nations people).

Note. According to the Outer Eastern LLEN: Environmental Scan 2022 Report (prepared by .id Informed Decisions, February 2022) the unemployment rate of youth who are in the labour force for the 18-25 age group in the YRDR is lower (4%) than the Greater Melbourne area (5.3%), so youth unemployment appears not to constitute a major problem for the YVDR.

4.4 IMPACT ON THE WORKFORCE WITH KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE DMP

Assuming the successful implementation of the key recommendations of the DMP KPI, consequent changes to workforce management and configuration are likely to include the following developments:

- More predictable and longer shifts for food and beverage workers, which nevertheless will include some evening and night shifts, with increased visitation at night (as well as during the day)

- More regular weekly employment, as opposed to a weekend focus

- A shift from casual status towards permanent status

- A more age-diverse workforce with the addition of more mature workers

- More jobs in visitor accommodation and visitor attraction

- The emergence of some interesting job opportunities with the advent of new visitor experiences and nature-based activities

- A higher investment in the training and development of staff
- An increased local supply of workers, but at the same time, an increased catchment of workers to draw upon with improved transport to the region.
- Reduced turnover.

There may not necessarily be a need for more people, but jobs will be better (in terms of their conditions) with a more stable workforce (i.e., lower turnover).

4.5 TRAINING NEEDS TO SKILL INDIVIDUALS AND CREATE CAREER PATHS

Training Needs for Lower-Skilled Jobs

As previously indicated, the education and training requirements for many of these tourism and hospitality jobs are relatively basic, and some would argue that these skills can be mainly learnt on-the-job. The acquisition of these skills and investment in the same, can be supplemented with short courses (including online courses or micro-learning) on such topics as customer service, barista and bar attendant training, etc., for which there is a continuing need. However, with this 'minimalistic' approach to training and education, the question is whether this form of industry skilling in the longer term is sufficient to propel the YVDR region to 'best practice' status?

Beyond these courses is the step up to a Certificate II in either hospitality or tourism, that typically extends over 1 to 2 years.

Training Needs for Skilled or Semi-Skilled Jobs

Training of middle management has been identified as a potential need (Certificate III) for the region. There is a perceived naivety in the sector as many current workers have been promoted into these roles based on past performance against a background of people shortages (i.e., without relevant qualifications). As such, this cohort may be lacking the necessary wider knowledge and experience to deal with the complexities of contemporary business, including various people issues (e.g., OH&S, compliance, IR issues, etc.).

It is estimated that the number of jobs in this skilled or semi-skilled category constitutes 30% of the total number of jobs. To that end, it is important that over the next 10 years that effort is directed to ensuring a pipeline of workers from supervisors all the way through to managers, as these people management roles are also needed to deliver an effective tourism offer.

Career Paths

A 'one-size-fits-all' approach to career development is flawed in that there are a variety of job and career motivations and aspirations for workers, particularly for lower-skill-level jobs. To that end, it is important to cater for this career diversity in the workforce. Some may be seeking a job and the associated income, some may be seeking experience, some may be seeking socialisation, or any combination of these factors without necessarily thinking of building a career in the industry. Not everyone who works in the industry is seeking a career in the industry!

That said, it is important to counter perceptions of the lack of career paths in the industry. This may be best achieved by promoting the success stories and the journeys of those individuals who have done so. The following is just one example of a somewhat unpredictable yet successful career development path.

Max's Story

Max (not his real name) started as a 17 year old in 2018 at a cellar door winery and restaurant where he spent the next few years in various roles. Max's career development trajectory has been detailed below:

1. 12 months polishing glasses in the bar, setting tables in the restaurant and general duties.
2. On turning 18 Max was trained to deliver wine services, working in the restaurant as waiter and developing his knowledge of food and wine for the next 18 months.
3. In March 2020 at the commencement of lockdown, all of the team (including the manager, the kitchen team, administration staff and Max), entered the vineyard to start picking fruit for vintage (i.e., the making of wine for the year) and general vineyard duties.
4. Over the next 18 months, bouncing in and out of lockdown, Max always returned to the restaurant when able, but in the interim became more proficient (and useful in the vineyard). Over this period, he learnt to drive a tractor and prune the vineyard and also commenced a TAFE course studying Viticulture.
5. When the restaurant finally reopened after emerging from lockdown, Max was promoted to Restaurant Supervisor and held the position for a further 8 months.
6. Post this time Max, was looking for a change again and has since left this winery and joined another winery in the Yarra Valley where he continues to learn and grow.
7. In his personal life, Max now has a partner and has spent the last two years learning to be a volunteer firefighter with the CFA.

