Murrup Laar (Ancestral Stones) **Artist:** *Deanne Gilson* 📷: *taracmoorephotography*

VICTORIAN
TOP
TOURISM
TOWN

GOLD
WINNER 2021

Acknowledgement of Country

The City of Ballarat acknowledges the Traditional Owners of our land, the Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung People. Within our council boundaries, the Wadawurrung People are the Traditional Owners south of the Great Dividing Range and, to the north, the Dja Dja Wurrung People are the Traditional Owners. We recognise their continuing connection to the land and waterways. We pay our respects to their respective Elders past, present and emerging and extend this to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

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This plan was prepared by the City of Ballarat's Marketing Team following the development of the *Ballarat Traveller Experience Plan 2021-2030,* the *Visitor Economy Strategy 2021-2024* and the *Ballarat Events Strategy 2018-2028.* Language and content have been lifted from these documents for the purposes of succinctness and consistency.

Disclaimer: Any representation, statement, opinion, or advice expressed or implied in this document is made in good faith. The City of Ballarat directors, employees and associated entities are not liable for any damage or loss whatsoever which has occurred or may occur in relation to taking or not taking action in respect of any representation, statement or advice referred to in this document.

Executive summary

The years ahead will be pivotal for our city as we emerge from a pandemic that has impacted the way we live, travel, work and study.

The marketing of our city is fundamental to Ballarat's growth, not only within the visitor economy, but more broadly across the pillars of liveability and investment.

Marketing can inspire people to believe in Ballarat, and there is plenty to believe in. As a city, we are perfectly placed to leverage the opportunities that lie ahead.

Over the last 18 months, the city has worked together to align on the visitor economy's strategic direction by developing the *Traveller Experience Plan 2021–2030*, the *Ballarat Events Strategy 2018–2028* and the *Visitor Economy Strategy 2021–2024.*

To round out this quartet of documents, we are pleased to present the *Destination Marketing Plan 2021–2024.*

The plan's objective is to deliver creative marketing that amplifies Ballarat's unique identity and supports the city's aspirations of being a place that is innovative, courageous, inspiring, and caring.

During the document's development, three strategic marketing priorities have been identified based on the work that has gone before. These are:

Continued investment in Ballarat's brand evolution

Invest in innovative marketing to showcase Ballarat's unique traveller experiences and connect with our two priority tourism audience segments

Focus on our community as hosts to greater leverage Ballarat's visiting friends and visiting relatives market

📷: *mattdunnephoto*

Success stories so far

Creation of an identity for Ballarat

- **ballarat.com.au**
- **Ballarat Content Hub**
- **Ballarat brandmark**

Outcome: a unified and consistent approach to promoting our city

Greater focus on community engagement

- **Launch of *We Are Ballarat* campaign**
- **Leveraging high-profile city ambassadors**

Outcome: a more engaged community to back Ballarat's recovery and visitor sector

Leveraging earned PR

- **Unprecedented coverage from top tier media publications**

  i. Total audience reach: 69,342,286

  ii. Total PR value: $2,769.545

Outcome: credible coverage in respected national and metropolitan publications

Collaboration

- **Leveraging key external organisations to distribute marketing**
- **Cooperative media buying with Visit Victoria**
- **Supply of campaign assets to industry**

Outcome: a city united and equipped with assets to support marketing activities

Re-launching ***Made of: Ballarat***

- **Tourism audience research**
- ***Made of: Ballarat* publication**
- **New creative suite showcasing breadth of experiences on offer to appeal to broader audiences**
- **Focus on digital advertising to drive higher engagement**
- **Increased owned audiences across social media and email channels**

  i. 260% increase in Facebook followers

  ii. 32% increase in Instagram followers

  iii. 48% increase in email subscribers

Outcome: evolution of a tourism marketing campaign based on research, insights and refined execution

**The successes outlined on this page were achieved during 2020/21FY*

Strategic foundations

The purpose

This *Destination Marketing Plan* lays the foundations for how our city's identity is positioned and promoted over the next three years. It captures the aspirations outlined in the *Ballarat Prosperity Framework, Traveller Experience Plan 2021-2030* and the *Visitor Economy Strategy 2021-2024* to inform, guide and evaluate the decisions we make, and sets out a roadmap of the priorities and actions we will deliver as we navigate Ballarat's post-COVID road to recovery.

The adoption of the aforementioned plans is a significant step forward for Ballarat – we, as a city, are now aligned on what makes Ballarat unique, understand the audiences we need to speak to and agree on the actions to fulfill the opportunities that lie ahead. This work sets the scene for how the City of Ballarat's Marketing Team can deliver efficient, strategically led and creatively inspired work.

This plan acknowledges that we are responsible for building on, and communicating, the existing strengths of the city's rapidly changing identity.

