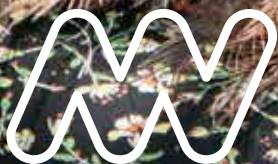




We are Victoria

Museums Victoria Regional
Engagement Plan 2020–2023



**MUSEUMS
VICTORIA**

First Peoples acknowledgement

Museums Victoria acknowledges the Woi Wurrung (Wurundjeri) and Boonwurrung peoples of the eastern Kulin Nations where we work, and First Peoples language groups and communities across Victoria and Australia.

Our organisation, in partnership with the First Peoples of Victoria, is working to place First People's living cultures and histories at the core of our practice.

Front cover: Yulendj member and honorary associate Esther Kirby sharing knowledge with Kimberley Moulton, senior curator South Eastern Aboriginal Collections
Photographer: Benjamin Healley
Source: Museums Victoria

The Murray Explored Bioscan
Photographer: Tiffany Garvie
Source: Museums Victoria

Poetry Tree, a bushfire memorial in Strathewen
Photographer: Taryn Ellis
Source: Museums Victoria

Outreach Program, Mariemont Preschool
Photographer: Rodney Start
Source: Museums Victoria

Researcher in the field, Karen Rowe, Neds Corner Bush Blitz
Photographer: David Paul
Source: Museums Victoria

Wilson's Promontory National Park Bioscan
Photographer: Caroline Farrelly
Source: Museums Victoria

Back cover: Fossil recovery, Point Impossible Beach, Torquay
Photographer: John Broomfield
Source: Museums Victoria

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Introduction

For more than 160 years, the people of Victoria have engaged with their state museum to connect the past and the present, and to imagine the future. As Australasia's largest museum organisation, Museums Victoria inspires audiences to engage in life's deep mysteries and big questions.

Museums Victoria is a major contributor to the rich cultural life of the state. In 2018–19 we connected with more than 8 million people at our museums, across our digital platforms and through our outreach programs to all parts of Victoria. Museums Victoria, as Victoria's leading museum organisation, is custodian of a rich collection that inspires significant research and engaging experiences that explore the stories of life, humans and the universe. We are uniquely placed to help audiences make sense of this world and foster greater understanding of the deep connections we have to each other and to our environment. Our role in sharing and exchanging knowledge, experiences and expertise in Victoria and beyond has never been more critical.

Museums Victoria's Strategic Plan 2017–2025 outlines our approach to evolve as a dynamic and responsive museum organisation that engages broadly and deeply with audiences across Victoria, Australia and the world.

The Regional Engagement Plan is our approach to deliver Priority Initiative 3.3—*Develop a coordinated strategy that broadens and deepens engagement with regional and rural communities* which is part of Strategic Objective 3: *Museums Victoria engages with, welcomes and celebrates all communities.*

This Regional¹ Engagement Plan brings together the story of our regional work and impact across disciplines. It builds on Museums Victoria's meaningful engagement with audiences across Victoria, collaborative work to safeguard Victoria's diverse environment, and momentum to deliver on our vision—*People enriched by wondrous discovery and trusted knowledge; society compelled to act for a thriving future.*

The Regional Engagement Plan is designed to chart a course for growth and increased impact across Victoria. It has been developed to align with key Museums Victoria strategic themes and plans including:

- First Peoples transformational theme and Strategy
- Digital Life transformational theme and *One Digital Life Strategy*
- Foundation Narratives transformational theme

¹ 'Regional' is used to denote regional and rural communities throughout Victoria. Designations of rural, regional and peri-urban areas continue to shift, particularly as Victorian regional growth plans identify land-use and infrastructure initiatives to accelerate growth including new settlement options in a broad range of peri-urban and regional towns to attract population growth away from Melbourne.



