

Visit **Sunshine Coast**  
Queensland *Naturally refreshing*

# 2019/2020 HIGHlights



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**2019-2020** was definitely a year of two halves. After finishing 2019 as Queensland's fastest growing tourism region, the pandemic completely disrupted the region and its tourism industry in the first half of 2020.

In the pre-Covid-19 world, the Sunshine Coast tourism region enjoyed unprecedented success in terms of growing visitor numbers and increasing visitor expenditure, despite the local and national impact of bushfires. In fact, when compared with other competing tourism destinations such as the Gold Coast, Tropical North Qld and North Coast NSW, over the period March 2019 to March 2020, the Sunshine Coast was number one in terms of: growth in international visitors, growth in domestic visitor nights, growth in total visitor nights and top generator of intrastate visitation.

While the result is a great endorsement of the effort put in by the whole industry, the impact Covid-19 has had on our region's tourism businesses has been deep and distressing for tourism operators and the wider community across the region. Visit Sunshine Coast (VSC) responded quickly and has focused its work on supporting tourism businesses during the crisis through to recovery.

VSC engaged in a high level of communication to keep members informed about guidelines and what it meant for their business to operate

safely, as well as providing information on funding programs that were available from Federal, State and Local government.

Even with the restrictions and closed borders, VSC took an agile and innovative approach to marketing, delivering campaigns to best position the Sunshine Coast for visitors who could travel to the region and to ensure the region remained top of mind for potential future visits by interstate travellers.

As restrictions began to ease through May and June, our region began to see a re-emergence of visitation to the Sunshine Coast, in particular from the drive market. This provided a glimmer of hope and some confidence for our tourism businesses as they slowly returned to operation.

However, while the Sunshine Coast performed strongly in the Queensland market, the closure of interstate and international borders had a serious impact on the region's tourism sector, with business events, weddings, mid-week and long-stay business severely disrupted.

It is also important to acknowledge that in a highly competitive market, to generate future growth, as well as extract more value from the visitor economy, the region requires enhancement of existing product and additional investment in new product and tourist-related infrastructure.

**Looking forward, the Sunshine Coast is in an ideal position to provide real experiences that deliver on the needs and expectations of re-emerging local, national and international travellers.**

Extensive research highlights travellers' desires for fresh air, wide open spaces, fresh produce and nature-based experiences – something the Sunshine Coast has put at the forefront of its promotions over the past five years.

The events of 2020 will continue to shape the way we all do business and we have admired the resilience, determination and innovation of our members to regroup, get back to business and meet new customer expectations.

We know many tourism operators and our wider industry will continue to face challenges as we collectively continue to navigate on our course to full recovery.

The team at VSC is passionate about the unique, authentic experiences of the Sunshine Coast and committed to working together for our tourism industry.

**Team Visit Sunshine Coast**



# Leading the way

📍 Kondlilla National Park

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# About us

📍 Glass House Mountains



## Objective and Purpose

- The goal of VSC is to grow the economic value of tourism within the region to \$3.9Bn by 2022 to benefit both the industry and community.
- Key role is marketing and promotion, industry and product development.
- VSC supports investment in and promotion of existing and new tourism products.
- VSC targets domestic and international travel business working closely with Tourism & Events Queensland (TEQ) and Tourism Australia.



## Destination and Brand

- VSC equally emphasises the Sunshine Coast's hinterland, coastal, and cultural strengths including food-related tourism, health/wellness, adventure tourism and distinctive incentive tour programs.
- VSC works closely with regional councils to support events, arts and food-related tourism.
- During 2019/2020, work commenced on new Sunshine Coast branding to emphasise further the region's rich natural attributes and its authentic attractions.
- A Destination Tourism Plan (DTP) for the region will provide direction for the Sunshine Coast visitor economy from 2020 to 2025.



## Competitive Advantages

It is not one single (or unique) product strength; but rather a collection of characteristics that make the Sunshine Coast a highly desirable destination. These include:

- Accessibility and connectivity – ease of access from key source domestic markets.
- Tourism hubs – multiple locations that have strong clusters of accommodation, hospitality services and tourism product.
- Product rich – the number and quality of tourism product and experiences on offer.
- Nature-based assets – high-quality and attractive nature-based assets.
- Tourism services – a large resident workforce supports industry in providing tourism/hospitality services that cater to visitor needs.