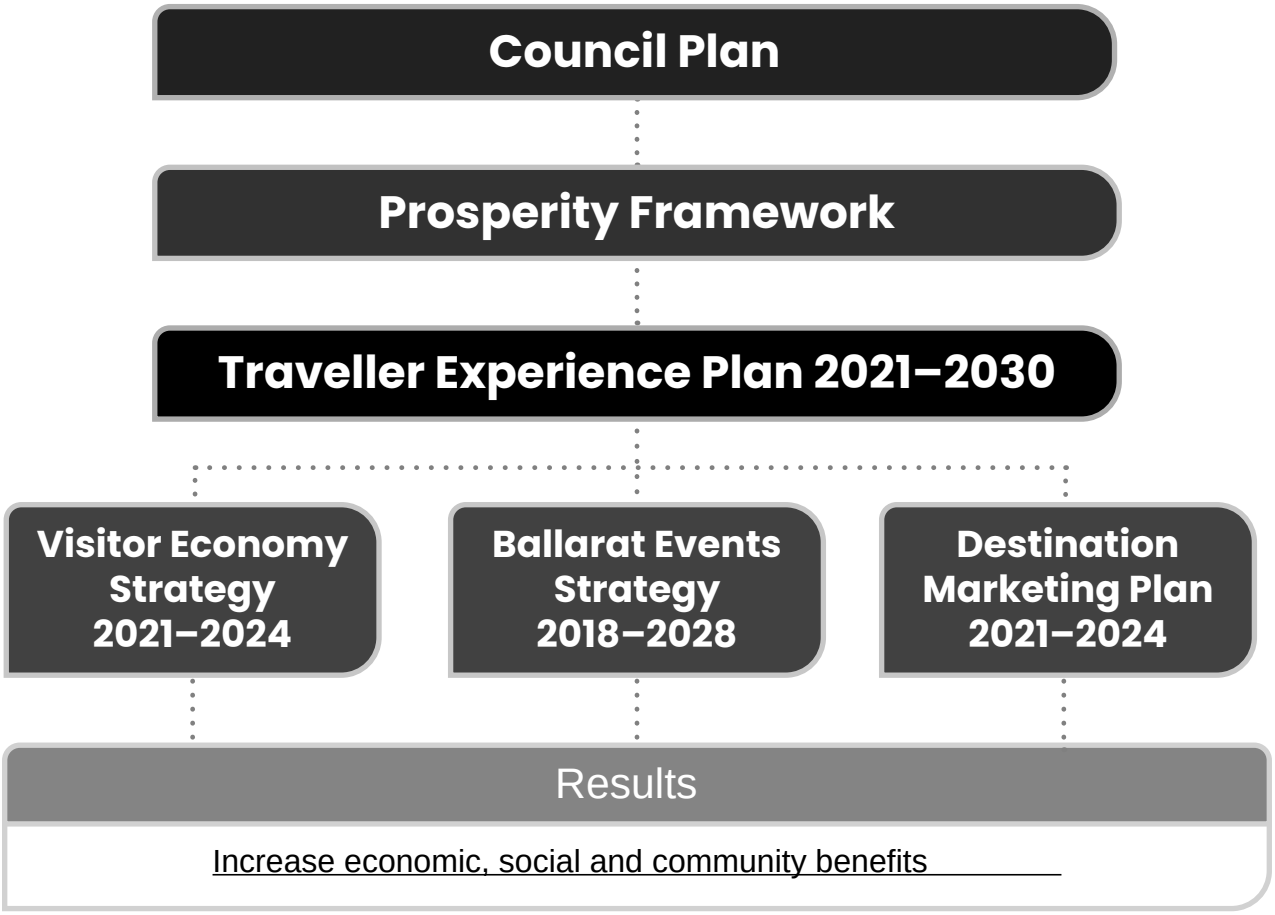
The plan also recognises the importance of our local community and the role we play in working to instil pride and equip our community with the tools and confidence to help advocate on the city's behalf.

We'll do this by sharing stories about our city to convince future travellers of our unique identity, and by leveraging Ballarat's strong visiting friends and visiting relatives market. We want travellers to feel how we do about our region and fall in love with it, just like the people who call it home.

As Victoria's inaugural Top Tourism Town for 2021, this plan sets us up to build on the work that's gone before to position Ballarat as a worthy place to visit, visit again and to stay.

📷: *mattdunnephoto*

Context of visitor economy planning



Ballarat's unique selling proposition

Reflect on our past, revel in our present and imagine our future

Core attribute pillars:

Ballarat's unique point of difference as a destination is defined by the intersection of two overarching attribute pillars. These pillars are at the root of our identity and act as anchor points for the types of product and experiences we offer.

1. Cultural and creative

A fusion of cultural and creative experiences crafted by exceptional artisans, makers, designers, creators and performers.

2. Contemporary heritage

Experiences that are created against the rich tapestry of Ballarat's history and architecture.

Key attributes:

The key attributes can add value by building on Ballarat's uniqueness in a way that is authentic and tangible.

- Food and drink
- Sporting and active
- Accessible facilities
- Accommodation
- Greater region
- Touring routes
- Retail
- Nature and sustainability
- Events

Over the next three years, we will focus on telling the stories that articulate Ballarat's core pillars and key attributes.

📷: *mattdunnephoto*

Responding to current plans & strategies

1

Traveller Experience Plan 2021-2030

To truly amplify our unique identity we need to celebrate and share the experiences that set us apart.

If we put these points of difference at the heart of delivering destination marketing, we will inspire pride in locals and make Ballarat a compelling destination for visitors.

The *Destination Marketing Plan* will deliver on the *Traveller Experience Plan* in the following ways:

1. Identify segment target markets and develop a customer journey that identifies touch points and opportunities to actively reach them

2. Invest in marketing to underpin and build equity in our unique selling proposition to help shift the perception of Ballarat

3. Capitalise on a number of opportunities highlighted throughout the plan to grow Ballarat's reputation as an enticing place to visit and live

4. Facilitate community tourism by leveraging Ballarat's strong visiting friends and visiting relatives market

5. Confirm the long-term brand strategy

2

Visitor Economy Strategy 2021-2024

To support recovery and re-ignite the visitor economy, a number of short-term tactical actions were outlined in the *Visitor Economy Strategy.*

Delivering on these actions will contribute to growing visitation spend and increase market share of regional Victorian visitation.

The *Destination Marketing Plan* will deliver on the *Visitor Economy Strategy* in the following ways:

1. Express the identity of Ballarat through accessible assets and campaigns that drive word of mouth

2. Build community pride and invest in community as hosts, partners and experience entrepreneurs through the development of a major visiting friends and visiting relatives campaign and initiatives to develop community understanding of the benefits

3. Share knowledge, assets and resources to amplify our city's promotion through regular updates to industry

4. Support product developed under agreed seasonal themes

3

Ballarat Prosperity Framework

As detailed in the City of Ballarat's *Prosperity Framework,* the people of Ballarat want to move into a future where they see Ballarat being defined by the four values outlined below. By aligning our strategy with these, we will ensure our marketing outputs are authentic.

Our residents want to be seen as…

1. Innovative
2. Courageous
3. Inspiring
4. Caring

What does the aspiration for our city look like through a marketing lens?

Innovative

- Creatively amplify the narrative and stories of our people and places
- Support and empower industry to talk about Ballarat and share content of other experiences beyond their own

Courageous

- Empowering our locals to become ambassadors for Ballarat
- Leverage our key attributions to increase awareness, visitation and yield among our primary audiences

Inspiring

- Impress potential visitors by promising a breadth of opportunity
- Effectively differentiate Ballarat from other destinations

Caring

- Embrace and celebrate our diverse communities and cultures
- Support industry to align their products and marketing to our priority audiences

📷: *mattdunnephoto*

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Insights that shaped our thinking

The follow pages provide an overview of the data and insights that shaped the *Traveller Experience Plan 2021-2031* and *Visitor Economy Plan 2021-24,* and reiterates the importance of understanding our current and potential visitors.

The City of Ballarat receives regular visitation data from research agencies such as Tourism Research Australia and datainsights, with these insights informing planning, marketing and investment decisions across all business units.

