

CM14.4. Albury Wodonga Visitor Economy Trends Report - 2021

DATE	10 May 2022	FIL REFERENCE	FIL22/00446
CONFIDENTIAL	No		
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Purpose of Report

To present the findings of the 2021 Albury Wodonga Visitor Economy Trends to Council.

Background

The Albury 2030 Community Strategic Plan highlights the community's recognition of the benefits tourism brings to the city's economy and lifestyle offer. As a result, AlburyCity has been an active advocate and partner to the tourism industry for many years.

The Albury Wodonga 2019 – 2023 Destination Management Plan defines the vision for the visitor economy and identifies priorities and actions required to further increase its contribution to the local and regional economy and the lifestyle offered by the cities. The primary objective includes increasing visitor numbers, length of stay and spend.

Accordingly, the Albury Wodonga Visitor Economy Trends (AWVET) report is prepared annually, in conjunction with the City of Wodonga. Data analysis is based on the calendar year with the key objective of measuring demographic, purpose and cycle of visitation and length of stay for domestic and international visitors to Albury Wodonga. The AWVET also benchmarks Albury Wodonga against other regional destinations in NSW and Victoria.

Issues

The 2021 AWVET report analysis data is provided by Tourism Research Australia (TRA), to determine the number and type of visitors to Albury Wodonga between 1 January 2021 and 31 December 2021. Data is also sourced from REMPLAN, an independent agency that provides economic industry data, to determine the economic impact of tourism on the community.

In addition, the 2021 AWVET reports on visitation to visitalburywodonga.com, visitor enquiries at the Albury Visitor Information Centre and measures social media engagement.

The outset of 2021 saw a handful of events in Albury Wodonga, held under varying levels of COVID-19 restrictions. As the year continued, the ongoing threat of COVID-19 became increasingly serious, leading to event cancellations and postponements. Border closures, travel restrictions, lockdowns and general pandemic rules prohibiting public gatherings had a major effect on the industry.

The 2021 AWWET is now finalised and has been distributed to key industry stakeholders and members of the Albury Wodonga Tourism Partner Program. A copy of the report is provided (Attachment 1 – Albury Wodonga Visitor Economy Trends 2021) for the information of Councillors.

Key findings are as follows:

Year in Review – Key highlights

- The overall economic impact on the Albury Wodonga economy was up from \$518M in 2020 to just over \$591M in 2021.
- Domestic Daytrip visitors increased by 6% during 2021.
- Overnight visitor length of stay decreased from 3.4 to 2.5 nights per trip from 2020, while;
- Overnight visitor trips increased by 29%, up from 301,000 in 2020 to 388,000 in 2021.
- Commercial properties were the most popular accommodation type, up by just over 5% in 2021.
- Visit Albury Wodonga social media followers increased by just over 24% from 2020.

Domestic Daytrip Visitors

Domestic day visitors include anyone who is above 15 years of age and who has travelled for a round trip distance of at least 50 kilometres to visit Albury Wodonga. This may include visitors from Wangaratta, Wagga, Corowa, and other nearby destinations.

Of the 727,000 day trip visitors who travelled to Albury Wodonga during 2021:

- 37% came for holiday and leisure purposes;
- 17% visited friends and relatives;
- 16% were in Albury Wodonga for business; and
- 30% visited for other reasons (this includes medical, educational etc).

During 2021, day trip visitors to Albury Wodonga spent more than \$150M, an average of \$207.00 per visitor trip.

Domestic Overnight Visitors

Historically, domestic overnight visitors have formed the backbone of Albury Wodonga's tourism industry, contributing the greatest direct economic impact to the local economy. However, due to the Coronavirus pandemic, over the past two years, we have seen a substantial decrease (approximately 60%) from previous years.

During 2021, 388,000 domestic overnight visitors came to Albury Wodonga, resulting in an increase of 29% on the previous year (301,000 nights). These visitors stayed on average 2.5 nights (970,000 nights), down from 3.4 nights on the previous year. Of these visitors:

- 28% were in Albury Wodonga for holiday and leisure purposes;
- 42% were visiting friends and relatives;
- 23% were in Albury Wodonga for business; and
- 7% were in Albury Wodonga for other reasons (this includes medical, educational etc).

Albury Wodonga's domestic overnight visitors spent an average of \$187.00 per night during 2021, resulting in an estimated total spend of more than \$181M. Daily spend of domestic overnight visitors decreased by \$18.00 per visitor from 2020.

International Visitors

TRA did not collect International Visitor data during 2021 due to international border closures and sample sizes being too small.

