



2023 - 2028

Visitor Information Centre Business Plan

**District Council of
Peterborough**

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1. Role of the Visitor Information Centre

The role of a Visitor Information Centre is to help ensure visitors have the best possible experience during their stay. They provide tourists with free information on the best attractions, accommodations, tours, activities and more. They can initiate bookings for accommodation, tours, and transportation.

Peterborough is recognised as an Accredited Visitor Information Centre. The accreditation status is achieved by adhering to the National Accreditation Standard. Only Accredited VIC's can display the trademark yellow italic "i" sign, which serves to guarantee quality service and reliable information.

Accredited Visitor Information Centres are an integral in our Tourism Industry. They made a significant economic contribution to tourism, especially by providing information to visitors that encourages them to stay longer, spend more, and experience more attractions.

The Peterborough Visitor Information Centre is managed by the District Council of Peterborough.

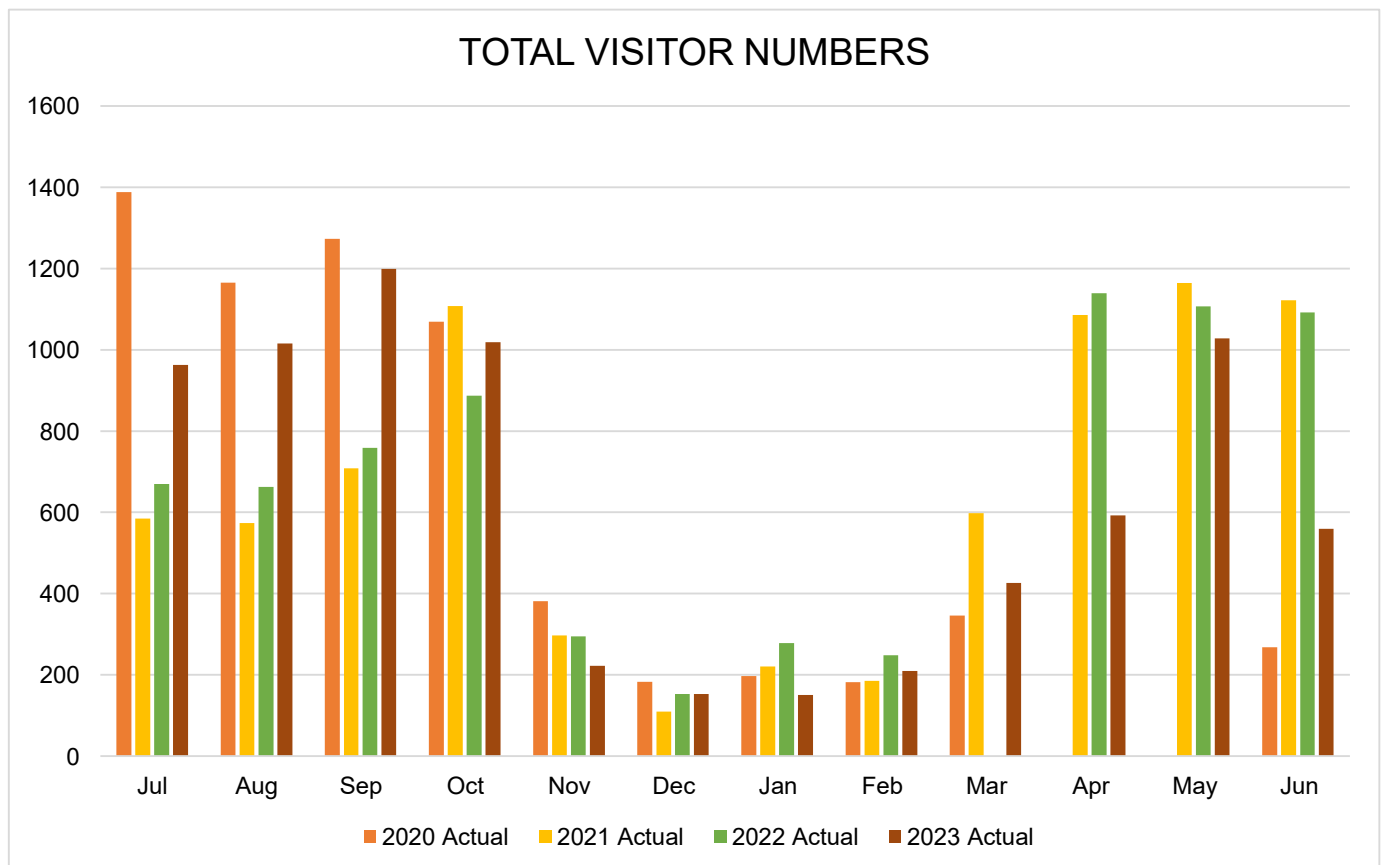


2. Statistics

In the 2022/2023 financial year, the Peterborough Visitor Centre welcomed **10,626** individuals. The highest percentage of visitors were from NSW (25.70%), followed by Victoria (22.27%) and South Australia (22.19%).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, number decreased dramatically. Until the borders completely opened, visitors from South Australia were making up majority of the visitors. Since this time, tourism in Peterborough and the Visitor Information Centre has made a full recovery.

Visitor numbers from July 2020 to June 2023 are displayed below.



3. Hours of operation

The Visitor Information Centre is open 7 days per week, from 9am-5pm in the high season (March until October) and 9am-4pm in the low season (November to February). These opening hours are in accordance with the South Australian Visitor Information Centre Accreditation requirements.

4. Staffing

Currently, the Visitor Information Centre is staffed with 3x Tourism officers and a Visitor Information Centre/ Steamtown Heritage Rail Centre Coordinator. The Tourism and Community Development Manager's office is also within the VIC, however is rarely involved in assistance of visitor enquiries or booking of tours.

The VIC/ SHRC Coordinator and Tourism Officers are casual employees, and the Tourism and Community Development Manager is full time.

The current roster is as follows (High season example):

Day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Coordinator	9am-5pm	9am-5pm	9am-5pm	9am-5pm	9am-5pm		
Tourism Officer 1	9am-4pm	9am-4pm	9am-4pm	9am-4pm	9am-4pm		