## Operations

- In August 2019, VSC moved to a smaller, centrally located base in Maroochydore on the Sunshine Coast with modern facilities.
- Dedicated business areas include Marketing, Industry Development, Business Events, Membership, Trade Engagement, PR, Finance and Operations.
- VSC operates three visitor centres across the region and the organisation is increasingly developing online tools to support touring options around the region.
- The Sunshine Coast actively targets the meetings, conferences, incentives and events sectors, operating as Business Events Sunshine Coast (BESC).

# Funding & Partnerships



## Funding and Representation

- VSC is a not-for-profit, membership-based organisation that receives funding from Sunshine Coast Council (SCC), TEQ and members.
- VSC is a Regional Tourism Organisation and includes three council regions - Sunshine Coast, Noosa and Gympie.
- VSC represents more than 600 members comprising accommodation, attractions, tour operators, restaurants, transport providers and tourism support services.
- VSC is guided by a board of directors with specialist skills under an established governance structure.



## Partnerships and Collaboration

- VSC partners and provides funding and marketing support to each of the SCC area's sub-regions including the Hinterland, Nambour, Caloundra, Kawana, Mooloolaba, Maroochydore, Coolool and Eumundi.
- VSC works collaboratively and transparently with Tourism Noosa (TN) and Destination Gympie Region (DGR).
- Sunshine Coast Airport (SCA) is a key piece of tourism infrastructure and VSC works strategically and collaboratively with the airport team.

# Driving visitation



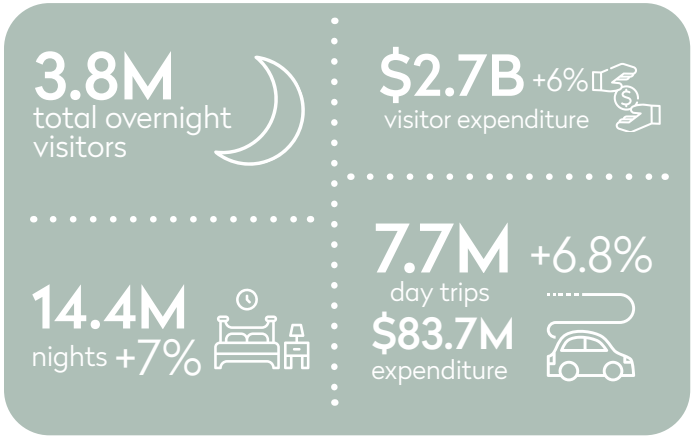
📍 Rainbow Beach

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# Visitor snapshot

## National Visitor Statistics

Visiting friends & relatives	1.4 million	+5.2%
Holiday	2.1 million	-2.6%
Business	303,000	-16.4%
Average length of stay	3.8 nights	+3 nights
Spend per visitor	\$705	+7%
Spend per night	\$187	-1%




## Intrastate Visitors

Intrastate	2.7 million	-6.3%
Holiday	1.4 million	-8.5%
Visiting friends & relatives	1.1 million	+3.3%

## Interstate Visitors

Interstate	1.1 million	+15.7%
Holiday	645,000	+13.4%
Visiting friends & relatives	327,000	+11.6% 

## Intrastate top source markets

Brisbane	1.7 million	-12%
Gold Coast	277,000	+19.8% 
Within Sunshine Coast region	241,000	+7.8%

## Interstate top source markets

Sydney	263,000	+3.9%
Regional NSW	263,000	+37.6%
Total NSW	526,000	+18.4%
Melbourne	264,000	+11.6% 
Regional Victoria	152,000	+28.6% 
Total Victoria	415,000	+17.3% 

Source: Tourism Research Australia.  = RECORD

The figures are for the year ended March 2020. As such, full impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on aviation, cruise, events and overall visitation are not yet evident in the results.



