

Strategic Tourism Branding, Communications & Marketing Plan

2025 – 2030

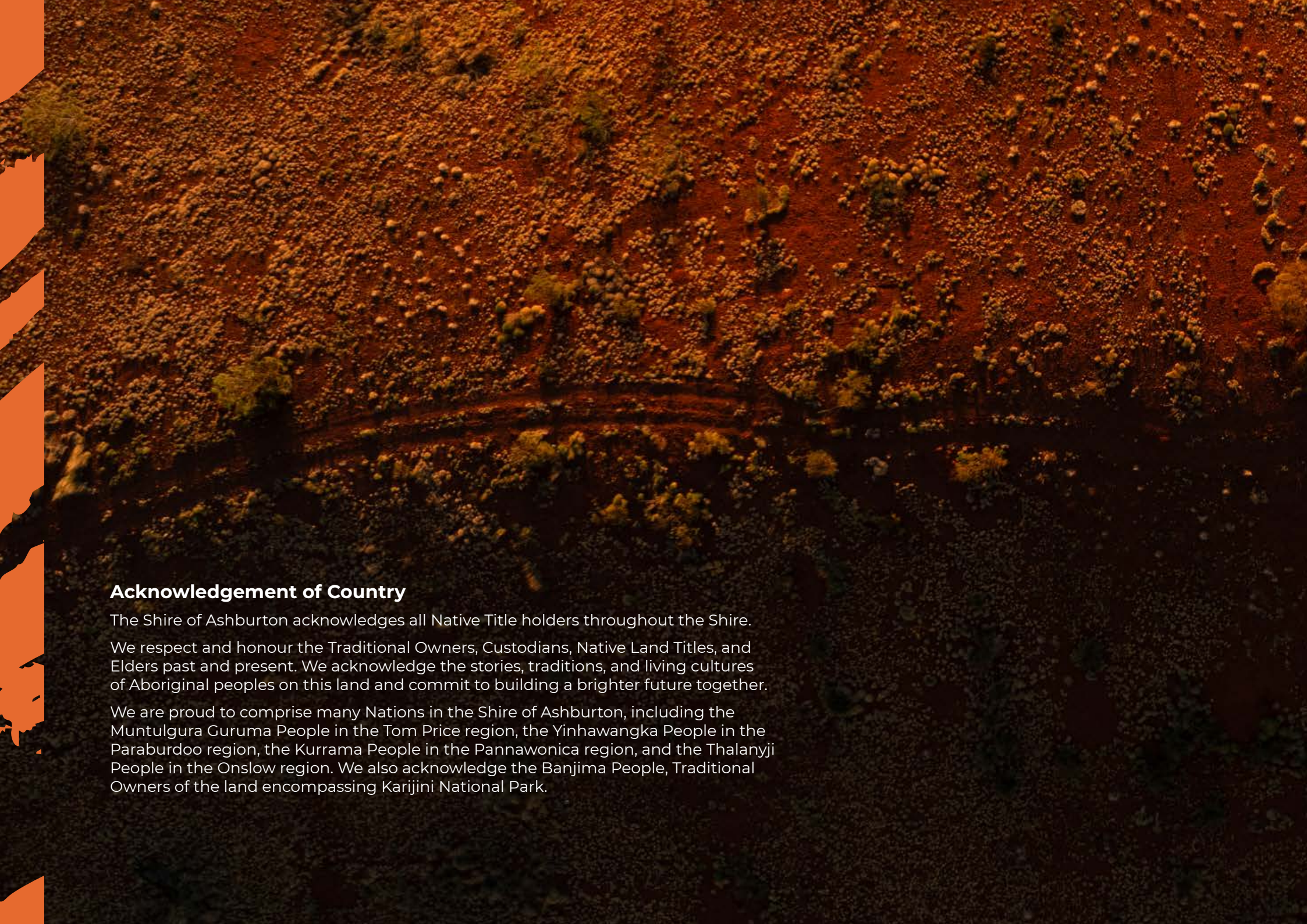




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Acknowledgement of Country

The Shire of Ashburton acknowledges all Native Title holders throughout the Shire.

We respect and honour the Traditional Owners, Custodians, Native Land Titles, and Elders past and present. We acknowledge the stories, traditions, and living cultures of Aboriginal peoples on this land and commit to building a brighter future together.

We are proud to comprise many Nations in the Shire of Ashburton, including the Muntulgura Guruma People in the Tom Price region, the Yinhawangka People in the Paraburdoo region, the Kurrama People in the Pannawonica region, and the Thalanyji People in the Onslow region. We also acknowledge the Banjima People, Traditional Owners of the land encompassing Karijini National Park.



Message from the Shire President



I am pleased to present the 2025–2030 Strategic Tourism Branding, Communications and Marketing Plan, an important step in strengthening Ashburton's identity and showcasing our region not only to current and future visitors to our region, but also in partnership with West Australian and Australian tourism organisations.

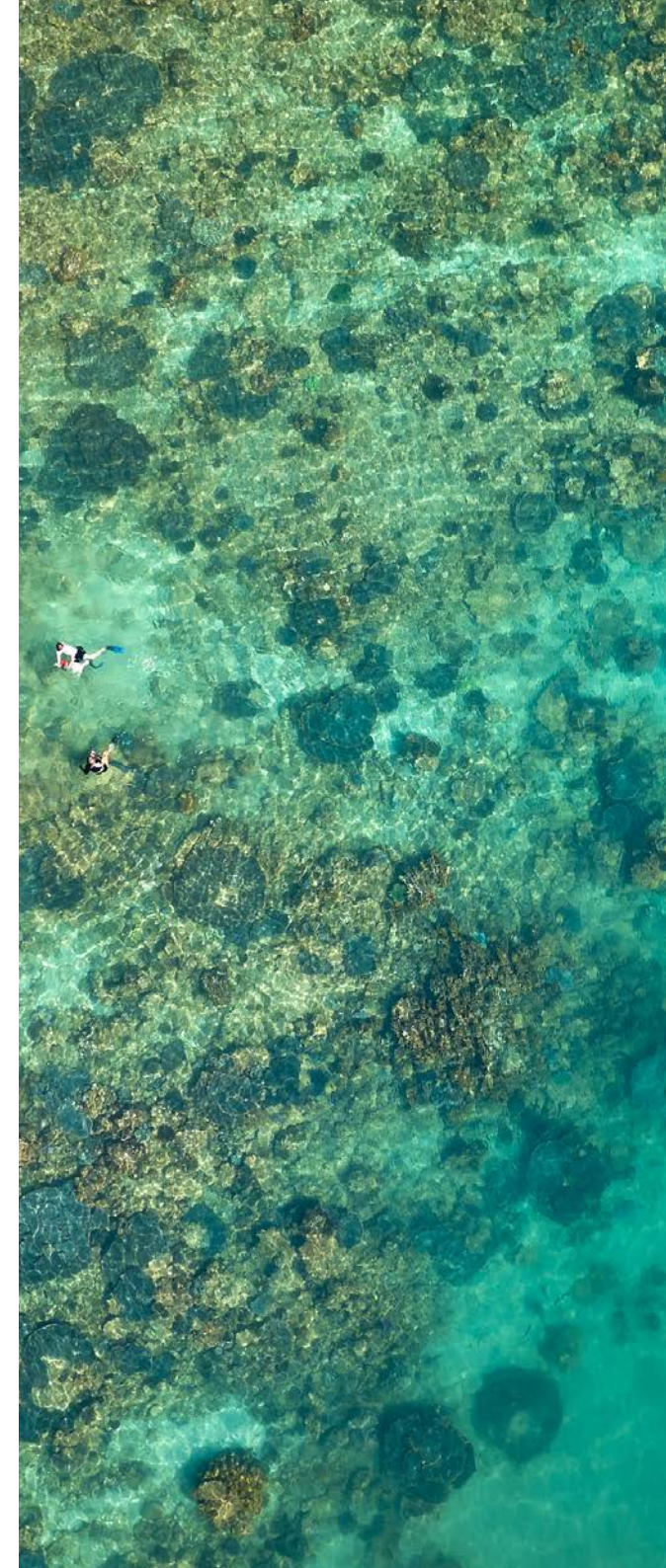
From the coastal beauty of the Mackerel Islands to the dramatic landscapes of Karijini and Millstream Chichester National Parks, and the sweeping Hamersley Range, our region offers a quintessentially iconic Reef-to-Range experience unique to Australia. Across Onslow, Paraburdoo, Tom Price and Pannawonica, we are proud to represent one of the most authentic, diverse, and remarkable parts of the Pilbara.

Aligned with our 2024–2028 Economic Development Strategy, this Plan focuses on growing culture and tourism to support thriving communities, long-term sustainability, and prosperity. It outlines a clear five-year approach to elevating the Visit Ashburton brand, responsibly promoting our natural assets, events and experiences, and positioning Ashburton as a must visit destination.

This Strategy also reinforces our dedication to open, transparent, and meaningful communication with our partners and communities. We understand that building trust and fostering participation is essential to achieving our long-term vision. Through this Plan, we aim to keep business and residents informed, involved and connected as we work together to shape the future of tourism in our region.

