

The Impacts of Tourism

- **Frequently Asked Questions**
- **Environmental Issues, (incl. seagulls)**
- **Schoolies Week**

Questions Frequently Asked in Student Assignments

The following questions have been asked in order to gain understanding of tourism views related to Victor Harbor. The answers should be considered as an insight from one persons perspective rather than a complete assumption by the City of Victor Harbor council or the business community of Victor Harbor.

To gain understanding on a broader scale, students are encouraged to visit Victor Harbor, make observations and survey/ interview the broader business and general communities.

1. How is Victor Harbor going to develop?

The Victor Harbor Strategic Directions Plan is addressing Victor Harbor's development and PARs have been developed (refer council website - www.victor.sa.gov.au/site):

Our Economy:

- ◆ Protect and support existing businesses and industries.
- ◆ Attract appropriate businesses to the region.
- ◆ Encourage the development of technology-based industries.
- ◆ Address unemployment.

Urban Development:

- ◆ Plan for future urban growth in appropriate areas.
- ◆ Improve traffic movement both to and from Victor Harbor.
- ◆ Consider major development projects such as a new boat launching facility, Marina development, convention/arts centre, etc.
- ◆ Review and establish sound planning policies.

Rural Development:

- ◆ Develop better land care practices and water management plans.
- ◆ Develop new market opportunities, including value adding to farm produce.
- ◆ Promotion of those products.

Tourism:

- ◆ Further develop eco-tourism opportunities.
- ◆ Retain the heritage and character of Victor Harbor.
- ◆ Encourage the development of new tourist facilities such as a major convention centre, family and high quality accommodation facilities.
- ◆ Develop more festivals and sporting events, which capitalise on the strengths of the region.

Refer to list of websites for further detail.

2. What are some major issues for Victor Harbor ?

Cost of infrastructure to keep pace with growth such as:

- Sewerage treatment plant. (A new plant is now in operation)
- Amenities
- Recreation facilities.
- Road surfacing.
- Lack of suitable all weather boat launching facilities.
- Lack of suitable indoor venues to be able to host events during inclement winter season.
- Advertising campaigns are costly; many small businesses have limited advertising funds and are reluctant to contribute to generic campaigns.
- Businesses not able to remain viable, especially if the summer (peak) season is quiet.

Large percentage of population are retirees on set incomes:

- Lack of local support for businesses due to tight budgets.
- Council's main form of revenue is from Council Rates, increasing rates can cause undue hardship for retirees on set incomes.

3. What are some positive impacts of tourism in Victor Harbor?

- Employment has increased due to tourism in the area, with more jobs particularly in the hospitality area.
- Because of the volume of visitors to the area, infrastructure is being improved. Eg roads are being upgraded, bike tracks – benefits for whole community.
- Upgrade of established tourism businesses;
- SA Whale Centre reopened June 2000. Continual upgrades being done to the Centre.
- Whalers Inn – construction of 28 studio apartments (August 2000).
- Extension to the Victor Harbor Central Shopping Centre 2001
- New businesses attracted to the town.
- Real estate prices have increased. Properties sell quickly.
- More employment opportunities in the hospitality area.
- New business opportunities, Bed & Breakfast, attractions, Convention Market.
- More casual employment for students especially during peak season.
- South Coast District Hospital is viable due to the large number of visitors that come to this area, many country hospitals have closed.
- Job opportunities attract permanent residents.
- Local supermarkets open extended hours and weekends due to the number of visitors – casual and permanent positions created.

4. What are some negative impacts of tourism in Victor Harbor?

- If adequate infrastructure is not in place the problems caused from pollution (rubbish), damage to sand dunes, fencing and board walks and dedicated viewing areas needed to minimise damage especially during Whale season.
- Some services are stretched to the limit during peak times, medical, taxi.
- Some locals are anti tourism due to traffic problems – parking and difficulty accessing main roads during peak times.
- Protection of Penguins during peak times on Granite Island is difficult.
- Cost of maintaining or upgrading some infrastructure.
- Traffic congestion during peak times, some locals view visitors as a nuisance.
- Damage to eco area due to pollution through rubbish and inadequacy of sewerage system.
- Damage to sensitive dune areas due to visitors ignoring fenced off areas.
- Some businesses close due to financial difficulties during low season they rely on a very good peak season to sustain them through this time.
- Small family businesses find it hard to keep trained staff on payroll during low season and can only employ extra staff during peak season, this means they have to train them when they can least afford time to spend with them.