The Marketing Team also invests in a number of other independent research projects.

Fundamental in the development of the *Destination Marketing Plan 2021-24* is the recent Quantum Market Research that was undertaken to identify a clear and reliable profile of Ballarat's current and potential visitor base.

The research clearly articulates two priority audiences that offer the greatest potential for Ballarat, what their motivators are for regional travel and what channels we need to focus on to deliver messages to them.

It also identified that there are still fundamental challenges around perceptions that Ballarat is an uninspiring tourism destination.

These insights will guide our creative development and marketing of Ballarat over the next three years.

Also guiding the development of campaign creative and media buying strategies over the course of this plan will be regular campaign health tracking.

During the development of this plan it has also become apparent further research is required to better understand Ballarat's visiting friends and visiting relatives market to truly leverage this audience. For this reason, additional audience research has been earmarked.

COVID-19 impact on Ballarat's visitor economy

Spend $M

$328 (2020)

47%

Occupancy

60% (2019-20)

11ppt

Employed

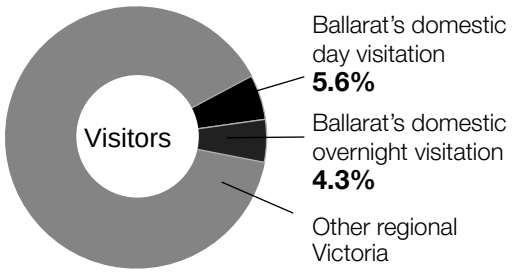
3,088 (2019-20)

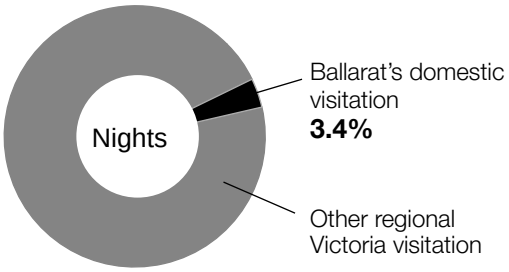
16%

** Australian Tourism Region Data Profiles to December 2020, Tourism Research Australia*

Domestic overnight visitors				Domestic daytrip visitors			
2021	2020	2019	CHANGE	2021	2020	2019	CHANGE
506K visitors	**666K** visitors	**813K** visitors	**24%**	**1.3m** visitors	**1.7m** visitors	**2.2m** visitors	**20.9%**
1.2m nights	**1.5m** nights	**1.6m** nights	**20.6%**	-	-	-	-
$223m expenditure	**$184m** expenditure	**$258m** expenditure	**21.4%**	**$202m** expenditure	**$212m** expenditure	**$246m** expenditure	**4.7%**

Our market share of regional Victoria visitation





Behaviour of current visitors

Where did they stay?		What did they do?		Visitors	
• Friends or relatives property	44.3%	• Eat out	46%	• Regional Victoria	57.2%
• Hotel/motel	33.2%	• Visit a friend or relative	45%	• Melbourne	38.7%
		• Outdoor/nature	34%		
		• Go sightseeing	19%		

Source: Ballarat domestic travel snapshot YE June 21, Tourism Research Australia. International visitation data not available due to international border closures.

Domestic day trippers

More than half are visiting from regional Victoria (62.6%), followed by Melbourne (37.4%).

Most day trippers are coming to Ballarat to holiday (35.6%) and visit friends and relatives (29%). Compared to YE June 20, holiday was up by 11.5%.

Average expenditure is $153 per visit.

The biggest age group of visitors to Ballarat is 65 years and over (25%), followed by those aged 35-44 years (21.4%) and 45-54 years (18.5%)

They are most likely to eat out (43.6%), spend time with friends and family (28.3%), shopping (16.2%) and sightseeing (10.1%)

Source: Ballarat domestic travel snapshot YE June 21, Tourism Research Australia

Domestic overnight visitors

Are mostly from Melbourne (47.4%), followed by regional Victoria (39.2%) and interstate (13.4%).

Their main reason to travel is to visit friends and relatives (43.1%), followed by holiday (33%) and, to a lesser extent, business.

Visitors stayed on average two nights, mostly with friends or family (49.2%). The next most popular accommodation used was hotel below four stars (16.7%), followed by rented house (7.2%) and luxury 4-5 hotel (7.1%).

The average expenditure per night was $189.

More visitors are aged 45-54 (18.9%), followed by 15-24 (17.9%) and 25-34 (16.8%).

Eating out (48.6%) was the most popular activity, followed by catching up with friends and family (43.4%), sightseeing (18.1%) and pubs, clubs and discos (16%).

Source: Ballarat domestic travel snapshot YE June 21, Tourism Research Australia

International visitors

Prior to borders closing as a result of the global pandemic, most international visitors visited Ballarat as part of a holiday.

They were mainly from New Zealand and Asia, followed by United Kingdom and Europe.

They generally enjoyed social activities, outdoor activities and sports, and local attractions.

The average expenditure per night is $66.

Source: Ballarat domestic travel snapshot YE Dec 19, Tourism Research Australia

**International figures also include international students*

Visits inspired by residents

Ballarat boasts a population of almost 110,000, which continues to grow at a rate of 1.85% per annum*.

With more and more people calling Ballarat home each year, we recognise residents will play a key role as ambassadors to promote the Ballarat experience to their friends and family.

Tourism Research Australia data** provides regular snapshots of the travel behaviour and characteristics of visitors to Ballarat, including insights into the visiting friends and visiting relatives (VFR) market.

While the data, to an extent, shows us the differences between VFR and non-VFR visitors and measures the impact of this type of traveller, there is still much to learn about these audiences.

We acknowledge this is a market with potential and warrants further research to better understand and target.