This is a positive story to emerge from the pandemic and shows how individuals, with appropriate encouragement, can be resilient and progressively follow a career path that may not always be as clear-cut as first thought.

Other examples of successful career paths can be found at:

https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/studentguides/getvet/Pages/Harrison.aspx

4.6 A NEW EMPHASIS ON RETENTION

Following the emphasis on recovery from COVID-19 and recruitment of staff, the new emphasis should shift more towards how best to retain those staff. Retention is a multifaceted phenomenon - there is no silver bullet solution!

> **Note.** The cost of turnover for lower-level skills jobs is calculated by the turnover multiple of 0.33 of the salary of the job in question. This turnover multiple includes both the direct and indirect costs of turnover.
>
> Example: Assuming an individual is earning $50,000 per annum, the cost of turnover is $16,500 (i.e., $50,000 × 0.33 = $16,500).

4.7 NEW TRAINING CHALLENGES FOR MANAGERS

Given the people and skills shortages, this has imposed greater responsibility now on management for recruiting, training and developing staff and retaining the same. To that end, management needs to be upskilled in people management, including:

- How to recruit more mature aged staff
- The induction of new employees
- How to develop staff
- How to retain staff

There are various business management programs (some

5. RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

5.1 SOURCE STAFF FROM UNDER-UTILISED SEGMENTS

Promote the opportunities available in the region to engage the under-utilised segments of the community, including older residents as the core focus given the higher representation of older people in the region with valuable skills and experiences to offer the industry as well as an increasing willingness to want to find job opportunities. Other target groups may also include, younger mothers and fathers, unemployed youth, people with a disability and First Peoples.

> Note.
>
> (a) The mature aged workforce should be a key target given this cohort offers a significant group from which to source new staff.
>
> (b) Working in or on their own Country is also particularly appealing to members of Traditional Owner Groups.

Support a public education program, in conjunction with local Councils. Yarra Ranges Council has the greatest coverage of the region, but Nillumbik Shire Council and Cardinia Shire Council should also be approached to try and achieve a regional approach to this problem. This education program , aimed at promoting the benefits of employing more mature aged workers, including showcasing success stories from employers and favourable testimonials from individual workers, and encourage more mature aged residents to consider working in the industry. This program could also include specialised job matching for interested local older residents.

Publicise examples of pathways to transition for older workers or workers wishing to change careers, including career advice from organisations such as the Job Skills Centre at BHI.

Also target the fast-returning international students for roles in tourism

Promote workforce diversity including highlighting examples of those businesses in the Region that have successfully integrated a workforce that includes a heterogeneous mix of skills, knowledge, and experiences.

5.2 DELIVER SKILLS – BOTH TO MANAGEMENT AND THEIR WORKERS

Support grassroots, community-based career training that integrates tourism as a valuable aspect of the community, increasing the social license of the industry.

Continue to collaborate with and support local LGAs, and in particular Yarra Ranges Shire, in their feasibility assessment for the wider region to be approved for the importation of specialised skilled occupations under a Destination Area Migrant Agreement (DAMA).

Continue to connect relevant stakeholders and businesses to ensure that cross-regional and cross-industry opportunities and needs are understood and met.

Continue to support and contribute to building a training and skills ecosystem that ensures all key skills needed for a thriving tourism industry are provided to employees who need it.

Continue to support businesses in their people management practices, including recruitment, engagement, retention, career development, and coaching and mentoring of their staff.

YRT and OELLEN could seek to be sponsored to share a resource as a tourism industry educational pathway development officer to work more effectively with training providers and industry and employees.

In particular, provide greater assistance to business in:

- The recruitment of more mature aged prospective workers
- The retention of staff.

5.3 RECRUIT AND RETAIN A LOCAL WORKFORCE

Support a workforce that lives and works in the local community.

Encourage more workers to stay and work locally by partnering with community and industry to encourage migrant flows and local employment. In particular, continue to support the Yarra Ranges Council with their Employment Awareness and Retention Scheme and look to opportunities for similar activities in the other Council areas.

Advocate for improved low-cost housing availability for workers in the industry in the community, emphasising the community and industry benefits to living and working in the region.

Advocate for improved transport in the region, including transport beyond the three terminating rail stations, and in particular, the Yarra Valley sub-region.