What guidelines are in place for sensitive and ethical behaviour for tourists?

- Coastcare brochures are available in the Visitor Centre.
- Information on Conservation Parks with guidelines for visitors to the Parks.
- Whale watching guidelines are also available.
- Restrictions on public movement during the time Penguins are returning to their burrows – visitors are now required to be on a guided tour during this time.
- Signs on Granite Island advising visitors not to touch Penguins, or to use flashes on their cameras or normal torch light.
- Public and local awareness raising plays a big part in this.

Could Victor Harbor become the next Gold Coast in South Australia?

- Careful planning and development ensures that Victor Harbor remains sympathetic to its natural, historical surrounds. Building restrictions in most cases prevent high rise development. The climate of Victor is changeable, causing winter tourism to be much reduced. This causes some small businesses to struggle. Victor Harbor has the potential to gain similar recognition as the Gold Coast, but its appeal would be uniquely different, as it offers wildlife, water activities, environmental experiences and unique architecture that the Gold Coast does not offer. The Gold Coast has a “Capital City” feel combined with its coastal experiences. Victor Harbor enjoys a slower social environment.

Is tourism sustainable in Victor Harbor?

- Closeness to Adelaide makes Victor Harbor an enjoyable and reachable destination for many SA locals as well as visitors from elsewhere.
- Spectacular scenery, whales, surfing beaches will continue to attract tourists
- As Victor Harbor grows in population more businesses are setting up here. More people will choose to live here as work opportunities increase. Tourism businesses rely on local spending as well as tourists.
- Tourism operators must ensure there is adequate “appeal” through developing experiences that will meet the expectations of visitors.
- Council planning needs to ensure that infrastructure supports visitors as well as locals.
- Further tourism attractions are always being investigated to ensure Victor Harbor stays on the map.

How is the Victor Harbor community consulted about tourism developments?

The city of Victor Harbor operates numerous committees that have community representation where they have a voice for concerns, ideas or support for specific developments. Alerting the committee via the media and other avenues such as the internet ensures that the community is aware of developments and proposals that are current and future planned. Reports and plans are available either via the internet or at the Council office for comment.

Refer to other headings under this webpage for other information, eg visitor statistics, visitor feedback, tourism management and strategies. Look under “Websites and useful sources” for more information on specific topics.

Impact of tourism on the environment

Does tourism have a negative impact on the environment?

Tourism can have a negative impact on the environment, to what extent depends on education and management. Some examples where careful management is required is Whale watching, this can relate to dune damage and charter boat based whale watching. In Victor this year the majority of whales have been in the Bashams Beach area (actually Alexandrina Council area) and this has placed some strain on the dune system in this area (talk to SA Whale Centre). In regards to boat based whale watching there are very strict guidelines in relation to allowable distances etc. The other obvious natural attraction in Victor Harbor that has the potential to be affected by tourism visitation is Granite Island Nature Park, this is managed by National Parks (DEH), with a commercial lease element that incorporates the penguin interpretive walks and the kiosk on the Island.

What are the main concerns about the environment?

Some of the main concerns are related to Granite Island and the declining penguin population, there has been much research into what has caused this recently and the latest

info should be sourced from the Friends of Granite Island Group (FOGI), refer to contacts on this webpage.

The other would be the state of the two rivers that run through Victor Harbor, the Inman and Hindmarsh.

What has been the impact on the beaches and sand dunes from the tourists?

Coastal development and the changing of the natural flows and movements of sand can cause damage in this area. Development over the years has removed important fore dune areas that often act as a barrier against storm surges and general erosion. The local National Parks Office can provide some info on dune damage and actions to control this damage in the Waitpinga area, refer to contacts on this webpage.

What is being done to help protect the environment?

