



DIAMANTINA SHIRE COUNCIL

TOURISM STRATEGY 2025-2028

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Introduction

The Diamantina Shire Council aims to transform its region into a premier outback Queensland tourism destination by leveraging its unique natural assets, rich historical heritage, and iconic events. This three-year strategy outlines our vision to increase visitor numbers by 25% and extend average stays from 4 to 5 nights, while developing sustainable tourism infrastructure and experiences.

The Diamantina Shire Council has determined that the development of Tourism is a major activity for Council. As a result, the Tourism Strategy links into the Shire of Diamantina's Corporate Plan 2022-2027 and has been developed as a direct action from the Council's Operational Plan 2024/2025:

Strategic Theme – Our Economy

- **Goal** – Flourishes from a growing tourism industry and continuation of major events.
- **Action 3.2.4** - Review and update the Tourism Strategy

Vision

“To establish the Diamantina region as Queensland's premier outback destination, offering authentic experiences that celebrate our natural environment, cultural heritage, and community spirit.”

Strategic Goals

In order to achieve our vision for tourism in the Shire the below five Strategic Goals have been defined to guide future tourism development.

- 1. Enhancement of the Visitor Experience** – We will leverage our unique assets to have a wide range of high quality tourism products.
- 2. Signature Events and Festivals** – We will work to expand and promote our signature events to drive increased tourism.
- 3. Telling Our Story** – We will define our identity and tell our stories as a point of differentiation.
- 4. Infrastructure Development** – We will have modern infrastructure and essential services supporting the visitor economy.
- 5. Stakeholder Engagement and Partnerships** – We will foster collaboration between local businesses, tourism operators and regional bodies to enhance the visitor experience.

This strategy aims to position the Diamantina Shire as a vibrant and sustainable tourism destination, capitalising on its unique events, landscapes, and heritage. Through targeted development, strategic partnerships, and a commitment to sustainability, the Diamantina Shire will thrive as a must-visit outback destination.

“Our Vision is to establish the Diamantina region as Queensland's premier outback destination, offering authentic experiences that celebrate our natural environment, cultural heritage, and community spirit.”

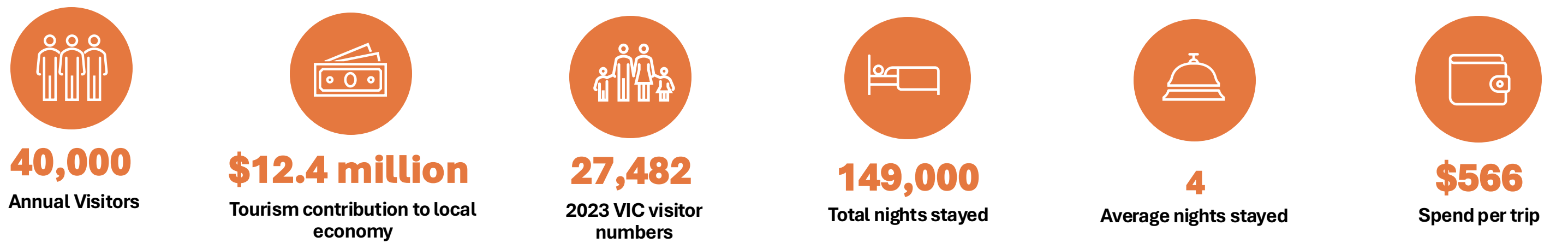
Tourism Statistics

Experience the
outback
adventure



The Diamantina Shire is a treasure trove of unique attractions and experiences that draw visitors from across the globe. The industry attracts 40,000 visitors worth \$12.4 million to the local economy per year with its iconic attractions like the Birdsville Hotel, the towering Big Red Sand Dune, and the vast Simpson Desert, all complemented by unique events such as the legendary Birdsville Races, Bedourie Camel Races, and the Big Red Bash. Whether exploring on 4WD tours, camping under expansive outback skies, or following heritage trails, the region offers a rich blend of adventure, history, and culture

Key statistics include:





Council's Role in Tourism

The Diamantina Shire Council (DSC) plays eight fundamental roles in tourism development:

1. Destination Marketing

- Lead strategic destination marketing initiatives
- Develop and maintain consistent positioning and messaging
- Manage public relations and media engagement
- Oversee events development and management
- Coordinate marketing campaigns across multiple channels

2. Industry Development

- Support emerging local tourism businesses
- Provide business mentoring and guidance
- Facilitate operator training and development
- Assist with grant applications and funding opportunities

- Enable technology adoption and digital transformation

3. Place Management

- Enhance and maintain the public realm
- Implement placemaking initiatives and activation programs
- Lead community capacity building projects
- Manage heritage conservation and interpretation
- Coordinate streetscape improvements and maintenance

4. Tourism Infrastructure

- Develop and maintain visitor facilities
- Ensure appropriate signage and wayfinding
- Manage council-owned tourism assets
- Coordinate infrastructure planning and development
- Oversee safety and accessibility improvements

5. Fostering Partnerships

- Build and maintain relationships with state tourism bodies
- Coordinate with neighboring councils on regional initiatives
- Engage with local Indigenous communities
- Facilitate industry networking and collaboration
- Liaison with state and federal government agencies

6. Planning Scheme

- Streamline approval processes for tourism developments
- Provide clear guidelines for tourism operators
- Enable appropriate development in key tourism precincts
- Balance conservation with development opportunities

7. Advocacy

- Represent regional tourism interests to government
- Advocate for infrastructure funding
- Support insurance affordability initiatives
- Champion regional tourism opportunities
- Promote sustainable tourism development

8. Industry Collaboration

- Coordinate visitor information services
- Support industry networking and knowledge sharing
- Facilitate collaborative marketing initiatives
- Enable cooperative destination management
- Share market intelligence and visitor data



BACKGROUND



Our Shire

Discover the Diamantina Shire



Diamantina Shire (the Shire) is located in Central West Queensland and has operated as a Local Government Area (LGA) since 1879. The Shire covers an area of 95,000km² and is often referred to as ‘corner country’ as it borders South Australia and the Northern Territory. Parts of the Shire are also referred to as ‘channel country’ because of the network of western Queensland rivers, which during the wet season, create an extensive flood plain. Approximately 25% of the Shire consists of national parks and includes the famous Munga Thirri (Simpson Desert) as well as the Diamantina and Astrebla Downs National Parks.