## Regional Comparison

Year Ending March 2020

							% Proportion of Travel Purpose			% Share of Total Visitors
Total Visitors	Visitors	Year % Chg	Nights	Year % Chg	Length of stay	Nights change	Holiday %	VFR %	Business %	
Brisbane	7,942,000	4.2%	22,921,000	4.0%	2.9	0.0	28%	41%	24%	32%
Gold Coast	3,923,000	-2.0%	15,005,000	-4.9%	3.8	-0.1	52%	33%	12%	16%
TNQ	2,183,000	8.1%	11,068,000	3.0%	5.1	-0.3	54%	23%	20%	9%
<b>Sunshine Coast</b>	<b>3,819,000</b>	<b>-0.9%</b>	<b>14,375,000</b>	<b>7.0%</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>15%</b>
SGBR	2,258,000	1.8%	8,625,000	3.3%	3.8	0.1	33%	30%	31%	9%
SQC	2,126,000	3.0%	5,477,000	-8.4%	2.6	-0.2	30%	39%	24%	9%
Townsville	1,226,000	-14.1%	4,494,000	-7.9%	3.7	0.2	32%	30%	27%	5%
Outback*	1,057,000	4.1%	5,809,000	19.8%	5.5	n/p	29%	15%	53%	4%
Whitsundays*	624,000	8.9%	2,686,000	4.5%	4.3	n/p	60%	20%	19%	3%
Fraser Coast*	744,000	7.5%	3,108,000	7.9%	4.2	n/p	49%	35%	14%	3%
Mackay*	1,099,000	8.3%	4,269,000	9.4%	3.9	n/p	21%	18%	55%	4%
<b>Total Queensland</b>	<b>24,809,000</b>	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>98,577,000</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>100%</b>

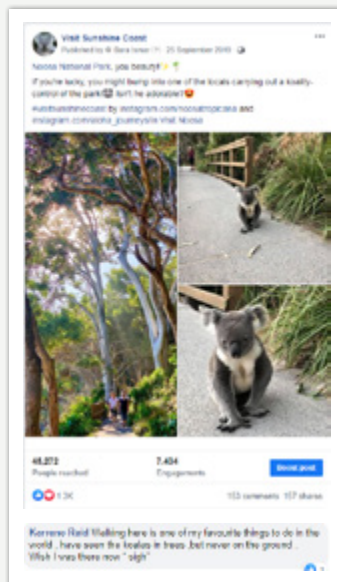
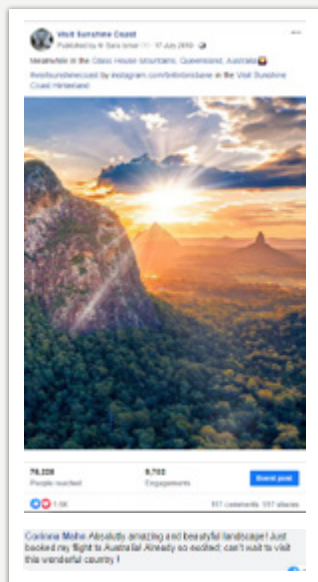
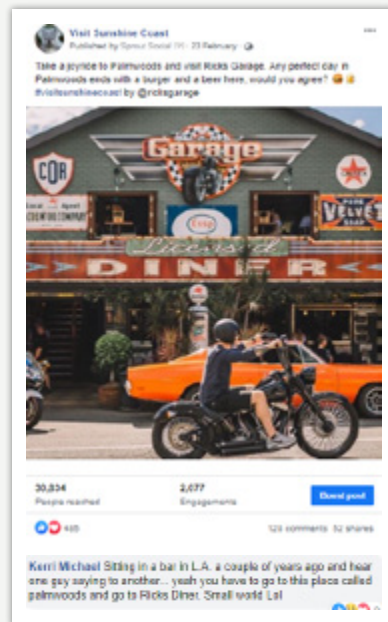
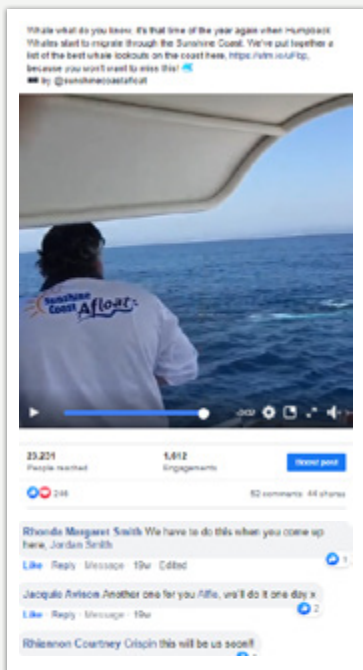
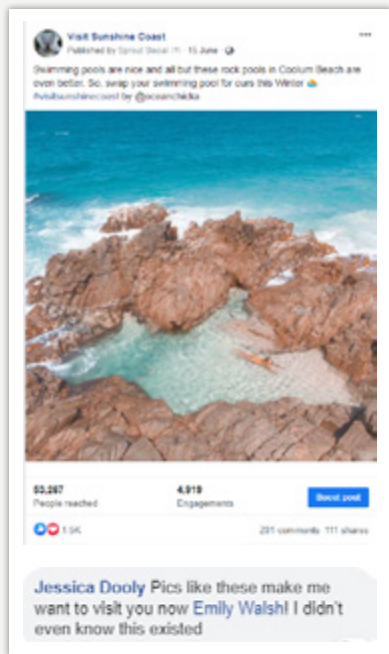
## International Visitor Survey

