



Cassowary Coast
REGIONAL COUNCIL

CASSOWARY COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL

2022-26

Visitor Information
Services Strategy





Contents

Executive Summary **4**

Report Background **6**

- 1.1 Purpose of the Review 6
- 1.2 Methodology 7
- 1.3 Regional Profile 7
- 1.4 Cassowary Coast Strategies and Direction 10

Visitor Services Research **12**

- 2.1 Perspectives on Visitor Servicing 12
- 2.2 Who Uses VICs? 12
- 2.3 Do VICs Have a Future Model - How Do They Evolve? 13
- 2.4 Co-Location 14
- 2.5 Being Part of the Journey 15
- 2.6 Digital Bridges and In-House Experiences 16
- 2.7 Information Network 16
- 2.8 Sustainable Tourism 17
- 2.9 Transitioning to Explore Centres Network 18
- 2.10 Evolving from a Passive VIC Model 18

Cassowary Coast's Vics **19**

- 3.1 Current Assets - The Region's VICs 19
- 3.2 Visitor Engagement 21
- 3.3 Cassowary Coast - Brand Recognition 25
- 3.4 VICs Current Services 26
- 3.5 Current VIC Operations & Costs 27
- 3.6 VIC Locations 28
- 3.7 SWOT Analysis - Regional 29

A New Vision **35**

- 4.1 Reimagining Cassowary Coast's Visitor Services 35
- 4.2 NEW Cassowary Coast Visitor Information Network - What will it look like? 35
- 4.3 Adapting Current Visitor Information Services 37
- 4.4 Creating Visitor Touchpoints 39
- 4.5 Strategic Priorities 40
- 4.6 Action Plan 41

Bibliography **43**

Glossary of Terms

CCRC	Cassowary Coast Regional Council
LGA	Local Government Agency
LTO	Local Tourism Organisation
NIEIR	National Institute of Economic and Industry Research
QICA	Queensland Information Centres Association
QTIC	Queensland Tourism Industry Council
RTO	Regional Tourism Organisation
TCT	Tropical Coast Tourism (region's Local Tourism Organisation)
TEQ	Tourism and Events Queensland
TRA	Tourism Research Australia
TTNQ	Tourism Tropical North Queensland

Executive Summary

The Cassowary Coast lies midway between Townsville and Cairns in Tropical North Queensland. With a population edging around 30,000 and a Gross Regional Product of some \$1.57 billion (Source: NIEIR 2021) its primary industries and economy centres around agriculture, forestry and fishing. But that is only half the story of what is a special and pristine part of Queensland's northern coastline, islands and rainforest hinterland.

The juxtaposition of two World Heritage Areas – the Wet Tropics and the Great Barrier Reef are a clue to just how unique this region is and its potential for nature-based tourism – the fastest growing trend and visitor sector as identified by Tourism and Events Queensland in their *Tourism Nature-based Tourism Strategy 2021-2024*. This sector now represents 28.5% of visitors and is expanding.

It is through the lens of that strongly emerging theme of visitor interest together with the unique and unspoilt natural heritage of the Cassowary Coast that the relevance of this report needs to be understood. Calibrating the right outcomes for an effective and holistic approach to visitor servicing within the region is a vital component to delivering a destination marketing plan (tourism strategy) and the important role of Visitor

Information Centre's (VICs) within the system of conveying brand messaging, welcoming and influencing visitors to experience more, stay longer and spend more.

Rather than just resolving the problems of declining visitor attendance in VICs that have lost some of their lustre and appeal and are losing out to technology, this review offers a timely opportunity to capitalise on the rise of nature-based tourism. By refreshing its visitor services Cassowary Coast Regional Council (CCRC) can deliver an 'omnichannel' in its VICs that combines local knowledge of face-to-face services complemented by visitor geared digital platforms – primarily an all-of-region website that provides the insights of what a visitor seeks during their planning/dreaming stage before a visit, through to booking options to transact easily and safely.

A common website is part of the toolkit for an effective network of a region's VICs to also use in advising visitors or with interactive touchscreens within a centre. Having common resources provides consistency of brand and products and helps unite individual VICs to be part of a cohesive team and network of visitor touchpoints that cross promote their neighbours in the region and help with greater visitor dispersal.



Executive Summary

Working as a collective network rather than as silos benefits the tourism economy and makes services more useful to visitors while also streamlining costs by avoiding duplication of resources. Not all innovations need to be digital and the deployment of visitor noticeboards and maps can be an effective boost to delivering visitor services while the addition of QR code links can provide a simple online connection.

This report examines in depth the performance of each centre, taking into account the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic and its massive impacts on travel. Despite the pandemic, visitor numbers are returning and domestic day trip figures in particular have seen significant increases. While the role of every region is to increase overnight stays the full dynamic of tourism in the region needs to be considered including current accommodation and resort options within the region.

Clearly, Cassowary Coast is on the radar of a large and growing sector of nature-based visitors. Gearing the visitor products to that audience and understanding how VICs can be reimagined as points of interest with themes that connect with nature tourism will, together with strategies to provide information satellites, digital connections including a common visitor website for the

region, all play a part in the tourism economy.

As cited later within this report, the influence brought through effective visitor servicing delivers more in economic benefit than just the price of a tour transaction. The onflow to other local businesses as suppliers and for the employment opportunities that come both directly and indirectly means that tourism benefits all businesses within a community and all businesses are effectively in the business of tourism.

As cited with examples from other destinations, the immediacy of information available to everyone through their smartphones has changed the dynamic for visitor behaviour. VICs need to respond, most particularly by being where visitors are most likely to congregate to achieve greater intercepts. There is a need to transition from the traditional passive model of awaiting a visitor enquiry and through a revamped model of offerings to attract visitors into a centre and to be reaching visitors online and through effective marketing campaigns is what will deliver results for a strategy of refreshed and invigorated VICs for Cassowary Coast.



Report Background

1.1 Purpose of the Review

Cassowary Coast Regional Council (CCRC) is reviewing the current operational framework of visitor information services and its four Visitor Information Centres (VICs). The findings will help formulate a new direction and strategy for an effective network of visitor touchpoints and benchmark visitor servicing.

The review is to examine how CCRC can maximise visitor engagement and reimagine its visitor services, assess the number of centres needed and how to optimise the locations or co-location of its VICs. It will explore the rise of digital options as a future alternative to physical centres or complement face-to-face advice for a holistic strategy of disseminating information and adding new experiences including Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality to the visitor experience.

The review draws on the collective insights of eminent research, benchmark examples, innovations and consultations with industry leaders. It also addresses the conventional passive model of VICs and considers the options for more commercial and active alternatives to increase interaction with visitors and influence greater exploration of the region, extended stays and increased expenditure.

VISION

The Cassowary Coast Regional Council will provide exceptional visitor services and be a destination of choice for visitors, event organisers and investors, resulting in increased economic and social benefits for our communities.

OBJECTIVE

The objective is to define a clear and relevant role for visitor servicing, adaptable to innovations and equipped with relevant services that enhance a visitor's experiences of the region and contributes to the tourism economy and benefits for the community.

This visitor information services strategy is focussed on these key objectives:

Customer Experience

A holistic approach to connect visitors with experiences; provide local insights, accurate information and fulfilment with booking options

Destination Role

Clear regional branding; expand visitor dispersal throughout the region; provide tourism data source; participate in VIC accreditation network

Economic Benefits

Influence visitors experience of the destination, increase their length of stay and spend; promote visitor dispersal throughout the region.

Social Benefits

Local employment; engaging locals into the volunteer program.

Report Background

1.2 Methodology

The review undertakes three key actions:

- Engagement with key stakeholders and industry consultants
- Desk research of the region's tourism economy, its tourism assets, marketing strategies, demographics and benchmark options applicable to the region.
- A review of each VIC, its operations, staffing and finances; the surrounds and local tourism dynamics; areas of concern and options for alternative locations

The SWOT analysis identifies the problems and opportunities that are key to sound and sustainable Visitor Information Services, ideas for innovation and Strategic Goals. The Action Plan will outline and prioritise revitalisation of the VICs under the proposed recommendations.

1.3 Regional Profile

Lying midway between Cairns and Townsville and boasting 150km of tropical coastline and pristine rainforest hinterland, the Cassowary Coast sits between two World Heritage Listed Areas – the Wet Tropics and the Great Barrier Reef. The main population centres for the region are Innisfail, Tully, Cardwell and Mission Beach – each has a dedicated VIC.

While tourism has focused on major developed areas of the Queensland coast the changing trend in visitor preferences, particularly in the wake of COVID-19, has seen the growth in regional tourism and especially in areas of exceptional natural beauty.

Tourism and Events Queensland (TEQ's) '*Tourism Nature-based Tourism Strategy 2021-2024* cited: "Domestic overnight leisure visitors to Queensland increased from 21.6% (YE Dec 2019) to 28.5% (Sept quarter 2020)." That increase of 6.9% of all travellers opting for nature-based experiences represents a 32% increase of the sector and likely to expand.

The Cassowary Coast is ideally positioned to grow a sustainable tourism economy based around its outstanding natural heritage of untouched coastline and verdant hinterland to meet the rapidly expanding demand for this tourism sector.

REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

- A quarter of the Wet Tropics Rainforests lie in Cassowary Coast
- Great Barrier Reef experiences
- Family Group of Island – Dunk and Bedarra
- Hinchinbrook Island and Thorsborne Walking Trail
- Tully River – White water rafting
- Tully Sugar Mill Tours
- Art Deco streetscapes in Innisfail
- Paronella Park
- The longest stretch of sandy coast in Far North Queensland
- Exceptional fishing
- Activities including diving, snorkelling, boating, skydiving, White Water Rafting, trekking, kayaking mountain biking
- Indigenous experiences include Girringun Aboriginal Art Centre, Cardwell
- Food and Agri-tourism
- Events, markets and cultural experiences

Economic Profile 2019/20 (Source: Economy.id, NIEIR)

Regional Population:	29,964 <small>(ABS ERP 2020)</small>
Gross Regional Product:	\$1.57 billion <small>(NIEIR 2021)</small>
Local Jobs:	12,979 <small>(NIEIR 2021)</small>
Main Industries:	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing

Value of Tourism 2019/20 (Source: Economy.id, NIEIR)

Total tourism and hospitality sales in the Cassowary Coast was **\$120.2m** with total value added contributing \$64.3million.

Employment: Direct 719, Indirect 240,	TOTAL: 959
Output/Sales (\$m): \$75.31m, Indirect \$44.90m,	TOTAL: \$120.21m
Value Added (\$m): \$42.41m, Indirect \$21.93m,	TOTAL: \$64.34m

“ In the 5 years up to 2019/20, International visitors to the Cassowary Coast were more likely to be visiting on Holiday, accounting for 80.3% of all visitors. ”

(Source: TRA)

Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFRs) comprised some 12% of visitors staying in the region.

Visitor Statistics – 2010/11 to 2019/20 (Source: Economy.id, NIEIR)

Visitor nights - Numbers

Cassowary Coast - 2010/11 to 2019/20	Cassowary Coast			Queensland		
	International Visitor Nights	Domestic Visitor Nights	Domestic Daytrips	International Visitor Nights	Domestic Visitor Nights	Domestic Daytrips
2019/20	382,534	499,818	--	39,548,832	79,900,659	42,666,974
2018/19	370,130	541,106	557,293	53,205,830	96,473,279	46,772,437
2017/18	348,760	722,655	--	52,197,190	86,675,519	41,267,984
2016/17	293,431	627,379	--	50,614,106	80,200,191	38,197,973
2015/16	360,241	727,956	--	48,338,278	76,702,682	40,375,689
2014/15	422,548	613,714	--	46,855,007	76,642,635	37,837,188
2013/14	474,059	583,273	--	43,175,470	73,477,550	36,852,935
2012/13	454,903	681,485	--	45,079,308	74,286,258	38,393,889
2011/12	313,034	453,513	--	40,838,126	74,139,112	37,134,573
2010/11	345,848	717,399	--	39,056,633	69,289,686	34,680,828

Source: Tourism Research Australia, Unpublished data from the National Visitor Survey and International Visitor Survey 2019/20.

Note: "--" represents unavailable data or data that has been suppressed due to a sample size of 40 or less.



In the 5 years up to 2019/20, there were an average of 46,874 international visitors to the Cassowary Coast. Average length stay for international visitors was 7.6 days, lower than the average for Queensland.



(Source: TRA)

Visitor Comparisons: 2015 – 2019 (Source: TRA's NVS and IVS statistics)

The 5 years from 2015 to 2019 provides a 'business as usual snapshot' of tourism activity and trends for the Cassowary Coast Region specifically and by comparison to TTNQ.

