

Visit
*Sunshine
Coast*



THE MOOLLOOLABA SPIT

Snapshot of 2020/2021



Acknowledgement of Country

Visit Sunshine Coast acknowledges the Sunshine Coast Country, home of the Kabi Kabi peoples and the Jinibara peoples, the Traditional Custodians, whose lands and waters we all now share. We wish to pay respect to their Elders – past, present and emerging, and acknowledge the important role First Nations people continue to play within the Sunshine Coast community.

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What a year!

Tourism continues to be a significant driver of the Sunshine Coast economy, contributing close to \$2.3 billion in Regional Gross Product and supporting an estimated 22,700 jobs.*

It was a real pleasure to join Visit Sunshine Coast mid-way through the financial year and what a time it has been. Despite the challenges and uncertainty thrown our way by the pandemic, the tourism industry continued to get on with the job in providing world-class experiences for our visitors.

With border restrictions coming and going throughout the year our visitor composition changed with it. Importantly, when restrictions eased from mid-2020 our intrastate market was quick to pick up. At this time we focused on the drive market, as we knew this market was less likely to face restrictions from travelling to the Sunshine Coast. This approach paid off and a strong performance from our drive market mitigated some of the losses from our international and interstate markets during the period. By the numbers, intrastate travel to the Sunshine Coast rose by 35% YOY for the period to a record 3.2 million visitors. This was still 7.8% greater than our pre-pandemic visitation (FY19/20). A phenomenal result.

A big part of this success was the launch of our 'For real' campaign in late 2020, as well as continued efforts by industry to provide a safe and welcoming visitor experience.

We were also opportunistic in capitalising on our interstate markets when they were open, including our major markets of Sydney and Melbourne. In addition, we also were able to leverage improved access to the region thanks to the Sunshine Coast Airport in attracting new direct flight routes with Cairns, Canberra and Newcastle.

All in all, despite the disruption the Sunshine Coast recorded a 24.5% YOY increase in overnight visitor expenditure of \$2.8 billion for YE June 21. This performance was well above other destinations in Queensland who really did it tough during the period.

However, when we compare our performance prior to the pandemic (FY18/19), the full extent of COVID-19 becomes evident. Compared to that period Sunshine Coast visitor numbers declined by 13.9%.

The events of FY20/21 shaped the way we all do business and most of all I have admired the resilience, determination, and innovation of our Sunshine Coast's tourism industry throughout the year. What has stood above all is the 'Team Sunshine Coast' collaborative approach that has helped us position the destination for success today and success tomorrow.

A huge thanks to Sunshine Coast Council and Tourism and Events Queensland, who have worked closely with us to navigate through the uncertainty, and a huge shout out to our members for a year that will never be forgotten!

Matt Stoeckel
Chief Executive Officer



SUGAR BAG ROAD
MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAIL,
CALOUNDRA

Leading the way

About us

Visit Sunshine Coast (VSC) is the Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO) for the Sunshine Coast, responsible for promoting the Local Government Areas of Sunshine Coast, Noosa and Gympie. As a member-based organisation, our focus is to effectively manage the visitor economy in the Sunshine Coast to maximise the contribution it makes to tourism industry stakeholders.



Vision

VSC is leading a sustainable tourism industry that is united by a distinct brand.



Mission

We will lead the tourism industry in promoting the Sunshine Coast's experiences and build a sustainable tourism industry that will maximise the long-term benefits of the visitor economy to the region.



Partners

In a tough year, the 'Team Sunshine Coast' approach shone through and by working together we were able to navigate a way through the uncertainty. We couldn't have done this without the ongoing funding support and assistance of Sunshine Coast Council (SCC) and Tourism and Events Queensland (TEQ).

We also work closely with each of the SCC sub-regions including the Hinterland, Coolumb, Eumundi, Nambour, Mooloolaba, Maroochydore, Kawana and Caloundra.

We also work collaboratively with Tourism Noosa and Destination Gympie region on promoting the Sunshine Coast.

The Sunshine Coast Airport is a partnership we highly value and through it ensure that this great piece of tourism infrastructure is leveraged.

Our 746 members are the backbone of the tourism industry and responsible for delivering the visitor experience we are famous for.