Visiting friends and visiting relatives market at a glance

Visitors

VFR	Non-VFR
204,000	254,000
⬇ 47%	⬇ 54.7%

Nights

VFR	Non-VFR
522,000	643,000
⬇ 37.4%	⬇ 49.1%

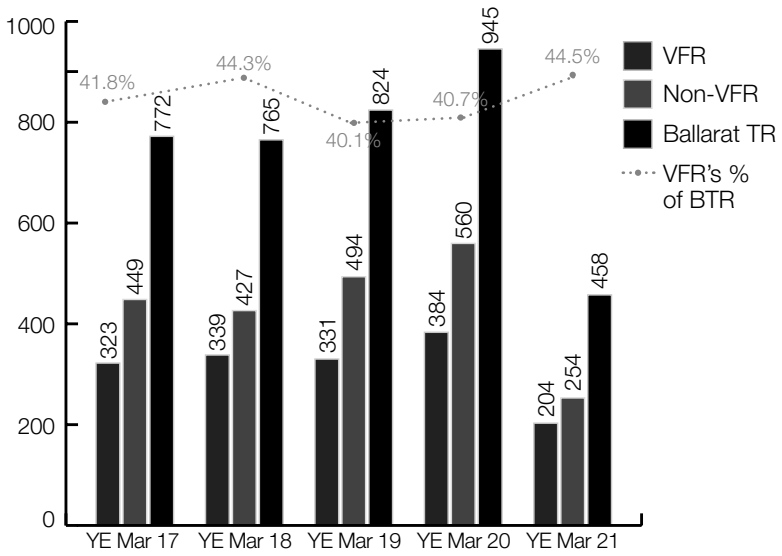
Expenditure

VFR	Non-VFR
$45m	$144m
⬇ 40.6%	⬇ 31.1%

VFR travellers spent, on average, $221 per visit to the region. Up by 12.5% on YE March 20
Non-VFR travellers spent, on average, $567 per visit to the region. Up by 52.2% on YE March 20

The VFR share of overnight visitors

VFR visitors represent 44.5% of all visitors to the region - up by 3.8% pts on YE Mar 20 and by 2.7% pts on YE Mar 20



** REMPLAN community profile of Ballarat*
*** datainsights VFR travel to Ballarat tourism region YE Mar 21*

📷: *mattdunnephoto*

Priority tourism audience segments

Audience research was undertaken to identify a clear and reliable profile of the current and potential visitor base for Ballarat.

It outlines motivations and visitation behaviours, and gives us an understanding of perceptions and attitudes towards Ballarat's existing and prospective future visitation offering.

The research identified four key audience segments for Ballarat, with Active Regional Explorers and Regional Fledglings identified as new primary targets. Relative to other markets, the impact of destination marketing will have shorter lead time to attract these engaged and flexible primary markets.

Based on recommendations from the research, we will focus our marketing efforts on these two primary markets by:

Prioritising younger Active Regional Explorer families

Families with pre-school and young primary aged children are more readily satisfied by what Ballarat has to offer. By contrast, once they pass age eight, Ballarat can't consistently deliver to the needs of a mature Active Regional Explorer family.

Prioritising more sophisticated Regional Fledglings

Regional Fledglings with a taste for dining and culture are far more likely to convert to visitation than those who can't see past the beach. Likewise, those travelling as a couple are more likely to be in-market longer than larger social groups.

For more information on this research, see the Traveller Experience Plan 2021-2030.

Source: Ballarat tourism audience segmentation, Quantum Market Research February 2021

📷: *mattdunnephoto*

1

Active regional explorers:

Travelling in regional Victoria is a regular part of our life.

Who are they?

Spend the most per night and spend more nights away than any other segment.

- Skew younger, often at family life stage
- Metro Melbourne suburbs
- Educated, curious and enthusiastic.

What defines them?

- Engaged across channels, travel extensively and widely, participate in a broad range of activities
- Seek out enriching experiences; aspire to more than just ‘relaxation’
- Do not conform to one trip ‘type’, they arrange different itineraries to suit different needs.

Visitation habits:

- Take weekend and extended trips, typically touring to cover more than one activity
- Above average spend, prioritise recreation in their budget. Can include VFR spends
- Engage in one or more outdoor pursuits, often cycling, fishing, or getting into national parks.

Engaged by:

- Constant lookout via all channels for what is new or different in regional Victoria
- More likely to engage with art, culture, history and attend structured ticketed attractions.

📷: *mattdunnephoto*

2

Regional fledglings:

We can find cool things to do by leaving the city and getting out there.

Who are they?

Make more frequent day and short overnight trips than other segments. More likely to consider Ballarat in-scope for a daytrip (if metro-based). Are flexible to consider and convert to visiting Ballarat (as well as other destinations).

- Young singles and couples may travel as groups of friends
- Metro-based and urbanised tastes
- Following emerging trends, not their parents' example.

What defines them?

- Explore though visitor-oriented producers, events/ festivals, local operators, etc
- Food and wine focus and have the budget to support it
- Lighter touch in the outdoors, may camp or bushwalk but it's principally a social endeavour.

Visitation habits:

- Travel often, but typically on short weekend breaks or daytrips
- Emphasis on AirBNB-type accommodation
- Trips commonly based around a half-day hike/ bushwalk.

Engaged by:

- Social media, review sites, and official tourism/ destination sites
- Modern dining, wineries, craft beer, music events/ festivals, novelty, and intrigue.

📷: *mattdunnephoto*

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Marketing opportunities

Overarching destination marketing challenges and recommendations

Recent tourism audience research conducted by Quantum Market Research identified a series of challenges and opportunities that will inform our planning over the next three years.

Current challenges limiting conversion to visitation

Nature is important
The vast majority of visitors rate spending time in the outdoors as important. Ballarat may be an urbanised, city destination, but it is a major limiter if it does not also satisfy the need to spend time in natural surrounds. To fully maximise this offering, a full audit of the region's nature-based product, photography and signposted trails is required.

Ballarat does not feel like a getaway
Predominantly urban based, and at a time poor lifestage, even those who travel regularly want every trip to deliver 'a getaway'. Broadly this is characterised as 'somewhere different from home, where I can be inspired to switch off'. Priority segments lack depth of appreciation for Ballarat and think it's blankly urbanised (often compared to Melbourne's outer suburbs).

Ballarat does not have any surprises in store
It's common for target segments, particularly those who have a distant memory of visiting Ballarat, to underestimate what the city has to offer. Importantly, although they realise their familiarity may be limited, nothing about their perceptions leads them to feel intrigued about what they don't know. Asked to imagine they've been dropped on the main street, potential visitors reflect they'd have no inspiration in mind besides looking at old buildings and heading to a café (something they could do in Melbourne anyway).

Lack of things to do
Adding to the challenge is the perceived lack of things to do between meals and the closure of businesses on weekends that adds to the feeling of an empty CBD, especially on Sundays.

Recommendations to increase primary target audience visitation

Promise breadth of opportunity
Ballarat lacks a mainstream visitation driver. The solution is for audiences to implicitly believe they'll find what they need to compile a great trip when they get there. By all audiences, the Visit Ballarat website is evaluated as an excellent resource to achieve this – and driving more traffic towards it is implicit to converting consideration to visitation.