(Source: TRA's NVS and IVS statistics annual statistics)

2015-2019: Cassowary Coast Region 5 year comparison				Visitors (000)			Annual Spend (\$m)			
2015-2019 Profile	Visitors (000)	Nights (000)	Expenditure (\$M)	International	Domestic Overnight	Domestic Day	2015-2019 Profile	International	Domestic Overnight	Domestic Day
Average - 5 years	562	1029.6	138.4	47	195.6	319.4	Average (5 year)	30.4	80.6	26.8
2019	642	691	149	47	192	403	2019	31	76	42
% Variance (2015 vs 2019)	28.92%	-11.35%	7.97%	2.17%	-2.04%	57.42%	% Variance (2015 vs 2019)	0.00%	-11.63%	133.33%
TTNQ Region	6297	18,021	3,964	808	2,218	3,271		1,028	2,508	428
CCRC Portion	10.20%	3.83%	3.76%	5.82%	8.66%	12.32%		3.02%	3.03%	9.81%

Some of the key understandings we can draw from the above statistics from visitor numbers, nights and spend from 2015 to the 2019 are:

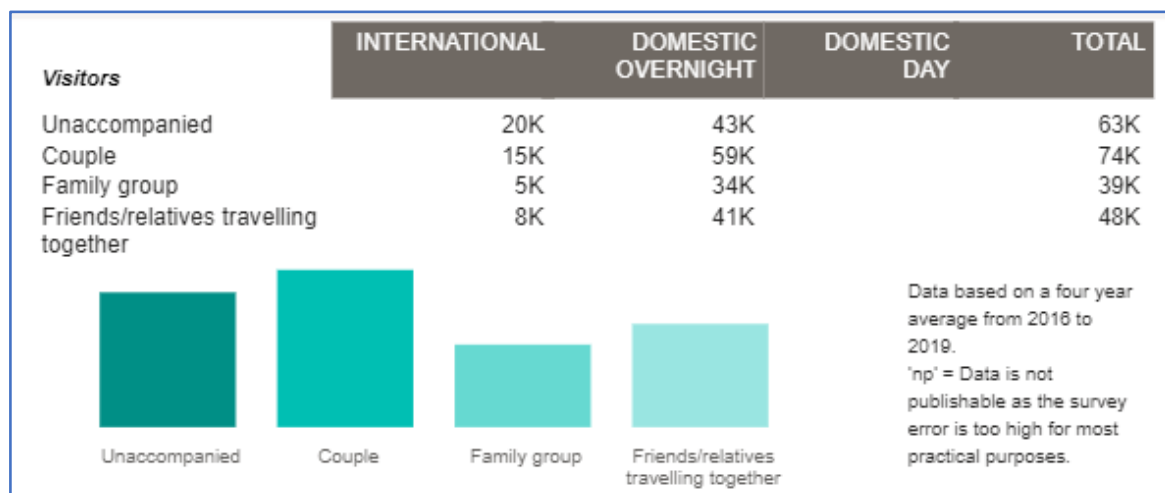
Total Visitors to Cassowary Coast 2019:	642,000
% increase in total visitors 2015 > 2019:	+28.92%
% decrease in visitor nights 2015 > 2019:	-11.35%
% increase in visitor expenditure 2015 > 2019:	+7.97%
% increase in domestic day trips 2015 > 2019:	+57.42%

While International Visitor numbers remained virtually static, Domestic Visitor Nights dropped by over **-11%** and so too did their expenditure. The rise in Domestic Day Visitors was significant at **+57%** but even more impactful was the **+133%** increase in this sector's expenditure, pointing to greater uptake of nature and adventure options.

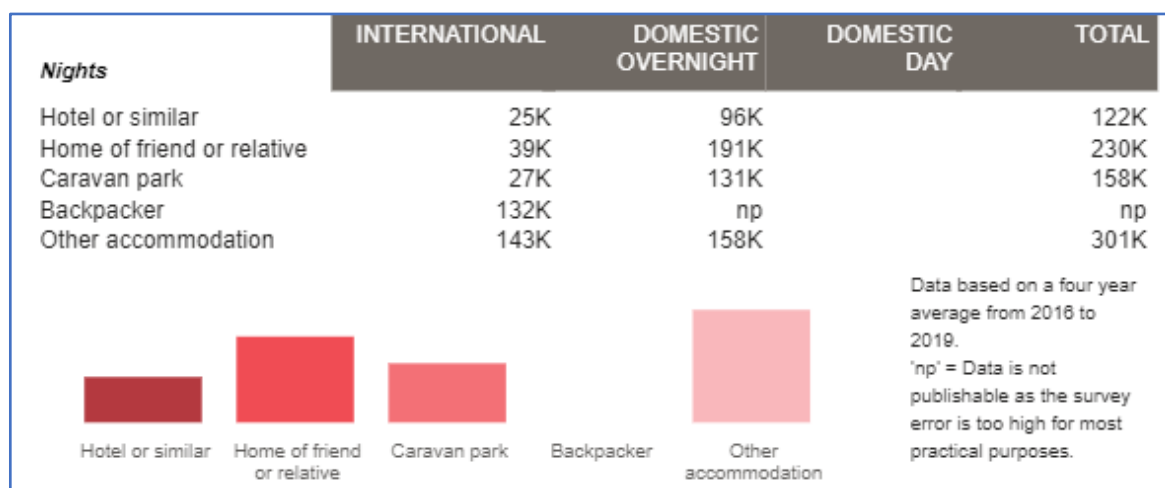
Cassowary Coast is an integral part of Tropical North Queensland (TNQ) region. In 2019 it welcomed 10% of the TNQ's total visitors. However, the region registered just 3.8% of TNQ's total visitor nights and only 3.7% of total expenditure. Bearing in mind the major tourism hubs of Townsville, Cairns, Port Douglas and Palm Cove, many visitors to TNQ will base in those locations. The predominantly self-drive demographic for Cassowary Coast is likely to have shorter stays but the rise in nature tourism provides a valuable opportunity for Cassowary Coast, assisted by the right deployment of visitor services and digital bridges.

Visitor Profile Samples from 2019 (Pre-COVID)

- Travel Party** (Source: TRA Local Government Area Profiles 2019)



- Accommodation** (Source: TRA Local Government Area Profiles 2019)



1.4 Cassowary Coast Strategies and Direction

In compiling this review we have considered the strategic objectives of other reports commissioned by CCRC to align with their objectives, key findings and recommendations...

A. CCRC Corporate Plan

Community – Our Customers: Strategic Objectives

- Increase community engagement, consultation, transparency in decision making and ease of access to information
- Value, share and celebrate our diversity of cultures across our region
- Build vibrancy through activities and major events.

Economy – Our Future: Strategic Objectives

- Encourage and facilitate investment in the region that will support both traditional and emerging industries and act as a catalyst for further employment and population growth
- Enable innovation and technology capacity within Council and the community to drive organizational efficiency and community prosperity.

B. Cassowary Coast Region, Tourism Strategy (June 2019)

The strategy is based on four primary outcomes that are intended to make tourism a resilient and more valued part of the region:

- Vibrant tourism economy
- Tourism as a gateway for regional prosperity
- Cassowary Coast as its own regional destination
- 'Love the place we live'

GOAL AND VISION

The strategy seeks to enhance the quality of local tourist information service by:

- Investigating and implementing an enhanced digital services strategy for regional tourist establishments, including use of website analytics to support the industry
- Review the role of Council-operated Visitor Information Centre (VIC) services in terms of contemporary customer requirements and efficiency/effectiveness of current model and make recommendations for revised VIC services

CHALLENGES

The strategy identifies the need for a cohesive and collaborative approach to grow tourism and cites some particular challenges to address.

- Surveys by CCRC in 2018 revealed commercial sectors within the Cassowary Coast have a low digital footprint with only 38% of businesses having a digital presence in some locations (CCRC Survey; unpublished, 2018).
- The need for a collective marketing approach by the region's tourist businesses if the industry is to compete and have a sustainable tourism economy
- 'Big Data' is increasingly important in shaping tourism in Queensland and our region
- Enabling tourist access to internet data and transaction services
- Understanding tourism consumers through website analytics to assist marketing:
 - Where are they from?
 - How did they get here?
 - What are they purchasing?

Visitor Information

The Tourism Strategy makes some specific comments regarding VICs and forecasts of how visitor services may be delivered in the future.

"Much of this will be digitally based with a need for greater business networking across the sector and an ability to provide for online transactions across the business network, including outside of the region (e.g. accommodation and inter-regional transfers).

"While face-to-face visitor information services will still have a place, the use of dated visitor information centres (VICs) is expected to be superseded by the digital economy with much greater reliance on face-to-face services being provided by businesses directly. VICs are likely to primarily have a role where they are consolidated and provide other value-add visitor services, which may include cafés, galleries and educational awareness venues. Such services are likely to require, and benefit through, direct partnerships with private sector and community organisations (eg. artist cooperatives).

A key consideration in the change-over to a digitally based visitor information service will be the need to maintain unbiased information that represents the broad spectrum of regional businesses and does not unduly favour individuals."

Visitor Services Research

2.1 Perspectives on Visitor Servicing

Visitor Information Centres have been the face of tourism for decades, providing free advice from friendly locals, booking accommodation, tours and experiences, offering an array of guides, maps and brochures. They are a focal point to aggregate local produce, arts and crafts as regional souvenirs for visitors.

The model has remained largely passive in that many VICs continue to wait for visitors to attend with the result that visitor numbers have declined in those centres that have not evolved their model. Digital options, particularly using mobile devices, provide immediacy for some functions such as bookings and transactions and in locating information relevant to a consumer's enquiries.

The challenge for VICs is how they evolve from a passive model to be relevant:

- To be where visitors congregate
- To have features of interest to a visitor beyond just information
- To take a more commercial and sustainable approach
- To be equipped with digital bridges that synch with visitor expectations and travel needs to make them an indispensable companion from pre-visit to in destination and post visit for future travel.



Source: A National Perspective on Visitor Information Servicing (Dec 2018)

2.2 Who Uses VICs?

The comprehensive, 'A National Perspective on Visitor Information Servicing' (Dec 2018) cites some key data on visitation to VICs:

13.5 million visitors per annum (2018)
37,000+ visitors per day
4.4% of total visitors

Users of VICs are in direct proportion with the distance they are from home as displayed below. The further a visitor has travelled and less familiar with the destination, the greater their need for local advice and answers not furnished through online searches. International Visitors are most likely to make use of a VIC followed by Domestic Overnight with Day Trip Visitors being the least likely to use a VIC.

Visitors	International Visitors	Domestic O/N Interstate	Domestic O/N Intrastate	Domestic Day Trippers
% Using a VIC	18.6%	8.7%	6.1%	2.7%

(Source: A National Perspective on Visitor Information Servicing', Dec 2018)

2.3 Do VICs Have a Future Model – How Do They Evolve?

VICs can positively impact on a visitor's length of stay, experiences and spend but success depends on where they are located and how effectively they evolve to attract, interest and influence visitor audiences across a spectrum of engagements from face-to-face to digital.

Since the arrival of smartphones and mobile devices pundits have forecast the demise of VICs. However, the debate of VICs vs Digital shouldn't be binary. While smartphones and devices initially impacted on VICs, the downward trend in attendance has plateaued and even increased as more travellers seek out local information by talking to VIC staff. Just as digital enhances the operation of other businesses, so too the contemporary VIC model can and has evolved through greater reach to visitor audiences by adopting digital bridges and providing a holistic information service.

Two reports by Tourism Research Australia (TRA) looked at the influence of VICs on visitor behaviour in Western Australia and New South Wales. The results are enlightening.

TRA – The Influence of Western Australian Visitor Centres on Tourist Behaviour

Key findings in the WA report were:

- 39% of international visitors used a visitor centre during their visit
- 17% of interstate domestic visitors also used a visitor centre
- 9% of intrastate visitors used a visitor centre
- 84% of visitors to a VIC reported a positive influence on how they viewed the location
- 19% of VIC users reported making a booking
- 13% extended their stay (on average by +2 nights)
- Increased expenditure after visiting a VIC ranged between 10% to 38%.

(Source: TRA – The Influence of Western Australian Visitor Centres on Tourist Behaviour- Sept. 2015)

TRA – Visitor Information Servicing in New South Wales

Key findings in the NSW report were:

- When in destination VICs were the lead information source for visitors (42%)
- Advice from locals was the next most popular (23%) followed by online (14%)
- Top information sources pre-visit were online travel sites (34%) followed by direct with operator (17%) or recommendations from friends and family (17%)
- Official websites for the State (11%), Local (10%) and Region (9%) each ranked low
- Priority of information at VIC was 'maps (53%), attractions (51%), events (24%), activities (21%)

Of VIC users surveyed:

- 18% reported spending money during their visit to the VIC
- 24% made day trips to surrounding areas
- 16% indicated they would extend their stay
- 27% decided to visit more attraction and events
- 73% spoke with staff during their visit to a VIC.