MT. COONOWRIN

Performance

For the year ending June 2021, the Sunshine Coast recorded a 24.5% increase in domestic overnight visitor expenditure (OVE) to \$2.8 billion for the year, with an increase of 17% in domestic visitor numbers.

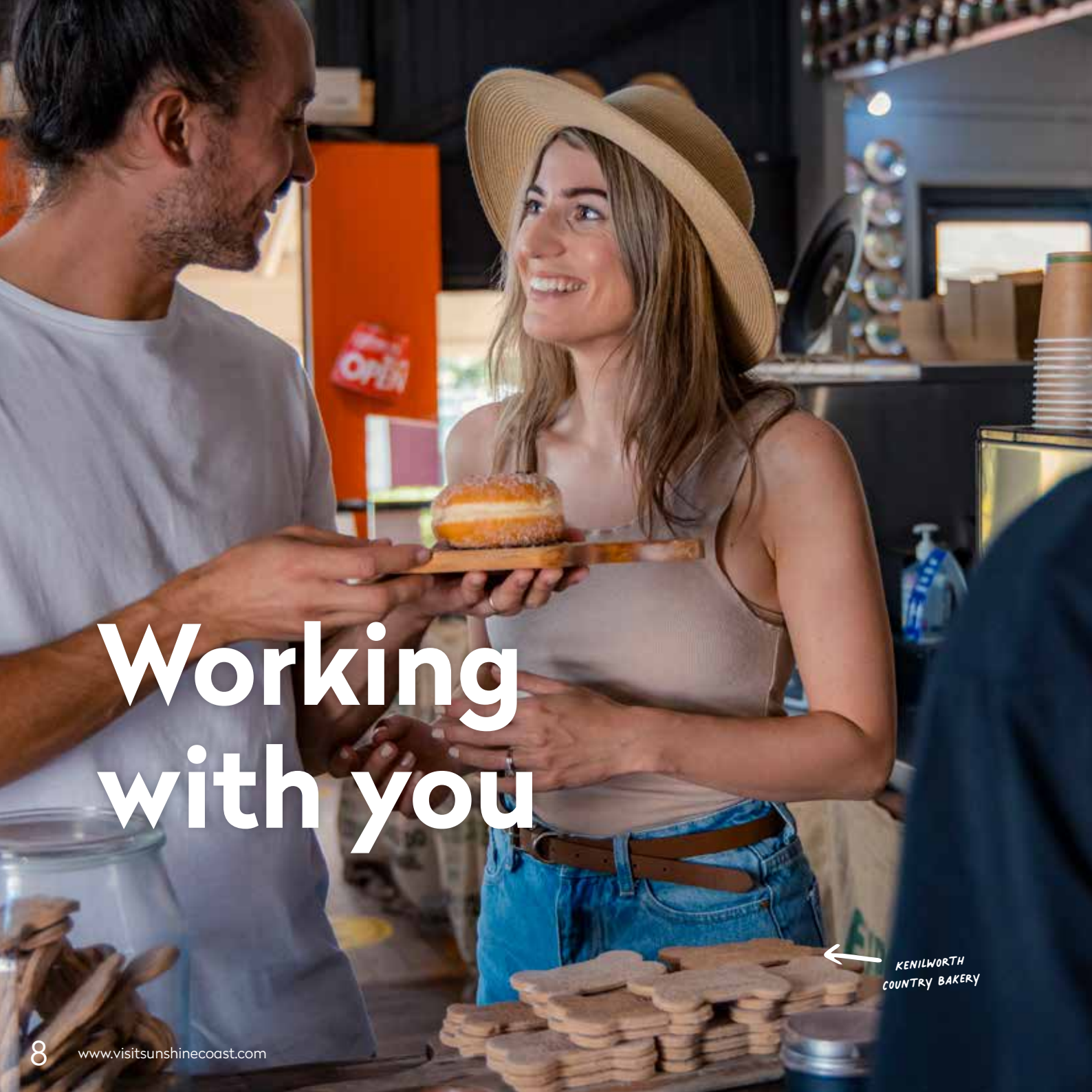
However, when YE June 2021 is compared to YE June 2019, the full effect of COVID-19 becomes evident. Sunshine Coast domestic visitor numbers declined by 7% but we maintained OVE parity with pre-COVID levels. The overall decline in visitor arrivals is more significant when you factor in the loss of international markets.