There are approximately 1,684kms of roads in the Shire with only 260kms of major road infrastructure currently sealed. It is envisaged that over the next five year period all of the major roads into and through the region will be sealed. Excluding the two small urban areas of Birdsville and Bedourie, there are 14 properties in the entire Shire with an average area of 6,800km².

The two main urban areas in the Shire are Bedourie and Birdsville which have an estimated population of 200 people (Bedourie with approximately 100 and Birdsville with approximately 100) as well as additional people living and working on the major cattle stations.

The major employer within the Shire is Council, which is headquartered in Bedourie and has a major depot as well as a Visitor Information Centre in Birdsville.

Whilst mobile phone coverage is available in Bedourie and Birdsville, there is very limited

coverage elsewhere throughout the Shire. This does have implications for the use of technology for marketing and visitor information purposes.

From a destination positioning perspective, the Birdsville Hotel and Big Red are recognised as two of the most iconic products in the outback tourism region of Queensland and the Birdsville Races and Big Red Bash are well covered as iconic annual events. Whilst Bedourie also has adequate services and facilities (swimming pool and spa, public hall facility, pub and roadhouse), it is not as well-known as Birdsville, but has positioned itself as a genuine authentic outback town. There is, as to be expected, a degree of rivalry between the two towns yet both are able to offer quite different but complimentary experiences. The Shire is also home to another iconic outback town in Betoota. Since its reopening in 2018, The Betoota Hotel has now had a new burst of life with new owners. The town continues to host the annual gymkhana and race meeting that attracts visitors from all over Australia.

In geographic terms the Shire is positioned by Tourism Queensland as part of the Far West subregion of the Outback Region



The Diamantina – Cattle Country

Our Towns

A gateway to the outback



Birdsville

Birdsville has a population of approximately 100 and lies 12 kilometers north of the SA border. Pre-federation, the town was a tolling point for the drovers transporting cattle between the colonies. After federation, in 1901, tolls were abolished, and the town fell into decline.

However, in recent times, Birdsville has grown to meet the demands of the growing domestic tourism industry and is now home to a historic and charismatic hotel/motel, one of Australia's only licenced bakeries, two service stations, tourist park, budget accommodation, hardware store, steel fabricator and a number of tourism operators.

Birdsville hosts the iconic Birdsville Races and Big Red Bash each year.

Bedourie

The Shire's administration centre has a population of approximately 100 people. It boasts many modern amenities including a Community Centre, Health Clinic, School, historic hotel, motel, roadhouse, caravan-park, unique desert golf course, flood lit tennis courts, and arguably the town's premier facility an aquatic centre with a hot artesian spa.

Bedourie, meaning 'dust storm', was first established as a Cobb & Co coach stop and watering point for drovers on the north-south stock route. The town's water, sourced directly from the great artesian basin, is celebrated as being Australia's best.

Betoota

Originally a Cobb & Co rest stop, Betoota, all but disappeared after the last horse-drawn Cobb & Co coach service ran in 1924. However, a Polish immigrant bought the Betoota Hotel in 1953 and lived in and managed the hotel, until his retirement in 1997.

The hotel has now had a new burst of life with new owners, purchasing it in 2018. The town continues to host the annual gymkhana and race meeting that attracts visitors from all over Australia.

Left picture // The iconic Birdsville Hotel

Bottom picture // The Betoota Hotel





Left Picture // Gibber Plains
Below Picture // Atop Big Red
Bottom Picture // The Diamantina River

Our Natural Wonders

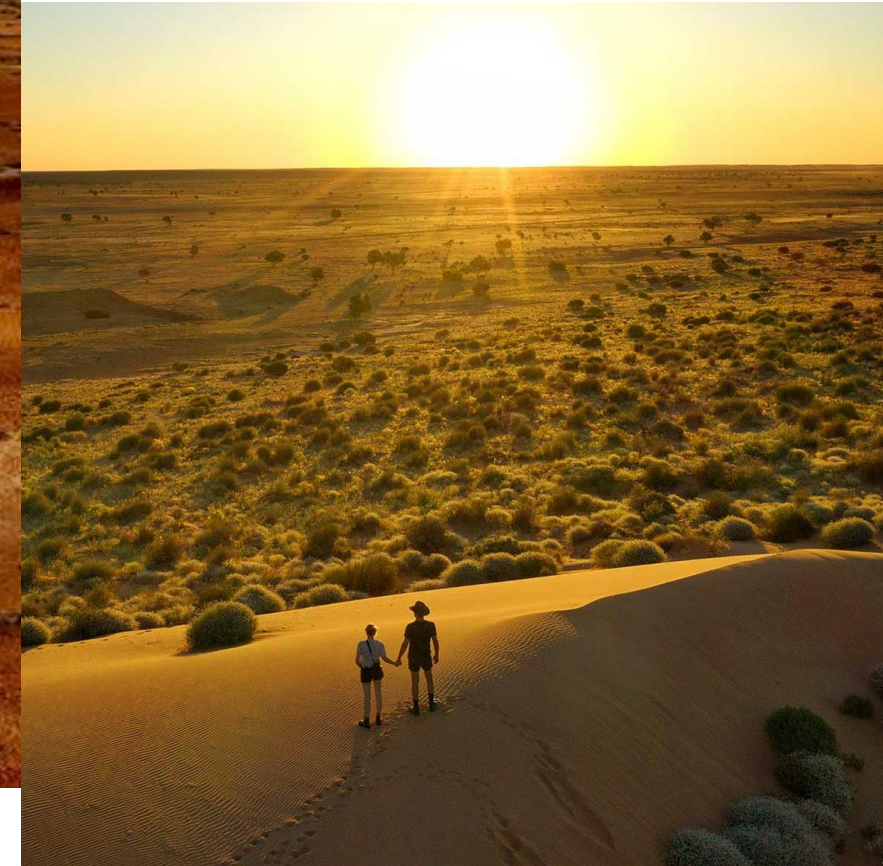
Nature's spectacle

The Diamantina Shire is a region of immense biodiversity, where a wide range of species thrive within its varied landscapes. The Shire's wetlands are a biodiversity hotspot, supporting a rich array of aquatic plants, fish, and invertebrates, alongside countless bird species that rely on these ecosystems for feeding and breeding. The arid deserts, though harsh, are teeming with life, from hardy shrubs and grasses to uniquely adapted animals such as kangaroos, lizards, and even nocturnal predators like owls and dingoes.