Museum outreach programs reached more than 140,000 people in 108 towns throughout Victoria

This year Museums Victoria welcomed 203,720 regional visitors to its Museums (Melbourne Museum, Immigration Museum and Scienceworks)

Museums Victoria carries out a range of significant regional partnerships. In 2018-19 a partnership with Parks Victoria continued critical research into biodiversity within Victoria's parks with the first biodiversity survey at Great Otway National Park

Virtual learning programs increased access to Museums Victoria's education content for 47 individual schools, 30 of which were located in regional and outer metro areas

255,552 students from across Victoria participated in Museums Victoria's education programs

One of the ways the organisation engages with regional Victorians is through enquiries; each year the museum receives over 10,000 enquiries (onsite and online), of which some 10% are significant research or collection enquiries

Context—Our regional activity

Our reach and impact across the state is unparalleled amongst Victoria's cultural agencies. Museums Victoria is a leading contributor to the education sector throughout Victoria and is active in every local government area through our outreach, loans, field work and onsite education. Our major research projects advance our understanding of the social and natural history of Victoria and beyond. Our inclusive exhibitions, experiences and events are important drivers of tourism to Victoria. We also support and commission a broad spectrum of local creative industries through our ongoing exhibitions and programs.

Museums Victoria currently undertakes many regional activities generated from many different parts of the organisation. Our activity can be categorised² as follows:

Reach and engagement

- Onsite visitation from residents of regional Victoria, often highest during school holiday periods and for relevant major touring exhibitions
- Outreach visits throughout Victoria, including Museum in a Van education incursions, lectures and learning kits

- Digital engagement in regional areas, including social media, collections online and online education programs
- Employer and mentor for residents in regional Victoria, including industry placements

Collections, knowledge and expertise

- Research in the fields of sciences and humanities, including multidisciplinary field work and biodiversity mapping in regional locations
- Collection development, donations and loans of collection items to and from regional centres
- Regional content and collection items embedded in Museums Victoria exhibitions and experiences
- Public enquiries and engagement in citizen science in regional areas

Collaborations

- Regional partnerships and sector collaborations
- Marketing and co-presentation partnerships in regional areas

² Categories aligned to Creative Victoria Service Agreement KPIs and Victorian Government BP3 deliverables.

Case study 1 Engagement through learning and exchange—Otways Bioscan

Museums Victoria’s collections provide a rich resource for understanding the past, present, and future of our state. A key part of the museum’s scientific research includes regular biodiversity surveys in Victoria’s regions, particularly within the national estate. With more than 237,000 square kilometres of land in the State of Victoria alone, our wildlife surveys increasingly incorporate a community approach, involving partners from government agencies, universities and community-based volunteer organisations. The development of partnerships such as these can support professional bodies and communities to address issues of contemporary relevance and public benefit.

Great Otway National Park Bioscan partnership with Parks Victoria

Through 2018–19 Museums Victoria conducted a series of surveys in selected regions of the Great Otway National Park with the key aim to support bushfire-affected communities and to promote aspects of the ‘nature value’ of the region by highlighting the wildlife and regions of palaeontological significance across the region, including the possibility of informing the development of relevant biodiversity management plans. Public engagement activities included a family friendly discovery day in Wye River, which was impacted by the 2015 bushfires. Hosted at Wye River Surf Life Saving Club in partnership with Parks Victoria, the event supported meaningful involvement and exchange of local knowledge and latest findings between community members and the Bioscan team. The day created an opportunity for participants to gain a better understanding of the recovery of local wildlife and habitat following the 2015 bushfires.

Growth

Partnerships that support exploration of habitats and species, and engagement with Victoria’s regions continue to shape our knowledge and management of Victorian biodiversity. The valuable information collected, and ongoing citizen science, directs future scientific and student research, and local community projects.





Case study 2

Initiating cultural connections— the Museum in a Van

The celebrated Museum in a Van program presents to kindergartens, aged care facilities and libraries throughout the state. Over 27,000 kindergarten children participate in the program each year, and 35% of these are located in regional Victoria.

The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) highlights the importance of museum and outreach experiences and their powerful impact on learning, particularly in the critical early childhood period when children have the greatest opportunities to develop neural pathways for learning. The Museum in a Van program enables this early learning opportunity to be accessible for families with geographic or physical barriers to visiting a museum. The kindergarten program has recently been reviewed by University of Melbourne academics, Associate Professor Trish Eadie and Sarah Young, as part of the McCoy research program. Findings demonstrate that the program is engaging and effective for preschool children's learning particularly with the strong focus on language and multi-literacies.