Thank you for your continued support as we build on what makes this region extraordinary and explore new opportunities for a sustainable future.

Audra Smith
President, Shire of Ashburton



Message from the CEO



The Shire of Ashburton Strategic Tourism Communications and Marketing Plan 2025 – 2030 is a strategic document linked to the Shire's Economic and Development Strategy 2024 – 2028. This strategy sets a clear plan to responsibly promote Ashburton as a must-see tourism destination of Western Australia, and to work towards a future offering diverse, sustainable, and liveable communities.

This Strategy directly links to Council's commitment to be a welcoming, sustainable, and socially active district. A unique place that offers a variety of opportunities to not only visitors, but to our community with an overarching vision to become a World-Class tourist destination.

Through collaborative partnerships, evidence-based decision making, and a strong focus on responsible destination promotion, this Strategy provides a roadmap for how we will elevate the Ashburton experience – celebrating our landscapes, our people, and our stories.

In this Strategy, we identify a pathway to raise awareness of our region, to inspire consideration of targeted and desirable visitors to our region, to create future ambassadors who also respect and appreciate the incredible place we get to call our own BIG backyard, returning with their friends and family for generations to come. Future ambassadors who are also Proudly Pilbara.

By working together with community, industry, and partners across Western Australia, we will shape a visitor experience that reflects who we are: welcoming, resilient, and deeply connected to our Country.

Together, objectives outlined in this Strategy aim to position the Shire of Ashburton as a leader in sustainable regional tourism, ensuring that growth is managed in a way that protects our natural assets, strengthens cultural connections, and enhances local prosperity.

Keith Woodward
Chief Executive Officer, Shire of Ashburton

Visit
Ashburton
reef to range

INDIAN OCEAN



DISCLAIMER: This map is indicative only. Actual locations and distances may vary.

Overview

The Shire of Ashburton is a Local Government Area located in the ancient Pilbara region of Western Australia (WA), around 1,400 kilometres north of Perth. As one of the largest local government authorities in the world by land area, it extends across 105,647km² and is almost half the size of the state of Victoria. Despite its size, it has a resident population of only 13,500, which equates to just 0.13 persons per km². SoA stretches from the Indian Ocean and reef systems of the Mackerel Islands off Onslow in the west, through to Tom Price and Karijini National Park in the east.

The land has been home to Aboriginal Australians for millennia. Sustained by bonds of kinship, language, culture and connection to the land, the local Aboriginal people have demonstrated autonomy

and innovation in adapting to the harsh environment. The region has more than 700 historic Aboriginal archaeological sites and over 10,000 rock engravings.

The original townsite of Onslow was established in the 1880s to support pastoral and mining industries. It was moved to its current location in 1925 due to cyclone damage and silting at the mouth of the Ashburton River.

The pastoral industry began in the late 1870s with Nanutarra Station. Early European settlers had to be resilient and resourceful, and this is still very much reflected in the spirit of the region. Tom Price was developed in the 1960s to support the growing resources sector.

Today, the main population centres are:

Tom Price - WA's highest town and the gateway to the spectacular Karijini National Park. Home to Jarndunmunha/ Mount Nameless, which offer a challenging 4WD or hiking adventure. The heart of iron ore mining in WA, mine tours are available.

Paraburdoo - Closest airport to Karijini National Park. Built in the 1960s as a mining town. Birthplace of 'Red Dog', a vagabond red heeler dog who travelled the region inspiring books and a movie. Planned MTB trails will provide an adventure focus.

Onslow - a small coastal town renowned for its beaches, recreational boating, fishing and as the departure point for the breath-taking Mackerel Islands and Ashburton River. Historical Old Onslow and the Goods Shed Museum provide a window into the past. Visitors can also experience the region's major industries through tours booked through Onslow Visitor Centre.

Pannawonica - A closed mining town where some visitation is allowed. Also home to the Robe River Rodeo, held annually in September and attracting visitors from far and wide.

—

The Shire also encompasses the Aboriginal communities of Bindi Bindi, Wakathuni, Bellary, Youngaleena, and Ngurawaana. In 2023, these communities had a combined resident population of 8,076 people.

Strategic Alignment

This strategic plan supports the delivery of several of the Shire of Ashburton's strategic directions.

A full analysis of the Shire's strategic approach and recommendations from the tourism consultants engaged to inform this strategy can be found in Appendix 1 (please refer to page 47 of this document).



1.

The Strategic Community Plan (SCP) (2022 – 2032) is the guiding document for the SoA identifying four broad themes of People, Place, Prosperity and Performance. Tourism falls into the Prosperity pillar (3.4 Sustainable commerce and tourism opportunities). In 2022 the Council and Shire identified the need to diversify the economy and saw tourism industry development and investment as a key driver for the region's ongoing sustainability. The specific actions in the SCP focus on building business capability and collaborating and partnering with the key state and regional tourism stakeholders to develop and market tourism in the Shire.

2.

The Corporate Business Plan (2023 – 2027) takes the sustainable commerce and tourism opportunities further and identifies specific collaborative actions, branding delivery and strategy development to support the development and delivery of tourism.

3.

The Economic Development Strategy (2024-2028) SoA is committed to supporting economic development outcomes for the region, including

- a. maximising its resource industry whilst expanding emerging sectors.
- b. creating liveable and vibrant communities.
- c. achieving economic prosperity.
- d. attracting investment for expansion and industry growth.
- e. becoming a place of choice to live, visit, and invest.

The Economic Development Strategy identifies several key strategies aimed at developing sustainable tourism across the region including

- infrastructure development.
- attracting private investment.
- influencing government policy.
- working with the region's major mining companies and providing visitor servicing.

4.

The SoA has also developed a portfolio of priority investment projects many of which will impact the delivery of memorable tourism experiences into the future. The priority projects also address the region's challenges and gaps in infrastructure required to facilitate a flourishing tourism sector.

Background

The Shire of Ashburton is the Local Government Area (LGA) that extends from Onslow and the Mackerel Islands in the west, through to Tom Price and Karijini National Park in the east. In 2022 the Shire recognised tourism development as an important strategy for the ongoing economic and social wellbeing of the region. They identified that focusing on tourism sustainability would not only help diversify the region's economy which is currently tied to resource and mining, but would also provide opportunity for industry diversification, to increase the standards of liveability and encourage investment into the region.

As part of the commitment and main objectives of the Economic Development Strategy 2024 - 2028, the Shire engaged a tourism specialist project team to develop this *Strategic Tourism Brand, Communications and Marketing Plan 2025-2030*.

The research, full plan and appendices provided by the consultants can be found as Appendix 1 to this document.

Purpose

The purpose of this five-year *Strategic Tourism Brand, Communications and Marketing Plan (the plan)* is to:

Identify the Shire of Ashburton's unique tourism experiences.

Identify the region's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT).

Determine the region's key target audiences.

Create a comprehensive plan that builds the region's tourism profile through effective brand recognition, experience development and promotion.

Objectives

This *Strategic Tourism Brand, Communications and marketing Plan* guides the Shire of Ashburton through 5 main Marketing objectives.

1. Raise Awareness.

2. Inspire Consideration.

3. Facilitate Conversion.

4. Encourage longer stays, higher spend and repeat visitation; and

5. Create future ambassadors.

Vision

The vision for tourism stated in the Shire's Economic Development Strategy 2024-2028 is for the Shire of Ashburton to become:

A World-Class Tourist Destination

This will be achieved by:

- International recognition for Karijini National Park as an adventure and trail tourism destination and growing recognition of Onslow as a gateway to world class reef and fishing tourism opportunities.
- Development of unique attractions, experiences and events.
- Leisure destination of choice for residents and FIFO workers in the Pilbara.

Main industries within the Shire of Ashburton

The predominant industry in the Pilbara is mining. Best known for its rich iron ore deposits, the region also has 'emerging resources' such as lithium and tantalite which underpin the movement to de-hydro carbonisation. It is also host to extensive offshore oil and gas fields and salt production.

The SoA plays a vital role in Australia and WA's economic wellbeing, contributing \$2.03 trillion or 1.9% to Australia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and \$37.5 billion or 40% to WA's Gross Regional Product. The Shire's contributions support 9.3% of the State's economy, \$41.38 billion Gross Regional Product (GRP). Ashburton Port is the 11th largest in Australia and currently handles commodities and condensate, liquid natural gas, project cargo, break bulk and general cargo.

Methodology and Research

To ensure an objective and thorough approach in development of this strategy, the Shire engaged a specialist project team who all work extensively within the tourism industry in their diverse fields.

The project team undertook site visits, conducted extensive stakeholder consultation and desktop and digital research to formulate a comprehensive strategy aimed at driving tourism and investment in the region.

The project team used this information to assess the current tourism environment for Ashburton through proven tourism industry analysis processes:

- SWOT
- PESTEL
- Global Trends
- Skift Mega Trends
- Tourism Visitor Analysis

This information and data is key to informing the Five-Step Brand Developmental Framework for the Shire of Ashburton.









