

## Functions of a Local Tourism Association

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Local Tourism Associations (LTA) represent local tourism businesses and focus their efforts on servicing visitors and ensuring “delivery on the promise”. LTAs have many roles and they exist to do many things including:

### Coordination and Representation

Coordinate and represent all businesses, organisations and individuals involved and interested in tourism in the local area.

### Visitor Services

- Visitor Information Centre (VIC) support or manage and/or assist with the running of a local accredited VIC to ensure visitors have accurate, comprehensive, personally delivered, independent visitor information 7 days a week
- Produce a local visitor's guide or map under the regional brand
- Advise local government on ensuring adequate visitor facilities - public toilets, signage etc.

### Tourism Business Development

- Conduct industry networking functions
- Conduct local familiarisation tours for businesses to encourage increased awareness of the local visitor experience and support cross referrals
- Promote the benefits of accreditation to encourage the growth of quality tourism businesses and experiences
- Support industry professional development for tourism businesses to:

- Encourage industry professionalism
- Engender a service culture
- Develop packages

### Tourism Industry Research

- Undertake research to evaluate and monitor visitor numbers, origin of visitors, visitor needs and the value of tourism to the local community

### Tourism Industry Development

- Work with local government on encouraging the development of new tourism attractions and accommodation, scenic routes and supporting infrastructure
- Facilitate the development of quality tourism events
- Maintain a detailed database of local tourism businesses, products and services

### Public Relations and Communication

- Provide clear communication to the industry regarding activity and achievements of the LTA and any positive outcomes for the tourism industry
- Provide accurate communication about the LTA and tourism industry to the broader community and stakeholders

### Partnerships

Forge partnerships based on mutual respect and understanding with:

- Regional Tourism Organisations
- Local government

- Tourism Victoria (and other relevant government agencies)
- Tourism Alliance Victoria
- Industry associations
- Chambers of commerce
- Neighbouring LTAs and regions

### Critical Success Factors

Committee Members with skills and/or knowledge in:

- The local tourism system
- Business planning
- Financial management
- People management
- Communication
- Local tourism marketing
- Chairing or participating in meetings
- Governance
- Local government systems, protocols and procedures
- Private sector business management

### Recognition and support from:

- Tourism industry
- Tourism Alliance Victoria
- Local government
- Regional Tourism Associations
- Broader community
- Regional marketing boards (Campaign Committees)

A workable LTA business plan inclusive of an evaluation process.

## SNAPSHOT OF SURF COAST TOURISM



### Surf Coast Tourism

Surf Coast Tourism (SCT) operates within the Surf Coast Shire. The Surf Coast Shire is located south west of Victoria and includes the townships of Torquay, Anglesea, Aireys Inlet, Lorne and Winchelsea, and covers about 1500 km<sup>2</sup>.

The region includes 55km of coastline and is the official start of the Great Ocean Road - one of Australia's major tourism destinations. The Great Ocean Road is complemented by the rainforests in the Great Otway National Park, making the region a diverse environment. The Shire receives more than 1.3 million visitors each year, based on the latest research, and its location, about 90 minutes from Melbourne, makes it a popular destination for both day and over night visitors.

### Structure

The SCT Board was formed in 1994 and is a Section 86 Committee – a separate tourism division of Council with delegated powers. Each of the 5 towns in the Surf Coast Shire are represented on the board by the local tourism and trader groups, one Councillor representative and a number of 'skills based' members. There are 13 members in total. The day to day running of SCT is carried out by a team of 9 people, including 3 full time staff and 6 part time staff, overseen by a Tourism Coordinator.

### Partnerships / Relationships

SCT is a Local Tourism Association (LTA) and along with three other LTAs – Otways Tourism, Geelong by the Bay Tourism and Bellarine Tourism, all sit under Geelong Otway Tourism as the Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO). SCT work most closely with Otway tourism in promoting both regions together. A fitting relationship given the two regions share the Great Otway National Park, similar coastline and experiences, and attracts the same sort of visitors.

Geelong Otway Tourism, Shipwreck Coast Tourism and Discovery Coast Tourism form the Great Ocean Road Marketing campaign committee. The committee is in charge of the marketing of the Great Ocean Road to key markets in capital cities and interstate. The Surf Coast Tourism Coordinator sits as an observer on the committee.

SCT also have a relationship with Rip Curl Pro Bells Beach Surf competition, a hall mark event in the region (coverage covered valued at \$4.8million in 2007), in the form of sponsorship and promotion.

### Funding

The SCT board are funded by the Council through the tourism levy collected from all commercially rated businesses. A special charge applied to non-commercially rated businesses was abolished two years ago and a new fee structure consistent across the Geelong Otway region was introduced. The funds collected are directly allocated to maintaining and producing local tourism information, Visitor Information Centres (two accredited centres in Torquay and Lorne in and 2 non-accredited centres in Anglesea and Winchelsea), initiatives and event sponsorship, as well operating costs.

### Tourism Business Plan

SCT is currently operating to its 2006-2011 tourism strategy plan. The tourism business plan outlines SCT's vision, mission and values. The vision for tourism is: *'To be the leading sustainable tourism experience in Australia.'*

### Sustainable Tourism

As part of working towards this vision, the following processes and programmes have been adopted at this early stage:

- The Surf Coast Shire was the first community in Australia to achieve Green Globe 21 benchmarked status - a programme used to monitor an organisation's green performance and therefore identify areas that need attention. As part of an ongoing commitment to sustainability and waste reduction, the Visitor Information Centres have become Waste Wise accredited.

- A programme of research has been established, which explores the economic and environmental impact of visitors to the area. The Surf Coast Shire in partnership with Geelong Otway Tourism and the Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Tourism conducted an Australian first pilot study on the social impact of visitors to the area based on resident perceptions, in order to identify and overcome the barriers that tourism represents.
- A proposal has been submitted to conduct research into determining the effect of climate change in the region and develop strategies to address any identified priorities.
- More regional initiatives include: Anglesea becoming the first town in Victoria to go plastic bag free, the introduction of a carbon neutral shuttle bus in Torquay and Lorne to reduce traffic congestion, the Lorne Visitor Information Centre built from recycled materials and the introduction of rain water tanks, brochure recycling and other green initiatives.

### The changing landscape in Surf Coast Shire

SCT's focus on sustainable tourism fits well with the changes occurring in the region. The Geelong Bypass extension will bring improved access to the area and reduce travel time from 90 minutes to 60 minutes which will result in an increase in tourists and permanent residents. There is also a prediction of a population growth concentrated on the south side of Geelong, which will see particular growth in Torquay, thus impacting more on the current environment.

Sustainable tourism is of particular importance to the region, given that the natural environment is the key attraction.

For further information:  
Surf Coast Tourism link from:  
[www.geelongotway.org](http://www.geelongotway.org) or  
[www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au](http://www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au)