SUNSHINE COAST - DOMESTIC	YE June 2021	YOY change	YE June 2019
Overnight visitor expenditure (OVE)	2.8B 	+ 24.5%	2.6B
Overnight visitors	3.8M	+ 17%	3.9M
Holiday visitors	2.3M 	+ 37%	2.1M
Visiting friends and relatives (VFR)	1.1M	- 4.8%	1.3M
Business	215,000	- 17.7%	374,000
Visitor nights	13.5M	+ 11.2%	14M
Average length of stay	3.6 nights	- 0.2 nights	3.5 nights
Spend per night	\$205	+ 12%	\$186
Spend per visitor	\$729	+ 6.5%	\$656
Day trippers	6.3M	- 9.8%	7M

SOURCE MARKETS	YE June 2021	YOY change	YE June 2019
Intrastate visitors	3.2M 	+ 35%	2.9M
Holiday intrastate visitors	1.9M 	+ 70.8%	1.5M
Interstate visitors	607,000	-30.9%	999,000
Interstate holiday	343,000	- 35.2%	601,000
NSW	283,000	- 35.7%	462,000
VIC	214,000	- 36.8%	374,000

 = Record





Working
with you

Membership & Industry Development

We represent all Sunshine Coast tourism businesses – from the small BnB operators to the biggest resorts and conference venues, fishing charters to wildlife attractions.

Over the past year, we recognised the hardship of COVID-19 and extended free 2020/2021 membership to all existing 2019/2020 members. In addition, we introduced a new \$10 membership fee for any new members.

This resulted in a record number of **746** financial members joining us of which **220** members signed up under the new subsidised incentive.

Further to this, we achieved a **90%** performance rating from the 2020/2021 Member Satisfaction Survey.

We are committed to building a sustainable tourism industry and implemented a wide range of development programs to support businesses reach their potential. Encouragingly, we had **198** operators identified as part of the TEQ Best of Queensland Experiences Program.

Holding events in person became tricky as webinars, Zoom and Teams became the new norm, but importantly we were able to provide a lead advocacy role and connect with members via phone and regular eNewsletters. In addition, we coordinated:

- SCouT21 'Sunshine Coast Big Day Out for Tourism' with **500+** Sunshine Coast tourism operators.
- 79 businesses participated in the Tourism Industry Business Capability Program facilitated by Queensland Tourism Industry Council.
- 6 face-to-face networking events attended by over **1000** operators.

Celebrating the Year of Indigenous Tourism

New operator Saltwater Eco Tours sailed into the Sunshine Coast tourism scene. Combining Indigenous culture, maritime history and entertainment on board an authentic timber sailing vessel in Mooloolaba has been the vision of Simon Thornalley, a young Indigenous man of Torres Strait Island descent.



INDUSTRY EXCHANGE AT SCOUT 21



TRADITIONAL OWNER AUNTY BRIDGETTE HOSTING MELBOURNE STORM

"VSC's support helped bring new initiatives to life and we are in a far better position to engage with potential visitors. Our team has come up with some very exciting activities including new discovery trails and destination videos, and with a major refresh of our website and digital marketing channels."

Mark Cameron,
President of Coolum
Business and Tourism

Living & breathing the brand

MALENY BOTANIC GARDENS AND BIRD WORLD

SNORKELLING AT
MUDJIMBA ISLAND
WITH SUNREEF



Marketing

For real.

In late 2020, we launched the new 'For real' campaign across our markets. The campaign highlighted our authentic nature as a destination and results showed it really rang true to our audiences. We developed a whole new suite of assets to bring the campaign to life, with more than 1000 new assets developed as part of it.

Campaigns

Due to border restrictions, we needed to be agile in our response and favoured digital channels for promotions to give us the flexibility to develop the best bang for buck through the campaigns.

One example was our multi-channel campaign launched in September 2020 and was in market until March 2021.

