

Ian Southall, General Manager Powerworks Energy Technology Centre, Morwell

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Ian Southall is a relative newcomer to Gippsland's tourism industry, but after 30 years as a regional television executive, he came to the role with a better understanding than most people that connection to the community is a vital ingredient of business success.

Powerworks at Morwell is Victoria's leading industrial tourism attraction. It showcases the science of electricity generation and the role played by the Latrobe Valley in powering-up Victoria's homes and businesses. However, Ian is also an ambassador for climate change and during the next four to five years he intends to re-align Powerworks into a learning facility about a wide range of alternative energies. It will physically showcase environmentally-friendly technology to inform business people, including tourism operators, how to significantly reduce their carbon footprint.

As the Chair of the local Business and Tourism Association, he also uses his roles on numerous other local organizations to spruik the environmental message, but he's also aware of the personal and business benefits of being so widely connected.

"I've grown up in an environment where networking was a given, so it's second-nature to me. You need to engage with other people, find opportunities to present yourself, and develop the ability to discuss common interests. Powerworks sees it as an important part of my work and its role in the local community.

"Plugging your business into wider networks will develop relationships and you just don't know when it will pay off. Someone will ring and say 'I was talking to you six months ago and I've been thinking about how we might be able to work together'.



Ian has always been an enthusiastic participant in courses, seminars and workshops, to not only broaden his industry knowledge and skills, but also to enhance his contacts.

"I've done many, many courses over the years, but they're always good for refreshment, because, as a human being, you always need to re-examine the way you do things. You can so easily fall into old habits, which often die hard. As you get older you need to more readily embrace new things.

"The world is changing quickly and if you don't keep up with some of those things you'll get left behind. That's why I like to attend courses, quite apart from the fact that I like the personal contact. Even a business like this can be very isolating. I can sit in my office for days on end and only engage with people electronically.

"That's why I have put my hand up for this year's Gippsland Tourism Leadership Program. It's a big commitment, but it will be of great benefit to the tourism group, because my enthusiasm and new knowledge from the course can be passed on to others on the committee, which may then filter down to other operators".