- Half of VIC non-users surveyed said “**they would have gone to a VIC if they had happened to drive or walk past**” highlighting the importance of a VIC's location.

(Source: TRA – Visitor Information Servicing in New South Wales, June 2016)



2.4 Co-Location

In the digital age where a wealth of information is at the fingertips of consumers on their smartphones and devices, there is less motivation for visitors to detour from their pathways to find a VIC. For a VIC to be effective it needs to be positioned where visitors congregate – ‘fish where the fish are feeding’.

A joint report undertaken by Tourism Research Australia (TRA) and Destination NSW found: **“Half of VIC non-users said, “they would have gone to a VIC if they had happened to drive or walk past”** highlighting the importance of a VIC’s location. (Source: TRA – Visitor Information Servicing in New South Wales , June 2016)

The benefits of co-location are promoted within leading industry manuals for VICs:

“ A Visitor Information Centre can increase its visitation and viability by co-locating with another business, service or attraction. When a Visitor Information Centre becomes an attraction, visitors want to visit and are open to discovering the region through interactions with staff and technology.

(Source: VTIC, Visitor Servicing Toolkit, August 2019)

Examples of Co-location in Queensland

The importance of selecting the right location and the benefits of being co-located with an attraction are illustrated with two Queensland VICs: Malanda and Mackay.

- **Malanda VIC** is located 1km outside of town next to rainforest. The VIC had some 16,000 visitors annually when in 2010 fire devastated the centre and operations were temporarily moved into town where numbers dropped to just 10,000 visitors. A new VIC was built on the original site but incorporated an excellent interpretive display of the area’s volcanic features, and the flora and fauna of the adjacent rainforest, home to tree kangaroos. The new VIC’s annual visitation grew to 32,000 visitors by 2016 – doubling its previous numbers despite the emergence of digital options.
- **Mackay’s VIC** was set to be compromised by a planned ring road. Following consultant’s recommendations, the VIC was relocated to the entrance of Mackay’s popular Bluewater Lagoon water park. Mackay Tourism reported a two-thirds increase in visitor numbers.

There are many examples of how co-location benefits the reach of a VIC including Winton’s Waltzing Matilda Centre, Tamworth’s Golden Guitar, Katoomba’s Three Sisters Lookout and Bega’s Cheese Factory. Conversely, when City of Melbourne had to move from their Federation Square location to Town Hall, just 450m away, visitor numbers dropped markedly. Calculating the best location to intercept visitors and add to the VIC experience beyond just information is critical in the effective reach and consequent influence a VIC has with visitors to stay longer, see more and spend more.

2.5 Being Part of the Journey

“Information is the currency of visitor servicing and must be accessible during all stages of the journey. A blended engagement strategy should be built off an understanding of how and when visitors want to receive specific types of information and inspiration. It also must be a fully collaborative effort with all channels interconnecting.”

(Source: VTIC, Visitor Servicing Toolkit, August 2019)

The dynamics of a modern visitor information service have shifted massively from the traditional passive model of waiting for visitors to attend a centre to one where engagement with visitors needs to begin well before a visitor arrives. The ability to not only reach but equip visitors with information and choices for the kind of holiday they are seeking should start at the ‘dreaming stage’.

A website that understands the needs of those planning holidays and includes not only information but pathways for bookings increase the relevance of a VIC. Few visitors continue to book accommodation upon arrival but a well-designed visitor website can provide the range of local options and offer either a booking widget or direct links to operator booking platforms thereby ensuring a visitor can fulfill the transactions they need for their travel.

In region, the relationship established online can be supported with both face-to-face advice and further digital options from apps to website or chat options. The VIC’s connection can continue after the visitor returns home with e bulletins that promote special offers, events or new experiences to invite return visitation.



(Source: A National Perspective on Visitor Information Servicing, Dec 2018)

2.6 Digital Bridges and In-House Experiences

Digital options provide the essential complement to in destination face-to-face services. Central to a digital strategy is a well-designed and maintained website that provides comprehensive, relevant and current content designed to meet the needs of travellers.

For regions with multiple VICs it is important to avoid duplication of digital resources which both fragments the audience and works against a collaborative approach to building dispersal throughout the region. Pooling resources allows for wider content, brand adherence and broadening visitors awareness of the collective offerings of a region that will encourage longer stays and take up for more experiences.

Social media is an essential partner to a good website, linking visitors from their preferred platforms back to the website.

Visitor apps are also an invaluable aid for VICs. Apps for individual regions are an expensive and time-consuming exercise and often counter-productive when the offering is for a single region. Participation on comprehensive, nationwide app platforms are more likely to have strong take-up by consumers who can use the app repeatedly on their travels.

In house digital experiences can enhance and prolong the visitor's time in a VIC. The options can be informational or entertainment. A particular example is the Canberra VIC which attracts some 200,000 visitors annually. Their interactive map table allows users to assemble an itinerary of products they encounter across different themes that can then be emailed to their device.

AR and VR have become valuable tools in drawing visitors into VICs, such as in Albany WA where the VR whale experience has been a catalyst for a dramatic increase in whale tour bookings, providing valuable revenue for the VIC's operations.

Like any business, digital may at first appear to be in competition until the opportunities are harnessed to help expand how a business can operate and the reach to its audience.

2.7 Information Network

Being 'where the fish are feeding' has become a strong mantra for visitor servicing and the value of selecting the right location for a VIC or being aligned with an attraction in a co-located environment brings significant benefits. However, the reach for a single site will always be limited by those visitors to a region who gravitate to that particular place. To achieve a broader physical presence, without establishing satellite VICs, can be partly achieved with well-located information stands and information boards that include comprehensive local info and a map to assist visitors in getting their bearings.

The strategy has been adopted by numerous LTOs and RTOs to assist the reach of their VICs.

“With the aim of engaging more visitors, Yarra Ranges Tourism uncovered the most visited destinations within its region and then worked with local businesses to strategically place information stands where visitors were. In the first year, the number of visitors receiving brochures more than doubled.”

(Source: VTIC, Visitor Servicing Toolkit, August 2019)

2.8 Sustainable Tourism

Sustainability has become a buzz word often wrongly applied, misunderstood or exploited by those seeking a commercial edge. Nevertheless, creating a sustainable tourism model is a sound initiative to establish an enduring strategy for operating successfully, meeting social, governance and environmental guidelines, and recognising what protects the natural assets of a destination will also maintain the interest of future visitors.

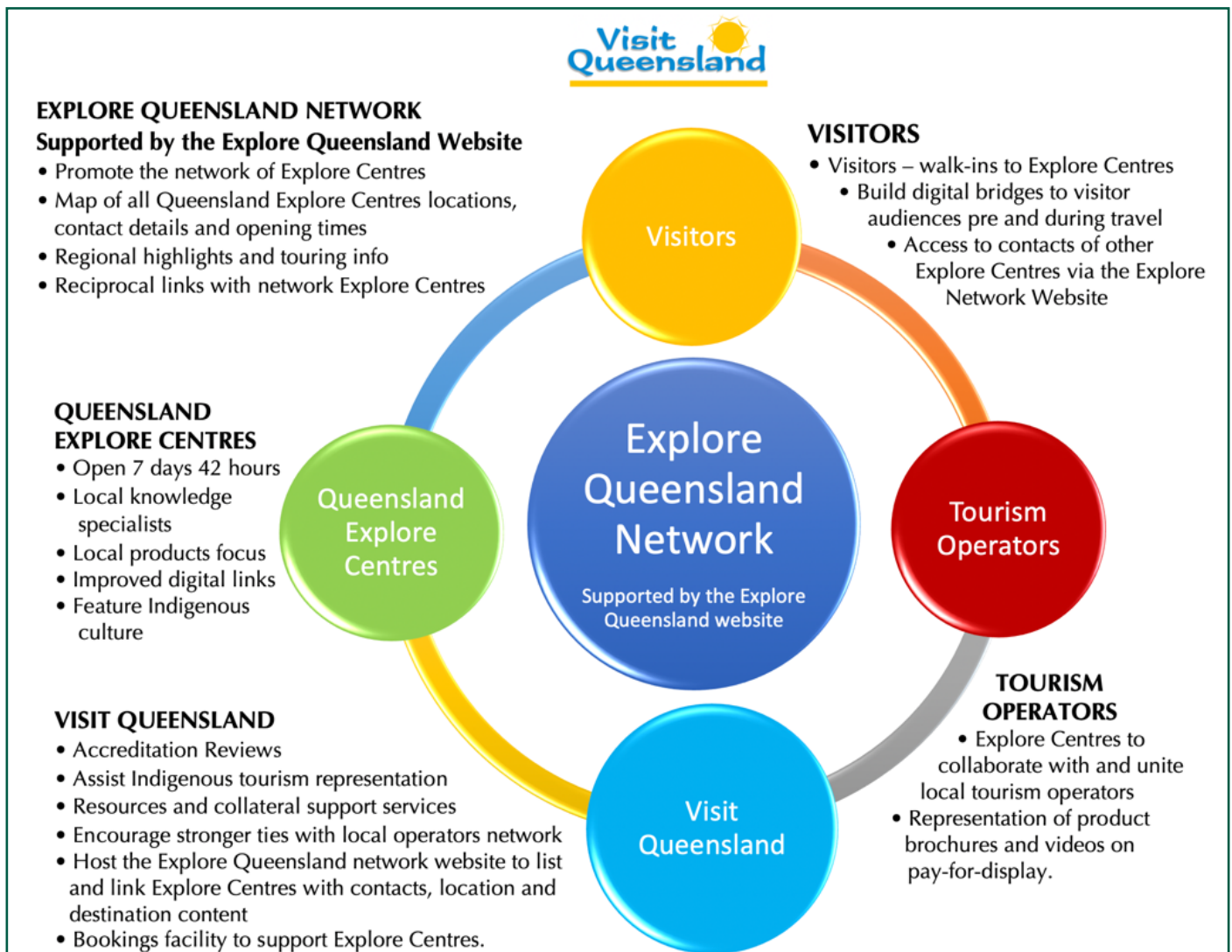
That is especially important in destinations like the Cassowary Coast where nature-based tourism plays a leading role in what's on offer and the perceptions of the market audience interested in visiting will be critical for the growth of the region's tourism economy.

United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO)

The UNWTO's leadership vision acknowledges the most pressing challenges facing tourism and identifies the sector's ability to overcome them and to drive wider positive change, including the opportunities responsible tourism offers for the advancement of the United Nation's **17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

UNWTO's work is based around five distinct pillars:

1. Making tourism smarter through celebrating innovation and leading the digital transformation of the sector
2. Making tourism more competitive at every level through promoting investment and promoting entrepreneurship
3. Creating more and better jobs and providing relevant training
4. Building resilience and promoting safe and seamless travel
5. Harnessing tourism's unique potential to protect cultural and natural heritage and to support communities both economically and socially.



(Source: Queensland's Visitor Information Centres Network - Transforming for the Future)

2.9 Transitioning to Explore Centres Network

Visit Queensland together with Tourism & Events Queensland has embarked on a new vision for accredited Visitor Information Centres to increase visitation, build digital connections with visitors, provide advice on improving the ROI for individual centres, and create a more collegial network that grows tourism.

The resulting transformation sees a rebranding to the 'Explore Queensland' network (previously the Visitor Information Centre network). The report included the diagram to summarise the role of key stakeholders in the visitor servicing arena including the centres.

“Our goal in reimagining the Queensland Visitor Information Centre Network is for a more agile and cost-effective model for visitors, VIC owners and stakeholders.”

2.10 Evolving from a Passive VIC Model

It's time to shift the dynamic away from a traditional VIC model of passively awaiting visitors to detour to a centre for the purpose of seeking information. In the face of a gamut of instant information options at hand with a smartphone, VICs need:

- To reinvent and not just rely on those who seek info finding them
- To reach more visitors incidentally through being positioned at a prime visitor precinct or co-location with an attraction
- Adding a feature attraction within a VIC that makes a centre a drawcard with the added benefit of visitor services
- By providing appealing retail of local and regional art and produce
- By connecting through multiple digital channels to visitors.

The strategy of combining both face-to-face and online experiences for customers of a VIC is known as an 'omnichannel' and it has proved a successful model with retailing and vital for a sustainable business model within the digital age. Thinking like a retailer is fundamental to the change in perspective of moving from a passive to an active model of visitor servicing.