Visitor expenditure	\$263.7 million	-4.9%
Overnight visitors	311,000	+0.5%
Holiday	235,000	+0.5%
Visiting friends & relatives	65,000	-0.6%
Nights	2.7 million	-5.3%
Average length of stay	8.8 nights	-.5 nights
Spend per visitor	\$849	-5.4%
Spend per night	\$97	+0.4%

## International top source markets

Continental Europe (no UK)	93,000	+7.2%
New Zealand	84,000	+20.5%
UK	50,000	-19.5%
Germany	32,000	+14.9%
USA	22,000	-12.8%
France	12,000	-4.8%
Canada	11,000	-22.3%
Scandinavia	11,000	-13.9%
Asia combined	33,000	-3.1%

## Social comments





# How we support you

📍 TreeTop Challenge, Woombye

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# Membership

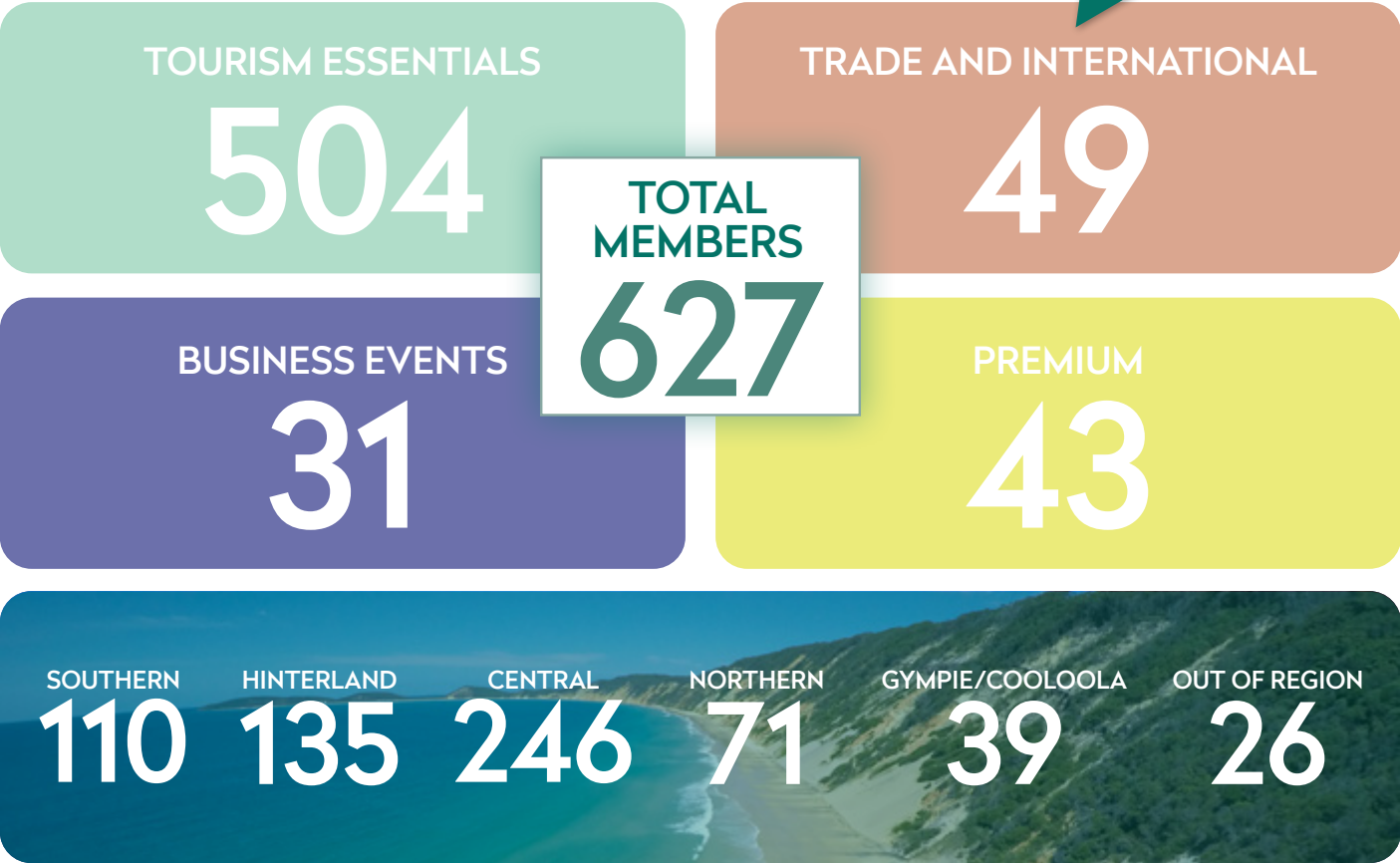
VSC offers four different membership options designed with all Sunshine Coast tourism businesses in mind – from the small BnB operators to the biggest resorts and conference venues; fishing expedition tours to wildlife and nature parks.