This biodiversity extends to the Shire's river systems, which act as lifelines for both flora and fauna in this otherwise dry environment. These waterways support lush vegetation and provide essential habitats for a variety of species, including endangered and rare wildlife. The Shire

is also home to unique bird species, such as the Eyrean grass wren and the Australian bustard, making it a significant area for ornithologists and birdwatchers.

The rich biodiversity of the Diamantina Shire underscores its ecological importance and highlights the need for ongoing conservation efforts. Eco-tourism activities, including guided nature walks and wildlife observation tours, will allow visitors to experience this biodiversity firsthand while contributing to the protection and preservation of these vital ecosystems. Conservation projects in the region focus on protecting endangered species, restoring habitats, and promoting sustainable land use practices, ensuring that the Shire's biodiversity continues to flourish.



Our Community & Lifestyle

A close-knit community with a unique lifestyle



Left picture // Relaxing in the Diamantina

Bottom picture // Bedourie Races

Above // Bedourie Races

The Diamantina Shire is characterised by a strong sense of community and a vibrant local culture that permeates every aspect of life in this remote region. Residents enjoy a close-knit community where neighbors know each other by name, and social gatherings are a cornerstone of local life. This communal spirit is reflected in the Shire's various cultural events and traditions, which celebrate the area's rich heritage and foster a deep sense of belonging among its inhabitants.

Despite its remote location, the Diamantina Shire offers excellent local services and facilities that contribute to a high quality of life. The Shire is well-equipped with essential amenities, including two

health clinics, two schools, and two playgroups, ensuring that families have access to necessary education and healthcare services. The presence of police stations adds to the sense of security and well-being within the community.

Life in the Diamantina Shire is marked by a balance of work and leisure, with residents enjoying a lifestyle that allows them to take full advantage of the region's natural beauty and recreational opportunities. Whether it's participating in community events, exploring the great outdoors, or simply enjoying the tranquility of rural life, the Shire offers a fulfilling and enriching environment that makes it a unique and desirable place to live.





Our Tourism Profile

The Diamantina Shire contains one of the world's most fragile and unique desert ecosystems, rare flora and fauna, national parks and channel country and significant history. National Parks comprise 25 per cent of the shire's area and include the Simpson Desert, Diamantina National Park and Astrebla National Park.

Tourism statistical data specific to Diamantina Shire is very limited. Diamantina Shire forms part of the Outback Queensland tourism region which encompasses 17 other local government areas. For the year ending September 2021, domestic overnight visitation to Outback Queensland increased 2.4 per cent to 977,000 people compared with the previous three-year trend. Expenditure during the same period was \$653 million, which represents a decrease of 2.3 per cent. The majority (98%) of Outback Queensland visitation is domestic visitors. There were an estimated 40,000 domestic overnight

visitors to Diamantina Shire in 2023. Over this period, those visitors stayed approximately 78,000 nights per year.

The largest of Diamantina Shire's events is the Big Red Bash which incorporates Australia's most remote major music festival. The Big Red Bash is hosted at the Big Red Dune, 35km west of Birdsville on the eastern edge of the Simpson Desert. The attendance recorded for the 2024 event was around 8,000 people down from the 11,000 in the previous years. The event in its current form will unfortunately, not be held in 2025, however, a scaled down, more intimate concert has been proposed in its place. Big Run Events is the organiser of the Big Red Bash with assistance provided by a number of sponsors including Tourism and Events Queensland, Outback Queensland Tourism Association and DSC.

The Simpson Desert Conservation Park which contains the world's largest area of parallel sand dunes, is closed annually from 1 December to 15 March to ensure public safety as temperatures can exceed 50 degrees.

In addition to direct financial sponsorship to events, DSC also provides in kind support in the form of hire equipment, waste collection, provision of portable toilets and bins. DSC introduced an environmental levy involving a special charge for tourists visiting Birdsville to attend the races, which assisted to meet some of the additional costs incurred by DSC during the event period.

Tourism activity and visitation are focused on the dry 'winter' season which generally runs from Easter (late March) through to late October. While there has been a consistent periods of drought, the last three years have been an exception, where extensive flooding has occurred. This has had a significant impact on visitation and the coordination of events. This is due to the roads and event grounds during the tourism season becoming virtually impassable due to high river levels and flooding.

Tourism sector growth is constrained by marketing which refers to the tourist season being in the winter months only and by media which provides a negative portrayal of Birdsville in summer. However, current summer visitors are likely to experience closed or limited opening hours of businesses and difficulty accessing the range of services and goods available to visitors during winter.



“In 2023, the event generated an estimated \$12.3 million in economic benefit”

Birdsville Races

The Melbourne Cup of the Outback

Known as the 'Melbourne Cup of the Outback,' the Birdsville Races have been running since 1882 and represent one of Australia's most iconic outback events. The event can typically attract around 3,000 - 7,000 visitors to Birdsville, effectively transforming the town into a bustling festival destination.

The event generates an estimated \$12.3 million in economic benefit for the state (2023 figures) and requires significant infrastructure support, including temporary accommodation for thousands of visitors. The race meeting features a 13-race program across two days, but the event's atmosphere extends well beyond the track, with visitors typically staying for 4-7 days. The Birdsville Hotel becomes the social hub, serving an estimated 80,000 beers over the

event period. The races also support various community organisations through volunteer involvement and fundraising opportunities.

The visitor markets that come for the race week are varied and cut across a number of market segments and sources which is important to maintain. The ability to increase visitor length of stay beyond a week is constrained by transportation limitations (road and air access), accommodation and general accessibility to Birdsville.