Approach

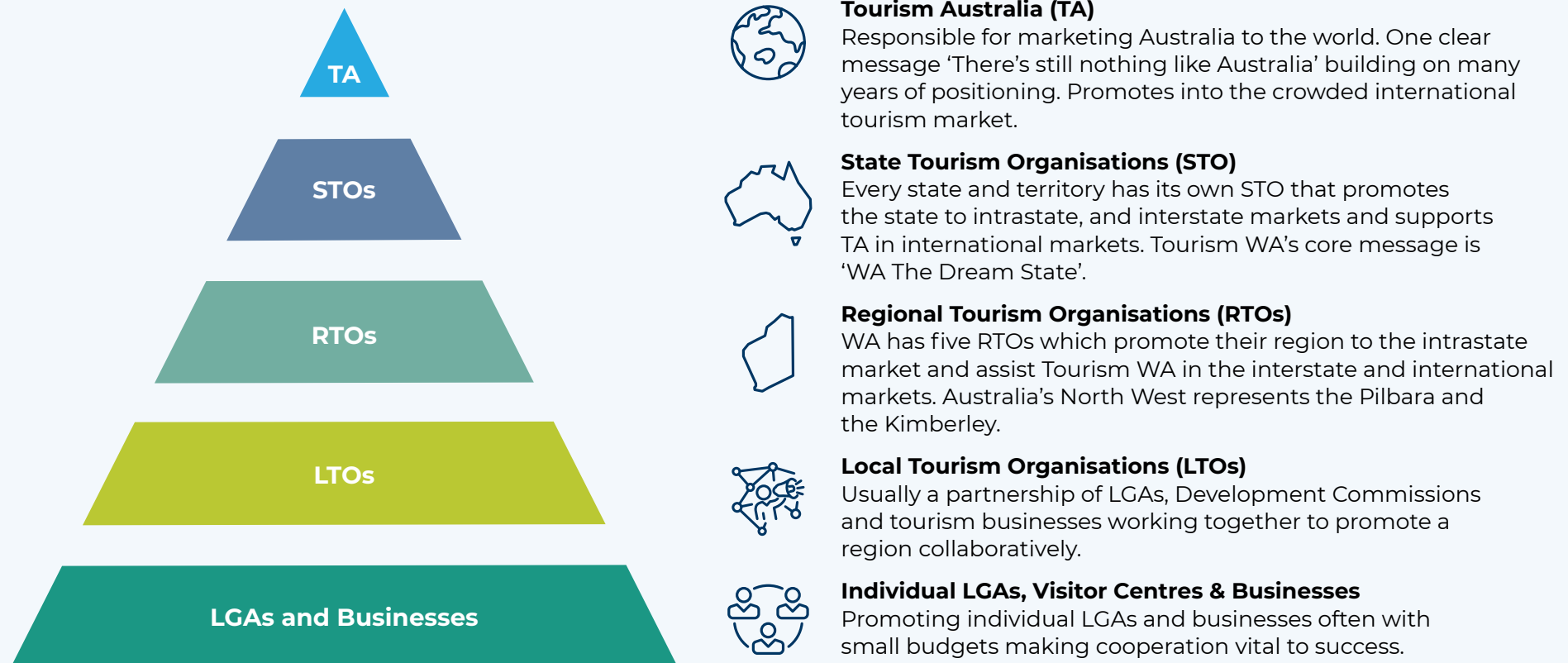
1. **Agree scope, milestones, timelines, outcomes and outputs** in consultation with the SoA Media and Economic Development teams.
2. **Desktop research** into the region's current tourism offering, marketing activities, brand positioning and strategic framework.
3. **Regional familiarisation**, including an eight-day immersion to understand first-hand the region's current tourism offering, logistical challenges and future opportunities.
4. **Consultation** remotely and in-person with operators, tourism partners and key stakeholders to understand the industry and its opportunities and challenges. In addition, workshops were held with key stakeholders and tourism operations in Onslow and Tom Price to gain an understanding of the region's tourism aspirations.
5. **Plan development** using the information gathered and applying the project team's combined knowledge and expertise in tourism development, marketing and branding to create a five-year Strategic Tourism Brand, Communications and Marketing Plan that will guide growth and promotion of the region's tourism sector. The Plan will help the SoA to plan future tourism promotional campaigns and activities and guide the development of the tourism sector across the region.

Understanding the Tourism Industry Landscape

The Shire of Ashburton works within a multi-layered tourism ecosystem.

Effective alignment with other tourism organisations who operate at a national, state and local level is critical for brand awareness and effective marketing campaigns, partnering together to promote content, packages and events.

Future marketing success requires partnerships and collaboration to leverage resources and increase the impact and reach of the messages into target markets.



Ashburton's 5 A's of Tourism

A destination's tourism capability is best assessed using the 5 A's of Tourism Model.

Each of the five A's must be present for a destination to succeed in the long-term. Reviewing the five A's helps identify a destination's tourism strengths and any gaps that need to be addressed in order to create a strong and sustainable tourism sector. Key challenges and opportunities, recommended actions and priority projects are summarised in attachment 1.



Access

- Good air access but can be expensive & focused on resources sector.
- Good main roads but competition with industrial traffic - safety concerns.
- Need for better wayfinding and signage for visitors.



Accommodation

- Good range of accommodation types but high competition with resources sector.
- Need more high-level accommodation to attract a higher yield market.
- More private sector investment in accommodation needed.



Attractions & Activities

- Two hero experiences - the reef (Mackerel Islands) and the range (Karijini NP).
- Need more adventure tourism attractions such as trails development.
- Need more events to encourage urgency in visitation.



Amenities

- The four main towns have good amenities linked to the resources sector.
- More food and beverage options are needed across the region.



Awareness

- There is very low awareness of Ashburton as a destination.
- Social media followings are still quite low.
- There is a need for more inspiring content to be developed to support marketing campaigns.

Current Branding



SoA currently uses several branding elements to promote the region, including:

- Shire of Ashburton logo with the '*Opportunity to Community*' tagline.
- Visit Ashburton logo with the '*Reef to Range*' tagline.
- Individual destination marketing, e.g. Karijini NP, Mackerel Island, Onslow.

Individual experience marketing, e.g. accommodation, iron-ore tours, hiking, fishing, station-stays.

With so many elements vying for attention, the consulting project team strongly recommend brand cut-through as easy visibility to the tourism and visitor market is being compromised.

Further development of the Brand and Brand Essence for Visit Ashburton is critical to create the cut-through required for the success of this strategy, discussed further in this document.

Current Tourism Market

Defining ideal visitors ensures that marketing efforts are aligned with the tourism experiences, products and services on offer within destination. These insights shape core marketing messages, keyword strategies and online advertising campaigns, as well as the visual look, feel, and tone of the brand's communications. Combined, it builds a marketing ecosystem infused with genuine connection with target audiences.

Visitors can be segmented in several ways. At the highest level they are categorised by where they come from, broadly intrastate, interstate and international.

For the whole of WA, the intrastate market is the largest and comes mainly from Perth. The market can then be further segmented according to travel group, for Ashburton the three main traveller types are:

- Family travellers.
- Couples.
- Solo adventurers.



They know the region well and like to explore and immerse themselves in the freedom this region offers however Ashburton currently attracts a low yield market share (e.g. retirees, backpackers).

The current Ashburton visitor market is self-drive, adventure seekers looking for activities and products that allow them to experience the region's unique natural places.

Key activities for the region are:

- Boating
- Fishing
- Camping and caravanning
- Star gazing,
- 4-wheel driving
- Hiking
- Canyoning and gorge exploration.

Tourism Season

The region is heavily impacted by seasonality with the main season being between June and September with one to two months of shoulder season either side. There is very low visitation between December and March due to high temperatures and wet season impacts.

Type of Visitors

The region has a very high proportion of business travellers compared to other parts of the state, with a larger proportion of male travellers. This has been attributed to the region's strong resource sector.

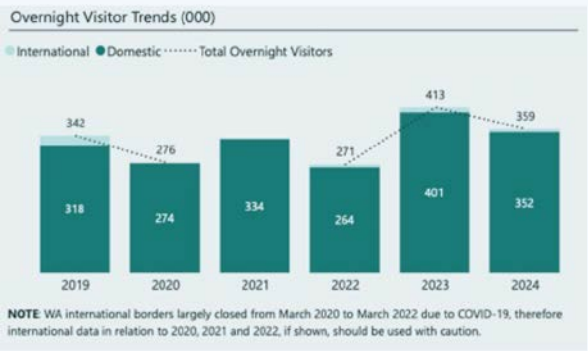
Visitation

The Shire of Ashburton's visitation figures to December 2024 in relation to Australia's North West, show that the region attracts 23% of ANW's overnight visitors, 19% of ANW's visitor nights and 14% of ANW's expenditure.

As with the broader ANW region, the domestic market travels predominantly for business purposes (81%), whereas the domestic holiday market accounts for only 17% of visitors.

The international market is overwhelmingly a holiday market.