Between March and June 2020, VSC grouped together to provide a Tourism Industry COVID-19 Taskforce that made more than 600 direct calls to members and industry to support them during the various levels of COVID-19 lockdown and government restrictions.

The team provided guidance to businesses on navigating the various levels of support during the peak of the crisis.

Further to this and to ensure businesses can emerge stronger and ready to grow, VSC has waived membership fees for all current 2019/2020 financial members and offered a reduced fee of only \$10 for new tourism essential members for the 2020/2021 financial year.

“VSC’s continued support is always welcome and appreciated”  
Alex Beach Cabins and Tourist Park





# BROUHANA

## BREWERY ★ RES

IPA

small - \$6.00  
medium - \$9.00  
large - \$11.00  
jug - \$22.00

milk  
STOUT

small - \$5.50  
medium - \$8.00  
large - \$10.00  
jug - \$20.00

hinterland  
pale ale

small - \$5.50  
medium - \$8.00  
large - \$10.00  
jug - \$20.00

LAGER

small - \$5.50  
medium - \$7.50  
large - \$9.50  
jug - \$18.50

📍 Brouhaha Brewery, Maleny





# Path to success

📍 Bellingham Maze, Tānawha

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# Industry Development

VSC is committed to build tourism industry competence and support members to develop appropriate products, hero experiences, events and icons that align to the region's brand pillars.

Both networking and face-to-face workshops were suspended in March 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions.

VSC facilitated



6

VSC networking events



4

Trade ready workshops and mentoring for 65 operators

During 2019/2020, TEQ's Best of Queensland (BOQ) Program had

170

that met the BOQ standards

(up from 158 in 2018/2019)

“Our latest website and campaign, *Discover Mooloolaba*, will spearhead that aim for greatness. Please contact us if you wish to be a part of this fantastic initiative, which is supported by Sunshine Coast Council and Visit Sunshine Coast. Look out for the amazing ads on social media - our great award-winning beach makes an excellent backdrop, that is for sure.”

Graeme Juniper, Mooloolaba Chamber of Commerce

## Sub-Regional Promotion

VSC has a successful Destination Promotion Program with key Sunshine Coast tourism sub regions, via the Sub Regional Panel, to maximise the marketing and promotion in each sub region. The key sub regions are Caloundra, Kawana, Nambour, the Hinterland, Maroochydore, Mooloolaba, Coolum and Eumundi. VSC developed a 'COVID-19 Response Marketing Program' to assist our Sub Regional partners during this difficult time. The program valued at \$160k facilitates the sub regions to come up with specific campaigns/ initiatives to best kick-start the tourism industry during recovery. This initiative will be extended into the 2020/2021 year.



# Sealing the Deal

📍 Sea Life Sunshine Coast, Mooloolaba

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# Marketing

VSC marketing initiatives are aimed to create demand and generate leads to new and existing high-value travellers across our key source markets.

The campaigns focus on growing visitor yield and encouraging regional dispersal, and we continue to support and leverage the region's vast array of products and experiences to ensure value for our members.

During the year, research was instigated to create a new brand positioning, to be launched during the 2020/2021 year.