There is an opportunity to attract more families to the event through the creation of a Birdsville Races “festival” in the town and attracting more food vendors, attractions and performances outside of the Racing and Pub.





“The three-day festival typically attracts around 10,000 attendees”

Big Red Bash

The most remote music festival in the world

Billed as the world's most remote music festival, the Birdsville Big Red Bash takes place against the stunning backdrop of Big Red, the 40-meter high sand dune that marks the eastern edge of the Simpson Desert. The festival, which began in 2013, has grown to become Australia's largest outback music event. The three-day festival typically attracts around 10,000 attendees each year, making it temporarily the largest town in the region.

The economic impact of the Big Red Bash is substantial, estimated at approximately \$15 million for the state in 2023. The festival features predominantly Australian artists and has hosted legendary performers such as Paul Kelly, Midnight Oil, and Jimmy Barnes. The event is particularly notable for its family-friendly atmosphere, with children under 11 attending

free, and its unique setting where most attendees camp on-site, creating a temporary desert community. The festival also holds several world records, including the World's Largest Nutbush Dance (2023) with 4,084 participants, and has become known for its dog-friendly policy, with approximately 1,000 dogs attending annually.

The event in its current form will unfortunately, not be held in 2025, however, a scaled down, more intimate concert has been proposed in its place. While the Bash is scheduled to return in full in 2026, Council needs to be ready and willing to fund and/or arrange an alternative event in its place to ensure the visitors still have a reason to visit the Diamantina during this time, should the event not return



Visitor Target Markets

The current visitor market is noted as primarily being the 50+ or “Grey Nomad” market with the time and disposable income to visit the Shire. While, its important to continue to focus on this key market there is opportunity to increase visitor numbers by also focusing on the SINKS/DINKS and families markets.

Grey Nomads

Grey Nomads, typically retired couples exploring Australia by road, are drawn to the Shire’s vast landscapes, cultural experiences, and iconic events such as the Birdsville Races. This group values slow, immersive travel, seeking self-drive routes, campgrounds, and easy access to nature and heritage sites.

Key characteristics of this target market include:

- Numerous stopovers and long length of stay in Outback, so long drives.
- Much higher proportion of interstate visitors.
- It’s all about the journey and meeting people.
- Low yield due to low use of accommodation and lower use of attractions etc.

SINKS/DINKS

Refers to ‘Single Income No Kids’ or ‘Dual/Double Income No Kids’. That is, adults with no children, usually aged between 18 and 49. They holiday more often, usually doing weekend trips of one to three nights.

Key characteristics of this target market include:

- Essentially intrastate visitors, 400-500km radius
- Its about the destination and doing something ‘different’, adding a little excitement.
- Lower yield due to low use of accommodation or lower end accommodation plus lower use of attractions.
- Higher yield through consumption of food and beverage, they like to eat out and enjoy dining.
- Volatile market as requires ‘different’ experience drawcard and will be impacted over time by decline in numbers of younger people migrating from rural regions nationally.
- Only one stopover and short stays (1-2 nights) within a 3-4 hour drive.

Families

Families, look for adventure and educational experiences that entertain and engage young travelers, making outback experiences like 4WD tours, stargazing, and wildlife encounters key offerings. They are most likely to take more holidays in Australia and Queensland and will stay between 4 and 14 nights.

Key characteristics of this target market include:

- Higher household income/disposable income.
- There are more interstate holiday visitors in this group than intrastate.
- Interested in transformational experiences.
- Its about the adventure and discovery of the Outback
- Higher yield as keen on tours and activities that educate, like to eat out and enjoy dining.
- Strong latent potential as missing connection to right information - the Outback doesn’t scare them.
- Multiple stopovers with short stays, however, accept the notion of a 10-14 day travel and that they may need to go back again.

Key Market Profiles

Self-Drive Tourism

The self-drive market represents the largest visitor segment for the Diamantina Shire, with most visitors arriving by private vehicle. This market predominantly consists of "Grey Nomads" and 4WD enthusiasts seeking outback adventures. Peak travel occurs during the winter months (May to September) when weather conditions are optimal. The average self-drive visitor stays 4-5 nights within the shire, typically splitting time between Birdsville and Bedourie, with extended stays during major events. This market generates significant economic impact through fuel purchases, accommodation, supplies, and touring activities, with average daily spend estimated at \$180 per person. Recent trends show an increasing demand for EV charging infrastructure and improved mobile connectivity along major routes, particularly the Birdsville Track and Diamantina Developmental

Road (Boulia to Birdsville). While the EV market is in its infancy and not a priority in the short term it is prudent for Council to continue to monitor it and be able to adjust according to demand.

Self-Drive Market Needs:

- Enhanced way-finding and interpretive signage
- Well marked and accessible points of interest.
- Regular road condition updates and communication
- Reliable fuel supplies and mechanical services
- Caravan parking and dump points
- Rest areas with basic amenities
- EV charging infrastructure

Camping and Outdoor Recreation

There is considerable overlap between the Self-Drive Tourism and Camping markets. The camping market in Diamantina Shire has seen substantial growth and popularity. This market includes both traditional campers at established sites and adventure campers seeking remote experiences. The market shows strong seasonality, with peak demand during the cooler months and event periods. Campers typically stay longer than other visitors, with an average stay of 4-5 nights, and demonstrate high rates of return visitation (approximately 35% are repeat visitors). The market generates direct revenue through camping fees and indirect revenue through supply purchases and tour bookings. Growing trends include demand for basic amenities at remote sites, increased interest in eco-camping experiences, and rising demand for glamping options during major

events. The camping market has proven particularly resilient during economic downturns, though it remains weather-dependent.

Self-Drive Market Needs:

- Establishment of rest areas throughout the Shire
- Developing of additional designated camping areas that can be booked online.
- Improved online booking and information systems
- Creating themed drive routes with supporting interpretation (Sidney Kidman, Burke and Wills)
- Emergency services coverage
- Glamping options for events
- Implement a coordinated road condition reporting system

Adventure and Nature-Based Tourism Market

The Diamantina Shire's unique landscape, including the Simpson Desert, Channel Country, and Astro-tourism opportunities, positions it as a premier destination for adventure and nature-based tourism. This market segment has shown consistent growth over the past three years, driven by increasing domestic interest in remote experiences and unique natural phenomena. Primary activities include desert exploration, astronomy experiences, wildlife viewing, and geological tourism. The market demonstrates strong shoulder season visitation patterns, helping to extend the traditional tourism season.