North-west Victoria— Mildura Arts Centre

Museums Victoria collaborates with the Mildura Arts Centre (MAC) to undertake a week long residency. The outreach program presents programs to local kindergartens visiting each day; outreach staff also visit kindergartens throughout the wider Mildura region. This collaboration is in its eighth year and enables small towns such as Murrayville in remote Victoria to have access to valuable museum learning experiences.

South-west Victoria— Edenhope Kindergarten

Edenhope kindergarten is in West Wimmera Shire in far South Western Victoria. Museums Victoria is the only cultural institution the Edenhope kindergarten engages with each year; they fundraise for outreach visits by making and selling lunch boxes to the local primary school. Geographic distance from Melbourne means it is unlikely that the Edenhope children have many opportunities to access physical museum venues.

Growth

The Museum in a Van actively takes museum programs to regional areas, providing education experiences to people who would not otherwise engage with cultural institutions. It is planned that by 2025 every kindergarten in the state will engage with the Museums Victoria outreach program.

Our future—We are Victoria

Museums Victoria’s Regional Engagement Plan offers a transformational opportunity to create stronger outcomes for all Victorians through priority projects, partnerships and activities. With a focus on collaboration and exchange, we will activate Museums Victoria’s mission by celebrating and deepening our connections with regional places, people and stories. This approach has the inclusion and meaningful participation of all Victorians at its heart.

Articulating and sharing our ongoing and compelling regional activity is an essential first step to set the stage for growth and stronger engagement. Museums Victoria’s regional engagement in many areas and disciplines is active and thriving, however there is a timely need to bring together, elevate and measure our regional work so that it can be more visible, understood, coordinated and expanded.

Defining MV Regional³ creates a compelling way to augment our regional activity to achieve greater reach and impact for all Victorians.

Key growth opportunities

- **Connect, share and collaborate—** Bring together our multiple existing activities across regional Victoria, and define, brand and promote our regional activity in a cohesive way, enabling audiences, stakeholders and partners to connect, contribute and share.
- **Data collection and impact measurement—** Implement systems to consistently track our work across the state and its impact, so that impact can be measured and extended.

- **Activate and grow regional audiences—** Increase our regional audiences through expanded outreach and education programs, community participation in research and collecting projects, greater digital reach, and increased regional visitation to all Museums Victoria museums. A key component of this will involve ‘calls to action’ at all regional touchpoints (such as lectures, outreach sites, partnerships, regional festivals) that extend the ‘invitation’ to visit a Museums Victoria museum or site or participate in digital experiences.
- **Identify, build, and secure key regional partnership—** Build and grow our work with Victorian Collections, Parks Victoria, Victorian Women on Farms Gathering and expand partnerships with regional galleries and organisations to collaborate to increase inclusion, and build social cohesion together.

³ The mechanism to brand and promote our regional activity is described in Key initiative 3, on page 14.

Principles of engagement

Connect

We foster inclusive, engaging and accessible opportunities for people to participate in and co-create shared museum experiences.

We provide opportunities for people across Victoria to access our research and collections within and beyond museum walls.

Learn

We empower discovery and build knowledge through informal and formal learning experiences.

Exchange

We collaborate and partner to mutually deepen our knowledge and to grow our regional reach and impact.

Initiate

We lead ideas and actions to equip people to secure more of Victoria’s natural, social and cultural heritage in our rapidly changing world.

Objectives

Access

Regional communities have increased access to, and engagement with, Museums Victoria’s collections, research, education and lifelong learning opportunities.

Reach

International, interstate, regional and Melbourne metro audiences engage with the unique stories and collections of regional Victoria.

Collaboration

Collaborations, including with First Peoples elders and artists, expand understanding of histories and knowledge, and First Peoples living cultures, in regional communities.

Collections, knowledge and expertise

Increased opportunities to deepen knowledge about places and equip regional communities to protect and sustain local natural, cultural and social heritage.