Total Overnight Visitors (000)	Total Visitor Nights (000)	Total Spend (\$ Million)
359	2,381	\$253



	Average Trip Length	Average Trip Spend	Average Daily Spend
Intrastate	6.6 Days	\$707	\$108
International	9.6 Days	\$571	\$60
Total Domestic + International	6.6 Days	\$705	\$106

Age and Gender Profile

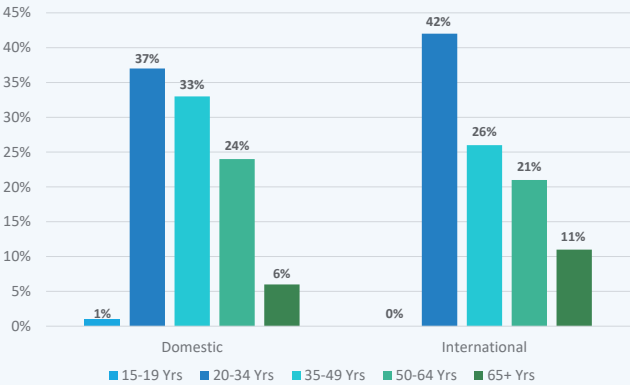
The age profile of domestic visitors is evenly spread with 20-34 years at 37%, 35-49 years at 33% and 50-64 years at 24%.

For the international market, the 20-34 year age group accounts for 42% of visitors. Considering their low level of spending (*low yield*), it is likely this group comprises a high proportion of backpackers.

Around 37% of the domestic market for the Shire of Ashburton is travelling alone; 8% are couples and 7% are visiting friends and relatives. 45% fall into the 'other' category, which is most likely linked to people travelling to the region for work.

For the international market, 55% are travelling alone and 30% travel in couples. Both markets have low family representation.

The domestic market for SoA is predominantly male, reflecting business and resources industry travellers. The international market is a more evenly gender balanced, with 47% female compared to 53% male.

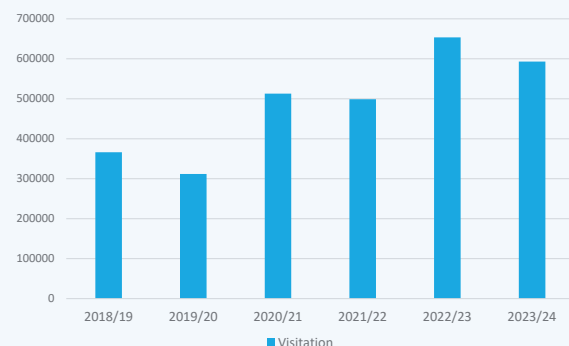


SOA Age Profile

Current Tourism Market – Visitation data

Karijini National Park

Karijini National Park welcomed in 2022/23 and 2023/24 an average of 600,000 visitors almost doubling the visitation numbers of pre-Covid (approximately 380,000 visitors in 2018/19). It is anticipated that sealing of roads in the National Park will further increase visitation and demand.



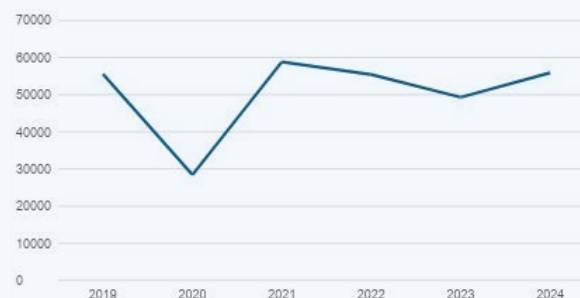
Karijini NP Visitation (source: DBCA)

Tom Price Visitor and Information Centre

Tom Price Visitor Centre data suggests that there was visitor growth at the beginning of the tourism season (May, June and July), but it has declined in the shoulder months.

Total Visitor Numbers for 2024 Season
55,884

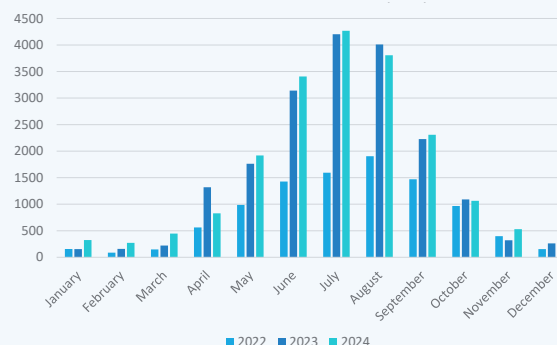
13% increase from previous 2023 season
(49,302)



Tom Price Visitor Centre Annual Season Visitation Data

Onslow Ocean View Caravan Park

Onslow's Ocean View Caravan Park occupancy data reinforces the region's seasonality with the peak being between April and September. Onslow had a spike in visitation in 2022.

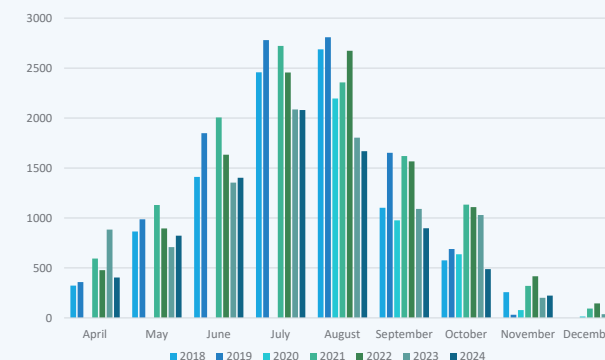


Ocean View Caravan Park % Occupancy

In 2022, the average annual occupancy was 35%, with the average occupancy during peak season increasing to almost 70%. This is compared to 2024, where the average annual occupancy was 29%, with the average occupancy during peak season increasing to 56% (indicating that there is currently under-utilised capacity).

Onslow Visitor Centre

Onslow Visitor Centre data also confirms that visitor numbers during the past two years have declined (approximately 30%), reinforcing that the area has capacity to accommodate more visitors.

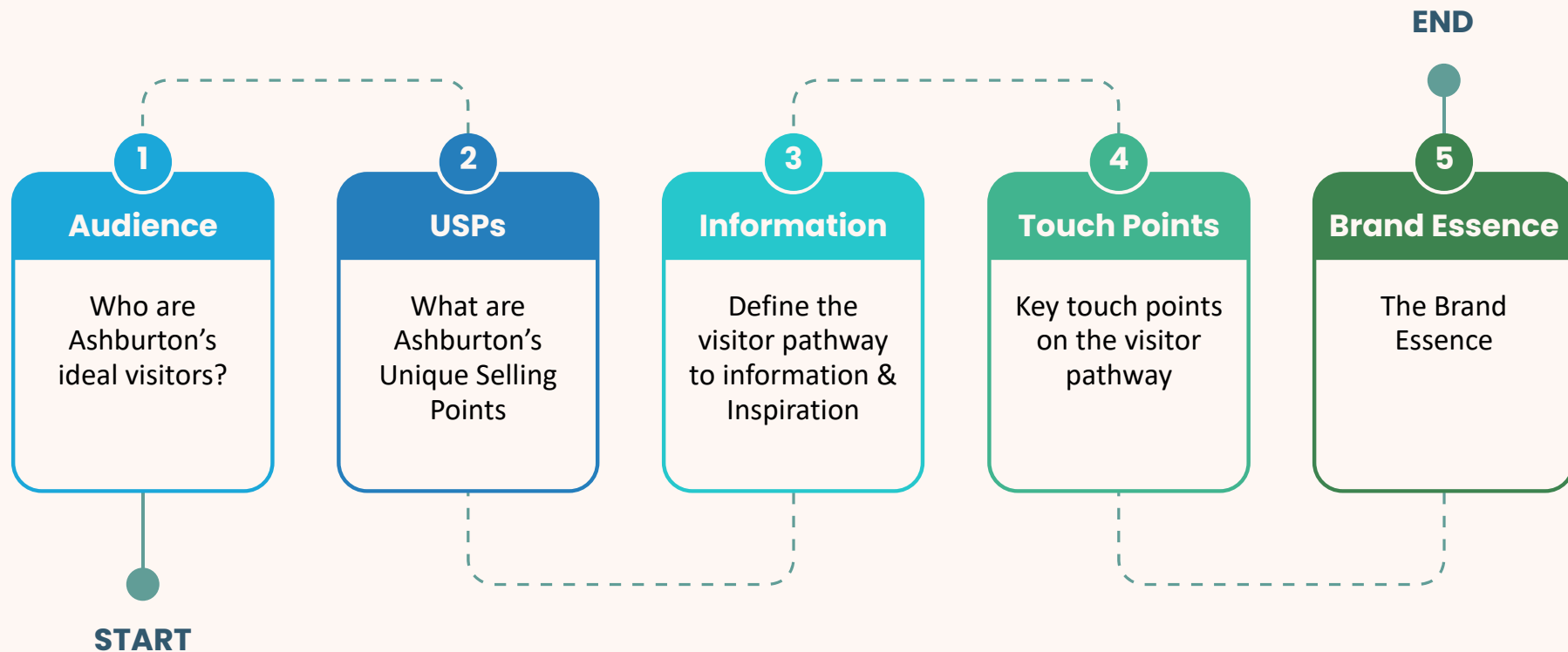


Onslow Visitor Centre Visits (source: SoA)

(Data and information has been supplied from findings from detailed analysis of Tourism WA, Australia's North West (ANW), data supplied by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) and Shire of Ashburton and additional tourism industry data).

Brand Development Framework

To develop the marketing and communications plan for the Shire of Ashburton, the project team have used a comprehensive **5-Step Brand Developmental Framework**, outlined below.



