

Mildura Tourism Week

Dani Harvey,
Industry Liaison and
Development Manager,
Mildura Tourism Inc.

Tel. 03 5021 0599

dani@milduratourism.com.au

www.visitmildura.com.au



Many regions hold events to network their tourism industry operators and to highlight the importance of the industry to the local community, but few do it as well as Mildura Tourism.

Mildura Tourism Week is an annual showcase of tailored events to throw the spotlight on the industry. It is a celebration of tourism in the region amongst industry, local businesses and the local community to promote the fact that "Tourism is everybody's business". It attracts strong participation from operators and locals, gains considerable media coverage and it profiles the regional tourism organization and the tourism industry to a range of corporate and public funding bodies.

Tourism Week coordinator, Dani Harvey, says it is also about providing industry development opportunities to their 173 members, actively engaging with the business community, and through building partnerships with other key local stakeholders, such as TAFE, the Economic Development Board, council and the Area Consultative Committee.

The 2007 Mildura Tourism Week presented seven days of stimulating speakers, events and activity that brought the industry together. The city hosted a Tourism Roadshow, comprising speakers from Tourism Victoria, Tourism Alliance Victoria, Better Business Tourism Accreditation Program and the Office of Small Business. Presentations and a Q&A session provided an overview on everything from tourism awards to taxation matters.

'Chefs of the Murray' was a highpoint of the week. Local apprentices worked alongside trained chefs and food producers to stage a progressive dinner among four leading restaurants, which highlighted the signature dishes of the region developed from local produce. Local hospitality trainees also worked with the restaurateurs for the service provision on the night.

A Small Business Luncheon was held in partnership with the local TAFE and the Area Consultative Committee, featuring business writer and speaker Rob Hartnett and a meal prepared by local hospitality industry chefs and apprentices.

As it was open to all businesses in the region, Dani Harvey says that it was valuable in helping the industry to cross-pollinate outside their normal business channels.

A 'Women in Tourism' networking group was also launched during the week, which seeks to remove the isolation felt by many local women tourism operators and provides them with the ability to network and learn from each other.

A conferencing and visitor information services session was held for tourism operators at the Mildura V.I.C., where speakers from the V.I.C. and from the Regional Victorian Conference Group spoke about their work and demonstrated new systems.

The acclaimed Mildura Grand Hotel provided the venue for the Tourism Week 'High Tea'. Mildura Tourism partnered with Country Racing Victoria to help build local support for the racing events held in the region, with a well known Melbourne milliner providing a touch of Flemington flair.

Water and energy management is a hot topic in the region, so it was not surprising that more than 20 operators attended a Sustainable Tourism workshop, sponsored by Lower Murray Water. Tourism Victoria's sustainability expert was keynote speaker and the session enabled some operators to immediately implement new energy saving measures. The Mildura Waste Management Group presented on programs available and a local case study was profiled to participants on waste management. Lower Murray Water has now developed a 'Turning Waterwise' program, specifically targeted at the region's tourism operators.

'Talking Tourism' was a four hour live radio broadcast in the Langtree Mall, which included interviews with tourism operators and featured a guest appearance by Mildura Tourism Ambassador television personality, Carl Stefanovic.

The partnership with local media is undoubtedly a key to the success of Mildura's Tourism Weeks. Each tourism week is launched with a major media launch in a prominent location. The radio station promotes the event during the preceding month, and features live-crosses and give-aways during the week itself.

The Sunraysia Daily runs a local schools' colouring competition during the week and a sponsored Tourism Week vehicle wanders the city streets promoting specific events and running a 'local knowledge' competition.

The 2007 Mildura Tourism Week concluded with a display at the Sunraysia Farmers Markets, industry familiarisation days to local attractions - sponsored by Sunraysia Buslines - as well as a family fun day and barbeque for tourism operators at the local heritage attraction, Psyche Pumps.

Dani Harvey admits that tourism week is a resource-heavy event to run and in future they may have to look at reducing the number of events to keep it logistically manageable. Numbers are growing each year and many of the events are booked out. Sponsor partners have indicated already their willingness to participate in 2008 Mildura Tourism Week. She says that the event needs to clearly focus on community elements and to communicate the value of tourism to the local economy.



Mildura Tourism evaluates the impact and effectiveness of the week each year. For 2008 it is investigating a mechanism to evaluate the impact on the locals specifically.

Mildura Tourism Week costs about \$26,000 to run, but thanks to many generous sponsors and much in-kind assistance, it needs a budget of only \$10,000 from the coffers of Mildura Tourism - money well spent and a great example of what can be done to lift the profile of the local industry and to actively bring operators together.