“Just like the world's leading retailers, where we have a Visitor Information Centre we need to create exciting physical environments that meet not only visitors' immediate information needs, but also inspire and open them up to opportunities for on-sell and cross-sell of other experiences.” (Source: VTIC Visitor Servicing Toolkit 2019)

The table below illustrates some of the options for creating alternative models including an omnichannel strategy.

Understanding alternative Visitor Servicing Channels

ASSETS	Model 1: VICs + Omnichannel	Model 2: Inspiration Hubs + Omnichannel	Model 3: Digital Channels & Mobile Services Only
Traditional Bricks & Mortar VICs	✓	x	x
Enhanced Inspiration Centres	x	✓	x
Digital touch screens	✓	✓	✓
Mobile VICs	✓	✓	✓
Roving Ambassadors	✓	✓	✓
Regional social media program	✓	✓	✓
Regional training program	✓	✓	✓
Regional merchandising	✓	✓	x

(Source: VTIC Visitor Servicing Toolkit, 2019)

Cassowary Coast's VICs

3.1 Current Assets - The Region's VICs

Cassowary Coast currently has an inventory of four Visitor Information centres.



TULLY VISITOR AND HERITAGE CENTRE

Located on the Bruce Highway at Tully, the VIC has drive-in access for cars, caravans and motor homes. Disabled toilets and wheelchair access are available.

The centre has an excellent, interpretive historical display of Tully township, European settlement and the Indigenous culture of the area. The VIC has a comprehensive selection of maps, local and regional brochures of the area. Free tea and coffee are provided.

A free booking service is provided for tours and accommodation and during cane harvest season (June to Nov.) the centre handles all bookings the Tully Sugar Mill tours.

MERCHANDISE AVAILABLE INCLUDES:

- Local produce, arts and crafts
- Souvenirs and postcards
- Cold drinks

OPENING TIMES - OPEN 7 DAYS

Monday to Friday open 9:00am to 4:30pm
Saturday open 9:00am to 1:00pm
Sunday open 10:00am to 1:00pm

CONTACT DETAILS

T: 07 4068 2288
E: tullytourism@ccrc.qld.gov.au
www.tropicalcoasttourism.com.au/around-tully



INNISFAIL I-VAN

The Innisfail visitor information I-VAN is positioned beside the Bruce Highway in ANZAC Memorial Park, at the corner of Gladys Street. ANZAC Memorial Park has parking for caravans and RVs. It is ideal for picnics and is a short walk from the town centre and riverfront with easy access to shops, cafes and the library, which has internet access.

Innisfail has an outstanding collection of Art Deco buildings. The self-guided Innisfail Town Walk Map, including the Art Deco heritage trail, local history and the twin rivers, is available from the I-VAN.

OPENING TIMES

Monday to Friday: 9am to 3pm
Saturday: 9am to 1pm

CONTACT DETAILS

P: 0428 228 962
E: innisfailtourism@ccrc.qld.gov.au
www.tropicalcoasttourism.com.au/around-innisfail

Cassowary Coast's VICs



CARDWELL VISITOR & HERITAGE CENTRE

The VIC is at 53 Victoria St, co-located in the Cardwell Bush Telegraph and post office, built in 1870 and a window into the pioneering days of North Queensland. The centre has a wide range of local and regional information and offers panoramic views of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Hinchinbrook Island – home to the iconic Thorsborne Walking Trail. The VIC provides information on National Parks, adventure tourist routes such as Kirrama Range Road, the Forest Drive, rainforests and Great Barrier Reef islands. The Cardwell Bush Telegraph is the old telegraph station the visitor information centre is also a great place to look around and learn about North Queensland's pioneering days.

OPENING HOURS

Monday – Friday 9am to 4.30pm
Saturday 9am to 1pm, or by appointment
Sunday 10am to 1pm

CONTACT DETAILS

P: 07 4066 2412
E: cardwelltourism@ccrc.qld.gov.au
www.tropicalcoasttourism.com.au/around-cardwell



MISSION BEACH WET TROPICS INFORMATION CENTRE

This Mission Beach Wet Tropics VIC is located on Porters Promenade, Mission Beach. Off road parking is available. The Mission Beach VIC has a wide range of local and regional information and offers a free booking service for accommodation and tours.

The visitor centre is located adjacent to the C4 Environment Centre, which has excellent rainforest and cassowary displays.

MERCHANDISE AVAILABLE INCLUDES:

- Camping books and walking trail maps
- Souvenirs and postcards
- Hats and t-shirts

OPENING TIMES

Monday to Saturday 9:00am to 4:30pm
Sunday 10:00am to 2:00pm

CONTACT DETAILS

P: 07 4068 7099
E: info@missionbeachtourism.com
www.missionbeachtourism.com

3.2 Visitor Engagement

Below are the official statistics compiled by Visit Queensland from data collected monthly from VICs across Queensland including the Cassowary Coast and also the data sets compiled for CCRC. There are some variations in these data sets and some omissions in what was supplied to Visit Queensland particularly in relation to Innisfail.

What is most relevant is trends identified within the various sets that help to inform how a strategy can be applied both to individual locations that may be experience declining visitor numbers and collectively as a network of visitor touchpoints.

CCRC - Visitor Centres & Visitation Statistics – Walk In Visitors

VISITOR CENTRES	FY 2018/19	FY 2019/20	FY 2020/21	YTD Dec 2021
TULLY	12,357	10,379	9,582	5,128
INNISFAIL	5,235	2,776	2,840	1,645
CARDWELL	4,941	5,763	7,169	4657
MISSION BEACH	17,148	11,593	9,542	5,524
TOTALS	39,681	30,511	29,133	16,954

(Source: CCRC Stats FY Comparison)

The comparison between the FY immediately prior to COVID-19 reveals a sharp drop of almost a quarter in visitor numbers, levelling out in the second year of the pandemic. However, outside of the disruptions of COVID-19 between FY 2013/14 and FY 2018/19 (a period of six years prior to the pandemic) the VIC visitor numbers plummeted significantly from a high of 111,129 down to 39,681. That is a drop of 64.3% or almost two-thirds.

CCRC's VIC TOTAL VISITORS PER ANNUM FY 2013/14 to 2018/19

FY 2013/14	111,129
FY 2014/15	104,146
FY 2015/16	42,005
FY 2016/17	48,709
FY 2017/18	41,619
FY 2018/19	39,681

When analysing the visitor statistics there are factors which have impacted on the decline including change in venue in some cases or a change in the opening hours. General impacts have also played a role, notably the rise of smartphones and mobile devices providing a ready source for visitors to access information rather than detour specifically to a VIC for advice.

Visit Queensland - Visitor Centres & Visitation Statistics – Walk In Visitors

VISITOR CENTRES	FY 2018/19	FY 2019/20	FY 2020/21 *	YTD Feb 2022
TULLY	2,594#	5,523	9,582	5,170
INNISFAIL ##	-	-	-	1,703
CARDWELL	4,886	5,086	7,169	5,185
MISSION BEACH	20,136	10,899	9,573	6,015
TOTALS:	27,616	21,508	26,324	18,073

* COVID-19 impacts meant VICs were closed April – June 2020 accounting for serious decline in overall attendances.

Figures for Tully in FY 2018-19 were incomplete with just Oct. '18, Feb. and June '19 supplied.

Figures for Innisfail I-VAN available only for YTD 2022 and not previous years.

Visit Queensland - Visitor Stats Last Complete FY 2020/2021

Visitor Breakdown	TULLY	INNISFAIL	CARDWELL	MISSION BEACH	TOTALS
Number of walk-in visitors	9,582	-	7,169	9,573	26,324
Number of phone enquiries	1,712	-	1,462	1,193	4,367
Number of unique visitors / users to your tourism website or web page	0	-	0	69,305	69,305
Email enquiries	259	-	271	513	1,043
Social enquiries	4,823	-	4,920	698	10,441
Local Residents	1,223	-	1,515	1,181	3,919
Queensland	6,965	-	5,789	5,912	18,666
New South Wales	955	-	563	1,033	2,551
Victoria	441	-	210	763	1,414
South Australia	307	-	57	597	961
Western Australia	78	-	8	29	115
Northern Territory	104	-	2	24	130
Australian Capital Territory	18	-	0	13	31
Tasmania	56	-	13	13	82
Overseas /International	109	-	36	749	894

(Source: Visit Queensland AVIC audit statistics) # Figures for Innisfail I-VAN available only for YTD 2022 and not previous years.)

Cassowary Coast achieved a **6.2%** engagement of VICs with total visitors to the region, 40% greater than the national average of 4.4%. (Source: TRA NVS and IVS for YE 2018)

Key Points from VIC Visitor Engagement Stats

- Regional spread of 4 main hubs, over 90 conversations per day YTD
- COVID-19 impacted the number of visitor engagements during 2020 and 2021 but numbers overall have returned strongly
- Mission Beach – which has the greatest number of international visitors – saw the greatest fall during the COVID-19 peak waves and border closures
- Regional self-drive intrastate visitors have sustained tourism during the pandemic
- A third of visitors to the VICs were looking to find ‘things to do’ and ‘experiences’ creating demand for tours and booking services
- The loss of the Tully Sugar Mill Tour experience due to COVID-19
- Some users visit more than one centre
- Extrapolating the YTD figures for FY 2021/2022 from the 8 months to end of February the full year should reach approximately 27,000 walk-in visitor engagements

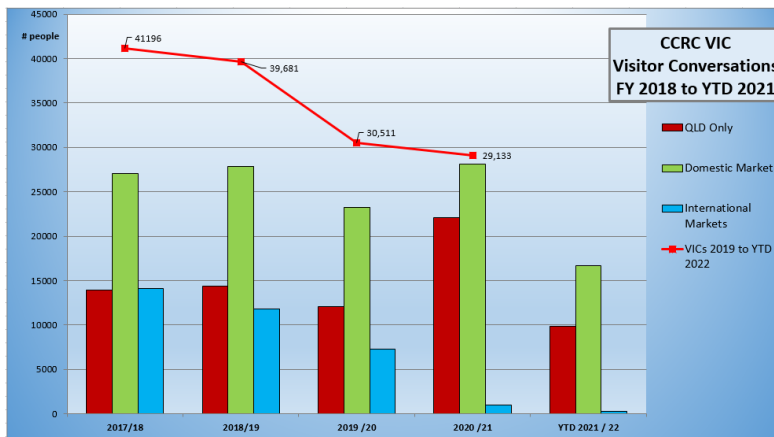
VIC Conversations

The adjacent chart compares conversations between visitors and staff at each VIC and tracks the collective performance for the same period for 2020. The figures reveal both seasonal fluctuations common to the region and factors such as the pandemic waves influencing engagements.

Source: CCRC Stats FY Comparison

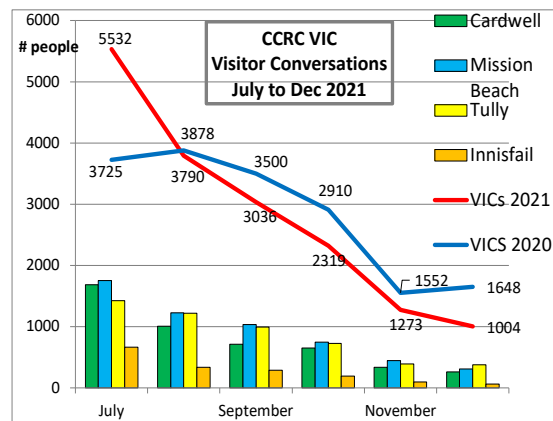
VIC Users by Origin

Data trends for source markets: Queensland, Domestic Australia and International. The International Visitors market was almost entirely decimated during the pandemic.