Please visit the following site http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/coasts/encounter_marine_park.html or <http://www.wenviroment.sa.gov.au/coasts/planning.html> to research the proposed Pilot Encounter Marine Park. This is a major initiative as far as protecting the marine environment.

Local councils are constantly introducing infrastructure and policies to help protect the environment. The new sewerage treatment plant opened in Victor Harbor recently is going to improve the Inman River system as well as planned stormwater filtering systems.

A number of recycling initiatives have been introduced. There is also a regional waste management strategy.

What changes can be done to help improve the protection of the environment?

Further infrastructure investment in stormwater management, coupled with education for locals and visitors on how they can help look after the environment. Further viewing area investment particularly in relation to the popular area where Southern Right Whale migrate.

OTHER USEFUL CONTACTS – (correct as at 1/3/07)

Victor Harbor Coastcare – Ph 8552 7352

Friends of Granite Island Nature Reserve – Ph 8552 6346

National Parks and Wildlife Fleurieu District Office – Ph 8552 3677

South Coast Dune Care – Ph 8554 3476

National Trust, Victor Harbor – Ph 8552 1094

Encounter Coast Discovery Centre – 2 Flinders Parade, VH - Ph 8552 5388 (1-4pm)

Victor Harbor Heritage Society – Ph 8552 1799

Fleurieu Road Safety Group – Ph 8552 2310

Friends of the Hindmarsh River – Ph 8552 3492

THE IMPACT OF SEAGULLS IN VICTOR HARBOR

Q. When was the seagull “problem” first recognised?

A. Complaints about seagulls have been spasmodic. Public interest has become more prevalent in the past two years, possibly due to greater media attention and the prevalence of similar debates in other areas about other problem bird species (eg. Corellas, pigeons, etc.)

Q. What has been the nature of complaints to the council from the public about the seagull population?

A. There are two common arguments for controlling and /or culling of seagulls. Firstly there is concern about potential injury, particularly to small children, caused by seagulls taking their food from their hands while eating. Secondly, people are offended by the mess that seagulls can cause through their scavenging behaviour and their droppings.

Q. What reports have there been of any incidents caused by seagulls?

A. Council have had two or three unconfirmed reports over the past couple of years of children receiving facial injuries from seagulls. Anyone injured in this manner is likely to consult a doctor rather than advise the Council of the injury.

Q. What is the intended course of action to deal with the seagulls in Victor Harbor?

A. Council has sought advice from the State Government (National Parks & Wildlife Service) on action that may be taken. They have recommended educational programs for the community to discourage them from feeding seagulls. They would only consider culling as an absolute last resort. Council is using signage as a means of discouraging the feeding of seagulls.

Q. Are seagulls causing a drop of any kind in the tourism industry?

A. There is no evidence to suggest that seagulls have any impact on tourism. In fact, most tourists enjoy interacting with the feeding seagulls when they visit a seaside holiday destination. Tourism is more likely to be effected by other influences such as petrol prices, terrorism, weather, etc.

The perceived problems are summarised as follows:

The seagull population has increased significantly in recent years.

There has been a displacement of seagulls as a consequence of better management practices at Council's landfill.

The feeding of seagulls by residents and tourists is attracting the birds in greater numbers to areas where people frequent.

The feeding of the birds had made them less timid around humans; as a consequence, they scavenge food directly from the hands and mouths of humans raising the potential for injury.

The seagull's constant presence exacerbates the fouling of public places with bird faeces.

Some preliminary investigation has been undertaken and council potentially has some power to address the problem of feeding the seagulls via an "order" or "by law" pursuant to the Local Government Act. This has not been tested by legal opinion, as Council has given no such direction at this time.