Financial Impact

The fiscal impact of tourism activity in Albury Wodonga was examined using spending and visitor data from TRA and the Tourism Module of REMPLAN's Regional Economic Modelling Software. The 2021 results show tourism injected more than \$591M into the Albury Wodonga economy during 2021, an increase of 14 per cent from the previous year.

The key financial findings are:

	Visitors	Average daily expenditure per trip	Average length of stay (days)	Visitor impact (000)
Domestic day visitors	727,000	\$207	N/A	\$150,489
Domestic overnight visitors	388,000	\$187	2.5	\$181,390
International night visitors*	-	-	-	-
Total direct impact				\$331,879
Total indirect impact				\$259,685
Total tourism impact				\$591,564

* Tourism Research Australia has recorded a 97.4% reduction in international visitation across NSW and Victoria for the year ending December 2021 as compared to the year ending December 2019 (pre-COVID period). As a result of the limited data available, an economic impact of international visitors to Albury Wodonga for the year ending December 2021 could not be calculated.

Visitor Information Centre

Visitor enquiries totalled 190,837 during 2021, with website visitation being the most popular medium, followed by Visitor Information Centre walk-ins.

Of the 190,837 enquiries:

- 180,556 were from the website, down from 237,536 during 2020.
- 7,234 were walk-ins, up from 5,139 the previous period.
- 2,548 were by phone, down from 3,001 during 2020; and
- 499 were by email, up from 124 during 2020.

Social Media

Followers across all Visit Albury Wodonga's social platforms have grown during the reporting period. Facebook followers increased by 38.4% making it the most popular platform with 7,453 followers. Instagram followers increased by 36.2% during 2021 taking the total followers to 5,991. Twitter followers (2,504) remained consistent with previous years.

Risk

- **Business Risk** – No risks identified.
- **Corporate Risk** – The visitation statistics contained in this report are based on sample data collected by Tourism Research Australia (TRA) and therefore provide an indication of visitor trends, rather than actual performance measures. TRA collects survey data from 120,000 domestic travellers and 40,000 international travellers each year.
- **WHS and Public Risk** – No risks identified.
- **Environmental Risk** – No risks identified.
- **Delivery Program Risk** – No risks identified.

Community Engagement

The 2021 AWWET has been developed to assist in monitoring performance against Albury 2030 objectives and those incorporated in the Albury Wodonga 2019 – 2023 Destination Management Plan. Both were developed in collaboration with the community and industry.

The 2021 AWWET is available to download from the [Visit Albury Wodonga](#) and [Invest Albury Wodonga](#) websites. The report has been distributed to Albury Wodonga Tourism Partner Program members and key local, regional, and state organisations.

Conclusion

Tourism plays a significant role in the social, cultural, and economic liveability of Albury Wodonga. The effect of tourism is not limited to the accommodation, cafes and restaurants, retail, and personal services sectors; the indirect financial and employment benefits filter through to all but a few industries.

For twelve years, AlburyCity has been actively working to increase the industry's contribution to the sustainable growth, development and vibrancy of Albury and the region. Work continues to be undertaken to promote the Visit Albury Wodonga brand, increase and explore opportunities required for effective marketing and promotion of the destination, actively drive growth in the conference, business, sports and recreation events market and provide high-quality visitor information services and experiences.

Analysing data from the 2021 calendar year, the report shows a dramatic decrease in visitation across domestic day visitors, overnight visitors and visitor trips and international visitors when compared to previous years (except for 2020). The ongoing reduced level of tourism economic activity during 2021 was attributed to the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 and travel restrictions both

domestically and from international border closures. Despite the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 Visitor Economy Trends were slightly improved in most categories when compared to the 2020 data.

As we move forward the team will continue to actively work with Tourism Australia, our State Tourism agencies, Murray Regional Tourism and Destination Riverina Murray, to develop and implement marketing initiatives and campaigns to constantly amplify Albury Wodonga in visitor's consideration, when planning holidays, to drive conversion.

The report will continue to be produced annually, delivering comparative year on year analysis. This is to provide business-critical information to guide business development, marketing strategy, creation of tactical plans, funding applications and measure performance against objectives identified in Albury's 2030 Community Strategic Plan and the Albury Wodonga 2019 – 2023 Destination Management Plan.

Recommendation

That Council receives and notes the 2021 Albury Wodonga Visitor Economy Trends report.

Attachments

1. Albury Wodonga Visitor Economy Trends 2021 (DOC22/94719).