From March 2020, the team moved with speed and agility to respond to a rapidly changing environment to create flexible marketing scenario-based plans for identified target markets, based on access to the Sunshine Coast.

During this period, the team capitalised on the visiting friends and relatives segment, focused on maximising the Queensland drive market and leveraged our digital footprint to build marketing databases.



# Campaigns



## Escape to the Sunshine Coast

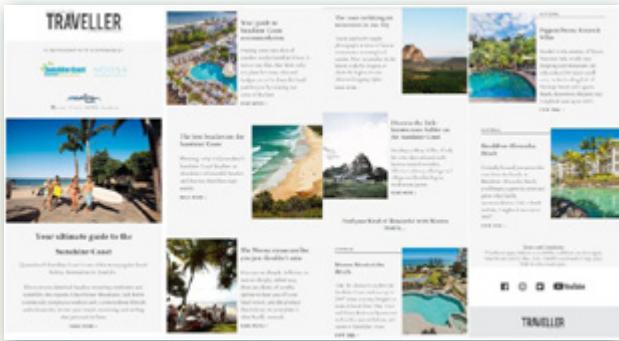
December 2019 - February 2020



Outdoor bus backs, trams, billboards, baggage screens and taxi ranks



Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney



## Multi-channel as part of TEQ Bushfire Recovery funds

September - December 2019



ATN radio, television advertising, Qantas and Australian Traveller eDMs, print and famils



Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide



KPI metric for all media components achieved **295 leads to partners.**



# Campaigns

## A Taste of Escape campaign

May 2020

Continue awareness of the Sunshine Coast during the COVID crisis through new and current audience engagement to stay top of mind.



Paid social, consumer eNews and content



Drive Market



Social reach: **711,807**



Social engagements: **128,362**



Social shares: **78 post shares**



Page views: **13,699 landing page views from social**



eNews sign up: **220**



## SEQ drive campaign as part of TEQ Sunshine Coast is Good to Go

June 2020



TV, Social, Radio, OOH, Urbanlist, TripAdvisor



Brisbane



**311 leads to industry and 27,621 total unique visitors**



# Sub-Regional campaign

June 2020



Paid Social



Drive Market



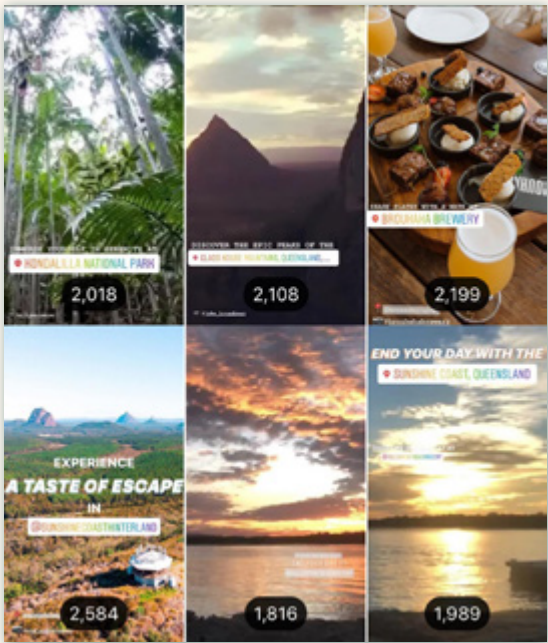
Social reach: **202,720**



Social engagements: **3,893**



Landing page views: **15,165** (153% above target)



# 'Pineapple' video campaign

June 2020

Continue awareness of the Sunshine Coast during the COVID crisis through new and current audience engagement to stay top of mind.



Paid Social and Digital channels



Drive Market



Social reach: **475,993**



Social engagements: **153, 507**



Landing page views: **97,712** (489% above target)



# Our face time

📍 Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve, Maleny

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# Digital

The shift from traditional printed media to digital marketing and the increasing use of social media to promote the Sunshine Coast has brought with it several advantages including cost-effectiveness, customisation, performance trackability and increased destination exposure.



Visitors to website  
**809,496**  
new users



Pageviews  
**3,896,041**



Database subscribers  
**72,345**



Facebook followers  
**114,880**



Social engagements  
**4 million**



Instagram followers  
**113,568**



Leads to members  
**123,553**



VSC also launched new itinerary software for users to create and share interactive maps.

