



GROWING
DESTINATIONS



TOURISM
EXCELLENCE

Gippsland Tourism Industry Leadership Program

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From Warragul to Mallacoota; from Mt Hotham to Wilson's Promontory, the expanse of the Gippsland region has always presented its tourism industry with geographic and cultural challenges.

Hand-in-hand with the restructure of the region during recent times has been the attention paid to the professional development of its industry leaders. Across the region, 24 tourism operators are devoting money and considerable time to developing skills that, it is hoped, will underpin the vision and performance of a new peak body.

The Gippsland Tourism Leadership Program is believed to be the first of its kind in Australia and according to General Manager of Gippsland Tourism, Chris Buckingham, it is all about 'joining the dots'

"There's a lot of industry talent across the six local government areas involved. A lot of good work has been done at a local level, but it has been disjointed.

"There were already natural leaders in the region, but in many cases they were feeling unsupported and we saw a need to build the networks."



The broad goals of the program are to:

1. Develop leadership relevant to the tourism industry,
2. Build individual leadership skills,
3. Build leadership networks,
4. Strengthen leadership capability within the industry,
5. Develop a peak body within Gippsland.

The 12 month program began during mid 2006, after securing a combination of \$70,000 in funding and sponsorship through Regional Development Victoria, Telstra and Gippsland Tourism.

Program participants were recruited through local advertising and personal contact, based on their current leadership activity and recognised ability. Forty applications were received for 25 positions and the final 24 participants were selected through a formal process.



They represent accommodation, destination attractions, adventure tourism, the wine industry, the food and restaurant industry, the racing industry, tourism consultancy and the entertainment industry.

The program is conceptually based on the Williamson model of leadership training and enjoys synergy with the long standing Gippsland Community Leadership Program. The ten one and two day workshops held across the region over six months impart theoretical knowledge as well as practical learning, but not in a text book or lecture room sense. It involves much discussion, debate and conversation. Most of it is concerned with personal challenge and reflection, rather than strategy and technique.

Baw Baw Shire provides in house resources to administer the program and two professional development facilitators have been engaged to coordinate and deliver the content.

Each workshop involves two to four specialist speakers -recognised leaders in their field - plus personal development exercises. During the six months, participants are expected to complete a tourism industry project.

Chris Buckingham says that the program is about building leadership capacity throughout the region, with the potential outcome being a visionary peak industry group, supported by strong formal and informal networks.

“ The peak group may not necessarily comprise those people doing the course, but it will certainly be supported by many of them.

We are watching a group of very switched-on people develop into a network. These leaders are able to see the bigger picture and will play a key role in providing positive leadership in their part of Gippsland”.

Organisers plan to run a second year of the Gippsland Tourism Leadership Program and the steering committee is happy to share its experience with other areas of Victoria who see the benefit in such a program for their region.

Key findings:

Effective tourism destinations need strong and visionary leadership to thrive.

There needs to be vision and leadership displayed by the industry from the coalface to the regional level; one does not work well without the other.

Some people are born leaders, while many others need some nurturing to bring out latent ability.

Techniques for community leadership and facilitation can be taught, but good leadership programs are more about self development of personal and interpersonal skills.