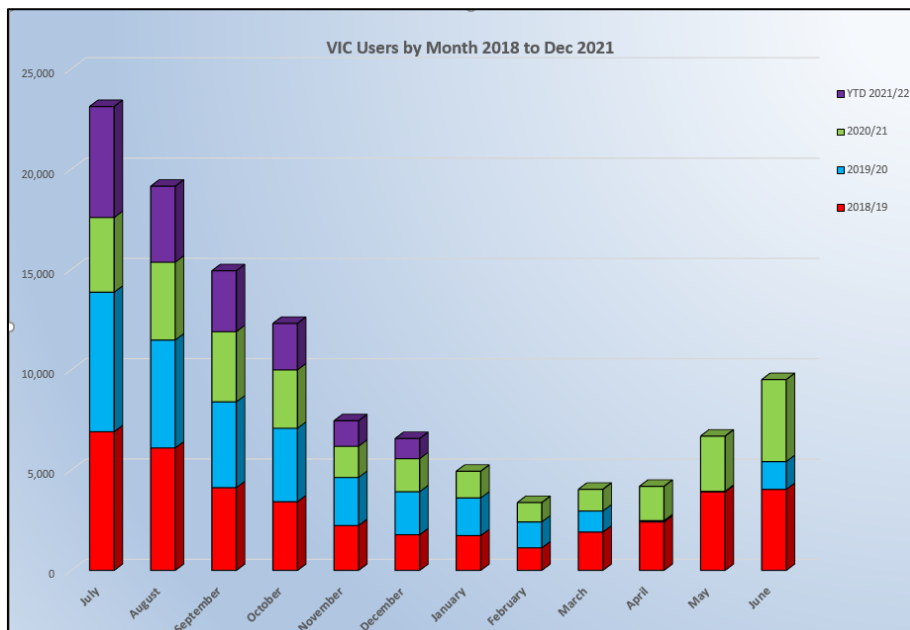
Percentage of International of total users 2019 (Pre COVID-19)

Tully	15.5%
Cardwell	13.2%
Innisfail	22.5%
Mission Beach	46.9%



VIC Users by Month

Visitor 'conversations' by month over the last 3.5 financial years show the annual seasonal patterns on visitor numbers and the impacts of COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021.

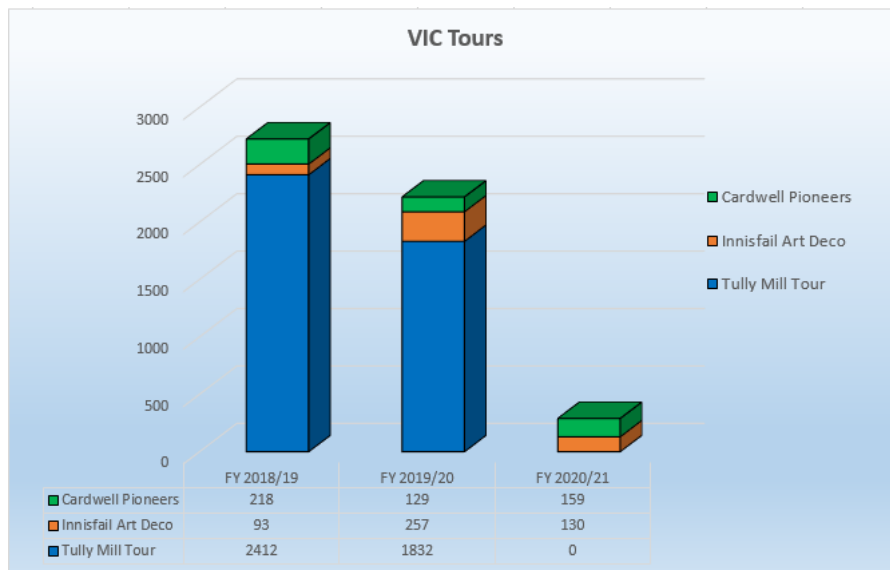


During FY2020/21
Cassowary Coast's VICs also distributed 746 after-hours info packs and answered 4,367 phone calls.

VIC Services – Tours

The graph below records the number of people booked on tours run from the VICs over 3 financial years FY 2018/18, FY 2019/20 & FY 2020/21.

Tours included the Cardwell Pioneers Tour, Innisfail Art Deco Tour, and the Tully Sugar Mill Tours (where VIC are the sole booking agent). The Tully Sugar Mill Tour ceased in 2020 due to COVID-19 representing a loss of 2,400 visitors taking tours annually.



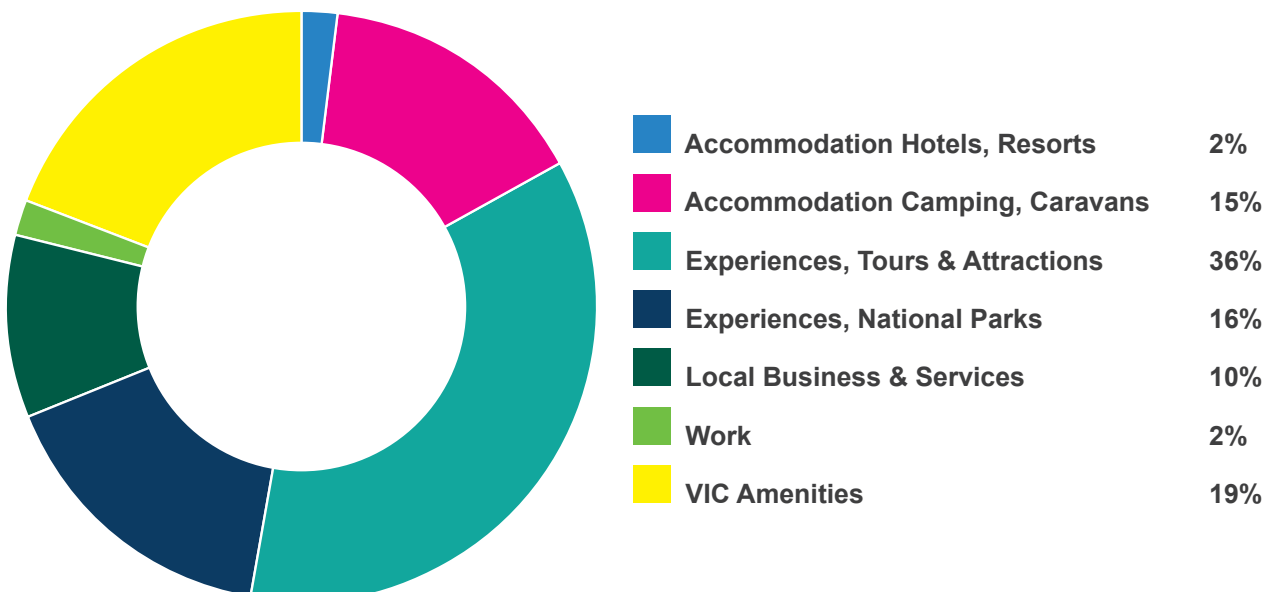
VIC User Enquiry Type

What are customers asking about at the VICs? Visitor data from FY 2020/21 shows that:

- 36% seek information on experiences, tours, and attractions
- 16% ask for National Park experiences

The opportunity for visitors to engage with VIC staff members and the potential for conversion to transact bookings helps to extend their length of stay and spend. The VICs play a vital role through imparting local knowledge about the region’s experiences for visitors, matching the visitor interest to products and places thereby having a positive influence on their stay and benefiting the local tourism economy.

Visitor Service Enquiry Type YTD 2021-2022



3.3 Cassowary Coast – Brand Recognition

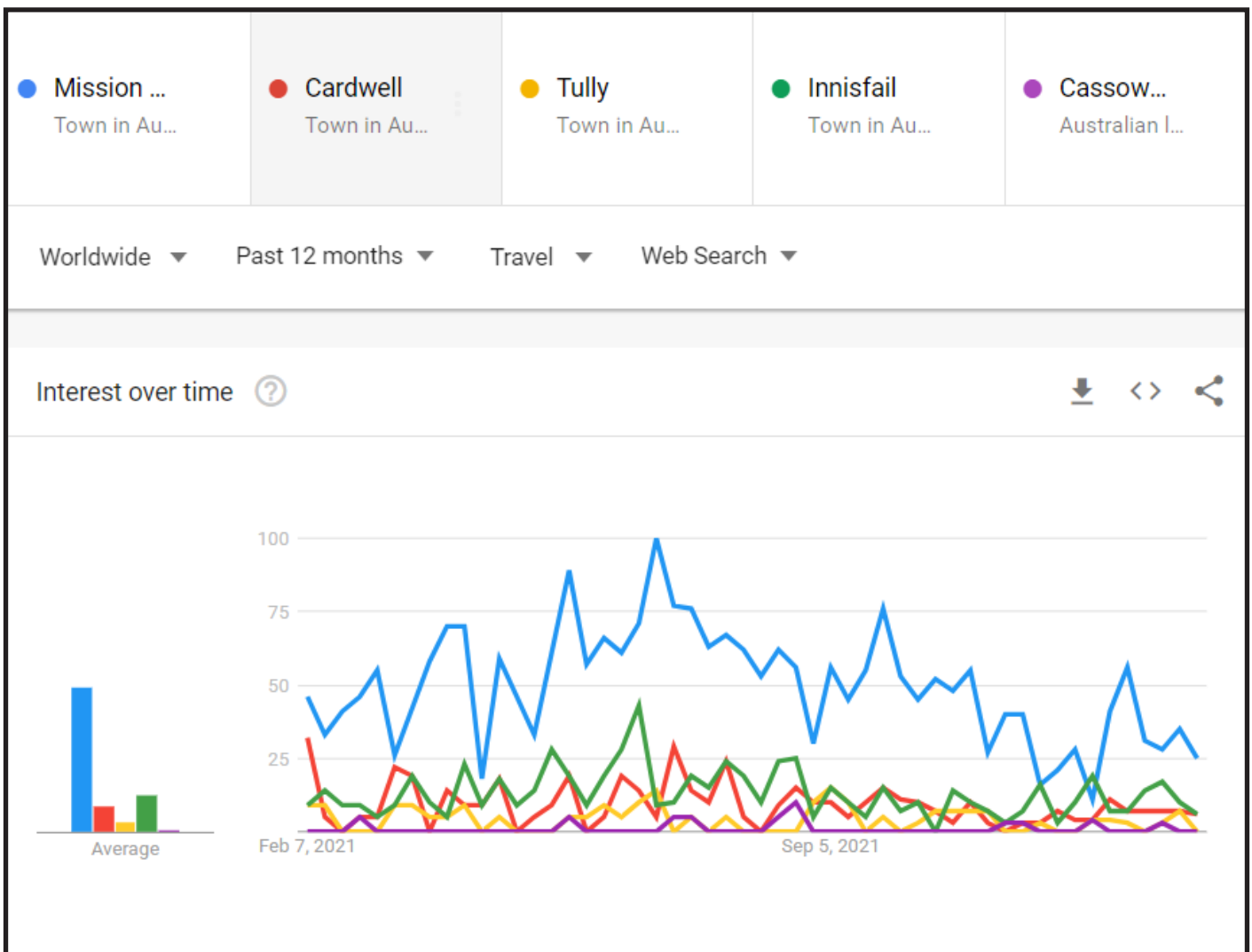
For a region to optimise its tourism potential it needs to promote the collective assets of all its tourism features to illustrate the range and diversity of what's on offer. Individual products and places contribute to a bigger picture but at times a single product or place can outweigh the recognition of other parts of the region or indeed the region as a whole.

For a brand to gain traction it needs the collective support of all players. The strength of a star product or destination can assist the whole region and together each place can gain advantage through cross promotion, improved visitor dispersal and a larger collective audience of visitors. Working in silos fragments the strength of an all-of-region strategy.

To assess the cut-through of our region and individual destinations we conducted an analysis using Google Word Search Trends. The below graph illustrates digital search demand for each of our four destinations that host VICs – Mission Beach, Cardwell, Tully, and Innisfail – and compares online searches with that of 'Cassowary Coast'.

The data clearly shows 'Mission Beach' (which has its own dedicated website) as the most searched tourism destination of the four within the region. All four hubs rank higher than Cassowary Coast. Without a dedicated Cassowary Coast visitor focused, all-of-region, tourism website, brand 'Cassowary Coast' (in purple) has low audience awareness.

For a network of VICs to be agile in delivering a contemporary model of visitor servicing and offering an omnichannel approach it needs not only benchmark visitor information centres but also to be complemented by a comprehensive, visitor website encompassing all the region's holiday destinations, products and experiences on offer. As part of this strategy to refresh VICs a common website is the digital foundation.



(Source: Google Word Search using criteria subject 'Travel')

3.4 VICs Current Services

The table below maps the current services provided across CCRC's network of VICs.

Current VIC Services Available	CARDWELL	TULLY	INNISFAIL	MISSION BEACH
Accredited destination information provider	√	√	√	√
Displays member products & services	√	√	√	√
Bookings – Tours & Accommodation (* Manual)	√*	√	√*	√
Retail (* limited display)	√*	√	√*	√
Notice Board: Events, Safety, Weather, Maps	√	√	–	√
Events – Market Support	√	√	√	√
Centre Services: WiFi, Parking, Amenities	√	√	√	√
Emergency Situation – Source data, communicate safety info	√	√	√	√
Social Media	–	–	–	√
Website	–	–	–	√
After Hours Information Packs	√	√	–	√
QPWS Booking Service	√	√	–	√
QR Booking Service	√	√	–	–
Other Services Provided by VICs	CARDWELL	TULLY	INNISFAIL	MISSION BEACH
Product Gap Servicing	Tours: Pioneer & Bush Tucker Garden	Agent: Tully Mill Tours & manifests	Tour: Shire Hall Art Deco	Tour: Mission Beach History
Local Project Support	Cardwell MTB, Eco Destination Cert	Eco Destination Certification	Eco Destination Certification	Eco Destination Certification
Member Support Services		Meeting Room		Admin Services Meeting Room
Collect Visitor Data (For Surveys)	√	√	√	√
Community Services	Volunteers Program	Volunteers Program	Volunteers Program	Volunteers Program
Other Services	Venue for community groups & functions		Mobile VIC promos (expos). Service satellite brochure racks	Dunk Island Camping booking agent

While there is a general consistency of services available across the region's VICs there are noticeable gaps particularly in relation to digital bridges: websites and social media. A holistic approach to visitor servicing across the region would make each of the region's visitor touchstones equipped to provide comparable services, resources and presentation of collateral, motivational video content, interactive digital aids and a consistent level of service delivery.