- 'Always On' marketing initiative launched across paid social media and Search Engine Marketing channels driving prospecting and retargeting audiences to visitsunshinecoast.com.
- Sub-regional campaign with co-operative buy-in. Results: **19 Million** digital impressions and **57 K** landing page views.
- Tactical retail campaigns with Expedia Media Solutions (wotif.com) and Ignite Travel Group (My Queensland) that generated **10 K** incremental room nights.
- Delivery of over **12** campaigns within Aviation Partnership including fare leveraging campaigns with Virgin, Jetstar and Qantas.

The Results:



10.43 M
social impressions



2 M
social reach



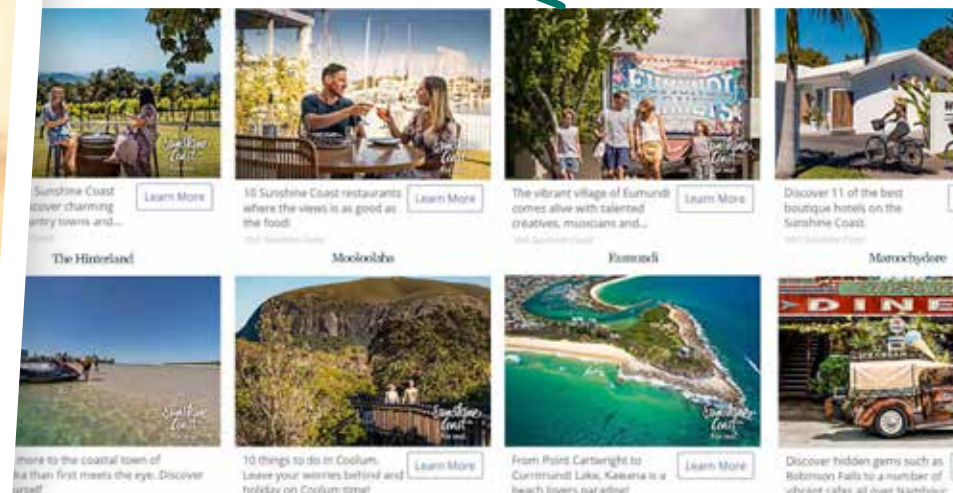
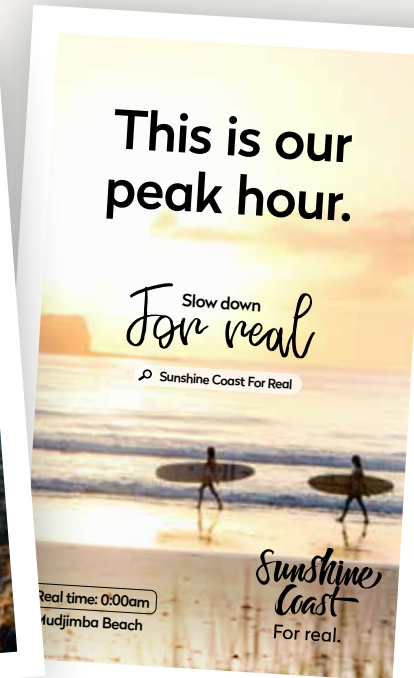
700 K
out of home reach



145 K
landing page views

'FOR REAL'
OUT OF HOME
CAMPAIGN

EXPEDIA SUB-REGIONAL CAMPAIGN



Our platforms



THE MARY VALLEY RATTLER



Digital

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

Website

In June 2021, VSC launched a new consumer website! The site visitsunshinecoast.com has been redeveloped for faster performance with options to 'book now' at the forefront of each business and operator listing. The new visitsunshinecoast.com consistently outperforms other websites of its kind on page speed and search engine optimisation, ensuring the website is easy to use on smart phone devices and the Sunshine Coast is prioritised in Google search results.

Just a few numbers:



937 K

visitors to website



4 M

pageviews



104 K

database subscribers



130 K

leads to members

Followers on the up

- Facebook: **10,471** more followers, 6.3% increase.
- Twitter: **580** more followers, 2.9% increase.
- Instagram: **13,845** more followers, 0.50% increase.
- Total social impressions across all platforms (includes paid): **93 Million** - 100.1% increase.
- Total engagements across all platforms (includes paid): **2 Million**.
- Total VSC social followers across all platforms: **260 K** - 3.4% increase.

Market ready, trade ready

ORIGINAL EUMUNDI MARKETS.