The market consists of several distinct sub-segments:

- Desert adventurers (4WD enthusiasts crossing the Simpson Desert)
- Astro-tourists (drawn by DarkSky opportunities)
- Wildlife enthusiasts (particularly birdwatchers during flood events)
- Geological tourists (studying unique desert formations)
- Photography groups (capturing landscape and night sky images)

Average length of stay is 3-4 nights, with higher-than-average daily spending of approximately \$250 per person due to specialized tour bookings and equipment needs. This market shows strong potential for growth, particularly in the emerging astro-tourism sector following Dark Skies accreditation.

Adventure and Nature-Based Market Needs:

- Designated 4WD tracks and trail marking
- Dark Sky viewing areas and facilities
- Wildlife viewing platforms and hides
- Interpretive signage and information
- Emergency communications infrastructure
- Specialized guide services
- Equipment hire facilities
- Weather monitoring systems

Event Tourism Market

The Diamantina Shire's events calendar is anchored by two internationally recognized events - the Birdsville Races and the Big Red Bash which can attract over 17,000 visitors annually. The event tourism market extends beyond these flagship events to include the Bedourie Races, Betoota Races,

Bedourie Camel Races, cultural festivals and sporting events. Event tourists typically stay longer (average 5-7 nights) and spend more (average \$320 per day) than general visitors.

Key event market segments include:

- Racing enthusiasts (Birdsville and Bedourie Races)
- Music festival attendees (Big Red Bash)
- Cultural event visitors (heritage festivals, Indigenous events)
- Sports event participants (desert racing, endurance events)
- Special interest groups (camel racing circuit, rodeos)

Event tourism generates significant economic impact through:

- Direct event spending (tickets, merchandise)
- Accommodation bookings
- Food and beverage consumption
- Transport services
- Local tours and experiences
- Support services (event setup, catering, security)

Event Tourism Market Needs:

- Expandable event spaces
- Temporary accommodation infrastructure
- Enhanced waste management systems
- Mobile telecommunications capacity
- Power and water infrastructure
- All-weather access roads
- Medical services capability
- Transport management systems



Tourism Product Stocktake

The tourist products in the Diamantina Shire is anchored by its iconic events, natural attractions, and cultural heritage. attracting thousands of visitors annually and significantly boosting the local economy. Beyond this, the region offers a range of outback experiences, including self-drive adventures, camping, birdwatching, and visits to landmarks like Big Red Sand Dune and Diamantina National Park.

The market is still developing, with room to expand the variety and quality of tourism products. Opportunities exist to diversify offerings, such as guided indigenous cultural tours, adventure activities like 4WD expeditions, and eco-tourism experiences that focus on the unique flora and fauna of the outback.

Strengthening these products can help the Shire tap into emerging travel trends and extend visitor stays beyond peak event seasons, thereby supporting year-round tourism growth.

Product name	Council Asset	Product Category	Product Type
Birdsville			
Big Red	No	Attraction	Historic Site, Natural Scenery
Birdsville Airport	Yes	Infrastructure	Commercial airport
Birdsville Court House	Yes	Attraction	Historic site
Birdsville Races	No	Event	Horse racing (September)
Big Red Bash	No	Event	Music Festival (July)
Birdsville Hotel	No	Food & Drink Accommodation	Historic pub
Birdsville Bakery	No	Food and Drink	Bakery & Café
Karrawa Warinya Coffee	No	Food and Drink	Café
Big Red Tours	No	Tour	Guided tours
Birdsville Aviation	No	Tour	Scenic flights (Birdsville Hotel)
Birdsville Sights Tour	No	Tour	Guided tours (Birdsville Hotel)
Birdsville Roadhouse	No	Fuel, Food and Drink	Roadhouse
Big Red Sunset Tour	No	Tour	Guided Tour (Birdsville Hotel)
Birdsville Fuel Service / Post Office / Annandale Trading Co.	No	Fuel	Fuel service and retail
Birdsville Caravan Park	Yes	Accommodation	Caravan Park
Birdsville Lodge	Yes	Accommodation	Rooms and Cabins
Wirrarrri Visitor Centre	Yes	Attraction	Visitor Information Centre
Birdsville Golf Course	No	Attraction	Golf course

Product name	Council Asset	Product Category	Product Type
Birdsville (cont...)			
Birdsville Bronco Branding, Campdraft and Rodeo	No	Event	Bronco Branding, Campdraft and Rodeo (July)
Birdsville Horse and Motorbike Gymkhana	No	Event	Horse and Motorbike Gymkhana (October)
Munga Thirri (Simpson Desert)	No	Attraction	Natural scenery
Burke and Wills Tree	Yes	Attraction	Historic site
Carcoory Homestead	No	Attraction	Historic site
Cacoory Bore	No	Attraction	Historic site
Simpson Desert Ultra	No	Event	Ultra marathon (TBA)
Town Common (Free Camping)	Yes	Attraction & Camping	Natural scenery, creeks and billabong
Waddi Trees	No	Attraction	Natural scenery
Two Boys Dreaming	Yes	Attraction	Historic site
Bedourie			
Bedourie Caravan Park	Yes	Accommodation	Caravan Park
Bedourie Hotel	No	Food & Drink Accommodation	Historic Pub
Bedourie Mud Hut	Yes	Attraction	Historic site
Bedourie Outback VIC	Yes	Attraction	Visitor Information Centre
Bedourie Camel Races	No	Event	Camel Races
Bedourie Races	No	Event	Horse racing
Bedourie Campdraft, Rodeo and Gymkhana	No	Event	Campdraft, Rodeo and Gymkhana
Bedourie Swimming Pool and Artesian Spa	Yes	Attraction	Swimming and recreation