Tourism Officer 2						9am-5pm Alternate weekends	9am-5pm Alternate weekends
Tourism Officer 3						9am-5pm Alternate weekends	9am-5pm Alternate weekends

The above is a temporary situation, and will be adjusted to reflect a rotating roster for the Tourism Officers i.e. 4 days on, 2 days off, 3 days on etc.

The Tourism and Community Development Manager works Monday to Friday from 8:30am- 5:00pm.

4.1 Organisational structure



5. Roles and responsibilities of staff

5.1 Visitor Information Centre/ Steamtown Heritage Rail Centre Coordinator

The VIC/SHRC Coordinator is the face of visitor services in Peterborough, providing visitor information (including information about Steamtown Heritage Rail Centre) and other relevant services to the public. Along with the Tourism Officers, the Coordinator is responsible for facilitating a positive visitor experience, and encouraging visitors to stay longer, spend more, and become advocates for the Peterborough district.

Requirements of the role:

- Administration and Leadership
 - Actively provide guidance to the Tourism Officers, Tour Guides, Volunteers and Trainees, assisting with additional training when required
 - General administration duties, including the maintaining of appropriate records, data and files electronically and manually
 - Respond to enquiries using a variety of methods including electronically, mail, telephone or in person.
 - Undertake Visitor Information Centre/ Steamtown Heritage Rail Centre general site duties, including open and closing procedures, and security requirements.
 - Provide a range of administration support services for Governance, and the Tourism and Community Development Manager (TCDM)
 - Working alongside the TCDM, ensure the accuracy of merchandising at SHRC and the VIC.
 - Effectively communicate with all staff members
 - Reconcile all receipts/ monies on a daily basis
 - Monitor stocks of tourist literature and materials
 - Provide monthly/ bi-monthly reports and submissions as required
 - In alignment with the Tourism Strategy 2023-2026, assist in the implementation of identified strategies and projects.
 - Development of Standard Operating Procedures, ensuring the team is aware of any systematic changes
 - Be actively involved in meetings with the Peterborough Tourism Management Committee, and the Make Tracks to Peterborough group
 - Organise bus bookings with Tourism operators, and catering if required
 - Develop rosters for Tourism Officers and Tour Guides
 - Assist in ensuring information on websites are relevant and accurate.
 - Actively identify news and opportunities that are relevant to the Tourism industry in the Peterborough District.
 - Establish good relationships with local business owners for ease of communication and promotion
 - Ensure the timely and effective running of the SHRC Sound and Light show.