Trade

For trade, 2020/2021 was all about growing our presence in the domestic market, whilst maintaining our relationships and market share with our international partners.



A real focus was on the New Zealand market in anticipation of a Trans-Tasman bubble. We developed our partnerships with Air New Zealand and strengthened destination awareness and product knowledge of the Sunshine Coast with trade partners.

- For our other markets, engagement shifted to virtual trade shows where we sought to maintain our international relationships and use the time to increase trade's knowledge of the Sunshine Coast.
- VSC supported over **25** trade partner visits for education famils. Trade partners included key online travel agent's such as Tripadvisor, Get Your Guide, Expedia and Trip.com and inbound operators Goway, APTC and Pan Pacific Travel.
- Attended 11 trade shows online and in person meetings with **500** trade contacts.
- Trained over **1,000** travel agents via webinars across domestic and international markets.
- In partnership with Tourism Noosa, we ran a four-city domestic roadshow with 14 Sunshine Coast suppliers.

The TreeTop Challenge Junior Adventure Park opened with the support of the Growing Tourism Infrastructure Fund

"We are thrilled with this latest venture – a huge adventure park for children with challenges up to 10 years old. This creates a truly unique and exciting adventure experience that families love."

David Taylor, General Manager, TreeTop Challenge



- Provided **163** introductions for members to connect with key inbound, wholesale, domestic and online travel agents.
- Met with over **60** members one on one, to provide support in working with trade and assist them with increasing their distribution channels.
- Aviation was also a focus throughout the period to take advantage of new routes with Cairns, Canberra and Newcastle.

Sunshine Coast in the spotlight

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



↑
TODAY SHOW
WEATHER,
MOOLOOLABA BEACH

PR & Communications

During 2020/2021, VSC has generated a total media value of **\$28.7 Million**. We coordinated and hosted **32** media outlets on familiarisations in the region and assisted **6** TEQ coordinated visits.

VSC secured **17** major broadcasts airing with **\$7 Million** media value and reaching an audience of **9.6 Million**. These included The Amazing Race, Taste of Australia, TVNZ1, four Today Show breakfast weather cross days, two The Great Australian Doorstep dedicated episodes, Detours with Subaru, and seven dedicated Weekender episodes.

We hosted 3 media events in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane for over **60** top travel media not only showcase what the Sunshine Coast has to offer, but further build relationships with important media outlets.

'For real' Qantas beach activation, on board messaging and merchandise to leverage Great Southern Land scenic flight of Australia and media call launch.

Sharing stories of resilience and recovery

We knew the importance of providing comprehensive communications to our industry during the pandemic. Through our platforms, businesses could stay in touch with what was going on and be best prepared for navigating their way through the changing landscape. We were also able to share stories of tourism businesses as they adapted through this challenging period.



↑
MESSAGE FOR QANTAS
FLIGHT, COOLUM BEACH

"The first pivot we made due to COVID-19 was to put our Ginger Shop online - we held over \$60,000 of perishable stock - the decision was then made to increase the range to other items in store, homewares, health and wellness and books. It was very important that we stayed connected to our locals and VIP Card Holders, we ran regular virtual experiences from scone baking, to a live bee show, turtle talks to children's storybook reads."

Brenda Baily, Tourism Manager of The Ginger Factory

Fresh air for business

Business Events traditionally represents one of the highest yielding sectors in Australia's visitor economy but has been the hardest hit tourism sector by COVID-19.

Latest venue to be launched is the exciting new entertainment precinct – NightQuarter

It takes an extraordinary amount of confidence to launch a new business during a time of uncertainty. But Michelle Christoe and her husband Ian Van der Woude are not known for shying away from a challenge, and in November 2020, they opened NightQuarter – the region's newest entertainment precinct.



Business Events

Our team was able to engage with Associations, Professional Conference Organisers, Corporations and Event Management Companies to get leads and secure business. However, with conferences and conventions greatly impacted by border restrictions, this also presented an opportunity to further develop our incentive travel market.

- Sunshine Coast Showcase held in Sydney and attended by **32** buyers.
- **18** Sydney-based representatives attended a fam in-region.