1. Audience

Who are Ashburton's ideal visitors?

Helix Personas are a powerful segmentation tool developed by leading market research company Roy Morgan Live. This system of segmentation is used by Tourism Australia, Tourism WA and the RTOs to guide marketing efforts. Helix Personas combines sophisticated psychographic, attitudinal and behavioural data that classify the Australian population into 54 unique personas.

The region's current market has a high proportion of the 500 Doing Fine category. Fun First 30s and 40s (503) and Active Social (507) are the main categories and are centred around the camping, caravan and adventure markets.

They know the region well and like to explore and immerse themselves in the freedom this region offers. *Identified as a low yield market.*

The identified below future target markets focus on a higher yield and tread lightly and respectfully tourism market segments. Given the challenges Ashburton is faced with, as highlighted in the 5 As of Tourism, the identified future market segments are more suitable as to meet future demand and the objectives of this strategy.

Key future visitors for Ashburton

Rustic Heartlanders (Helix Persona 401)

These Australians are the core of 'middle Australia' with values centred around the home and building financial security. Many of them are successful, but they hold traditional values about saving and generally seek value for money. They are often willing to pay a little more when quality is consistent, or the brand is established.

Most are married mid-life families in homes they own. Like their name suggests, one in five are employed in the agricultural sector. Most live rurally in active agricultural districts across WA and Australia. Those who have retired may live in Perth's affluent suburbs for mid-life householders.

For relaxation, the Rustic Heartlanders:

- Prefer holidaying in nature (78%)
- Prefer holidays away from crowds (76%)
- Enjoy saltwater fishing, clay target shooting and hunting.
- Attend sporting events with friends.
- Travel within Australia (82% in the last 12 months)





Home Improvers (Helix Persona 403)

Life for Home Improvers revolves around their home, which they proudly view as a symbol of their status and personal achievements. They are enthusiastic DIY enthusiasts, continually undertaking renovations, maintenance and upgrade projects which makes them significant spenders who regularly visit garden centres and hardware stores to find inspiration.

Typically, Australian-born, Home Improvers often work in construction, manufacturing or community services and reside in both metropolitan and regional areas. Financially committed to their homes, either through outright ownership or mortgages, they usually embrace traditional values and exhibit cautiousness towards new trends and ideas.

For relaxation, the Home Improvers:

- Prefer to holiday within Australia (81%)
- Prefer holidays away from crowds (73%)
- Prefer holidaying amongst nature (75%)
- Enjoy hiking and bushwalking
- Enjoy freshwater fishing



Self-made Lifestylers (Helix Persona 106)

Confident, competent and productive visible success stories, Self-made Lifestylers seek recognition for their personal achievement and the value of their hard work. Family life is important, with high expectations for their children and family. They work for financial reward and job stimulation, but at the same time, they maintain traditional values about home, work and society. This Persona consists of a mix of household types including mid-life households, mid-life families and young parents. They tend to live in separate houses, are financially stable, and are also big spenders. Between work and family life, they're super busy but love socialising and having a glass of wine or a premium beer with dinner or over a special meal on a weekend getaway. Self-made Lifestylers enjoy travel and you'll likely find them planning their next holiday – be it in Australia or overseas.

For relaxation, the Self-made Lifestylers like to:

- Attend live events and may even travel to attend these events.
- Love to travel overseas, domestically and on weekends away
- At home they unwind with board games, good books and cooking.



Healthy, Wealthy & Wise (Helix Persona 202)

These individuals embody Australia's active outdoor lifestyle, frequently engaging in sports and maintaining careful eating habits. Typically well-educated with high incomes, they thrive in fast-paced urban environments appreciating vibrant cultural scenes, dining and café culture. Passionate about social issues, especially human rights and charitable causes, they are ambitious and career driven.

Around 30% were born overseas, primarily from Asia and Europe, and many are young singles, mid-life households or young couples and parents residing predominantly in Sydney apartments and metropolitan areas. Driven by optimism and a pursuit of excitement, they treat their homes mostly as spaces for rest and occasional takeaway meals, heavily relying on technology for entertainment, news and social connections.

For relaxation, the Healthy, Wealthy and Wise like to:

- Travel internationally for leisure (35%)
- Travel within Australia for leisure (43%)
- Organise holidays for family and friends (37%)
- Enjoy gym and weight training
- Enjoy hiking and bushwalking
- Enjoy jogging

2. Unique Selling Points

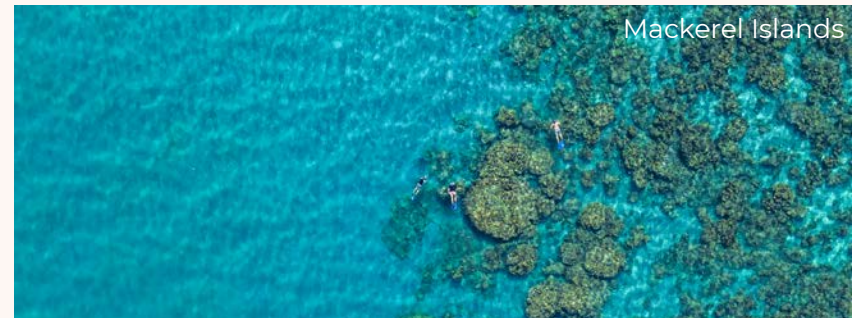
What are Ashburton's Unique Selling Points?

Regional workshops were held in Onslow and Tom Price and community feedback was sought on a range of issues and ideas. Attendees were asked to identify hero experiences for Onslow and Tom Price.

It is unsurprising that

1. Karijini National Park and adventure activities were identified for Tom Price (Range) and
2. Mackerel Islands and other aquatic pursuits were identified for Onslow (Reef).

These destinations form the backbone of the current SoA tourism offering and together are promoted as 'Reef to Range' Hero experiences.





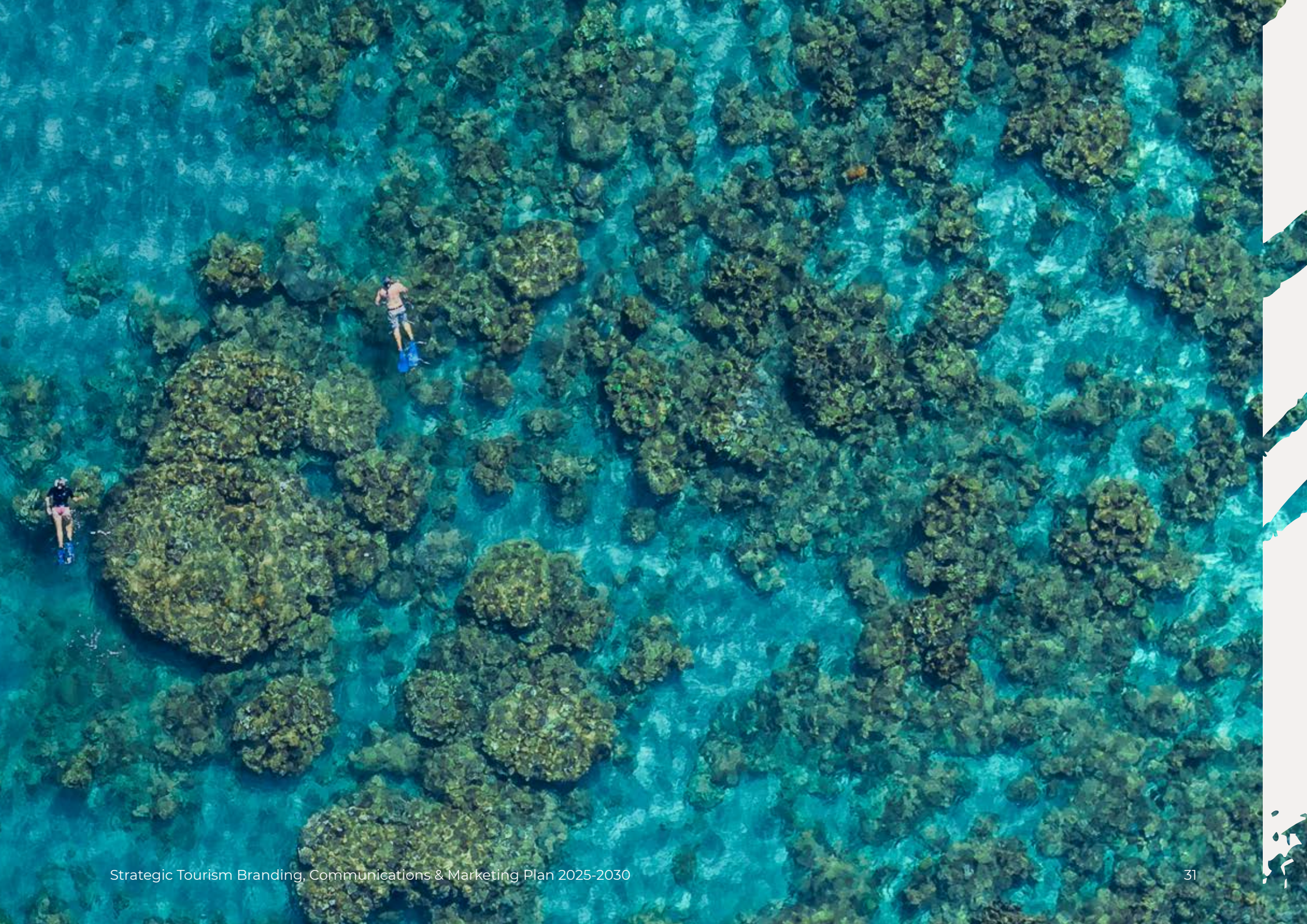
A photograph of a rugged landscape in Karijini National Park. In the foreground, there are green grassy slopes and some small trees. In the background, a massive, dark, layered rock wall rises steeply, showing distinct horizontal geological strata. The overall tone is dark and dramatic.