- Ensure you work within the Visitor Information Centre accreditation requirements
- Promote the 'Make Tracks to Peterborough' branding
- Customer Service
 - Be proactive in the encouragement of visitors to stay longer, and spend more in the Peterborough District.
 - Maintain a high standard of product knowledge pertaining to Steamtown heritage Rail Centre, and other tourism attractions in Peterborough
 - Provide accurate and unbiased information on the district's tourist attractions, accommodation and other services to visitors and Peterborough residents.
 - Ensure all requests, enquiries and complaints concerning tourism services and development matters are dealt with promptly and efficiently in accordance with Council's adopted *Customer Service Charter*.

5.2 Tourism Officers

Tourism Officers must be exceptional at customer service, and ensure a visitor is consistently having a positive interaction. The Tourism Officers provide relevant information regarding things to see and do in Peterborough, attractions, events, businesses, drives, history, and generally be positive ambassadors for the region.

The Tourism Officers encourage visitors to stay longer, spend more, and become advocates for the Peterborough district.

Requirements of the role:

- Assisting visitors face-to-face and answering phone enquiries, devising itineraries and purchases whilst providing high quality customer service skills, and accurate up-to-date information.
- Assisting the Coordinator, Manager and staff with tasks
- Assisting with volunteer management in their queries and tasks
- Basic I.T. Support
- Brand ambassador for Steamtown Heritage Rail Centre, and Make Tracks to Peterborough
- Distribution, ordering and re-stocking of brochures
- Creation of stock orders, and monitoring of stock levels
- Drafting responses for feedback websites i.e. Trip Advisor
- Data entry including surveys into database
- Filing front desk online bookings
- Liaison with local businesses and media
- Maintaining a clean Visitor Information Centre including the boardroom and facilities
- Maintaining up-to-date skills and knowledge in tourism, first aid, new and existing businesses, as well as the local area and surrounds

- Merchandising stock/ signage creation
- Receiving of stock, and barcoding accordingly
- Set-up and pack-down reception area and Diesel Shed at the beginning/ end of every day
- Amend and update Steamtown website, as required
- Perform stock-take as required
- Take bookings for the boardroom, and Sound & Light show
- Train staff in various systems/ tasks
- Performing adjustments to Vend (POS) system, as well as adding new products/editing/quick keys and pricing.

6. Accreditation requirements and benefits

6.1 Accreditation requirements

The Visitor Information Centre accreditation program raises the standards of information service. Visitor Centres that display the yellow on blue italicised 'i' sign have achieved certain quality standards in their service provision and operational systems. The yellow and blue 'i' has been trademarked on the provision that it represents these standards, hence distinguishing it from the existing blue and white 'i' sign.

The standards to be an accredited Visitor Information centre include:

- Friendly, knowledgeable and professionally trained staff
- Information on local road and transport options
- Information on attractions, events, retail outlets, restaurants, local services, accommodation and tours.
- Maps, directional and visitor safety information; and
- Services for visitors, such as on-site public toilets.

6.2 Accreditation benefits

There are many benefits of being an accredited Visitor Information Centre, including:

- Recognition as part of the National Network of Accredited Visitor Information Centres.
- Eligibility to use the registered trademark 'i' logo. The accreditation logo can be promoted locally, nationally, and internationally as a symbol of quality.
- Assurance to visitors/tourists that staff are well trained, knowledgeable, and unbiased in recommending and providing correct information.
- Operators have confidence in recommending visitors to Accredited VICs.
- Promotion of VIC locations on southaustralia.com.
- Inclusion on the Tourism Australia, SATC (South Australian Tourism Commission) and TiCSA (Tourism Industry Council South Australia) websites. VICs must be registered on ATDW (Australian Tourism Data Warehouse) to appear on southaustralia.com website.