Product name	Council Asset	Product Category	Product Type
Bedourie (cont...)			
Bedourie Airport	Yes	Infrastructure	Commercial airport
Bedourie Golf and Leisure Club	No	Attraction	Golf course
Cuttaburra Crossing	Yes	Attraction	Natural scenery
Hutchison Monument	Yes	Attraction	Historic site
King Creek Crossing	Yes	Attraction	Historic site
Vaughan Johnson Lookout	Yes	Attraction	Historic site, Natural scenery
Lake Machattie	No	Attraction	Natural scenery
Unmarked Afghan Grave	No	Attraction	Historic site
Astrebla Downs	No	Attraction	Natural scenery, National park
Simpson Desert Oasis Roadhouse	No	Food & Drink Accommodation	Roadhouse
Diamantina Lakes	No	Attraction & Camping	Natural scenery, National Park
Betoota			
Betoota Hotel	No	Food & Drink Camping	Historic Pub
Betoota Horse and Motorbike Gymkhana	No	Event	Horse and Motorbike Gymkhana (June)
Betoota Races	No	Event	Horse racing (September)
Dreamtime Serpent	Yes	Attraction	Historic site
Deon's Lookout	Yes	Attraction	Historic site

Accommodation Stocktake

The accommodation market in the Diamantina Shire is characterised by a mix of options that cater primarily to adventure tourists, self-drive travelers, and event attendees. Available accommodations range from basic caravan parks and campgrounds to a limited number of motels and lodges in the key towns of Birdsville and Bedourie.

Demand for lodging peaks during major events such as the Birdsville Races and Big Red Bash, often exceeding local capacity and prompting visitors to rely on temporary camping setups. While the existing infrastructure serves the region’s core markets, there is an opportunity to diversify and upgrade the accommodation offerings, particularly by introducing eco-friendly cabins, glamping options, and enhanced amenities at campgrounds.

Expanding the range of accommodations can help the Shire attract a broader demographic of travelers, including families and younger tourists seeking more comfort without sacrificing the outback experience..

Product name	Category	Capacity	Location
Birdsville			
Birdsville Hotel	Hotel/Motel	27 motel units	Adelaide St, Birdsville
Birdsville Lodge	Accommodation	49 accommodation units	Graham St, Birdsville
Birdsville Caravan Park	Caravan Park	84 powered sites 3 Cabins 6 Motel units (non-ensuite) 3 Motel Units (with ensuite)	Florence St, Birdsville
Town Common free camping	Camping	-	Town Common
Bedourie			
Bedourie Hotel	Hotel/Motel	10 motel units	1 Herbert St, Bedourie
Bedourie Caravan Park	Caravan Park	5 powered sites 10 unpowered sites (caravan) 20 unpowered sites (camping)	Nappa St, Bedourie
Simpson Desert Oasis Roadhouse	Roadhouse & accommodation	4 motel units 18 Cabins 40 camping sites	Herbert St, Bedourie
Town Common free camping	Camping	-	Town Common
Betoota			
Betoota Hotel	Hotel/Camping	-	Betoota
TOTAL		279	
Built accommodation		120	
Caravan and camping sites		159*	

* Does not include the free camping throughout the Shire

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Authenticity of outback towns Birdsville, Bedourie and Betoota • The iconic Birdsville Hotel • Betoota Hotel • Bedourie Hotel • Big Red sand dune • Birdsville Races • Bedourie Camel Races • Big Red Bash • Munga Thirri / The Simpson Desert • Birdsville Race Course • Council (and community) support for tourism • Natural landscape, flora and fauna • Birdsville and Bedourie airports • Visitor Information Centres and Birdsville and Bedourie • Acquatic centre and Artesian Spa at Bedourie • Long history of indigenous population and their stories • Long history of stockman and their stories • Connection to Burke and Wills • Connection to Sidney Kidman • Viewed as the “real Australia” • The Birdsville Track	• Disjointed marketing effort • Remoteness of the Shire, which leads to: • High cost of accessing the Shire • High cost of goods and services within the Shire • Inability to cater to the “weekender” market • Unpredictable weather patterns • Unsealed roads • Restricted access to private property to develop points of interest and tourism products (e.g. 4WD) • Limited accommodation options • Limited food and beverage options • Lack of all weather visitor experiences • Tourism market restricted to cooler winter months • Summer months reported as oppressive restricting all year visitor numbers • Lack of mobile phone coverage outside of Birdsville and Bedourie town limits • Signage maintenance • Lack of ground transport and tour operators • Tourism website is outdated and in need of a refresh • Lack of robust statistical data and lack of market intelligence from the industry
Opportunities	Threats
• Develop the Birdsville Races “Festival” to include acts and vendors that cater to families and those outside of the races and the Pub. • Reinstate underwing camping at the Birdsville airport for large events • Secure access to key tourism points of interest, including Lake Machattie, Lake Koolivoo and Lake Mipia • Indigenous tourism product potential • Tag along tours • Creation of 4WD tracks and experiences • Promotion of a Camel trail to include the camel racing in Bedourie, Junday, Winton, Maree and Boulia • Attract new accommodation options, including eco-tourism and glamping • Increase international visitation • Extend the tourist season to be year-round • Update the online presence of the Diamantina • Develop destination marketing plan • DarkSkies accreditation to attract astronomy and stargazing visitors • Signage audit • Development of local Agritourism sector taking advantage of the Shire’s Cattle and stockmen history	• Ongoing flooding that affects access during tourist season • Cost of living pressures affecting the visitation to the Shire and attendance to key events • Economic downturn overall • Big Red Bash cancellation • Increasing costs to holding events in the Shire, fewer events will mean fewer visitors • High cost of air access to the Shire • Viability of a reliable air carrier in the region • Inability to grow traditional visitor markets as well as new markets • Lack of creation of all-weather visitor experiences • Increasing prices of fuel and supplies • Increasing prices of air services • Viability of race clubs • Unsealed road access to the Shire from the South • Transient tourism staff and housing them. • Having a clear vision and the funds and appetite to carry it through • Attracting and retaining staff • Climate change impacts



STRATEGY



Strategic Framework



This strategy aims to position the Diamantina Shire as a vibrant and sustainable tourism destination, capitalising on its unique events, landscapes, and heritage. Through targeted development, strategic partnerships, and a commitment to sustainability, the Diamantina Shire will thrive as a must-visit outback destination.