- Attended Tourism Australia South East Asia virtual webinar.
- Attended Professional Conference Organisers Association hybrid conference and virtual expo meeting.
- Represented the region at Brisbane and Melbourne Executive PA trade shows.
- Social media campaign and new website launched for the incentive market.
- Creation of the Shortlist Magazine.



Hands up for events

MOOLOOLABA TRIATHLON



VSC WAS A PARTNER OF SUNSHINE COAST LIGHTNING DURING THE 2020 AND 2021 SEASONS.



↑
THE AUSSIES

Events

VSC has supported 25 Major Events on the Sunshine Coast throughout 2020/2021.

Whilst the event industry was impacted by the pandemic, thanks to the efforts of SCC and TEQ; there was still plenty of scope to leverage some major events in the region.

Highlights:

- The Australian Surf Life Saving Championships
- Mooloolaba Triathlon
- Netfest
- NRL Womens State of Origin

VSC also continued as a sponsor of Sunshine Coast Lightning throughout the year.

Spotlight - The Aussies 2021

- Event ran across 9 days from Friday 16 April until Saturday 24 April.
- **6,144** Surf Life Savers entered across Youths, Opens and Masters championships.
- Events were held at Maroochydore, Alexandra Headland, Coolum and Mooloolaba.
- Social media content promoting Surf Life Saving on the Sunshine Coast meant that media were consistently updated via the Surf Life Saving Australia channels and media releases.
- Total reach of over **2 Million** people across Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.
- Livestreaming the different events on the Sunshine Coast reached over **380 K**.
- Media coverage had a potential reach of over **197 Million**.



Service with a smile

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SOCIAL DISTANCING

Our people are our greatest asset and none more so than our Visitor Information Centre (VIC) Volunteer Ambassadors.

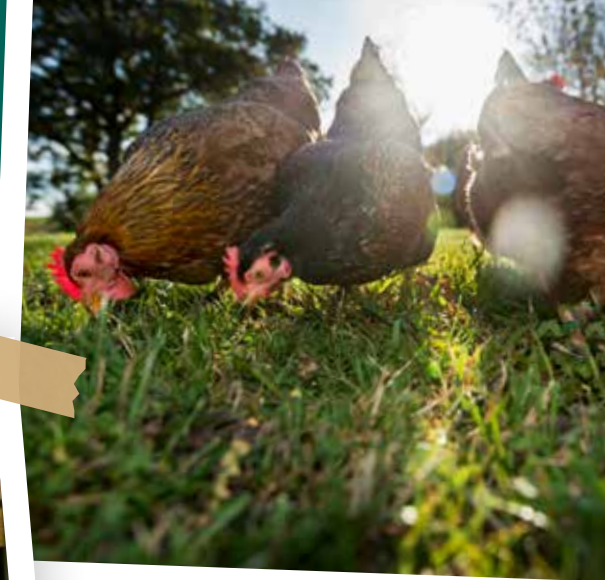


GREETING NEW FLIGHT AT THE AIRPORT



VISITOR SERVICING COORDINATOR
BETH MAHONEY AND VSC
AMBASSADOR RODGER THOMSON

Thank you Rodger Thomson
Rodger has been volunteering in the VICs on the Sunshine Coast since May 1994! At age 89, Rodger (who says age is merely a number) is our longest serving ambassador showing up for a weekly shift to share his extensive knowledge of the region.



Clucking hell!
The age-old question of why did the chicken cross the road may have been answered, but there was a new riddle that had the local tourism industry stumped. Seven hens on an apparent Hinterland holiday were running fowl in the grounds of VSC's Glass House Mountains VIC. Seemingly all cooped up with nowhere to go it begs the question – why did the hens go on holiday?



Visitor Servicing

Our people are our greatest asset and none more so than our Visitor Information Centre (VIC) Volunteer Ambassadors. They are dedicated and passionate about promoting the best spots and hidden gems of the Sunshine Coast.

During the past year we:

- Trained our **150** Ambassadors through a comprehensive familiarisation program.

- Participation in SCouT21 'Volunteer Exchange' with **160+** ambassadors from South East Queensland.
- Implemented COVID-19 safe plan, including the introduction of QR codes in all centres and online collection of visitor statistics.



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visitsunshinecoast.com

[#visitsunshinecoast](https://www.instagram.com/visitsunshinecoast)