Promote Ballarat's established scene of authentic and down-to-earth producers
Exploring regions through food and drink experiences is a key driver of travel intention for all audiences. Being a heritage regional centre, the link between Ballarat and artisan produce is intuitive. Creating intrigue through food/drink is an effective way to prompt a more thorough investigation of Ballarat as a place to visit, ties in with Ballarat's broader cultural offering, and challenges misconceptions of Ballarat as a 'characterless' regional town.

Promote shareable, picturesque moments which convey a getaway
For all audiences, this style of communication is a short-cut to convey newness, liveliness, and escape, addressing Ballarat's key barriers in doing so.
For primary target segments in particular, full trips start from an initial source of inspiration, often through word of mouth, an image or simple description shared via social media.

Weave nature into the brand story
It is a major impediment that Ballarat is not perceived to deliver any kind of nature experience. Perhaps exacerbated under COVID conditions, all audiences expect fresh air/walk/sightseeing outdoors as a part of their travel, even when that travel is centred around an urbanised or indoor activity.

Source: Ballarat tourism audience segmentation, Quantum Market Research February 2021

Customer journey mapping & opportunities

Journey mapping is a visual storyline of every engagement our priority audience segments have with us. It gives us a better understanding of what motivates our visitors and indicates how they plan, book and execute their trips. These insights will inform the development of marketing content.

CATCH >>	CONNECT >>		CONVERT >>	ADVOCATE >>
Dreaming >>	Interest >>	Booking >>	Experience >>	Sharing >>
Consider where to go Prospecting activity aimed at driving awareness among prospective customers. **Touch points** • Online video • Paid search • Paid social • Native ads • Publication • Public relations • Traditional media **Insights** 74% Active Regional Explorers use Google as their preferred source of travel inspiration, it's slightly higher for Regional Fledglings at 78%. Social media is the second most prevalent source of inspiration.	**Decide on destination, consider things to do to suit interests** Educate visitors about the experiences applicable to them through targeted remarketing activities to drive further education and consideration. **Touch points** • Paid social • Native ads • Content partnerships **Insights** Both primary target audiences continuously engage in passive, and even active searching. Whether they subscribe/follow directly, or just gravitate to them in a Google search, resources such as TimeOut, Urban List and Broadsheet all influence consideration and then support with rounding out a trip plan.	**Confirm base of their itinerary by booking** Provide visitors to your website with highly curated content to help them plan where to stay and what they can do when they get here. **Touch points** • Website • Stories/itineraries • ATDW listings • Instagram **Insights** Both primary target audiences express that, once committed, they leave large parts of their trip unplanned. They might have some activities or hospitality options in-mind, and will pre-book accommodation, but otherwise enjoy leaving finer details to chance/ open to last minute decisions. Both audiences are consistently pleasantly surprised by the presentation of information, and breadth of 'things to do' on visitballarat.com.au. The website is felt to convey character and variety – directly challenging common misgivings.	**Continue to book experiences while in destination** Serve specific itineraries that are relevant to their areas of interest to drive interest and enquiry. **Touch points** • Paid search • Paid social • Website itineraries • Locals as ambassadors • Tourist information centres **Insights** Itineraries resonate with both primary audiences as a vehicle to covey opportunity. Local information sources are influential once in-region. Both primary audiences over-index on 'local people' as a source of planning inspiration.	**Share their story with friends and family** Build visitor loyalty by re-sharing their experience and continue engaging with them to prompt re-visiting the region. **Touch points** • Organic social media • Email sign-ups

1

Active regional explorers

Sources of planning inspiration

Most common resources to inspire or plan travel

- **74%** Google search
- **55%** Social media
- **49%** Ask friends and family
- **48%** Accommodation websites
- **46%** Read review
- **36%** Official destination websites
- **34%** TV/newspapers/radio/magazines

Top travel inspiration

Most common factors when determining where to travel

- **73%** Fresh air in the outdoors (picnicking, short strolls)
- **69%** Sightseeing (visiting townships, exploring by road)
- **64%** Exploring local produce (farmers' markets, local producers, cafes, breweries)
- **57%** Dining out (wineries, restaurants)
- **52%** Arts and culture (galleries, museums, historic sites)
- **49%** Visiting friends and relatives
- **49%** Engaging with the outdoors (camping, bushwalking)

Opportunities

- Active Regional Explorers are more engaged across the board, including traditional media
- Ballarat has many assets which align to the family market. What resonates with Active Reginal Explorers is 'life experiences', which supports children's development by stimulating them and deepening their appreciation for the world
- Active Regional Explorers express great intrigue about local producers. Ballarat may be well-placed to fill a market need for down-to-earth, authentic offerings which are welcoming to family groups.

2

Regional fledglings

Sources of planning inspiration

Most common resources to inspire or plan travel

- **78%** Google search
- **57%** Social media
- **57%** Read reviews
- **52%** Ask friends and family
- **51%** Accommodation websites
- **46%** Official destination websites
- **31%** Visitor guides

Top travel inspiration

Most common factors when determining where to travel

- **75%** Fresh air in the outdoors (picnicking, short strolls)
- **62%** Dining out (wineries, restaurants)
- **55%** Sightseeing (visiting townships, exploring by road)
- **52%** Engaging with the outdoors (camping, bushwalking)
- **49%** Exploring local produce (farmers' markets, local producers, cafes, breweries)
- **36%** High energy active pursuits (cycling, hiking)
- **31%** Indulgences (spas)