Key initiatives

Access

1 **Every regional school and kindergarten in Victoria by 2025** (MV Education)

2 **Museums Victoria Regional Collection Centre** (MV Collections)

Reach

3 **Share, promote and build our regional story** (MV MAC)

4 **Increasing regional connections** (MV Digital)

Collaboration

5 **First Peoples regional gallery partnerships** (MV First Peoples)

8 **Interdisciplinary regional partnerships** (MV Research)

Collections, knowledge and expertise

6 **Regional stories** (MV Stories)

7 **Redevelopment of the Victorian Collections website** (MV Digital)



Case study 3

Access to First Peoples' knowledge

Museums Victoria works in partnership with the First Peoples of this country; we place the knowledge and depth of their histories and living cultures at the core of Museums Victoria's work across diverse platforms. Through our regional field work, there is an ongoing opportunity to connect with the oldest living culture in the world and the important cultural heritage of First Peoples' communities in Victoria. Through Museums Victoria's multidisciplinary approach to regional collaboration and engagement, we connect to First Peoples' communities across the state, sharing in histories and knowledge.

Through our programs all people of regional Victoria also have increased access to understand First Peoples living cultures. An example of this impact included the 2017 expedition marking 160 years since William Blandowski explored the Murray River in 1856. A team of Museums Victoria scientists, historians and curators camped along the Murray to undertake a special anniversary project. The field work included sciences, humanities and First Peoples' teams along with local First Peoples Traditional Owners and culture and land experts to explore and profile the rich environment and natural histories of the region. A key component of the project was to connect in with local First Peoples' communities sharing histories and acknowledging the role that their Ancestors played in the Blandowski expedition over 160 years prior.

As part of this work, Elder and Yulendj Member Aunty Esther Kirby and Museums Victoria's senior curator of South Eastern Aboriginal Collections Kimberley Moulton hosted community history sessions on First Peoples history of the area and shared the collections and First Peoples exhibition at Museums Victoria. This included a display of Museums Victoria collections and Aunty Esther's personal objects, comprising a contemporary emu feather skirt she had made that was later acquired into the State Collection. First Peoples' exhibition images and multimedia were included throughout the sessions with Aunty Esther sharing with the community her knowledge of the local area and her work at Museums Victoria. The sessions included many non-Indigenous audience members of whom had not engaged with Aboriginal culture before.

Museums Victoria continues to work with First Peoples communities to strengthen relationships and to also engage non-Indigenous people with First Peoples' cultures.

Case study 4

Raising the profile of Victorian stories— Women on Farms Gathering Collection

For more than 30 years Museums Victoria has been working to uncover and record the untold stories of regional Victorian women and their contributions to society. The development of the Women on Farms Gathering Collection has played a key role in increasing the visibility of these women and their stories.

The Victoria's Women on Farms Gathering Collection is a community project involving the active participation of rural Victorian women in collecting, interpreting and sharing their histories. Developed through the annual Victorian Women on Farms Gatherings, the collection highlights the diversity of rural women's experiences, documents the contribution of women to their farms and communities, and shows the changing nature of agriculture and contemporary issues affecting the future of Victorian communities.

Of national and international significance, the collection is a valuable resource for internal and external researchers and is used for exhibitions and programs. Elements of the collection are displayed annually at the regional gatherings.

Impact

The contemporary and collaborative nature of the collection has created important community links across Victoria. Ongoing collaboration has seen many of these links evolve into long-term partnerships some of which have directly influenced the development other regional collections and research such the Victorian Bushfires collection and the Invisible Farmer Project.

Through documenting and sharing the stories of these women the collection has the capacity to facilitate conversations about where our food and fibre comes from, who produces it, and why gender equality is so fundamental in addressing issues such as climate change, rural decline, globalisation and urban sprawl. Women contribute half of the world's food supply, so it is vital that we understand and recognise their significant contributions.

Key initiatives

1 Every regional school and kindergarten in Victoria by 2025 (MV Education Experiences)

Objective	Regional communities have increased access to and engagement with Museums Victoria's collections, research, education and lifelong learning opportunities.
Initiative	Map existing reach to government, Catholic and independent regional schools and develop a planned approach to actively connect with new schools.
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Museums Victoria is active in every regional school and kindergarten in Victoria by 2025.

2 Museums Victoria Regional Collection Centre (MV Collections)

Objective	Regional communities have increased access to and engagement with Museums Victoria's collections, research, education and lifelong learning opportunities.
Initiative	Develop and implement identified short, medium and long term options for sustainable collections storage, in the context of regional engagement opportunities.
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Scope the possibility of partnered development of a major regional collection storage centre as a major strand of Museums Victoria's Sustainable Collection Storage Strategy.