Karijini National Park

Western Australia's second largest national park that is over 2.5 billion years old and sits central to four Pilbara Local Government Authorities. It is seen as the crowning tourism jewel of the Pilbara and is Ashburton's key hero tourism asset and the main attraction for Tom Price.

Mackerel Islands

Made up of ten islands and atolls, the islands off Onslow are known by locals, regular visitors and fishing enthusiasts as the Mackerel Islands due to the abundance and prevalence of mackerel fish species, particularly Spanish mackerel. The annual and coveted Mack10 fishing competition pays tribute to this and is a coastal hero tourism asset and the main attraction for Onslow.



3. Information

Define the visitor pathway to Information and Inspiration

The visitor pathway describes the journey of ideal visitors when planning a holiday, from the initial dreaming and research through to booking their trip. It maps how ideal visitors move through each of the stages as follows:



Defining this journey in the context of an in-depth brand channel and content audit helps to identify:

- Which marketing channels work best for which visitors
- What messages resonate most effectively, and
- How to smoothly guide visitors from initial curiosity through to making enquiries or bookings whilst ensuring their experience remains positive from start to finish.

The tourism content marketing funnel emphasises:

- Strong inspiration and information in early phases (Dreaming, Planning).
- Moderate effort on conversion-drivers in middle phases (Booking, Experiencing).
- Light, effective strategies for visitor-generated promotion post-travel (Sharing).

NOTE: There are currently very few 'commissionable' businesses in Ashburton, this will become an important goal for the future development of tourism in the region as to not only raise the profile of the region, but also to enable the attraction of low volume, high value visitors.

An assessment of Ashburton's current tourism channels (Website, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube) was conducted to evaluate their technical performance, content effectiveness and opportunities for improvement.

Website visitashburton.au

- Enhance SEO via targeted blogs (e.g., "Top 5 Sunset Views")
- Clearer calls-to-action (CTA) for newsletter sign-ups and enquiries
- Refine brand voice (authentic, practical, warm, inviting)
- Improve social media integration

Facebook (@visitashburton)

- Increase live engagement, boost high-performing posts.
- Encourage and reward user-generated content (UGC)
- Segment audience clearly (families, couples, solo adventurers) with dedicated content streams.

Instagram (@visitashburton)

- Highlight operators, behind-the-scenes content, amplify UGC
- Expand to search-friendly topics.
- Strategic use of regional hashtags (#RoadTripWA)
- Organise Stories highlights for destination USPs
- Segment audience and tailor messages.

YouTube (@visitashburton)

- Add informational videos (How-to series, local guides)
- Optimise descriptions (timestamps, keywords, transcripts)
- Interactive end screens with clear CTAs
- Enhance reach with detailed captions (accessibility)
- Clearly segment content for families, couples, solo adventurers.

Cross-channel marketing

- Ensure consistency in brand voice so that it is practical, warm, and inviting.
- Prioritise content optimisation (SEO, hashtags, captions) to enhance discoverability.
- Integrate live engagement strategies consistently across all channels.
- Segment audiences explicitly to improve content relevance and engagement effectiveness for ideal visitors.

Note: The Australian government, including the Western Australian public sector, banned **TikTok** from government owned devices in April 2023. This decision was based on advice from federal intelligence and security agencies, citing concerns about the app's ties to the Chinese government and the potential risks to national security and data privacy. For this reason, TikTok has not been chosen as a social media channel.

4. Touch Points

Key Touch Points on the Visitor Pathway

Understanding these key interactions allows the more engaging visitor content that genuinely connects with, and speaks to, the ideal visitors. By continually improving these touch points create a smoother, more efficient pathway for travellers planning their holiday, ultimately increasing the volume of visitors; their satisfaction in-destination; and encouraging repeat travel by turning visitors into passionate advocates for the reef to range offering.

Cross-channel marketing:

- Boosts brand reach with geo-targeted social and search advertising.
- Incentivises User Generated Content and implement live community engagement.
- Promotes audience segment-specific itineraries that are linked across all channels.

Touch points are all the places and moments where potential visitors interact with Ashburton, whether it be website, social media channels, advertising or direct communications with visitor centres.



5. Brand Essence

What is Brand Essence?

The brand essence is the heart and soul of the Visit Ashburton brand, defining the core feeling or idea that visitors connect to when they think of the destination. The brand essence provides an emotional anchor, capturing in a few simple words exactly what Ashburton stands for.

More than just a tagline, the brand essence is the intangible spirit or personality that shapes all interactions. It acts as an emotional anchor, seamlessly guiding messaging, visuals and visitor interactions across all Visit Ashburton marketing efforts. It determines not only how the tourism offering is communicated, but how visitors feel during their stay.

Defining a clear brand essence ensures all parts of the Visit Ashburton brand identity consistently express the same emotional tone, building better connections with every visitor.

Combined with the Helix Persona data, the brand essence also defines the brand voice, tone and visual look and feel.

5.1 Brand voice and tone

The brand voice and tone for Visit Ashburton will consistently reflect:

Warmth and authenticity: communications need a friendly, conversational manner that feels sincere, approachable, and relatable.

Inspirational and inviting: optimistic, motivational language that encourages visitors and stakeholders to engage enthusiastically.

Clear and practical: straightforward messaging that is useful and easy to understand, helping to foster confidence when planning a visit or investment.

Friendly and engaging: reflect local hospitality by actively inviting dialogue, sharing stories, and encouraging interaction.

5.2 Brand look and feel

Expansive visuals: Highlight vast landscapes and natural grandeur with images emphasising open spaces, wide horizons, towering gorges, vibrant reefs and big skies. Ensure generous white space in layouts to enhance feelings of openness and freedom.

Warm, earthy colour palette: Utilise colours inspired by Ashburton's natural environment, including deep reds, ochres, sunset golds, ocean blues, and soft greens that evoke warmth, authenticity and tranquillity.

Authentic, human-centric imagery: Showcase genuine experiences featuring real visitors and locals actively participating in adventures, community life and cultural activities. Include diverse visitor groups: families, couples, solo adventurers and locals, to convey inclusivity and genuine warmth.

Clean and approachable design: Employ uncluttered layouts, clear typography, gentle curves and straightforward designs that suggest relaxation, ease and accessibility. Keep visuals inviting rather than overwhelming.

Dynamic storytelling: Use emotionally compelling imagery and video content that tells engaging, relatable and immersive stories. Highlight sensory experiences – what visitors will see, hear, taste, and feel – to create anticipation and excitement.

5.3 Brand essence alignment

The brand essence of **'BIG'** encapsulates the Ashburton's identity by celebrating its vast landscapes, adventurous spirit and limitless opportunities.

Combining it with an appropriate verb (such as 'dream' BIG, 'live' BIG, 'explore' BIG), expresses a warm, authentic invitation for visitors and stakeholders to immerse themselves in genuinely memorable experiences, from breathtaking natural attractions to thriving economic possibilities.

Supported by a friendly, practical and inspirational voice, alongside expansive visuals, warm colours, authentic imagery and dynamic storytelling, **'BIG'** seamlessly connects emotional resonance with clear, approachable design, positioning Ashburton as a place where life's most meaningful adventures unfold and is unashamedly *"Proudly Pilbara"*.