Left picture // Bedourie Artesian Spa

Bottom picture // Mud Hut at Bedourie

The following strategic framework has guided the development of this Tourism Strategy and should be used to direct tourism development

Vision

The vision for the Diamantina Shire's tourism and visitor economy is as follows:

"To establish the Diamantina Shire as Queensland's premier outback destination, offering authentic experiences that celebrate our natural environment, cultural heritage, and community spirit."

Strategic Goals

high-quality achieve our vision for tourism in the Shire the below five Strategic Goals have been defined to guide future tourism development.

1.Enhancement of the Visitor Experience – We will leverage our unique assets to have a wide range of high-quality tourism products.

2.Signature Events and Festivals – We will work to expand and promote our signature events to drive increased tourism.

3.Telling Our Story – We will define our identity and tell our stories as a point of differentiation.

4.Infrastructure Development – We will have modern infrastructure and essential services supporting the visitor economy.

5.Stakeholder Engagement and Partnerships – We will foster collaboration between local businesses, tourism operators and regional bodies to enhance the visitor experience.



Action Plan

All stakeholders within the Diamantina Shire need to work closely together to achieve the desired outcomes of this Tourism Strategy. Council will need to often be the promoter-facilitator for many of the actions identified, however, industry groups, individual operators, along with state government agencies, will also need to input. Securing funding grants from state government and other sources will often be required and will need to be coordinated and/or driven by Council with input from other stakeholders.

The following tables, provide the plan for achieving the goals of this Tourism Strategy, along with an indication of who will be involved. The actions are non-exhaustive and will continually need to be revalidated over time.

Goal 1: Enhancement of the Visitor Experience					
We will leverage our unique assets to have a wide range of high-quality tourism products.					
No.	Action	Measure	Budget	Timing	Priority
1.1	Conduct a signage audit and action plan to replace gateway entry signage, wayfinding and visitor information and interpretive signage.	• Signage audit complete • Relevant shire signage replaced	\$60,000	Short term	H
1.2	Ongoing marketing at trade shows and tourism conferences	• Council (and industry) to attend trade shows in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide	\$15,000 p.a	Ongoing	H
1.3	Facilitate and develop the fly-in market to be a year-round visitor market	• Meet with tour operators and service providers to promote fly-in • Greater air capacity in tours • Air capacity stretched throughout the year not just winter months	Internal	Ongoing	L
1.4	Facilitate the development of the agritourism/farm tourism experiences in the Shire, including on-farm tourism products and innovation.	• Identify those businesses and properties that could develop agritourism initiatives • Ensure at least one agritourism tour/product is operational by 2026	Internal	Long	M
1.5	Facilitate the development of Indigenous cultural tours in the Shire	• Liaise with the Traditional Owners groups within the Shire to develop opportunities. • To liaise with relevant State and Federal Government agencies to support an Indigenous business initiative for tours • Ensure at least one agritourism tour/product is operational by 2026	Internal	Long	M

No.	Action	Measure	Budget	Timing	Priority
1.6	Facilitate the development of nature-based tours in the Shire, including stargazing and astronomy	• Ensure Dark Skies accreditation for the Shire in Bedourie, Birdsville and Betoota • Identify those tour operators specialising in bird watching and nature-based tours • Ensure that at least one specific Bird Watching, nature and/or astronomy tour is operational by 2026	\$10,000	Ongoing (Dark Skies accreditation in FY25/26)	M
1.7	Facilitate the development of heritage-based tours including Burke and Wills and Sidney Kidman	• Identify tour operators focussed on heritage-based tours • Determine if there is a market for the product • If viable, ensure heritage-based tour is operational by 2026	Internal	M	M
1.8	Re develop the tourism website with up-to-date imagery, content, accommodation, tours and events.	• Tourism website updated with assistance from LGAQ • Continued focus on the drive market	\$15,000 p.a	S	H
1.9	Explore the use of technology, including the implementation of interactive Kiosks and a mobile application that provides detailed storytelling, wayfinding and sites of significance for all visitor markets.	• Interactive Kiosks installed at Bedourie and Birdsville VIC • Mobile app designed and tested • App available for download	\$95,000	S	H
1.10	Creation of an annual visitor survey and database for all tourism related businesses and products in the shire.	• Data is gathered to assist in refining marketing initiatives and identify future target markets.	Internal	S	M
1.11	Audit the current merchandise at the VICs and work with local suppliers to facilitate the sale of a range of souvenirs and material to improve commercial performance at visitor information outlets.	• Audit completed with highest selling items identified with consistent ordering • Data backed decision making in the stocking of merchandise • Increase store year on year sales • Work with local suppliers and business to sell local goods eg work shirts	Internal	Ongoing	L
1.12	Develop and implement a destination marketing campaign for the Shire.	• Agency contracted to develop and implement destination marketing campaign • Increased visitation from target markets and segments	TBC	L	M
1.13	Conduct tourism membership audit	• Audit complete to streamline operations and get the biggest return on membership spend.	Internal	M	L

Goal 1 - Expected Outcomes:

- Improved existing tourism experiences
- Visitors stay longer and spend more
- New and genuine reasons for people to visit
- Diversified and expanded tourism product

Goal 2: Signature Events and Festivals*We will work to expand and promote our signature events to drive increased tourism.*

No.	Action	Measure	Budget	Timing	Priority
2.1	Develop the Birdsville Races “Festival” to include acts and vendors that cater to families and those outside of the races and the Pub.	- Attraction of acts and music that creates a festival atmosphere for Birdsville - Attraction of additional vendors to feed the visitors adding to the festival atmosphere - Family visitation numbers	\$50,000	S (Ongoing)	H
2.2	Investigate and implement underwing camping at the Birdsville Airport for the event season	- Meet with key stakeholders in Birdsville (Birdsville Hotel) to determine feasibility - Underwing camping reinstated for 2026 Birdsville Races	TBC	M	M
2.3	Continue to work closely with Big Red Bash organisers to ensure the continuation of the event	- Big Red Bash to continue to be held in Birdsville into the future - Relationship maintained with event organisers - Cost to Council for the event reduced or compensated	Internal	L	H
2.4	Development of the “Camel Trail” to include the Camel racing circuit of Jundah, Winton, Bedourie and Boulia. Including an event in Birdsville during the reduced capacity Big Red Bash in July 2025	- Work with OQTA and TEQ to establish and support the Camel Trail - Meet with adjoining councils to work together to develop the trail - Camel Trail advertised and established for 2025 tourist season	\$70,000	S	H