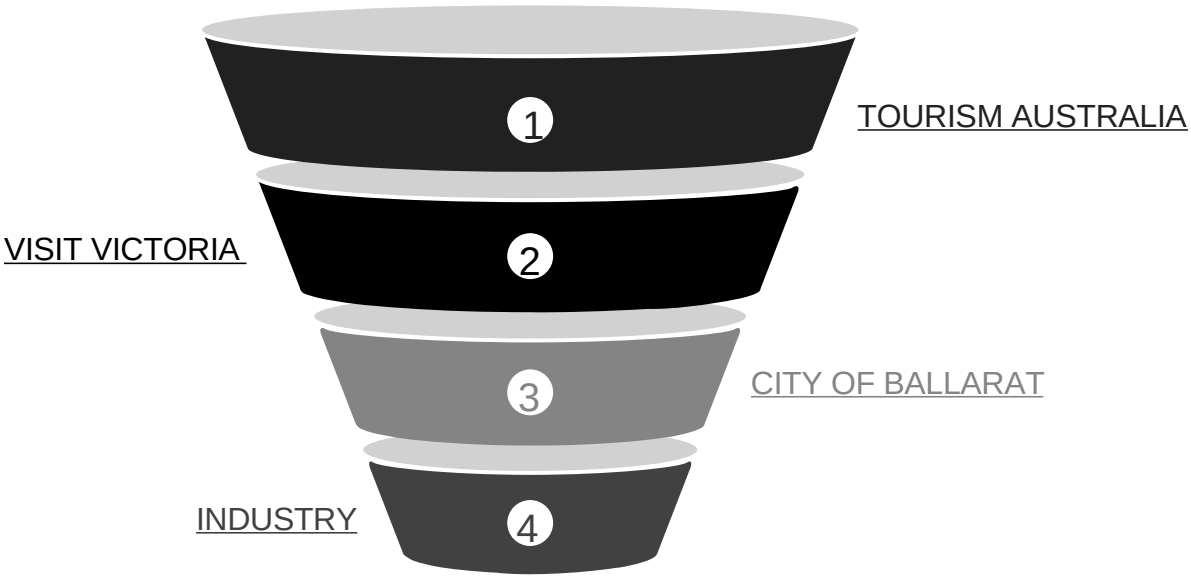
Opportunities

- Regional Fledglings are more likely to dine at a wide variety of venue types – from cafes and low-mid tier restaurants, to breweries and high-end restaurants
- Regional Fledglings are highly engaged social media users. For this group, Instagram is the dominant trigger of initial visitation intention. Even more influential, they follow each other and draw inspiration from user-generated content. Consciously or not, trips can even be based on being 'Instagram-worthy'.
- Regional Fledglings in particular make last minute decisions. It's not uncommon to commit to a trip at the very last minute.

Leveraging federal and state marketing

The City of Ballarat's Marketing Team is the lead destination marketing body for Ballarat, working in partnership with advocacy partner Ballarat Regional Tourism, industry and Visit Victoria to promote Ballarat and surrounds as the ideal place to visit.

The role of national, state and local destination marketing is represented as follows:



1

TOURISM AUSTRALIA

Lead international and domestic destination marketing by encouraging tourists and Australians to explore the country.

Current campaigns
There's still nothing like Australia (Destination Australia)
Be the first (New Zealand)
Holiday here this year (Domestic)

2

VISIT VICTORIA

Lead Melbourne and Victoria destination marketing by building emotional connection with intrastate, interstate and international (when relevant) markets. Their key objective is to position regional Victoria as an ideal short break destination.

Current campaigns
Stay close, go further (regional campaign)
Get Set (interstate campaign)

3

CITY OF BALLARAT

Leverage the work Visit Victoria is doing and lead Ballarat's destination marketing by promoting product that taps into the drivers of travel for our primary audiences.

Current campaigns
Made of: Ballarat
Future VFR campaign

4

INDUSTRY

Individual businesses leverage the City of Ballarat's destination marketing and promote assets available to entice visitors travelling to Ballarat to visit their business.

Leveraging current campaign architecture

The uncertainty that unfolded as a result of the global pandemic was like nothing Ballarat has ever faced before. However, it was also a time that brought the city's leaders together. This collaboration led to the development of a whole-of-city identity and brand architecture which has been outlined below.

As we begin to focus on the road to recovery, it is going to be important we test the work that's gone before and establish a brand evolution that can carry Ballarat into a post-COVID world.

Ballarat Content Hub

The city-wide brandmark, BALLARAT, was created in 2021 to establish a unified and consistent way to sell the city, which included the launch of ballarat.com.au – a central site showcasing the city as a place to visit, live, work, invest and study in. The strategic work targets consumers considering a regional lifestyle by showing them the best of Ballarat, and activates Ballarat businesses as brand advocates by providing a content hub with free photography, brand marks and videography.

Made of: Ballarat (tourism)

Based on the recommendations from the recent audience segmentation research, as well as previous brand health tracking insights, a new strategic approach for the re-launch of the *Made of Ballarat* campaign was developed in 2021. The campaign narrative aims to position Ballarat as an active playground made of a multitude of experiences that celebrate the region's many riches: food, craft beer, natural surroundings, art and culture.

We Are Ballarat (community)

Tourism data continues to profile the importance of the visiting friends and visiting relatives market for domestic overnight travel to Ballarat.

The *We Are Ballarat* campaign was created in 2021 in an effort to instil in the community the sector's importance and to encourage them to invite their friends and family to Ballarat. An annual visiting friends and visiting relatives marketing plan has been developed to continue this push, with deliverables outlined on page 38.

Leveraging Ballarat's seasonal themes

The *Visitor Economy Strategy 2021-2024* identified the importance of the development of whole-of-city seasonal themes to be used as a mechanism to align product and marketing.

Based on conversations with key stakeholders, the following thematic approach has been developed to assist build campaigns and develop product and events around the four seasons: summer, autumn, winter and spring.

These seasonal themes are owned by the entire city and are intended to help develop and deliver product and marketing to strengthen Ballarat's unique point of difference.

Immerse

Our summers are filled with music, outdoor adventure and making the most of the longer days by reconnecting with friends and family.

DISCOVERY | OURDOOR EVENTS | TRAILS | DINING OUTDOORS | FRUIT PICKING COLD BREWS & COCKTAILS

Reflect

Throughout autumn, we reflect on our past and think about our future – we ponder the city that has shaped us and dream of the creatives carrying our city forward.

FESTIVALS | IMMERSION | MEET THE MAKER | CELLAR DOORS | PADDOCK TO PLATE | MASTERCLASSES & WORKSHOPS

Emerge

Spring is a season for rebirth, rejuvenation, revitalisation, and emerging creativity. As the winter gloom withers away, and the flowers bloom for a new day, Ballarat too prepares to emerge for a season on renewal.

FLOWERS | NATURE | WINE | CREATIVITY PICNICS | RELAX | LOCAL PRODUCE | MARKETS & FARMGATES

Embrace

In winter our senses are heightened. It's all about embracing the drama of our cold environment and the warmth of our experiences.