Advocate for improved services (including internet services) to the region.

Continue to support those programs aimed at underemployed youth (Job Ready Program through BHI, CIRE Jump for Start Program). Working in or on their own Country is also particularly appealing for members of Traditional Owner groups.

Continue to support those schemes aimed at addressing specialist skills deficiencies (i.e., DAMA Agreement).

Support a focus on retention, including the cost of turnover, notwithstanding the higher turnover typically experienced in the industry.

Note. The above recommendations are consistent with Yarra Ranges Council's Economic Development Plan, Section 2.3 refers to: Access to a quality local workforce that is productive, sustainable, inclusive and that supports and is responsive to industry and community current and future needs.

Then in Section 2.4, this Plan refers to: Accessing a quality local workforce that is productive, sustainable, inclusive, and that supports and is responsive to industry and community current and future needs.

Furthermore, in Section 2.5, this Plan refers to the following: Complement and support visitor economy, improve liveability for locals and maximise economic returns.

Yarra Ranges Council is in the process of preparing a Workforce Infrastructure and Development Plan. This YVDR Workforce Plan may well constitute a significant input to this plan and otherwise, in conjunction with the Yarra Ranges Council, make a valuable contribution to industry.

Nillumbik Shire Council also has elements in their Economic Development Strategy at Objective 1 that align to recommendations in this Workforce Plan.

5.4 PROMOTE CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Promote career development in the region where employment in the industry is not seen as just a job, but a career, including examples of those who have fostered a successful career path.

Continue to engage with education and training institutions, stakeholders and residents, to ensure relevant training and career development pathways exist and are promoted. It is important to note that YRT currently has limited resource to do this.

Develop and showcase a diverse set of career pathways and training (based on local successes), to support the whole industry, from specialists to entry-level opportunities and everything in between.

Build the capability of businesses to support career development opportunities and strengthen the workforce capability of the region.

5.5 IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION AND INFLUENCE

YRT should play a role of advocating industry best practices, by adopting a leadership position, potentially as a 'clearing house' of information, as well as advocate for workplace issues.

Continue to establish communication channels and forums to ensure regular and meaningful touchpoints are undertaken and maintained.

Continue to facilitate broader engagement and collaboration opportunities, especially for benefits that can be sourced outside-of-region.

Continue to maintain and further develop existing goodwill between all stakeholders to allow for continuous development in the opportunities, skills and networks that tourism and hospitality workers and operators can leverage.

Continue to facilitate the growth of a network of businesses, education institutions, government, other stakeholders and workers that collaborate across the region to maximise tourist and hospitality offerings.

5.5 KEEP ABREAST OF INDUSTRY INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Keep abreast of innovations in the industry, including technology and its impact on workforce skills, requirements, configuration and management.

> **Note.** Innovations to conserve or reduce labour costs in the food and beverage industry include:
>
> - Ordering through apps (on mobile devices) including QR codes.
> - Robot waiters that supply food and beverages to café and restaurant customers.
> - Technology to assist in the HR, recruitment and other administrative requirements for small businesses.
> - Artificial intelligence opportunities to assist in servicing customers, training staff and other applications that will evolve over the next 10 years.

Notwithstanding, experimentation with this technology in addressing staff shortages and efficiency improvements are likely to be varied. Showcasing case studies of success will be important for industry to learn and evolve with the aid of technology solutions

5.6 PROMOTE WORKING IN THE REGION AND THE INDUSTRY

Promote the unique value proposition of working in the region and in the industry, emphasising the diversity of activities available.

Promote the upside of working in the industry (to counter the COVID impact that diminished its reputation) which includes:

- Transferability of customer service skills to other occupations

- Opportunities to secure work anywhere, be it casual or permanent
- Opportunities as a second job, providing shift arrangements are suitable to both parties
- Opportunities to gain work experience, be it at an elementary stage or beyond
- Opportunities for socialisation and work as part of a team.

These recommendations also support the following Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria and United Nations Sustainable Development Guidelines detailed in the DMP.