Moreover, a strategy to refresh the VICs and visitor services delivery should also embrace a collegiate, network approach so the VICs provide advice not only on their immediate location but of the broader region in order to extend visitor dispersal. Such cross-promotion advocacy, informed by shared famils across the region, provides reciprocal benefits between destinations and forges a co-operative relationship between centres. It helps to build a cohesive tourism industry that is better equipped to drive the greater promotion of the Cassowary Coast.

3.5 Current VIC Operations & Costs

Under the current structure three of the region's four VICs are owned and operated by Cassowary Coast Regional Council: Cardwell, Tully and Innisfail. Mission Beach VIC is funded under by a service agreement with Tropical Coast Tourism Inc. The table below provides a snapshot of the centre's operations and costs.

Cassowary Coast VIC Snapshot	CARDWELL Visitor & Heritage Centre	TULLY Visitor & Heritage Centre	INNISFAIL Information Van (I-VAN)	MISSION BEACH Visitor Information Centre
Location	Bruce Highway	Bruce Highway	Bruce Highway	Porter Promenade
Operated by	CCRC	CCRC	CCRC	MBT/TCT Inc
Council Building	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Site Features	Pioneer tours, community organisation collaboration, event venue	Mill Tour services, Banana Story, central location in region	Access to businesses, ANZAC Park parking & facilities, Art Deco Tours	Boardwalk, bushwalk & beach access, C4 & nursery
VIC Accreditation	Yes	Yes	Yes (via Tully)	Yes
Operating Hours Per Week	44.5 hrs	44.5 hrs	34 hrs	49 hrs
Staff FTE Current	1	1.01	0.72	0.5
Volunteers	10	12	6	TCT
Operating Budget		\$315,730		*\$60000 (*TCT Service Agreement)
Centre Depreciation	\$37,635	\$16,698	\$3,830	\$19,917
Centre Rates	(Museum)	\$4,047	(ANZAC Park)	\$3,338
FTE for Open Hours Weekly	1.20	1.20	0.90	1.30

NB> Budgeted revenue for council VIC's for FY 2021/22 of \$62,200 is not represented in these figures. This is due to the impact of Tully Mill Tours not operating to avoid misrepresenting revenue totals.

Average annual costs per VIC = \$93,933 • Total staff needs = 4.6 FTE (actual 3.23 FTE)

I-Van

Unique in the mix of the four VICs is the I-Van, a mobile VIC under the accreditation status of Tully VIC. The current location at ANZAC Park is in easy highway access and affords plenty of long vehicle parking and easy turnarounds. The park setting is inviting as a rest and revive spot and close to shopping. Nevertheless, the I-Van is less appealing for many visitors compared to a permanent VIC building. Innisfail needs to activate its Art Deco appeal commercially and there is an opportunity to do that through this strategic review. Should VIC services be located elsewhere in Innisfail the I-Van vehicle could then be utilised for other council activity, be outsourced to the LTO or events, or even be sold.

The I-Van is also deployed for promotional events to represent Cassowary Coast Region. The choice of Expos is decided upon with the LTO and within the annual Expo participation budget of \$11,500.

During 2021 the I-Van attended the events in the adjacent table to present destination Cassowary Coast.

ACTIVITY	Location	Expo Brief	Days at Expo	Expo Fees	2021 Dates
Cairns Expo	Cairns	Home and Outdoor Adventure Event, largest in Far North Queensland, 14,168 attendance	3 & 3	\$1,583.00	06-08 May
Townsville Expo	Townsville	Townsville Caravan, 4x4 & Outdoor Adventure Expo, 13,625 attendance	3 + 2	\$1,426.00	14 - 16 May
Mackay Expo	Mackay	Home and Outdoor Adventure Event, largest event of it kind, 12,625 attendance. (Test market - as a potential growth market)	3 + 3	\$1,570.00	21 - 23 May
IRONMAN Sports & Lifestyle Expo	Cairns	Sports & Lifestyle Expo - during Ironman event weekend	4 & 4	\$2,300.00	03 - 06 June
Expo Criteria	: Regional visitors; within 400km (Cairns, Townsville, Tablelands) / accesability for multi annual visits / Audience: family, adventure - outdoor active, weekend escapes, boaties				

3.6 VIC Locations

This review offers the opportunity to reimagine how Cassowary Coast delivers visitor services through its four VICs. Location is a critical factor for modern VICs to calibrate ‘where the fish are feeding’ in order to maximise visitor intercepts and engagement. As described earlier in the report (2.4) a VIC’s co-location places the option for visitors to make use of the visitor services conveniently in their path.

A fresh operational model could entail a network of Cassowary Coast VIC touchpoints where each centre is a complementary component of the wider network centred from one main hub. This can provide operational economies by avoiding duplication of resources and digital platforms. The priority should be on customer convenience with each centre accompanied by a tourism experience or feature relative to the immediate location to appeal to visitors and provide a local point-of-difference.

The below table seeks to identify key factors in relation to CCRC’s current VIC locations, drawing from recognised industry sources such as the *VTIC Visitor Servicing Toolkit 2019*. To create an index we consulted with Visit Queensland (VQ) to rank the categories with the individual ranking then being the multiplier noted next to the VIC title.

Factors	Comments	VQ Weighting	ANZAC Park I-Van		Cardwell VIC		Mission Beach VIC		Tully VIC	
				143		180		171		160
Visitor Hot-Spot location	Fish where the fish are	5	4	20	4	20	4	20	3	15
Site accessibility - Welcome	Arrivals by Bus Stop, Self Drive, Train, Tour	2	4	8	4	8	3	6	2	4
Parking space - long vehicles (Caravans / RV /Van)	"Be known as the place you can always park". VQ	4	5	20	4	16	4	16	5	20
Parking access	Easy road entrance and exit	4	5	20	5	20	5	20	4	16
CBD accessibility (economic benefits to local business)	Vicinity to local businesses (pedestrian)	5	5	25	4	20	4	20	3	15
Main Road / Highway Visibility	Visible from road	3	4	12	5	15	3	9	5	15
Experience - add on	Located at an experience	5	3	15	5	25	4	20	3	15
Facilities - Toilet Access	Accreditation requirement	5	3	15	5	25	5	25	5	25
Disability Access	As per legal compliance	3	0	0	5	15	5	15	5	15
External Information	After-hours value: notice Boards, brochure racks, screens	4	2	8	4	16	5	20	5	20

(from 0 up to 5 for excellent)

In descending order of suitability as a location were:

Cardwell (180) >> Mission Beach (171) >> Tully (160) >> I-Van ANZAC Park (143).

NB> Mission Beach’s popularity as a holiday destination overcomes some of the VICs location issues and ratings. Consequently, Mission Beach VIC welcomes the most users.

Former VIC Locations

Factors	Comments	VQ Weighting	ASHC Mourilyan		Eslick St & THE CON Innisfail		Rainforest & Reef Cardwell		Shire Hall Innisfail	
			130	114	164	138				
Visitor Hot-Spot location	Fish where the fish are	5	3	15	1	5	4	20	4	20
Site accessibility - Welcome	Arrivals by Bus Stop, Self Drive, Train, Tour	2	3	6	3	6	4	8	3	6
Parking space - long vehicles (Caravans / RV /Van)	"Be known as the place you can always park". VQ	4	3	12	3	12	2	8	0	0
Parking access	Easy road entrance and exit	4	3	12	3	12	5	20	3	12
CBD accessibility (economic benefits to local business)	Vicinity to local businesses (walk to town centre)	5	0	0	1	5	4	20	5	25
Main Road / Highway Visibility	Visible from road	3	5	15	5	15	5	15	0	0
Experience - add on	Located at an experience	5	5	25	2	10	4	20	5	25
Facilities - Toilet Access	Accreditation requirement	5	5	25	5	25	5	25	3	15
Disability Access	As per legal compliance	3	4	12	4	12	4	12	5	15
External Information	After-hours value: notice Boards, brochure racks, screens	4	2	8	3	12	4	16	5	20

(from 0 up to 5 for excellent)

There are varying reasons for the success or failure or relocation of a centre. Selecting new alternative location takes considerable time to cut through in market, this is a risk that needs to be considered anytime a location is reviewed.

Currently, Mission Beach accounts for 43.4% of visitor interactions with a VIC in the region and Tully 32%. Collectively they account for 75% of total VIC users in Cassowary Coast

3.7 SWOT Analysis – Regional

Strengths... Weaknesses... Opportunities... Threats...

CASSOWARY COAST VIC SERVICES	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Customer Experience	Face to face interaction, quality information & services, connect with local experiences, open & accessible	Booking services, lack of digital presence	Information bridges - get information to high contact locations	Utilised by low % of visitors, lack of digital presence
Destination Role	High profile distribution channel, data source, product gap filler	Brand consistency	Conversion - of experiences and bookings	Clarity of role in the distribution chain
Economic Benefits	Convert more local expenditure, dispersal, fill product gaps	Manual booking systems, no on-line bookings	Information bridges - info through to bookings	No measure of service economic impact / conversion
Social Benefits	Employment, volunteer program,	Interaction with local businesses	Place activation, themed activities	Deactivation of VIC services

CARDWELL

Strengths

Location:	Audience for two services – Museum Experience & Bush Tucker Garden. Southern gateway to region, highway location
Visitor Experience:	Pioneer history, Indigenous heritage
Local Knowledge:	Comprehensive local knowledge, off the beaten track, road closures, etc.
VIC Accreditation:	Credibility, 'i' brand
Fill Service Gaps:	Pioneer Tour, town maps, QPWS & QR bookings
TCT Integration:	Collaboration
Venue Activity:	Volunteer weekly morning teas, Pioneer Tours
Community:	Volunteers program, QR and QPWS booking services
Emergencies:	Data & communication support system, information for travellers
Free WiFi:	Yes

Opportunities

Location:	Variety of Museum based events, historic and Indigenous features; modernise displays and interactive
Services:	Garden Island & CCRC campground bookings
Local Experts:	Hinchinbrook Island and Kirrama Range Road
Fill Service Gaps:	Data collection, Nov-Feb admin (eg. Local org contact updates), phone services, training, promote VIC and networks
QPWS & WTIMA:	Leverage to improve exposure, displays, experience access
Venue Activity:	Function and event venue, event activation
Info Channels:	Develop new info touchpoints and omnichannel to connect with visitors
QLD VIC Network:	Transform for the future, new customer focus direction
I-Van at Expos:	Regional collaboration for expos, share costs with Townsville
Revenue Options:	Promotional displays, booking services, charge for tours, cafe

Weaknesses

Location:	Limited display area & furniture, multiple entrances
Services:	Garden Island & CCRC campground bookings
Full Booking Services:	Manual booking systems
No Social Media:	VIV network group and a Traveller focussed Facebook page
Staffing:	Some days volunteers only, risk of no backup (FTE 0.2)
Training:	Needed for Volunteers but not approved for 2020/21

Threats

Location Challenges:	Convenience for customers is critical
Losing Relevance:	Not evolving information servicing delivery methods
Drop in Standards:	Service training required, update displays and presentation materials
Poor Conversion:	Missing opportunities to convert visitors to more experiences
Staffing:	Some days volunteers only
Volunteers:	Essential human resources and community benefits
Info Access:	Resourcing of visitors services operations.
Funding:	Resourcing of visitor services operations

TULLY

Strengths

Location:	Established high profile location, great parking, features interpretive story boards, high profile
Local Knowledge:	Comprehensive local knowledge, off the beaten track, road closures, etc
VIC Accreditation:	Credibility, 'i' brand
Fill Service Gaps:	Tully Mill Tour bookings & manifest, QPWS & QR bookings
TCT Integration:	Collaboration
Venue Activity:	Meeting venue
Community:	Volunteers program, QR and QPWS booking services
Emergencies:	Data & communication support system, information for travellers
Free WiFi:	Yes