COSY ACCOMODATION | WARMING DRINKS | FROST & SNOW ICE | COLOUR | FIRE

Leveraging our owned channels

Visit Ballarat channels	2019/20	2020/21	%
visitballarat.com.au	231,012 unique visitors	341,039 unique visitors	47.63%
@visitballarat	66,230 followers	69,541 followers	5%
@visitballarat	15,100 followers	19,985 followers	32.35%
Consumer email	4,746 followers	13,485 followers	184.13%
Other channels			
ballarat.vic.gov.au	-	15,481 unique visitors	
@weareballarat	-	1,006 followers	
Public relations		97,771,435 reach	

: *mattdunnephoto*

Mission statement

Deliver innovative marketing that amplifies Ballarat's unique identity and supports the city's aspirations of being a place that is innovative, courageous, inspiring, and caring.

📷: *mattdunnephoto*

Strategic priorities & actions

The Destination Marketing Plan has three priorities. Each priority will inform the basis of a series of deliverables that respond to and support the shared ambitions for Ballarat, its residents and those we host.

1. **Continued investment in Ballarat's brand evolution**
2. **Invest in innovative marketing to showcase Ballarat's unique traveller experiences and connect with our two priority tourism audience segments**
3. **Focus on our community as hosts to greater leverage Ballarat's visiting friends and visiting relatives market**

1

Continued investment in Ballarat's brand evolution

In March 2021, we launched brand Ballarat, our all-encompassing shared destination identity. This identity reflects our city as a place to live, work, invest, study and visit.

In doing so, we began the journey of evolving our brand architecture. With brand Ballarat now in existence, we will review and update Ballarat's master destination brand framework, including a review of the Visit Ballarat brand.

Ballarat.com.au was launched in 2021 as a key part of our place branding, bringing together visit, live, work, study and invest messaging. As an important concierge platform, we will continue to invest in ballarat.com.au and attracting the most valuable audiences to the site.

We will look to partners – existing and new – to amplify the Ballarat brand. This ranges from working with industry leaders, including Sovereign Hill, to public relations opportunities and partnering with content producers.

And we will continuously expand the Ballarat Content Hub, developing impactful, on-brand photography, videos and supporting marketing assets for industry use at no cost.

2

Invest in innovative marketing to showcase Ballarat's unique traveller experiences and connect with our two priority tourism audience segments

Convincing future travellers of our unique identity will be our challenge and opportunity. But it's a challenge we will embrace.

We have a clear and reliable profile of the current and potential future visitor, their drivers of travel and how to reach them. Now we must carve out our position in the destination marketplace and shift any perception that Ballarat cannot fulfill the needs of potential travellers.

We'll do this by curating marketing creative, itineraries and stories to showcase a magnitude of experiences that warrant spending more time in Ballarat.

We'll remain flexible and invest in marketing that allows us to respond to the ever-changing landscape of, and sentiment towards, intrastate visitation.

We want people to learn Ballarat has a breadth and diversity of experiences by shifting from general brand messaging to one of storytelling. We want travellers to feel how we do about our region and fall in love with it, just like the people who call it home.

To do this we will deliver marketing activities that speak to our priority audiences and promote Ballarat's uniqueness in a way that is authentic and tangible.

And we will position Ballarat as a worthy place to visit, visit again and to stay by developing and nurturing relationships with visitors long after their initial visit.

3

Focus on our community as hosts to greater leverage Ballarat's visiting friends and visiting relatives market

The visiting friends and visiting relatives tourism segment is a significant, and yet under researched, part of the visitor economy. In Ballarat, they accounted for 40-45 per cent of total visitation for the last five years (NVS, YE Mar 21, TRA).

With a steady population growth expected across the city, the number of residents who will have visitors coming to stay is only going to grow.

The key to understanding and maximising the value of this market lies in developing profiles of these visitors and, more importantly, their hosts. We will do this by investing in significant audience research to identify the best ways to influence the decision making of these groups.

Existing channels that are used to speak to local audiences will be further developed, and targeted content and campaigns will be delivered with the goal of arming Ballarat residents with the information they need to become ambassadors for the city they love. Additionally, digital tools will be developed specifically to assist locals invite their loved ones to visit, including the creation and promotion of the 'Ballarat Pass' which delivers another promotional tool to drive growth in this area.

We know Ballarat's residents aspire for the city to be known as an innovative, inspiring, caring, and courageous place, and our activities aim to help them spread this message far and wide.

mattdunnephoto

A plan for continuous improvement

In addition to our business-as-usual activity, we will continue to plan for Ballarat's post-COVID recovery period.

2021
Reset and Benchmark

Priorities

i. Undertake Made of Ballarat campaign tracking to identify recommended changes ahead of phase two roll out

ii. Undertake visitor and resident sentiment tracking, in liaison with the Visitor Economy Team

2022
Refine and Plan

Priorities

i. Conduct brand health research to measure sentiment of Ballarat as a tourism destination and consideration to visit

ii. Undertake work to test current brand architecture and confirm brand evolution and long-term strategy

iii. Compile a revised brand framework

iv. Conduct in-depth audience profiling to identify a clear and reliable profile of the current and potential visiting friends and visiting relatives base for Ballarat

2023
Nurture and Grow

Priorities

i. Execute distinctive, innovative and effective destination marketing that responds to research and insights

ii. Increase reach and frequency of tourism messaging to the community

iii. Review the *Destination Marketing Plan*, alongside the *Traveller Experience Plan* and *Visitor Economy Strategy,* to ensure relevance remains

2024
Leverage and Optimise

Priorities

i. Undertake visitor and resident sentiment tracking by end of 2024 and compare to 2021/22 results, in liaison with the Visitor Economy Team

ii. Reimagine our approach to target market prioritisation in a post-COVID world and determine a new strategic approach to marketing for 2025 and beyond

**For conciseness, language used to define priority pillars has been lifted from the Ballarat Events Strategy 2018-2028.*

