

## Beechworth

The 'Power of One' to transform a tourism destination is nowhere more apparent than in Beechworth.

When Tom O'Toole returned to the northern Victorian town, made famous by the Kelly Gang, to buy its run down bakery, no one realised that his action would soon put the place on the tourism map.

That was 1984 and Tom O'Toole's Beechworth Bakery has been a major catalyst in raising standards in the town, which has enabled Beechworth to now stand tall as one of Australia's premier cultural heritage destinations.

The bakery has the highest turnover of any retail bakery in Australia and Tom's success has inspired businesses in three countries. Most importantly for this case study, it demonstrates how one person's vision and drive can transform the image and economic fortune of a town.

Despite its illustrious early gold years and then as a pastoral centre, by the early 1980s Beechworth had fallen into a rut as a government town. The biggest employers were the prison, the hospital, the aged care centre and a 500 bed mental health facility.

According to Tom: "When I bought the Beechworth Bakery people didn't say "I'm going for a drive to Beechworth" unless they were going to visit Mad Aunty in the lunatic asylum, or one of their relatives in jail".



For over 20 years Beechworth has been steadily transformed into a vibrant tourism centre, with a growing population and with expanding business opportunities. Its streetscapes and 32 National Trust listed buildings are considered national treasures.

The council recognises the need to protect the asset from the overcommercialisation that unfettered tourism can bring. Its tourism and commercial signing policy is one of the most comprehensive in the state and stringent building regulations protect the aesthetics and integrity of the town.



## GROWING DESTINATIONS



TOURISM EXCELLENCE

For many years Tom O'Toole has toured Australia and overseas to spread the word about his business formula. In doing so, he has also promoted Beechworth as an outstanding visitor destination.

His story and that of the rejuvenation of Beechworth as a tourism and lifestyle centre has received national media coverage. Tom's role modelling has been an inspiration to the local business community and has set very high standards for others to follow.

The Chamber of Commerce works closely with the council to improve the physical assets of the town, to create a new service attitude, and to establish a calendar of special events.

The council has a dynamic tourism and events unit. It has facilitated the upgrade of the cultural and heritage precinct and was a major player in establishing the Murray to Mountains Rail Trail, one of the country's foremost cycling paths, which attracts tens of thousands of touring cyclists each year.

While no one small business can single-handedly transform the economic fortune of a destination, it is not uncommon for one business and one visionary leader to heavily influence the thinking of a town and to inspire people to create something for visitors greater than the sum of its parts.

Beechworth is an inspiring example of destination planning and management created collaboratively through the efforts of the business community, residents and council.



### Key findings ... from Tom O'Toole

*The difference between ordinary and extra ordinary is that little bit 'extra'. Who wants to be a bit ordinary? Who wants to be average? Just that little bit extra, that's all we've got to do.*

*The key to success is all about people: 5% technology, 95% technology.*

*Customer complaints are the school books from which we learn.*

*What if I train my people and they leave?*

*What if you don't train them and they stay!*