This displays content-rich routes and itineraries, showcasing things to see and do around locations and can be embedded on the website and sent to mobiles.



@wildlifehqzoo Koala Joey

In July 2019, the VSC Instagram channel reached the milestone of 100,000 followers (to end June 113,568).

The page was launched in 2013 to increase brand awareness of the destination through photos of the region's iconic landmarks, tourist attractions and local wildlife.

The page's content is user generated, and since it started, more than 400,000 people have shared their photos through the #visitsunshinecoast hashtag.

Over the last financial year, visitors to visitsunshinecoast.com consumer website are up 20%, 15% across all social media channels (incl. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) and online subscribers have increased by 50%.

# Navigating for the industry



📍 Noosa River, Noosaville



# Trade

In 2019/2020, VSC's focus was to grow international visitor numbers to the region, increase the average length of stay and develop product and distribution networks for VSC Trade and International members.

In partnership with TEQ, SCA, TN, DGR and in market key distribution partners, VSC created tactical marketing campaigns, developed relationships with key trade partners, and worked with our members to ensure their products

are export ready and distributed throughout travel trade in the inbound, wholesale, retail and online channels.



VSC supported **10** international trade educational visits welcoming over **60** trade partners to the region during the period from key inbound source markets.



The Trade and International team met with over **50** members one on one to provide support in working with trade and insight into key international markets. Further to this, VSC provided over **150** leads to connect with key inbound, wholesale and online travel agents.



The Sunshine Coast Airport's new **\$334 million** international-ready runway was officially opened on 14 June 2020, a move that in time will help open the Sunshine Coast up to the rest of the world.



VSC was awarded **AIFF (Attraction Aviation Investment Fund)** funding for the first time to help support the direct flight with Air New Zealand from Auckland to the Sunshine Coast. The AIFF funding was to include an extension of the flight from April until October, with the overarching plan to make the service year-round.

Due to COVID-19, this funding was paused and will be reviewed in the next financial year.



As part of the Australia's Nature Coast partnership, VSC ran a multitude of in market campaigns in Europe and the UK. Key partners included: **Austravel – UK, Australia a la Carte – France, Boomerang Reisen – Germany, Expedia – Germany, Explorer Fernreisen – Germany, Freedom – UK and Flight Centre – UK.**







# Uncovering the stories

📍 Mooloolaba Surf Club, Mooloolaba

# PR & Communications

Utilising a full suite of communication strategies, PR and Communications support was provided for the industry; from marketing campaigns, business events and member stories through to increasing share of local voice.



VSC hosted: **Better Homes and Gardens** in July 2019 with media value of

**\$1.6 million**

reaching over

**3 million viewers**

During 2019/2020, VSC has generated a total media value of

**\$28,990,452**

VSC provided a high level of communications support to tourism businesses throughout the pandemic including regular e-newsletter updates on the latest restrictions, links to official information and updates on VSC activities and assisting with COVID-19 webpages.

The team also hosted and coordinated weather crosses with **Sunrise** at Mooloolaba and Noosa generating a media value of

**\$2.2 million**

reaching over

**2.3 million viewers**

The PR and Communications team coordinated and hosted

**18**

media outlets on familiarisations in the region.

A dedicated local community PR campaign was created to educate the community about the role and value of tourism on the Sunshine Coast. Media comprised press, radio, PR and online with results indicating improved Social Indicators impact with two-thirds (66%) of residents in agreement that tourism has a positive impact on the community compared with 45% in Queensland.

VSC hosted three media events in **Sydney** (31 January) **Brisbane** (6 February) and **Melbourne** (7 February) for over 60 top travel media.



# For blue sky thinking



📍 Pumicestone Passage, Caloundra

# Business Events

It has been a particularly tough environment since COVID-19 and although national business events dropped 16.4%, it was off the back of a record previous quarter growth of +13.3%.



12

BESC members participated in five trade/corporate events with BESC



20

Interstate buyers, two media and five international buyers were hosted on famils



57

BESC members attended BESC run events



28

BESC/VSC members provided deals for conference campaigns



11

BESC members provided accommodation deals for conference campaigns



45

BESC/VSC members participated in Business Events famils



Circulated

21 leads to  
180 members

the potential business  
worth \$4.1M in economic impact

In conjunction with SCC, BESC confirmed

7  
Business Events  
Assistance Program

(BEAP) bids  
worth \$2.9M in economic value

Secured the 2019  
Queensland Tourism Awards  
held on the Sunshine Coast  
in November 2019.