3 Share, promote and build our regional story (MV MAC)

Objective	International, interstate, regional and Melbourne metro audiences engage with the unique stories and collections of regional Victoria.
Initiative	Share, promote and build our regional activity for greater visibility, reach and engagement. <ul style="list-style-type: none">Launch Museums Victoria Regional Engagement Plan.Develop and implement editorial plan for communication and promotion.Develop and implement content plan for communication and promotion.Evaluation plan.Tourism and brand involvement as opportunities arise.
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Greater awareness of Museums Victoria brand and group.Increased regional audience engagement with all Museums Victoria spaces i.e. Museum properties and digital platforms as well as outreach activities.

4 Increasing regional connections (MV Digital Life)

Objective	International, interstate, regional and Melbourne metro audiences engage with the unique stories and collections of regional Victoria.
Initiative	Whilst regional visitation to our museums is tracked and reported on, the breadth of Museums Victoria's digital channels reach and engagement with regional Victoria is not currently reported on. The <i>We are Victoria—Museums Victoria's Regional Engagement Plan</i> is an opportunity to capture and report on regional engagement. It is also an opportunity connect with existing regional digital forums and sites, including local government social media channels, to increase two-way connections.
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Connections with regional communities through digital platforms are increased.Proportion of digital engagement from regional point-of-origin increases.

5 First Peoples regional gallery partnerships (MV First Peoples)

Objective	Collaborations, including with First Peoples elders and artists, expand understanding of histories and knowledge, and First Peoples living cultures, in regional communities.
Initiative	Secure regional gallery partnership/s to take Birrarung developed exhibitions regionally and to galleries that relate to the featured artist in Birrarung.
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">One First Peoples regional gallery partnership(s) for year one.Stretch target: increase the number of First Peoples regional gallery partnerships in future years.

6 Regional stories (MV Stories)

Objective	Increased opportunities to deepen knowledge about places and equip regional communities to protect and sustain local natural, cultural and social heritage.
Initiative	Produce engaging and connected digital content for regional audiences, implemented as part of MV Stories stories roll-out.
Outcomes	<i>Regional stories</i> links with other initiatives (Initiatives 3,4,5,7,8).

7 Redevelopment of the Victorian Collections Website (MV Digital Life)

Objective	Increased opportunities to deepen knowledge about places and equip regional communities to protect and sustain local natural, cultural and social heritage.
Initiative	Redevelop Victorian Collections website in collaboration with Creative Victoria and Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA) Victoria.
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An expanded website with content from Victorian regional galleries, libraries and archives as well as museums. Connections with regional communities through digital platforms is increased. Proportion of digital engagement from regional point-of-origin increases.

8 Interdisciplinary regional partnerships (MV Research)

Objective	<p>Increased opportunities to deepen knowledge about places and equip regional communities to protect and sustain local natural, cultural and social heritage.</p> <p>Collaborations, including with First Peoples elders and artists, expand understanding of histories and knowledge, and First Peoples living cultures, in regional communities.</p>
Initiative	Place-based research and collection projects developed and implemented with regional communities and partners to encourage and support positive real-world outcomes (aligned to Museums Victoria's Research and Collections Strategy).
Outcomes	Interdisciplinary partnerships will be formed with a diverse array of government, not-for-profit, industry, academic, and community organisations to develop these collaborative projects in regional Victoria.

Our enablers

Staff and resourcing are a key enabler for the success of this Plan. Past successful regional programs with the greatest impact—including the Victorian Bushfires collection and exhibition, and the Invisible Farmer projects—resulted from the dedicated commitment of staff, financial resources and time to achieve meaningful, lasting impact.

Additional enablers include:

- Brand, Media/Communications, Audience Insights
- First Peoples Strategy
- Research and Collections Strategy
- Digital Life Strategy
- People and Culture
- Partnerships and Development

Longer term opportunities

It is acknowledged that this is a living document. With the progression and development of the Research and Collections Strategy, First Peoples Strategy and Strategic Facilities Planning, there are other distinct areas that may emerge in connection with the *We are Victoria—Museums Victoria's Regional Engagement Plan*. As the implementation of Museums Victoria's Strategic Plan progresses, other opportunities will emerge and may be included as part of this seminal Plan.

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