- VICs as call to action on South Australian touring routes for information and bookings.
- Each Accredited Visitor Information Centre (VIC) operating in South Australia (SA) are automatically recognised as a member of the SAVICN (South Australian Visitor Information Centre Network). Benefits of this include:
 - SAVICN members are also members of the Tourism Industry Council of South Australia (TiCSA) as part of the SAVICN's 'Industry Leader' Membership
 - Complimentary 'Supporter of Tourism' membership of TiCSA.
 - TiCSA member rates for all TiCSA organised events.
 - All other TiCSA members' benefits allocated to 'Supporter of Tourism'.
 - SAVICN member rates for the annual VIC conference, collaborative purchasing, collaborative advertising and promotions, and benefits arising from projects.
 - Customised DataSpark Smartsheet online dashboard for recording and reporting of visitor statistics.
 - Entitlement to vote at the annual SAVICN Annual General Meeting.
 - Entitlement to nominate for a position on the SAVICN committee.
 - Entitlement to nominate to host an annual SAVICN conference.

6.3 Accreditation audits and fees

To become an accredited Visitor Information Centre is a tedious process, however very beneficial and rewarding. There is a 23 page document listing the requirements of Accredited Visitor Information Centres in South Australia, and at any point, VIC's are subjected to online and physical audits by the Tourism Industry Council of South Australia (TiCSA) to ensure compliance with both national and state requirements. Individual VIC's are also responsible for the cost of auditing.

Fees- each VIC will receive a single invoice, annually, that covers the TiCSA accreditation fee and SAVICN membership fee.

- Accreditation Auditing Fee- \$495 per year (22/23)- fee is determined by TiCSA and subject to change.
- SAVICN Membership Fee- \$250 per year (22/23)- fee is determined by SAVICN and is subject to change.

6.4 Positive outcomes for Accredited VICs

Finally, some very positive outcomes from Accreditation and SAVICN Membership:

- An economic driver for the region encouraging visitors to stay longer and increase spend
- Brand recognition
- Engagement with industry
- Employment and volunteering opportunities for locals
- Statistical data on the value and use of VICs
- Ability to collect data from and influence the most valuable clients to the region.

7. SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis

<u>Strengths</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Peterborough Visitor Guide and town map• Knowledgeable staff providing accurate information of Peterborough businesses, attractions and events.• History and heritage- historic building and museums• Entrance into Steamtown Heritage Rail Centre- able to utilise the VIC as a strong selling point.• Visitor Information Centre is a relatively new building. Welcoming and clean.• Souvenir sales (with 40% mark-up)• Supporting local businesses i.e. selling their products in the VIC	<u>Weaknesses</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of communication between businesses and the Visitor Information Centre• Signage into town is faded and unsightly• Lack of funding• Front entrance garden is unappealing• Displays in the Visitor Information Centre need upgrading
<u>Opportunities</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Targeted and co-operative marketing campaigns• Improve internet and social media presence• Greater town signage and signage directing visitors into the VIC• Continue to educate community and business people in Peterborough about importance of tourism• Marketing to school groups• Product development• Greater involvement with the South Australia Visitor Information Centre Network• Upgrading and create new displays in the VIC• Increase length of stay	<u>Threats</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loss of businesses in Peterborough, and community support• Loss of staff i.e. retiring, obtaining other roles.

8. Operations- 7 days per week

The Visitor Information Centre operates 7 days a week, offering the following:

- Organising and booking of tours, accommodation and experiences in the area
- Providing general information on drives, directions, and road closures in the region.
- Selling souvenirs, maps, and refreshments