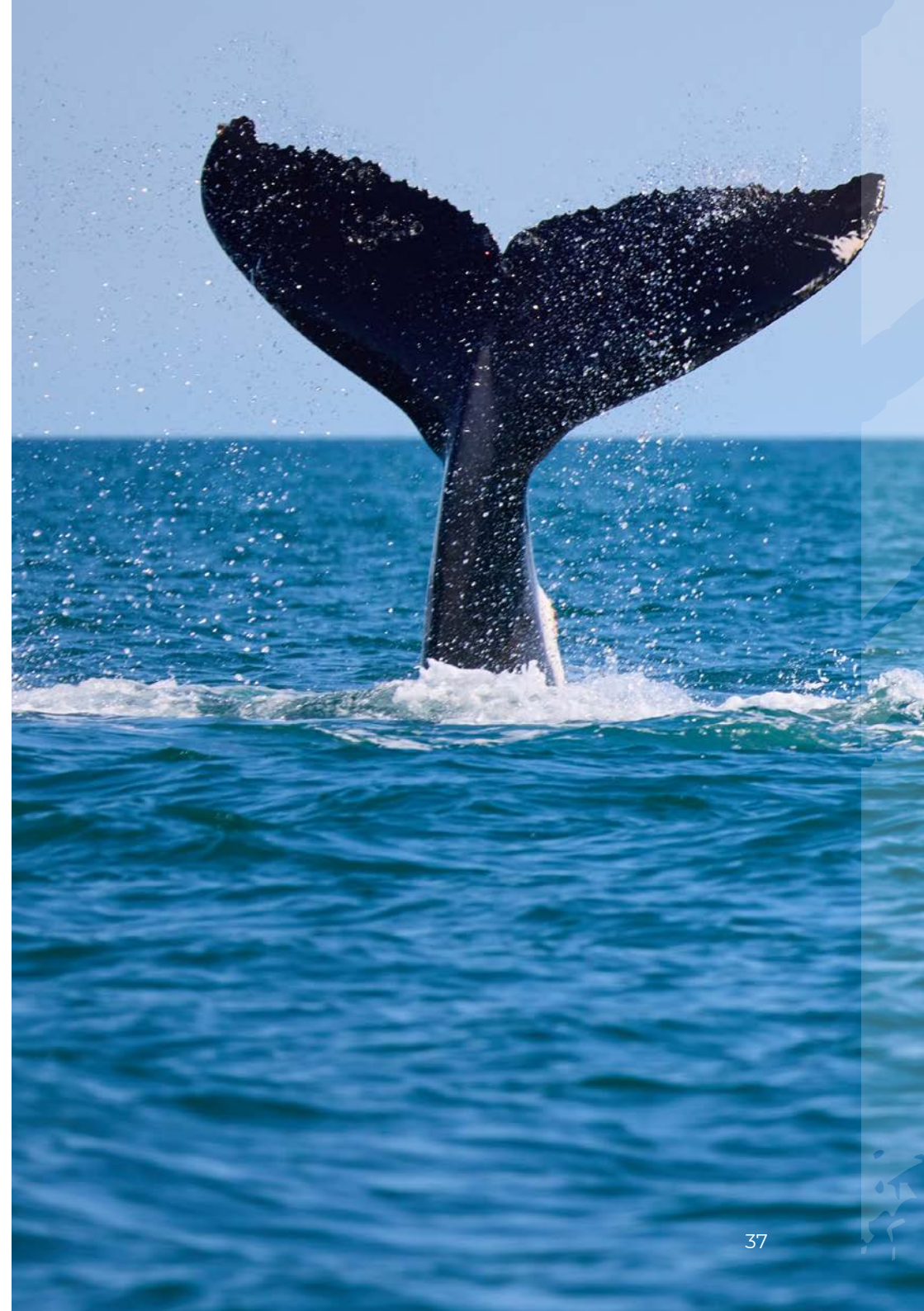
For example:



It is important to emphasise that introducing a brand essence does not replace but rather supports the 'Reef to Range' brand by amplifying the core strengths of the region including its expansive landscapes, adventure opportunities and economic potential.

A well-defined essence strengthens the 'Reef to Range' brand by deepening the emotional connection visitors feel when they think of the destination. It shapes the personality of the Shire of Ashburton by guiding messaging, visuals and visitor interactions across all marketing touchpoints.

It is succinct yet versatile and can function seamlessly across tourism and economic promotion. Its simplicity allows it to be paired with any number of emotive verbs for use within a campaign, e.g., dream, explore, conquer, live, build etc. It can easily be applied across various mediums such as print, billboard, web and social media through consistent wording and imagery that reinforce the Reef to Range experience.



External Stakeholder Brand Alignment

BIG and its synergy with Tourism WA and Australia's North West (ANW) marketing 'BIG' compliments the positioning, wording, imagery and ethos of broader marketing campaigns to international and interstate markets and development of this new brand essence has been done in consideration of marketing campaigns already established by Tourism WA and ANW to promote the region.

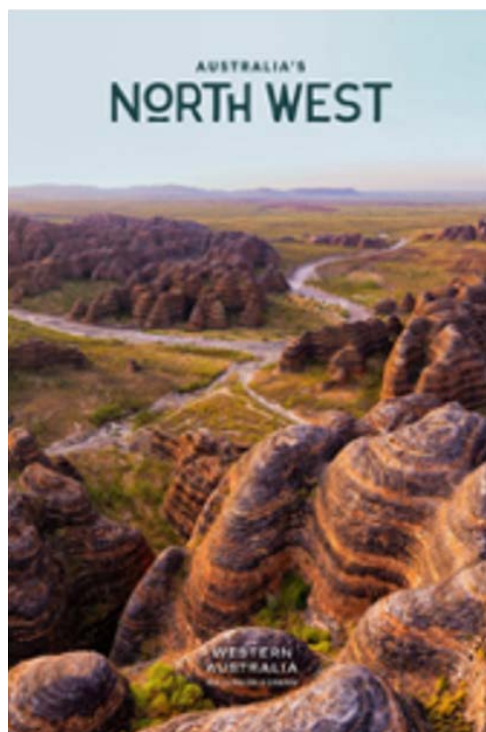
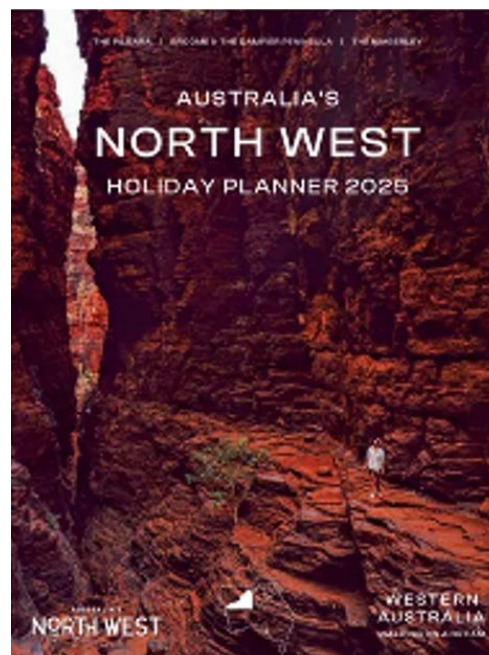
Clear synergies exist which will help to significantly leverage Visit Ashburton's marketing spend and investment.

Tourism WA's 'Walking on a Dream' campaign is designed to raise awareness both internationally and nationally of WA's iconic destinations and experiences. Their marketing reinforces the size and diversity of WA with its natural wonders, otherworldly phenomena, majestic landscapes and big skies. A new global 'Drive the Dream' campaign specifically promotes road trip adventures and one-of-a-kind experiences.

Ashburton can also reinforce through local campaigns that promote drive routes between key hero attractions.

In its role as an Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO), ANW promotes the region as one of the world's last true wilderness areas. Key messaging used in their marketing aligns with the proposed 'BIG' brand essence, with wording such as the 'epic' Pilbara, the 'massive' mining industry and the 'mighty' gorges of the region.

Imagery used in their campaigns also reinforces 'BIG' with people surrounded by vast landscapes.



Objectives and measures

SUPPLY – Density, Diversity and Uniqueness

Objective	Rationale	Measures of success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the density of tourism products and experiences • Improve off-peak and shoulder season visitation • Increase the supply of accommodation experiences across the region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly seasonal nature of the region's tourism. • Low density of tourism products and experiences in the main population centres leading to additional pressure on the fragile natural resources. • Strong competition for accommodation and labour resources across the region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of visitors in shoulder and low season. • Increased overnight visitation in shoulder and low season. • Increased visitor spend in shoulder and low season. • Increase in number of bookable tourism products and experiences. • Increase in tourism infrastructure across region by Shire of Ashburton. • Increase in tourism infrastructure across region by industry. • Positive economic contribution from tourism by spend, income generation and number of visitors. • Increase in usage of boating precinct. • Increase in bookable accommodation.

DEMAND – Targeting Marketing Solutions

Objective	Rationale	Measures of success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build market awareness. • Create a targeted approach to tourism marketing. • Build promotional partnerships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The region is known for resources and not tourism. • There is low awareness of Ashburton as a destination. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantity of content. • Tourism Council WA State Tourism Awards. • Inclusion of Karijini, Cheela Plains and Mackerel Islands in Dream Collective for Tourism WA. • Website visits/engagement/bookings, social media followers/engagement, newsletter subscribers, open rate. • Increase in content earned and shared in third-party digital and print channels such as Tourism WA consumer newsletters, ANW, 7 West Media, Perth is OK, So Perth, Scoop-Localista, Western 4W Driver, HEMA, Exploroz, Trails WA and relevant YouTube channels. • Increase in bookable product distributed and marketed through online travel agents. • Increase in bookable product marketed and sold through Visitor Centres.

CAPACITY – *Building partnership and Collaboration*

Objective	Rationale	Measures of success
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build strong partnerships and networks across the tourism industry from local businesses through to Tourism WA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promoting in isolation is expensive and ineffective, building partnerships is imperative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase in volume of partnership activities.• Increase in number of collaborative campaigns.• Increase in the number of collaborations with key stakeholders that improve visitor experience (e.g., airlines, car rental companies and destinations).

CAPABILITY – *Market Ready Product*

Objective	Rationale	Measures of success
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build operator capacity and regional brand alignment.• Build packaged product.• Work with market ready businesses to promote the region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is a lack of market ready bookable product across the region.• There is an opportunity to work with the products that are market ready to raise the profile of the region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a capacity building program with local and emerging operators.• Increased bookable product.• Increased collaborative marketing activity within SoA and with local (LGO), regional (ANW) and state (TWA) tourism organisations.• Increased spend per visitor night.• Increased bookable packages.