GSTC
Global Sustainable Tourism Council

SECTION A:
Sustainable Management

SECTION B:
Socio-Economic Sustainability

SECTION C:
Cultural Sustainability

UNSDG Impacted

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

5 GENDER EQUALITY

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

13 CLIMATE ACTION

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

WORKFORCE PLAN

Product Priority	Action Items	YRT ROLE			Stakeholders	Timing years
		Deliver	Partner	Advocate		
Source Staff from Under-Utilised Segments	1. Promote the opportunities available in the region to engage the under-utilised segments of the community, including older residents as the core focus given the higher representation of older people in the region with valuable skills and experiences to offer the industry as well as an increasing willingness to want to find job opportunities. Other target groups may also include, younger mothers and fathers, unemployed youth, and First Nations people.		✓		VTIC, State Government, LGA's	0-2
	2. Support a public education program, in conjunction with local Councils. This education program, aimed at promoting the benefits of employing more mature aged workers, including showcasing success stories from employers and favourable testimonials from individual workers, and encourage more mature aged residents to consider working in the industry. This program could also include specialised job matching for interested local older residents.			✓	VTIC, State Government, LGA's	0-2
	3. Publicise examples of pathways to transition for older workers or workers wishing to change careers, including career advice from organisations such as the Job Skills Centre at BHI.		✓		VTIC, State Government, LGA's	0-2
	4. Target the fast-returning international students and local multi cultural communities for roles in tourism.			✓	VTIC, State Government, LGA's	0-2
	5. Promote workforce diversity including highlighting examples of those businesses in the Region that have successfully integrated a workforce that includes a heterogeneous mix of skills, knowledge, and experiences.		✓		Local Councils, Industry	0-2

Product Priority	Action Items	YRT ROLE			Stakeholders	Timing years
		Deliver	**Partner**	**Advocate**		
Deliver Skills – To Both Management and their Workers	1. Support grassroots, community-based career training that integrates tourism as a valuable aspect of the community, increasing the social license of the industry.			✓	Local Councils, Training Institutions, industry	3-5
	2. Support local councils in their application for the wider region to be approved for the importation of specialised skilled occupations.			✓	Local Councils	0-2
	3. Continue to connect relevant stakeholders and businesses to ensure that cross-regional and cross-industry opportunities and needs are understood and met.	✓			Industry	0-2
	4. Continue to support and contribute to building a training and skills ecosystem that ensures all key skills needed for a thriving tourism industry are provided to employees who need it.			✓	Training Institutions, Industry	3-5
	5. Continue to support businesses in their people management practices, including recruitment, engagement, retention, career development, and coaching and mentoring of their staff.		✓		Industry, Local Councils	0-2
	6. YRT and OELLEN seek to be sponsored to share a resource as a tourism industry educational pathway development officer to work more effectively with training providers and industry and employees.		✓		OELLEN, State Government	3-5
	7. Encourage • The recruitment of more mature aged prospective workers • The retention of staff.		✓		Local Councils, Industry	0-2

Product Priority	Action Items	YRT ROLE			Stakeholders	Timing years
		Deliver	Partner	Advocate		
Recruit and Retain a Local Workforce	1. Support a workforce that lives and works in the local community.			✓	Local Councils, Industry	0-2
	2. Encourage more workers to stay and work locally by partnering with community and industry to encourage migrant flows and local employment.			✓	Local Councils, Industry	0-2
	3. Advocate for improved low-cost housing availability for workers in the industry in the community, emphasising the community and industry benefits to living and working in the region.			✓	State Govt, Local Councils	0-2
	4. Advocate for improved transport in the region, including transport beyond the three terminating rail stations, and in particular, the Yarra Valley sub-region.			✓	State Govt, Local Councils, Industry	0-2
	5. Advocate for improved services (including internet services) to the region. Continue to support those programs aimed at underemployed youth (Job Ready Program through BHI, CIRE Jump for Start Program). Working in or on their own Country is also particularly appealing for members of Traditional Owner groups.			✓	State Govt, Local Councils, Industry	0-2
	6. Support a focus on retention, including the cost of turnover, notwithstanding the higher turnover typically experienced in the industry.		✓		Local Councils, Industry	0-2

Product Priority	Action Items	YRT ROLE			Stakeholders	Timing years
		Deliver	Partner	Advocate		
Promote Career Development	1. Promote career development in the region where employment in the industry is not seen as just a job, but a career, including examples of those who have fostered a successful career path.	✓			Local Councils, Industry Training Institutions, VTIC	0-2
	2. Continue to engage with education and training institutions, stakeholders and residents, to ensure relevant training and career development pathways exist and are promoted.			✓	Training Institutions, State Govt Local Councils	3-5
	3. Develop and showcase a diverse set of career pathways and training (based on local successes), to support the whole industry, from specialists to entry-level opportunities and everything in between.		✓		Training Institutions, State Govt Local Councils	3-5
	4. Build the capability of businesses to support career development opportunities and strengthen the workforce capability of the region.			✓	Local Councils, Industry	3-5