Opportunities

Location:	Signage on building, upgraded display and interactive
Services:	Garden Island & CCRC campground bookings
Local Experts:	Adventure, Water and Agri-tourism, Rafting
Fill Service Gaps:	Data collection, Nov-Feb admin (eg. Local org contact updates), phone services, training, promote VIC and networks
QPWS & WTIMA:	Leverage to improve exposure, displays, experience access
Venue Activity:	Functions venue and activation
Info Channels:	Develop new info touchpoints and omnichannel to connect with visitors
QLD VIC Network:	Transform for the future, new customer focus direction
I-Van at Expos:	Regional collaboration for expos, share costs with Townsville
Revenue Options:	Promotional displays, booking services, charge for tours, cafe

Weaknesses

Location:	Old display furniture, lack of interactive displays
Services:	Garden Island & CCRC campground bookings
Full Booking Services:	Manual booking systems
No Social Media:	VIV network group and a Traveller focussed Facebook page
Staffing:	Casual Staff only (except Mon-Wed), risk of no backup (FTE 0.2)
Training:	Needed for Volunteers but not approved for 2020/21

Threats

Location Challenges:	Convenience for customers is critical
Losing Relevance:	Not evolving information servicing delivery methods
Drop in Standards:	Service training required, update displays and presentation materials
Poor Conversion:	Missing opportunities to convert visitors to more experiences
Staffing:	Casual Staff only (except Mon-Wed), risk of no backup (FTE 0.2)
Volunteers:	Essential human resources and community benefits
Info Access:	Resourcing of visitors services operations.
Funding:	Resourcing of visitor services operations

INNISFAIL

Strengths

Location:	Close to business hub, park and facilities, parking for caravans; on highway
Local Knowledge:	Comprehensive local knowledge, off the beaten track, road closures, etc.
VIC Accreditation:	Credibility, 'i' brand
Fill Service Gaps:	Shire Hall tours, satellite brochure services
TCT Integration:	Collaboration
Venue Activity:	Engage caravanners
Community:	Volunteers program
Emergencies:	Data & communication support system, information for travellers
Free WiFi:	Yes

Opportunities

Location:	Advance Art Deco product offering for Innisfail, tours from park; use team to activate ANZAC Park activity
Services:	Garden Island & CCRC campground bookings
Local Experts:	Art Deco and Waterfalls
Fill Service Gaps:	Data collection, Nov-Feb admin (eg. Local org contact updates), phone services, training, promote VIC and networks
QPWS & WTIMA:	Leverage to improve exposure, displays, experience access
Venue Activity:	I-Van promotions of destination and events at targeted expos
Info Channels:	Develop new info touchpoints and omnichannel to connect with visitors
QLD VIC Network:	Transform for the future, new customer focus direction
I-Van at Expos:	Regional collaboration for expos, share costs with Townsville
Revenue Options:	Promotional displays, booking services, charge for tours, café

Weaknesses

Location:	Van vs a fixed structure – customer experience and expectations
Destination:	'Destination Innisfail' is the challenge
Accreditation:	Mobile VIC operates fewer hours and misses out on network benefits
Services:	Garden Island and CCRC campground bookings.
Full Booking Services:	Manual booking systems
No Social Media:	VIV network group and a Traveller focussed Facebook page
Staffing:	All casual staff, high risk of no backup
Training:	Needed for Volunteers but not approved for 2020/21

Threats

Location Challenges:	Convenience for customers is critical
Losing Relevance:	Not evolving information servicing delivery methods
Drop in Standards:	Service training required, update displays and presentation materials
Poor Conversion:	Missing opportunities to convert visitors to more experiences
Staffing:	FTE = 0.5 (20hrs/week)
Volunteers:	Essential human resources and community benefits
Info Access:	Resourcing of visitors services operations.
Funding:	Resourcing of visitor services operations

MISSION BEACH

Strengths

Location:	Established long-term location, next to the beach and Ulysses Track
Local Knowledge:	Comprehensive local knowledge, off the beaten track, road closures, etc.
VIC Accreditation:	Credibility, 'i' brand
Fill Service Gaps:	Full booking service
TCT Integration:	Collaboration
Venue Activity:	Good displays and services
Community:	Volunteers program
Emergencies:	Data & communication support system, information for travellers
Free WiFi:	Yes

Opportunities

Location:	Kiosk service in the Village. Tour activation – Ulysses Track /GBR Birthplace narrative
Local Experts:	Great Barrier Reef and Islands
Fill Service Gaps:	Data collection, Nov-Feb admin (eg. Local org contact updates), phone services, training, promote VIC and networks
QPWS & WTIMA:	Leverage to improve exposure, displays, experience access
Venue Activity:	Function and event activation
Info Channels:	Develop new info touchpoints and omnichannel to connect with visitors
QLD VIC Network:	Transform for the future, new customer focus direction
I-Van at Expos:	Regional collaboration for expos, share costs with Townsville
Revenue Options:	Promotional displays, booking services, charge for tours, cafe

Weaknesses

Location:	Just outside main hub of activity, parking difficult for long vehicles
Social Media:	Have social media
Staffing:	TCT

Threats

Location Challenges:	Convenience for customers is critical
Losing Relevance:	Not evolving information servicing delivery methods
Drop in Standards:	Service training required, update displays and presentation materials
Poor Conversion:	Missing opportunities to convert visitors to more experiences
Staffing:	FTE – 0.5 (20hrs/week)
Volunteers:	Essential human resources and community benefits
Info Access:	Resourcing of visitors services operations.
Funding:	Resourcing of visitor services operations

SWOT Analysis - Highlights

CARDWELL VIC

HIGHLIGHTS

Co-located with an established experience (walk through museum buildings) & venue activation

CHALLENGES

Commercial activity; weekend staff; retail and tour bookings.

TULLY VIC

HIGHLIGHTS

Established, convenient location for highway traffic; valuable for visitor dispersal around region

CHALLENGES

No direct on-site experience connection

INNISFAIL VIC

HIGHLIGHTS

Easy walk to town and local businesses; long established parking location for visitors

CHALLENGES

It is a mobile VIC van rather than a building

NB: As requested by council resolution LG1011-27 May 2021, research was conducted into establishing a Tourist Information Centre at the Con Theatre in Innisfail. Research findings were reported to council on 9th December 2021 indicating the details and projected cost of the proposal. From the 9th December 2021 meeting council adopted the following 'alternate motion' recommendations (LG1164):

1. Council acknowledge the benefits that Visitor servicing provides to the Visitor Economy;
2. Council note the development of a Visitor Information Servicing Strategy is underway and will be presented for Council consideration early in 2022; and
3. Council defer this decision until a Visitor Information Servicing Strategy is adopted.

Reason for Alternate Motion: Council is currently developing a Visitor Information Servicing Strategy, which will be provided to Council in early 2022; as such the decision should be deferred and informed by this strategy at that time.

As per the council recommendation, this strategy will inform the decision-making process of the Innisfail VIC.

MISSION BEACH VIC

HIGHLIGHTS

Most popular VIC in region and long-established location; multi-award winner

CHALLENGES

Outside the main hub of Mission Beach

A New Vision

4.1 Reimagining Cassowary Coast's Visitor Services

Meeting the needs of visitors has evolved from the conventional, passive model of a VIC where staff and volunteers await visitors seeking resources and the friendly advice of informed locals to curate their holiday experiences. Digital has made information immediately available yet limited to the available content on whatever a search engine can deliver. Getting the specific answers that a visitor needs isn't always solved by turning to a mobile device and the best places and experiences are always those known by locals.

Rather than a binary argument of choosing between digital and face-to-face options, like any evolving business model, digital is an essential complement to a physical operation. Together the two create an agile means of complementary tools and resources for reaching visitor audiences and responding to their questions. A holistic strategy is therefore one that adopts an omnichannel approach as explained in 2.10 of this report.

Maintaining an inventory of VICs is a costly undertaking for every region seeking to service its visitor audiences and the relative reach of overall visitors may seem small in return, especially in the face of declining attendances at VICs. However, the influence that effective visitor services can deliver extends beyond the value of a single transaction for a tour, experience or accommodation. The Economic Benefit delivered through extended stays, wider experiences and increased expenditure by visitors is the catalyst for a multiplier of local value add – direct and indirect for jobs and economic input. Tourism injects fresh revenue into a community and the consequent circulation means that every business ultimately is in the business of tourism, each benefiting directly or indirectly.

The following strategy therefore needs to be viewed through the lens of not just how a better model for operating VICs can be created but it should bring into focus the wider benefits to the region's economy, jobs and community.

The historic Cassowary Coast visitor information centre model has operations in each of the region's four main hubs: Cardwell, Tully, Innisfail and Mission Beach. Our VICs have traditionally been suited to, and valuable for, connecting with the predominantly self-drive market. For a destination dominated by nature-based experiences (now the leading tourism trend identified by TEQ) often off main roads and in isolated areas that local knowledge is irreplaceable. Their role in Safety support services during periods impacted by forces of nature or other challenges such as pandemics makes them more than just a visitor service, they play a vital part in communicating safety information.

4.2 NEW Cassowary Coast Visitor Information Network - What will it look like?

Creating a network model for Cassowary Coast Visitor Information Services will require each centre to synchronise with the wider destination plan. Each centre will need to meet customer expectations as a well-designed, inviting centre where visitors can connect with local experiences.

To create a new VIC network, refresh established centres and consider relocation options will require:

- Enough lead time for community communication and consultation
- To integrate technology platforms to complement face-to-face services
- Trial new VIC locations (possibly using a mobile VIC) in high foot traffic areas
- Create a point of difference complementary to the VIC network
- Collaborate with fellow VICs and stakeholders in surrounding regions

A new model visitor servicing network with a customer focus could comprise...

- One major centre as the operational hub for the network
- Remaining centres remodelled to best cater to customer experience in their area
- Common branding, website and booking services across the network
- Centres support local 'information bridges' (eg signs, satellite racks, ambassadors)
- Activate an attraction or experience on site, or direct connection service.

The below table maps possible options to reimagine the VIC Network in Cassowary Coast.

CASSOWARY COAST VISITOR INFORMATION NETWORK - New Concept				
Cassowary Coast VIC	CARDWELL	TULLY	INNISFAIL	MISSION BEACH
Concept Draft	Visitor & Heritage Centre	Visitor & Heritage Centre	Information Van (I-Van)	Visitor Information Centre
Spread of visitors	13.6%	32.0%	11.0%	43.4%
Location (*same as current)	*Cardwell Museum & Visitor Heritage Centre	*Tully Visitor & Heritage Centre	Council Shire Hall	Village Green Mission Beach
VIC Network Role / Opportunity	Southern gateway	Central hub for visitor information service operations: central for visitors and operations. Highest profile location.	Be the product Innisfail needs. Base to run daily Art Deco tours. Support signage at ANZAC Park	Locate right in the heart of Mission Beach - where the people are, adapt service model to suit
Benefit Potential	Visitor contact with Cardwell Historical experience, two operations run from one resource	Established location and destination central. High opportunity for exposure of branding and messaging (on building)	Daily Art Deco Tours - reason to stop and stay in Innisfail. Run as a commercial product. Building and resources benefits.	Opportunity for interaction with more people. Contribute/support Hub activation. Adapt for commercial benefits.
Visitor Experience	Museum, Pioneer tours, Bushucker Garden. Evolve these further	Drive revive. Tully Gorge connector. Agrifood experience.	Tropoical Art Deco Tours	Part of The Mission Beach Hub experience
Resource Impacts	Increase staffing (+0.2) for full operation open hours (one operation for VIC and Museum)	Same operationally. Additional for signage / exposure.	Increase staffing (+0.5). Increase revenue from tours & merchandise. Reduced cost of building and related resource. I-Van sold, hired out or allocated to LTO to utilise)	Subject to TCT (who operated this VIC), and to Mission Beach Master Planning and operational design. Potential increase revenue (bookings, merchandise)
Operational Options	Common branding and messaging across the network and aligned with LTO activity. Advancing to opporational coordination with the LTO			
Information Bridges	Satelite informaton racks services and sign at identified hot spots	Satelite informaton racks services and sign at identified hot spots	Satelite informaton racks services and sign at identified hot spots. Signage needed at ANZAC Park	Satelite informaton racks services and sign at identified hot spots

4.3 Adapting Current Visitor Information Services

As the source of destination information, services provided from the VIC teams will remain essential to continue providing qualified and accurate destination information and regional content complemented by the digital bridges of:

- A common all-of-region visitors website used by all the VICs
- Social media postings to motivate interest and ideas for holiday experiences
- QR code connectors at sites of interest, linking back to website pages
- Apps that assist the visitor with findings VICs.