The issues for the Council to consider are as follows:

- a) Council does not currently have the financial or human resources to pursue this matter vigorously given other commitments and priorities.
- b) Victor Harbor's tourism is very important to the local economy. Seagulls are synonymous with holidaying at the beach. What impacts would occur if Council started fining out visitors for feeding the seagulls?
- c) Much television and printed advertising depicts the feeding of seagulls and other bird species as a holidaying pastime.
- d) Presumably under by laws fines would apply to anyone caught feeding seagulls. No one is currently putting their hand up to fine the 6,7 or 8-year-old child caught feeding seagulls.
- e) Will a by- law simply cause confusion and frustration by singling out seagulls? Can you still feed pelicans, ducks and pigeon? How do you keep the seagulls away while you are feeding other bird species?
- f) Introduction of a by- law community education program will not address the growing numbers of birds, if in fact that is proven to be the case.
- g) An education program will be enormous and ongoing task. Our community is consistently growing at 3% per annum, 40% of our rate payers are non-resident but visit frequently and, as a tourism destination, we experience new visitors to our area every day. How do we effectively and regularly communicate with this growing and changing population?
- h) There is no guarantee that the discouraging of human feeding of the seagulls will reduce the public safety concerns, as seagulls are a naturally scavenging bird.

The Impact of Schoolies Week on Victor Harbor

Schoolies Festival is usually held around the end of the third week in November.

In 2002 around 8,000 Schoolies descended on Victor Harbor, and the surrounding South Coast area.

The issues for the local community include:

- Noise levels late at night as revellers make their way to their accommodation, waking residents by loud shouting, vehicle noise etc.
- Subject to increased risks on roads due to the poor driving behaviour of many of the students. Many students make unannounced erratic manoeuvres as they suddenly locate a group of friends, or intentionally drive fast and dangerously.
- Increased levels of damage to public and private property and increased levels of litter including broken glass.
- The sense that the community are not respected and lack of consideration towards them and their public/private property.
- These celebrations attract non genuine school leavers (predators) who are attracted by the prospect of girls, alcohol and drugs.
- Increased alcohol consumption brings an increase in the level of violence. (statistics show the greatest percentage of assaults occur within close proximity of licensed premises)
- Potential for violence in the form of rape

The above issues increase the level of fear and apprehension amongst many of the elderly within the community.

The response

Strategies to overcome some of these problems have been:

- Schoolies Festival is now classified as a major event which means Victor Harbor now qualifies to have a larger police presence during the Schoolies Week.
- Schoolies Committee meets regularly to discuss issues, the Committee includes local police, Council representatives, Resident & Ratepayer representatives, Business Association representatives, Encounter Schoolies organisers and anyone interested in attending.
- Increased dry areas during the week, which means that alcohol cannot be consumed in many of the parks, foreshore areas and the main business area of Victor Harbor.
- Purchase of a tattoo (wrist band) entitles Schoolies to use the coach transport organised to allow travel for Schoolies between Victor Harbor and Goolwa.. It also entitles them to entry to the Marquee for entertainment, discounted entry and transport to Greenhills and other organised activities.
- Encounter group have volunteers who pick up rubbish.
- More rubbish bins and tins for collection of cans and bottles are put around the Foreshore area.
- Hotels have been asked to preferably sell beer and other drinks in cans to help alleviate the problem of broken glass.
- Marquee on Warland Reserve is open twenty-four hours providing a safe haven if required.

Advantages and disadvantages to Victor Harbor.

Some businesses receive a welcome increase in income during the celebrations. Others experience a downturn as their usual customers stay away. It is generally a mixed response, depending upon who you speak with.

Other people planning to come and stay do not want to visit during Schoolies Week.

Potentially the best outcome is that leavers celebrating in Victor Harbor enjoy their experience and continue to visit the area as tourists during the remainder of their lives.

Economic Benefits

Businesses that derive an economic benefit during Schoolies are:

Fast food outlets.

Supermarkets.

Hotels and liquor outlets.

Some accommodation venues.

Some attractions such as Greenhills Adventure Park

Petrol stations

It is estimated that Schoolies inject around 1 million dollars into the local economy over the 4 day Festival.

Other benefits

Media exposure for Victor Harbor, Fleurieu Peninsula.

Community involved in discussion on ways to improve the Festival for all stakeholders, general community, businesses and visiting schoolies.

Encounter Schoolies have a web site where information can be gained.

www.encounterschoolies.com

For further enquiries on the Schoolies Festival please contact

Encounter Schoolies e-mail@encounterschoolies.com Phone 8177 0739.

Sgt Trevor Hentschke, Victor Harbor Police