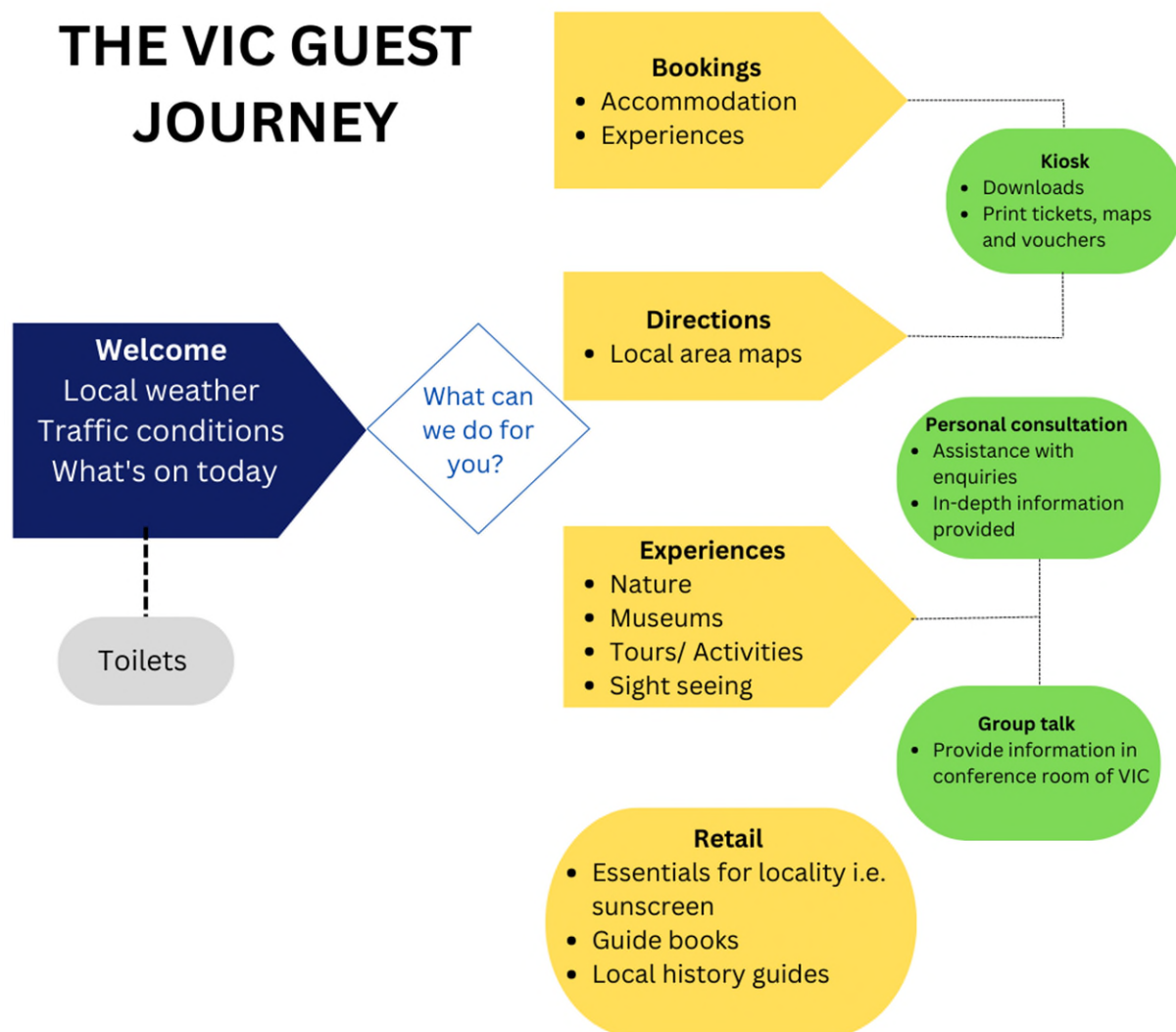
- Booking the VIC meeting room for organisations or groups, including organising catering (if required)
- Answering general enquiries via email or phone.

9. Quality service

Providing a high quality service and lasting interaction with our visitors is vital. In order to measure the quality service of a Visitor Information Centre, it must first be determined what visitors are seeking.

9.1 The VIC Guest Journey

The Visitor Information Centre Guest Journey is depicted below. *Note: This VIC guest journey has been amended slightly to reflect that of the visitors to the Peterborough VIC.*



9.2 Why do people utilise VICs?

Visitor Information Centre's play a variety of roles as an information provider, which is the fundamental reason visitors utilise them so readily.