Goal 2 - Expected Outcomes:

- Improved existing tourism experiences
- Visitors stay longer and spend more
- New and genuine reasons for people to visit
- The Diamantina Shire’s sense of place, character and amenity exceeds visitor expectations

Goal 3: Telling our Story*We will define our identity and tell our stories as a point of differentiation*

No.	Action	Measure	Budget	Timing	Priority
3.1	Open the Birdsville Courthouse experience to the public with hologram viewings and Birdsville history signage throughout.	- Courthouse Open to the public in early 2025 - Interactive displays in place telling the story of Birdsville and it's policing - Relocation of donated police buggy to the Courthouse site	\$350,000 <i>(Including infrastructure works)</i>	S	H
3.2	Undertake an audit of The Diamantina's online tourism content and work with businesses to fill content gaps across influential online and social media platforms	- Online Tourism content audit complete - Online content is updated and relevant	Internal	M	L
3.3	Develop and produce consistent crafted maps, guides, and other collateral to guide visitors through the region	Tourism collateral designed and printed each year in time for the tourist season	\$5,000	S	H
3.4	Partner with the Shire's Traditional Owner's groups to capture local stories to be told within the Shire's Tourism offering	- Meetings held with each of the traditional owners groups - Stories told through the kiosks, mobile app and VICs	Internal	L	L
3.5	Ensure the Bedourie Mud Hut is set up appropriately as a tourist attraction	- Mud Hut signage is designed and installed outside of the Mud Hut and Trackers Hut - Tourism visitation to the Mud hut is increased	Internal	S	M
3.6	Ensure the gallery space at the Wirrarri VIC is used to display exhibitions related to the Shire	- At least 1 exhibition in the Wirrarri gallery space, connected to community - Local artists have a place to display and sell their work	Internal	M	M

Goal 3 - Expected Outcomes:

- A consistent approach to how we talk about our destinations
- Increased awareness of the diversity of experiences on offer in our region
- Increased length of stay and visitor spend in the Shire

Goal 4: Infrastructure Development*We will have modern infrastructure and essential services supporting tourism and the visitor economy*

No.	Action	Measure	Budget	Timing	Priority
4.1	Tourism points of Interest developed between Birdsville and Bedourie at Lake Machattie, Lake Koolivoo and Lake Mipia	• Points of Interest in place and being used by visitors in FY 2025/26 • Increased nights stayed in the Shire • Increased overnight guests in Bedourie	\$500,000	M	M
4.2	Creation of a self-drive 4WD track from Birdsville to Bedourie following rabbit proof fence/Stock routes for a 2-day experience	• Assess and agree on a route with external stakeholders including landholders, traditional owners groups and government agencies. • Ensure route is created to avoid areas subject to flooding and the Bush Heritage area. • Determine level of support and cost required for Council to monitor	\$50,000	M	M
4.3	Restoration of the Birdsville Courthouse to be an interactive tourist attraction	• Courthouse Open to the public in early 2025 • Interactive displays in place telling the story of Birdsville and it's policing • Relocation of donated police buggy to the Courthouse site	\$350,000	S	H
4.4	Development of walking tracks in both Birdsville and Bedourie on Town Commons (2km, 4km, 6km, 8km, 10km)	• Bedourie sandhill graded and developed into a walking trail linked to Caravan park via the levy bank. • New walking trails identified and marketed throughout the Billabong and Pelican Point areas of Birdsville.	TBC	M	M
4.5	Attract new accommodation options, including eco-pods and small homes through a streamlined approval process and reduced fees and charges	• Liaise with relevant parties to determine interest • Market Council blocks of land and to potential developers • Identify	Internal	L	L
4.6	Investigate the feasibility of EV charging in the Birdsville (and Bedourie) to capture the increasing market	• Feasibility study completed • Liaise with surrounding Councils to determine a charging network from eastern states to the Shire	Internal	L	L

Goal 4 - Expected Outcomes:

- Modern infrastructure in the Shire that supports the tourism sector
- Visitors stay longer and spend more
- Community pride is strengthened, and residents become the Shire's best advocates
- Removal of barriers for potential tourists to visit the Shire

Goal 5: Stakeholder Engagement and Partnerships

1. We will foster collaboration between local businesses, tourism operators and regional bodies to enhance the visitor experience.

No.	Action	Measure	Budget	Timing	Priority
5.1	Continue to develop robust working relationships and partnerships with government, economic and tourism development agencies, including OQTA and TEQ.	- One shire visit per financial year - One partnership per financial year	Internal	Ongoing	H
5.2	Build working relationship with surrounding Councils, including Barcoo, Boulia, Winton, Longreach, Quilpie and Bulloo	- One shire visit per financial year - One partnership per financial year			
5.3	Undertake familiarisation tours of Diamantina Shire products and experiences for key influencers including media, industry and government stakeholders.	Familiarisation tour facilitated and promoted per year	Internal	S	H
5.4 (1.2)	Ongoing marketing at trade shows and tourism conferences	- Council (and industry) to attend trade shows in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide - Tourism staff given opportunity to attend	\$15,000 p.a	Ongoing	H
5.5	Creation of Birdsville Business Group to support the development and delivery of services in the region, particularly tourism	- Business group created with all businesses as members - Quarterly meetings held - More businesses established	Internal	Ongoing	H

Goal 5 - Expected Outcomes:

- Existing businesses thrive in the Diamantina Shire
- More businesses are established in the Shire
- Strong key tourism partnerships at local, state and federal government levels
- Collaboration with industry to manage the region as a visitor destination
- Advocacy for appropriate tourism development