A revised model will transpose the current level of 6% visitor interaction to engage in a variety of strategies and platforms to broaden the reach. Importantly, VICs can and must be able to connect with visitors from the pre-visit 'dreaming stage' by providing relevant online information backed up by phone, email and chat services; have a booking facility to transact holiday accommodation and experiences; social posts to trigger interest and motivate visitors.

This is a real opportunity to connect with visitors, entice them to **do more... stay longer ... spend more**. At the same time enhance their experience in the Cassowary Coast.

A catalyst for this evolution would be to move from the historic VIC operational structure to a whole of region coordinated approach. With four VIC's currently, one would be established as the main operational Hub. The other satellite centres would be designed to best suit the immediate area and visitor connection opportunities, rather than be a duplication of scale.

In concept for a Cassowary Coast Visitor Centre Network could look like this:

- **Region Model:** developed as a commercial model to present customers conveniently accessible information services and rationalise operations to be able to resource delivery of destination information beyond the centres. All branding in alignment with the LTO
- **Tully VIC:** establish as the central hub of operations. A high profile established centre that is centrally located in region (for local business, for experience connection, for visitors in transit). Tully currently services 32% of the region's VIC users. The building provides a great opportunity to display and promote destination imagery and messaging and is accessible to highway travellers as well as those turning off to the beaches. Highway location also suits operational logistics.
- **Mission Beach VIC:** located right in the middle of The Village Green area. This VIC is a valuable contact point for the region's visitors (and for 43.4% of all VIC users) and importantly as a booking office for local tours. As a popular visitor focal point, The Village Green is one of the busiest foot traffic locations at the beach. A new facility and services would need to be designed to best suit the new location to ideally increase commercial and space activation opportunities in the area.
- **Cardwell VIC:** maintain as it is co-located with the Museum and Bush Telegraph building. As part of the Historical Precinct the VIC provides a destination experience in addition to visitor services. This model has two products resourced as one operation and shares the same audience. Site activation has been successful and can continue to be developed.
- **Innisfail VIC:** A change in tactic whereby instead of the I-Van 'satellites' are located at local businesses. OR be the product that Innisfail needs – the Art Deco Tour VIC. Locate services in the centre of town – in the Shire Hall or similar – so the VIC team could run daily Art Deco tours commercially. This provides a visitor experience that generates visitation and revenue in the heart of town. Support signage in ANZAC Park would guide people from parking to the tour via local businesses. A Shire Hall based operation would allow for some resources to establish the tour and facilitate information delivery beyond the centre. The tour would be a catalyst for Innisfail to grow its identity as a tourism town, much more than a stand-alone VIC could.

Any remodel of the centres needs to consider how many centres are required and where, and the potential impact on staff and volunteer teams in the process.

NB: In advancing a VIC Network model changes to established centres need to be transitioned. When closing a VIC (or in this case reviewing our model) it is recommended to:

- have a long lead in time with community awareness and consultation prior to closing
- overlap time between any VIC closure and the introduction of technology solutions
- trial new VIC locations with a smaller footprint in high foot traffic areas, based on experiences and not brochures (this may also be unaccredited)
- introduce technology advances to create a point of difference (to not be a generic VIC), offer a different by complementary service to remaining VIC's
- collaborate with surrounding regions to ensure the visitor journey is considered and information shared

Source: VTIC Visitor Servicing Toolkit 2019



- **Information Bridges:** (Visitor Touchpoints) offer the opportunity to reach out to the 94% of our visitors not currently using VICs when in the region. The delivery method could include a branded display at accommodation or local businesses around the region, or signage at key locations such as the Tully Gumboot or supermarkets.

- **Collaboration:** with the LTO to create a cohesive suite of visitor services is essential. Working with the LTO, the VIC Network model could provide for a common website and booking system used by all centres benefiting customers and local tours and products. Outsourcing of VIC services through the LTO could bring synergies to a whole-of-region approach for operations, branding and service delivery.

4.4 Creating Visitor Touchpoints

In order to reach the 94% of visitors to Cassowary Coast who won't attend a VIC, there needs to be other easier and smarter ways to connect with visitors. To be relevant to visitors during their travel, information must be reliable, up-to-date, and most importantly convenient to access. Visitor touchpoints need to consider the variety of modern information delivery methods including digital, ambassador programs, and information bridges (strategically located where there is a high volume of visitor contact). The LTO can be the conduit for information delivery and direct customer contact, also to connect visitors directly to local operators and destination experiences.

Cassowary Coast 'Touchpoints'

To expand VICs visitor reach around the Cassowary Coast the deployment of 'information bridges' in high visitor traffic locations using can complement what is achievable with a fixed VIC. These satellite facilities can meet immediate needs and also help to direct visitors seeking more information to the closest VIC.

Target locations should already attract a high **volume of visitors consistently**. Digital search data could be used to contribute to a list of effective locations. Some potential examples of high visitation 'touchpoints' to consider include:

- Supermarkets
- Dunk Island Spit
- South Mission Beach
- ANZAC Park, Innisfail
- Cardwell Spa Pool
- Petrol Stations
- Paronella Park
- Bus Stops
- Tully Golden Gumboot
- Mission Beach Hub
- Accommodation Providers
- Etty Bay
- Cardwell Foreshore
- Museums
- Cafes
- Libraries

Identifying 'Hot Spots' requires a set of criteria to prioritise the most suitable locations that are popular with visitors. The type and style of information installation and delivery will depend on the physical attributes of the location and the visitor interaction dynamics. These could range from map and information boards or be as simple as signage with QR codes.

While interactive digital displays with on-line bookings sound enticing the experience of other VICs around Australia has been to move away from what is expensive technology requiring constant updates and vulnerable to vandalism. Every traveller has their own touchscreen with their phone and a wider deployment of noticeboards and QR signs can provide a more effective and broader distribution of information bridges at far less cost.

Satellite Visitor Information Locations

Innisfail VIC has supported brochure racks at several local businesses. This benefits the business and has proved successful relative *'to fish where the fish are feeding'*. A more formal program can be developed and branded across the region, providing wider access to information more prominently and consistently.

4.5 Strategic Priorities

Five strategic priorities have been identified to evolve the Cassowary Coast visitor information servicing model in alignment with the key strategy objectives. The Strategic Priorities and Actions are to be implemented in consultation with industry and community. Actions adopted by council can be prioritised for short to long-term planning and resourcing, and may be subject to a process of engagement with other key stakeholders

1 Destination Information Responsibility	2 Services and Standards	3 Destination Information Distribution	4 Information Centres	5 Destination Data
<p>Define the role of council and the LTO as being responsible providers of destination information</p> <p>Key Priorities</p> <p>1.1 Formalise councils role as the source of destination information</p>	<p>Advance a destination brand and service standards in collaboration with the LTO</p> <p>Key Priorities</p> <p>2.1 Establish one clear and consistent destination brand for the Cassowary Coast</p> <p>2.2 Establish consistency in services across all centres</p> <p>2.3 Maintain industry standards of information and service delivery</p> <p>2.4 Regional Dispersal of visitors</p> <p>2.5 Advance the VIC Volunteer Program</p>	<p>Effectively distribute visitor information across the region - what customers want, where and when they want it</p> <p>Key Priorities</p> <p>3.1 Establish information bridges at key locations</p> <p>3.2 Regularly present products, services, and events to local industry networks</p> <p>3.3 Establish VIC Facebook and Instagram profiles</p> <p>3.4 Develop a Cassowary Coast 'Satellite Brochure Display' program</p>	<p>Modernise and rationalise Visitor Information Centre's and operations</p> <p>Key Priorities</p> <p>4.1 Outsource VIC operations to the LTO</p> <p>4.2 Advance a 'VIC Network' operational model</p> <p>4.3 Staff as commercial centers</p> <p>4.4 Feature an experience at centres</p> <p>4.5 Fill Product & Service gaps</p> <p>4.6 Advance a commercial focus to retail and services</p> <p>4.7 Mobile visitor information (i-Van)</p>	<p>Source destination and visitor data to inform decision making</p> <p>Key Priorities</p> <p>5.1 Source automated Cassowary Coast visitor data</p> <p>5.2 Continue VIC visitor data collection</p> <p>5.3 Utilise VIC for Local Organisation data and communications</p>

4.6 Action Plan

#	Action	Detail	Partners	Year 1,2,3,4
1.1	Formalise councils role as the source of destination information	Detail the role and responsibilities as the LGA source of destination information (facts and details for distribution via various distribution channels).	CCRC	1
2.1	Establish one clear and consistent destination brand for the Cassowary Coast	Develop and implement a Cassowary Coast destination brand program across all areas of tourism services and promotion in collaboration with the LTO	CCRC, TCT	1 to 2
2.2	Establish consistency in core services across all centres	Offer visitors the same core services and standards at all centres across the VIC network, including access to bookings	CCRC, TCT	2 to 4
2.3	Maintain industry standards of information and service delivery	Service standards at centres are qualified by accreditation via the TEQ VIC Accreditation program. Utilise the TEQ/VIC network resources.	CCRC, TCT, TEQ, ITG	1,2,3,4
2.4	Regional Dispersal of visitors	Ensure presentation of local products and experiences across the region, beyond the major hubs, to enhance the visitor experience	CCRC, TCT, local events and operators	1,2,3,4
2.5	Advance the VIC Volunteer Program	Review and update the VIC Volunteers program, to evolve skills and servicing in alignment with advancing visitor services	CCRC, TCT, TEQ	2
3.1	Establish information bridges at key locations	Delivering information where and when visitors want it. Determine optimal locations and methods to get destination information out and accessible across the region beyond centres	CCRC, TCT	2 to 4
3.2	Regularly present products, services, and events to local industry networks	Utilise technology to regularly present local products, services, and events face-to-face and on-line, across the region	CCRC, TCT, local business, events & services	1,2,3,4
3.3	Digital bridges - destination website partnered with social media profiles	Digital options essential to complement in destination face-to-face services. Website and social media platforms for VIC destination communication with visitor audience and industry networks	CCRC, TCT	1 to 2
3.4	Develop a Cassowary Coast 'Satellite Brochure Display' program	Program to establish tourism branded satellite brochure displays across the region, located in identified high visitor contact locations	CCRC, TCT, local business & services	2 to 4

4.1	Outsource VIC operations to the LTO	Develop a plan in collaboration with Tropical Coast Tourism to outsource visitor centre operations to the LTO	CCRC, TCT, Industry, Community	1 to 2
4.2	Advance a 'VIC Network' operational model	Advance the current operational model to a 'VIC Network' model, where centre operations and admin are coordinated from one main hub and other VIC locations are scaled and re-designed to best connect with visitors and to benefit the local area. Stage 1: as per concept in the strategy, 12 month consultation and transition process. Stage 2: review model with consideration to scale down to 2 VIC's in region.	CCRC, TCT, Industry, Community	Stage 1 = 1. Stage 2 = 2 to 4
4.3	Staff as commercial centers	Advance services and commercial standards by having staff on duty for all centre opening hours. Volunteers as additional support to staff.	CCRC, TCT	1
4.4	Feature an Experience at centres	Activate an experience relative to the location and or features of each VIC location. Aiming to be the feature or the "WOW" of the 'Inspiration Centre'.	CCRC, TCT	2 to 4
4.5	Fill Product & Service gaps	Identify where there is a product or service gap and consider options to fill the gaps that present opportunities to benefit the destination and visitor experience.	CCRC, TCT	1 to 4
4.6	Advance a commercial focus to retail and services	Implement commercial opportunities through retail and services, tours, venue hire, space leasing.	CCRC, TCT	2 to 4
4.7	Mobile visitor information (I-Van)	Review Ivan options subject to direction of this strategy (4.1 & 4.2), including consideration for utilised the mobile VIC to extend destination exposure at identified expos and or events in collaboration with the LTO.	CCRC, TCT	1,2,3,4
5.1	Source automated Cassowary Coast visitor data	Source and subscribe to a supply of relevant tourism and visitor data from across the region.	CCRC, TTNO, TCT	1,2,3,4
5.2	Continue VIC visitor data collection	Continue current VIC user data collection, review data type and collection options as required	CCRC, LTO	1,2,3,4
5.3	Utilise VIC resources for other local data collection and communication	VIC's continue administrative support and communication in emergency situations for local tourism businesses. Plan to support collection and updating of contact data for local community groups and organisations	CCRC	1,2,3,4

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Consultation on this strategy has included the following industry organisations and representatives:

- Cassowary Coast Tourism (Tropical Coast Tourism)
- Tourism Tropical North Queensland
- Tourism & Events Queensland
- Visit Queensland
- The Tourism Group

Image credits:

- Cassowary Coast Tourism (Tropical Coast Tourism)
- Tourism Tropical North Queensland
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