The travel decisions visitors make are heavily influenced by the information available to them. The following depicts insights into visitor information needs:

- Visitors seek different topics and types of information at the different stages of their journey. Information needs to be filtered and not all provided at once.
- Visitors seek current, curated and detailed information. They want information presented from their perspective- we have to stand in our visitors' shoes.
- Traditional information sources (printed maps and face-to-face services) are highly sought after.
- Information needs to be available in different formats, tailored to individuals' preferred devices.
- Information needs to be consistent across the whole journey.

The Visitor Information Centre staff, at all times, must be providing credible information to visitors about the destination.

Other reasons visitors may come through an Information Centre (as shown in above graphic) are as follows:

- Generic enquiries i.e. weather and road conditions, current events, location/ utilisation of toilets
- Bookings- Steamtown Heritage Rail Centre tours/ Sound and Light show; Printing Works; Accommodation; Restaurant/pub bookings; Experiences; Museums.
- Directions- Providing information from the tare-off map, Peterborough Visitor Guide, and state map.
- Experiences- Once determining what the visitor would like to experience in the region, a more in-depth overview may be given. *This may also involve bookings.*
- Retail- Some retail options are available within the VIC i.e. souvenirs, tea/ coffee and snacks. However, direction to other essential items may need to be provided.

To ensure a quality service is being provided, accreditation audits are undertaken, and feedback surveys are encouraged to be completed by visitors.

9.3 Measuring quality of service

To measure VIC satisfaction specifically, two surveys are offered dependent on the time of year. The South Australian Visitor Information Centre survey is offered twice a year (February and August) and the Peterborough Visitor Survey, all year around.

- SA Accredited Visitor Information Centre survey questions:
 1. Visitor Centre location- town name
 2. Where are you visiting from?

3. How long are you staying in this town?
4. What are your reasons for visiting?
5. Where did you hear about this Visitor Information Centre?
6. What services did you use at this Visitor Centre?
7. How do you rate this Visitor Centre?- Customer Service
8. How do you rate this Visitor Centre?- Information display and range
9. How do you rate this Visitor Centre?- Range and quality of souvenirs
10. Do you usually use Accredited Visitor Information Centres as you travel?
11. From advice that you received at this Visitor Centre, do you feel that you will experience more, stay longer in region or spend more money than you had intended?
12. How do you use technology to source tourism information?
13. When planning your trip, what digital platform did you use to help you decide on where to go and what to do while in South Australia?
14. Your age demographic

This survey provides an integral insight into performance of the Peterborough VIC as a whole.

10. Souvenirs

There is a variety of souvenirs available for purchase at the Peterborough Visitor Information Centre, from mini trains puzzles, to stuffed toys, polo shirts, locally made olive oil, tea towels and everything in-between.

Locally-made products are sourced as much as possible, and promoted ahead of others.

All souvenirs are sold at a 40% mark up from the wholesale price, and generate the majority of the income from the VIC. In the 2022/2023 financial year, souvenirs generated \$59,916 of income.



11. Financials

The 2023/2024 Operational Income and Expenditure for the Visitor Information Centre has been provided below. This provides an outline on both the income the Visitor Information Centre generates, as well as approximate yearly expenditure.

Income	VIC Budget 2023/2024
Souvenirs	\$65,000.00
Refreshments	\$6,500.00
Other income (incl. Room Hire)	\$2,500.00
TOTAL Income:	\$74,000.00
Expenditure	
Advertising/ Marketing/ Visitor Guide	\$20,000.00
Contractors	\$1,500.00
Freight	\$400.00
Insurance	\$2,500
Materials	\$3,000
Stationery/ Printing	\$500.00
Souvenirs	\$39,000.00
Staff Training	\$250.00
Subscriptions	\$8,500.00
Telecommunications/ IT	\$3,500.00
Upgrade to displays	\$1,000.00
Utilities	\$9,600.00
Wages- Administration	\$154,460.00
TOTAL Expenses:	\$244, 210.00

12. Concluding summary

The Visitor Information Centre is an essential business of Council. It is the necessary outlet to ensure the visitor economy continues to increase in Peterborough and district Council area. The DCP must ensure it is maintained, and the accreditation is upheld.