Confirmed 28 conferences, with a total of

5,536 delegates and  
17,290+ room nights

equating to \$7M in  
economic impact

Exhibited at five trade events,  
hosted two networking events and  
held one workshop.





# Calendar to Play and Stay

📍 The Curated Plate, Yandina Station

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# Events

Prior to COVID-19, events continued to be a key focus for VSC during 2019/2020 working closely with both TEQ, SCC and members to drive tourism benefits around the extensive calendar of activity and strengthening the region's image as a key destination for events.

During 2019/2020, VSC was a partner of Sunshine Coast Lightning and also the inaugural culinary festival – The Curated Plate.

Held over four days in August 2019, the festival included multiple events dispersed throughout the Sunshine Coast region.

As a new and first year event, this required a whole of team effort and collaboration across the entire business from event marketing, industry development, digital and PR.



## The Curated Plate involved:



8

Feature Events



6

Restaurant Collaborations



37

Food Experiences



60+

Local Producers

## The Curated Plate results:



4.1M

advertising across Nine network



366,742

website page views



1,321,851

impressions



455,904

FB reach



258,900

FB event pages reach



4,371

event page responses



500

items of media coverage



\$6,291,732

in PR value





# Service with a smile

📍 Sunshine Coast Airport Visitor Information Centre

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**Sunshine Coast**  
Queensland Naturally relaxed

# Visitor Servicing

Serviced by dedicated volunteer ambassadors, the Visitor Information Centres (VICs) provide a range of local and regional brochures and information on tours, attractions and accommodation.



Between August and December 2019, the Roving Volunteer Ambassadors greeted 8 cruise ships in Mooloolaba.



Paperless administration of all VIC's was rolled out in June 2020. This includes all rostering, time sheets, new applications, visitor feedback and visitor registers as per the COVID safe plan.

“*I enjoy being able to promote tourism on the Sunshine Coast*” Helen Gainey

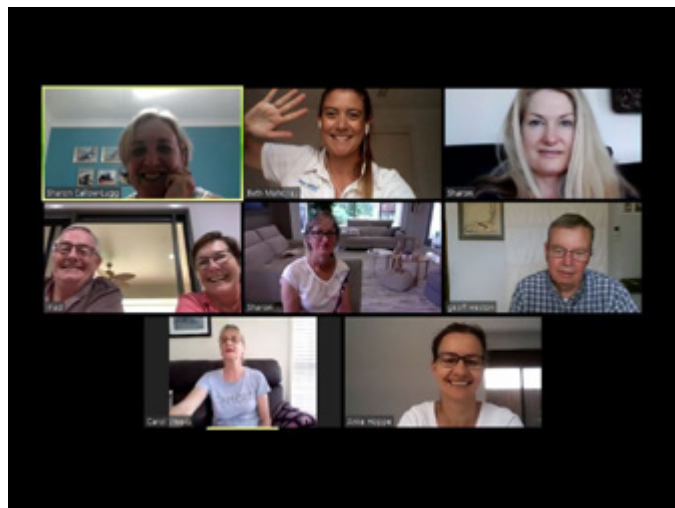
Following an extensive independent review, VSC decided to make significant changes to the way it provides information services for visitors, adopting a more responsive, mobile approach to disseminating information.

As part of this strategy, VICs at **Sunshine Coast Airport, Glass House Mountains and Montville** remain operational while centres at Mooloolaba, Coolum and two in Caloundra ceased operation from October 2019 and buildings were handed back to Sunshine Coast Council.



During the pandemic from 17 March to 13 June 2020, the three VICs were closed. This was to protect the health and wellbeing of the public and our volunteers. However, the team was kept busy with 25 virtual catch ups conducted with Team Sunshine Coast.

Of the 130 active ambassadors, up to 50 ambassadors joined the online conversations on a weekly basis. In addition, fortnightly virtual famils were conducted to keep the team immersed and informed with up to 40 ambassadors joining the live discussions, with the remaining viewing the content at their own convenience.





Visit **Sunshine Coast**  
Queensland *Naturally refreshing*

Level 3, 8 Maroochydore Road, Maroochydore, QLD, 4558  
**visitsunshinecoast.com | #visitsunshinecoast**