Visit Ashburton Tourism Brand, Marketing and Communications Plan

Marketing activities and strategies

The following table outlines the activities within the five-year strategy for each. An indicative budget is also provided across the five years.

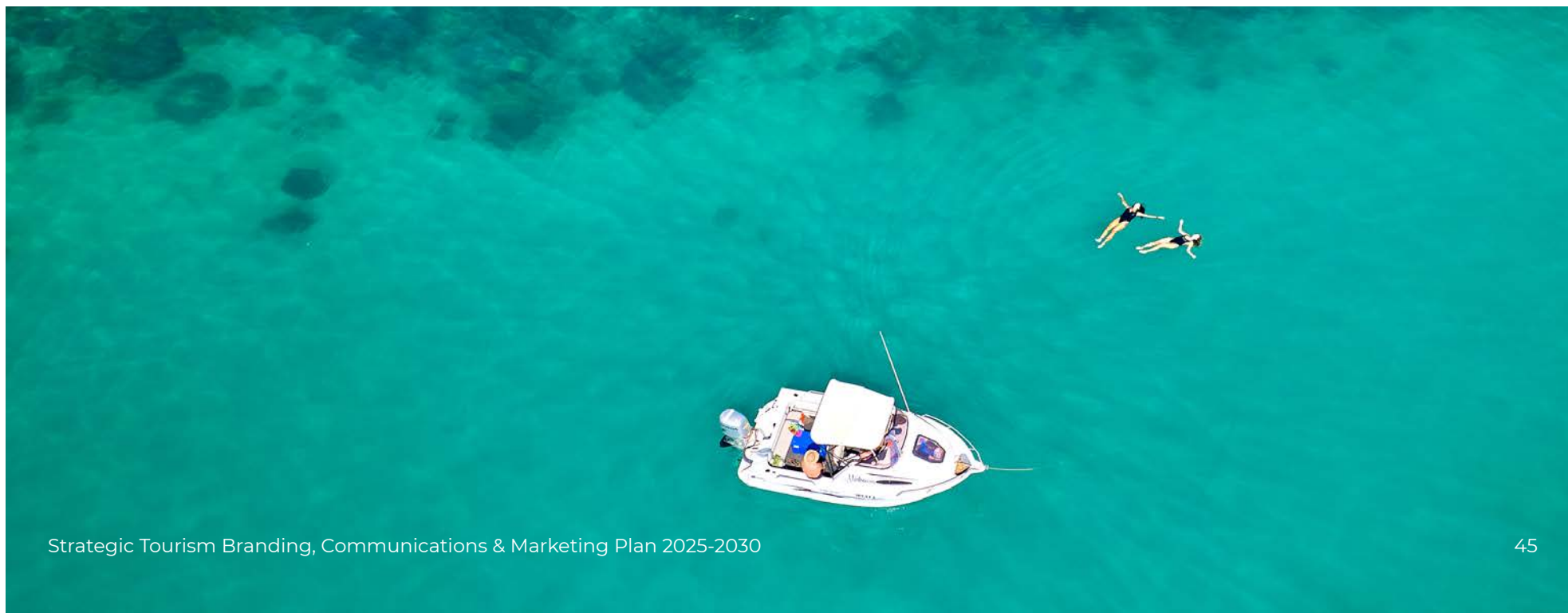
A range of measures have been identified in Appendix 7 that can be employed to track progress and effectiveness over the life of the plan. It is recommended that benchmarks be taken at the beginning of project delivery. An annual marketing plan should be developed based on events, infrastructure projects being delivered and broader environmental factors. This allows the team to be agile in its tactics and activities, meeting market conditions. A sample marketing calendar can be found at Appendix 8.

Activity	Strategy
CONSUMER	
Branding Development: Visit Ashburton, Reef to Range and BIG	<p>The overarching identify of tourism in the region is Visit Ashburton which is the website and social media name. Despite this 'Ashburton' does not have strong recognition in the markets but Karijini and potentially the Mackerel Islands are better known. Linking these destinations to Ashburton will assist in lifting the profile of the region and potentially increase recognition and visitation for the region's main towns.</p> <p>The region's brand is Reef to Range will remain as the overarching brand statement and its brand essence, BIG will be developed. Work will need to be undertaken to build the brand essence of 'BIG' into the delivery of all marketing activity. In year one brand assets will need to be designed and alignment will be required across all platforms and channels. After year one this will be a monitoring role making sure the brand and essence are aligned across all activity.</p>

Activity	Strategy
Website	<p>SoA already has a Visit Ashburton website. Work in year one and two will focus on undertaking a review of the website concentrating on SEO, Keywords and tags to ensure searchability is optimised. Following this all content will need to be aligned with the brand and brand essence.</p> <p>Additional functionality will be explored for bookability, and access and appropriate technology added. In years four and five the website will be reviewed for functionality and industry standards and a new website will be planned and developed in time for launch in years five.</p>
Social media	<p>SoA already has Visit Ashburton social accounts, but they have relatively small followings. Key goals for this five-year program will be to increase the follows and likes, reach and engagement through brand alignment and targeted campaigns. The social channels will also be used to engage users and gather user generated content (UGC). Regular campaigns will be undertaken throughout the year and posts will be boosted to gain traction. The focus for social media activity will be Facebook and Instagram. Competitions will be included in this strategy to grow followers, direct traffic to the website and grow the consumer database.</p> <p>Note: TikTok has not been chosen as an appropriate social media platform due to the banning of the platform for Government use. See the note on p46 above.</p>
Content development (images, film, written content for various mediums)	<p>While some work has been undertaken to develop content for use in marketing there are still gaps. Working with regional and state tourism partners, the team will undertake annual content development activities to ensure there is a bank of high quality content that can be used and shared to amplify the region's messages.</p>
Annual print publication/ distribution (Visit Ashburton destination guide)	<p>Print media is still popular with the tourism market so a regional destination guide will continue to be developed and distributed throughout the state through Visitor Centres and other locations such as Perth Airport terminals.. This will be aligned with the regional brand and brand essence and be distributed across the state in visitor centres and through partners at trade shows.</p>
Print publication advertising other paid and partnerships (e.g. RTO, TCWA etc)	<p>Partnerships with state and regional tourism partners are imperative to ensure that SoA gets cut through into its chosen markets. Being included in the regional holiday planner and being part of WA's tourism networks such as Tourism Council WA helps the region to change perceptions and become recognised as a tourism destination. This allows access to RTO interstate and overseas missions and Tourism Awards.</p>

Activity	Strategy
Digital publications, TV advertising/promotion, radio	In year one, digital publications relating to the region's drive trails and itineraries will be created. Into the future, an exploration of radio, TV and YouTube partnerships will be explored to expand reach and impact. This will include working with digital media organisations such as Perth is OK and So Perth which have strong cut through in the Perth market.
PR, influencers, famils, media kit	Creating a strong and flexible media kit will guide our activity in this space. The growth in importance of influencers could be an effective strategy for the region and work will be carried out to identify the best fit for our region and market aspirations. Partnering with Tourism WA and ANW to bring industry and media familiarisations to the region is an important aspect of this strategy.
Direct e-marketing	The creation of a regular and engaging newsletter will help promote events and seasonal activities and guide visitors to places that can take additional visitation during the season. Another key function of this strategy is to grow the consumer database.
Paid activities & campaigns, signage advertising	A modest budget has been allocated for paid marketing which will include campaigns across relevant channels and Out of Home (OoH) promotions in our target markets. This could include the use of billboards in Yagan Square, on the freeway or bus stops in targeted suburbs.
Trade marketing	A significant part of the marketing environment is the tourism trade. These businesses bring visitors to WA from interstate and overseas and seek high quality, iconic experiences they can promote to their clients. These businesses are accessed through trade shows and trade missions and are undertaken in partnership with Tourism WA and ANW. The budget is allocated to providing collateral and supporting the region's market and export ready businesses.
Consumer trade shows	The Perth 4WD Adventure Show and the Perth Caravan and Camping Show are the two main consumer shows that will be targeted and continuity of attendance at these events is important. They are a strong fit with our core target markets and provide the ability to partner with businesses and organisations across the region to create a bigger voice.

Activity	Strategy
INDUSTRY	
Stakeholder relationship building	Funding has been allocated to enable partnership activities with state and regional tourism partners and the regional tourism industry. Building strong regional relationships will be imperative to ensure strong cut through into the chosen core markets. Part of the funding will be used to develop a partnership guide to help the region's tourism industry to understand how they can leverage state, regional and local organisations to grow tourism across SoA.
Industry networking	The region's tourism industry is relatively small and scattered given the region's geographical challenges. Creating a network across the region will help the industry to grow and will provide support for individual businesses that may feel isolated.
Industry news (media releases etc)	Ensuring the region's industry and stakeholders are informed is important and a regular newsletter will help to achieve this.







Appendix 1: Shire of Ashburton Strategic Tourism , Branding,
Communications and Marketing Plan Working Document.
Email soa@ashburton.wa.gov.au for a copy.



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