Product Priority	Action Items	YRT ROLE			Stakeholders	Timing years
		Deliver	Partner	Advocate		
Identify Opportunities for Collaboration and Influence	1. YRT should play a role of advocating industry best practices, by adopting a leadership position, potentially as a 'clearing house' of information, as well as advocate for workplace issues.	✓			Local Councils, Industry	3-5
	2. Continue to establish communication channels and forums to ensure regular and meaningful touchpoints are undertaken and maintained.	✓			Industry, Local Councils, Training Institutions	0-2
	3. Continue to facilitate broader engagement and collaboration opportunities, especially for benefits that can be sourced outside-of-region.	✓			Other Tourism Regions, Industry	3-5
	4. Continue to maintain and further develop existing goodwill between all stakeholders to allow for continuous development in the opportunities, skills and networks that tourism and hospitality workers and operators can leverage.	✓			Industry, Local Councils, Training Institutions	3-5
	5. Continue to facilitate the growth of a network of businesses, education institutions, government, other stakeholders and workers that collaborate across the region to maximise tourist and hospitality offerings.	✓			Industry, Local Councils, Training Institutions	3-5

Product Priority	Action Items	YRT ROLE			Stakeholders	Timing years
		Deliver	Partner	Advocate		
Keep Abreast of Industry Innovation and Technology	1. Keep abreast of innovations in the industry, including technology and its impact on workforce skills, requirements, configuration and management.	✓			Industry, Training Institutions	3-5
	2. Promote the unique value proposition of working in the region and in the industry, emphasizing the diversity of activities available.			✓	Local councils, Industry	0-2
	3. Promote the upside of working in the industry (to counter the COVID impact that diminished its reputation) which includes: • Transferability of customer service skills to other occupations • Opportunities to secure work anywhere, be it casual or permanent • Opportunities as a second job, providing shift arrangements are suitable to both parties • Opportunities to gain work experience, be it at an elementary stage or beyond • Opportunities for socialisation and work as part of a team.			✓	Local councils, Industry	0-2

GLOSSARY & ACRONYMS

Activation Plans	An activation plan will look at ways to leverage infrastructure with clearly defined actions to maximise their benefit to the local region and meet the DMP's overall objectives. This may include initiatives to encourage visitation and realise business and community benefits. Areas that may be identified in an activation plan could include, accommodation supply in the local area, transport links, business opportunities, capability to deliver night time (including dusk and dawn) and mid-week activities, identification of key partners to work with and marketing and promotion activities.
DJSIR	Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry & Regions (State Government)
DEECA	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (Federal Government)
DTP	Department of Transport & Planning (Federal Government)
DMP	Destination Management Plan
First Peoples	The groups of people whose ancestors lived in Australia before the arrival of Europeans. This term is used mainly to refer to the Indigenous peoples of the area.
GSTC	Global Sustainable Tourism Council
Industry	Assorted tourism industry bodies and individual businesses working in the visitor economy
International Visitor Nights	International visitor nights are the number of visitor nights by international visitors who are 15 years or older as estimated by Tourism Research Australia using the International Visitor Survey results.
Land Managers	Parks Victoria, Yarra Valley Water, Power Companies and Govt. Depts, Melbourne Water, Zoos Victoria
LAP	Local Area Plan
LGAs	Local Government Areas
LTAs	Local Tourism Associations
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
Traditional Owner Groups	Refer to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation and Taungurung Land and Waters Council
Social license for tourism	The local community's level of support and acceptance of tourism
TRA	Tourism Research Australia
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
Visitor Economy Jobs	Visitor economy jobs are the jobs, not full time equivalent jobs, that are due to the direct or first round impact of visitor spending. This data is aggregated across all the industry sectors with the number of jobs attributed to the visitor economy reflecting the share of total sales due to visitor spending. This data is estimated by ABS for Australia and TRA for the States and tourism regions.
Visitor Spending	Visitor spending includes all overnight travel in the area and spending by visitors on domestic day trips who travel more than 25kms from their home and not for regular work or education purposes.
YVDR	Yarra Valley Dandenong Ranges
YRT	Yarra Ranges Tourism
Western Yarra Valley	The designated Local Area Plan geography that represents the Nillumbik LGA

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