Strategic priorities and actions

1. Continued investment in Ballarat's brand evolution	
Output	Timeframe
1.1 Evolve Ballarat's brand strategy by: **1.1.1** Reviewing marketing's role to deliver on the City of Ballarat's strategies and plans **1.1.2** Conducting brand health research to measure sentiment of Ballarat as a tourism destination and consideration to visit **1.1.3** Undertaking work to test current brand architecture and establish long-term brand strategy **1.1.4** Compiling a revised brand framework so future product development and promotional activities reflect consistent messaging **1.1.5** Continuing to develop ballarat.com.au as the information hub on living, working and investing in Ballarat by investing in new content and media to target core audiences to this site	ONGOING
1.2 Support product developed under agreed seasonal themes	ONGOING
1.3 Encourage industry to talk about Ballarat and share content of experiences beyond their own **1.3.1** Capture seasonal photography and other assets to encourage industry members to use the shared Ballarat brand, via the Ballarat Content Hub **1.3.2** Educate industry on what key audiences find compelling	ONGOING
1.4 Make the most of Ballarat's title as Victoria's Top Tourism Town over the next 12 months by actively including messaging in external-facing communications, including media releases and pitching	2022
1.5 Promote the attractiveness of Ballarat as a place to visit and live by: **1.5.1** Actively pitching to state and national mastheads **1.5.2** Coordinating a visiting journalist program **1.5.3** Investing in influencer marketing that aligns with priority audiences	ONGOING
1.6 Develop partnership opportunities with external events to amplify Ballarat's messaging and reach broader audiences	ONGOING
1.7 Work closely with Visit Victoria to ensure Ballarat is represented in marketing activities	ONGOING
1.8 Enter relevant marketing and tourism awards to celebrate and recognise Ballarat as an industry leader.	ONGOING

2. Invest in innovative marketing to showcase Ballarat's unique traveller experiences and connect with our two priority tourism audience segments	
Output	Timeframe
2.1 Further develop tourism campaign, *Made of: Ballarat,* that is underpinned by research and evaluation, and communicate our unique selling position to the primary audiences outlined in this plan:	March 2022
2.1.1 Conduct campaign tracking to determine levels of interaction and improve outcomes, both at the end of 2021 and 2024	End of 2021 & 2024
2.1.2 Promote inspiring stories of the region's producers and makers	ONGOING
2.1.3 Create opportunities for local producers and makers to profile their product during *Made of: Ballarat*-branded activations	Autumn 2022
2.1.4 Continue to produce the *Made of: Ballarat* publication for autumn and spring	Every spring & autumn
2.1.5 Capture seasonal photography that includes diverse communities	ONGOING
2.2 Continue cooperative marketing by:	ONGOING
2.2.1 Investing in Visit Victoria cooperative marketing activities and report on year-to-year engagement	
2.2.2 Investing in content partnerships that promote hero product to complement agreed seasonal themes	
2.2.3 Continuing to offer industry buy-in opportunities for the *Made of: Ballarat* publication	
2.2.4 Constantly looking for opportunities to work with neighbouring regions, including the Pyrenees and Moorabool shires, to deliver joint marketing initiatives	
2.3 Inform industry about marketing updates, including via the Visitor Economy database and Facebook group	ONGOING
2.4 Develop customer journeys for all priority audiences and identify opportunities	DELIVERED
2.5 Undertake visitor sentiment monitoring (Net Promoter Score) to determine how likely visitors are to recommend Ballarat as a travel destination	ANNUALLY
2.6 Continue to improve existing visitballarat.com.au platform experience by:	ONGOING
2.6.1 Striving towards improving SEO results	
2.6.2 Curating stories to promote new product aligned to core attribute pillars	
2.6.3 Curating itineraries aligned to the key drivers of travel for our priority tourism audience segments	
2.6.4 Increase the profile of the Pyrenees and Moorabool regions	
2.6.5 Prioritise new plug-ins to improve user experience	

2. Invest in innovative marketing to showcase Ballarat's unique traveller experiences and connect with our two priority tourism audience segments

Output	Timeframe
2.7 Create digital and CRM strategy for digital eco-system by:	
2.7.1 Conducting digital audit of visitballarat.com.au and ballarat.com.au	22/23 FY
2.7.2 Investigating new consumer-facing technologies to meet future user experience needs	22/23 FY
2.7.3 Exploring automation of the Visit Ballarat eDM user experience	22/23 FY
2.7.4 Investing in improvements to website accessibility and user experience	23/24 FY
2.8 Invest in improvements across Visit Ballarat social media channels	
2.8.1 Develop a strategy for year-round BAU advertising	June 2022
2.8.2 Explore expanding social media monitoring to capture data on brand health	June 2022
2.8.3 Invest time in curating engaging content across existing and new platforms	ONGOING
2.8.4 Undertaking professional development to ensure Visit Ballarat channels respond to current trends and changing algorithms	ONGOING

3. Focus on our community as hosts to greater leverage Ballarat's visiting friends and visiting relatives market

Output	Timeframe
3.1 Conduct audience profiling to identify a clearer profile of the behaviours of Ballarat's visiting friends and relatives base	21/22 FY
3.2 Develop a visiting friends and visiting relatives campaign plan that includes:	ONGOING
3.2.1 Tactical plans that increase the awareness of local product and encourages advocacy by locals	
3.2.2 Promote, in liaison with the Visitor Economy Team, a local's pass to Ballarat's key attractions	
3.2.3 Further develop the *We Are Ballarat* campaign	
3.2.4 Amplify content for residents to use to promote Ballarat's experiences and local culture to their visiting friends and visiting relatives	
3.2.5 Foster local community and industry engagement by activating and promoting locals as hosts/ambassador initiatives	
3.2.6 Develop a communications plan, in liaison with the Communications and Design Team, to instil pride among locals, including a focus on celebrating Ballarat's title as *Victoria's Top Tourism Town*	2022
3.3 Provide marketing support to the City of Ballarat's Events Team to encourage local participation in flagship events	ONGOING

Measurement

We will measure the success of our strategic priorities by:

Continued investment in Ballarat's brand evolution

Key performance indicators:

- 10% year-on-year growth of unique visitors to ballarat.com.au
- 5% year-on-year growth of new users to the Ballarat Content Hub
- Secure five journalist visits, generating positive coverage in top-tier metro and national publications.

Invest in innovative marketing to showcase Ballarat's unique traveller experiences and connect with our two priority tourism audience segments

Key performance indicators:

- 15% year-on-year growth across all Visit Ballarat channels
- *Made of: Ballarat* campaign tracking to measure effectiveness of campaign assets, both at end of 2021 and 2024
- Brand health research to measure sentiment of Ballarat as a tourism destination and consideration to visit
- Visitor sentiment monitoring (Net Promoter Score) to determine how likely visitors are to recommend Ballarat as a travel destination.

Focus on our community as hosts to greater leverage Ballarat's visiting friends and visiting relatives market

Key performance indicators:

- 10% year-on-year growth across *We Are Ballarat* channels
- 10% year-on year growth of traffic to a local's landing page and Ballarat Pass page on visitballarat.com.au
- 5% year-on-year growth in usage of new 'favourites' functionality.

📷: *mattdunnephoto*