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FERGUSON VALLEY MARKETING & PROMOTIONS INC

BUSINESS PLAN 2017 – 2019

PROMOTE - REPRESENT - CO-ORDINATE - CREATE

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1. BACKGROUND

In September 2008 Ferguson Valley Marketing and Promotions (FVMP) was incorporated (ABN 78 443 832 132). The organisation was established by the then Dardanup Tourist Committee for expanding the tourism focus to a more broadly based, Shire-wide promotion of tourism, shopping, business and lifestyle attributes of the Shire of Dardanup. The Shire of Dardanup was and still is one of the fastest growing local governments in Australia. Over the past 10 years the population has grown by nearly 50%, consistently achieving around 4% growth per annum since 2001. In 2011, the Shire of Dardanup had a total population of 12,405 and is expected to grow to approximately 20,400 by 2021 representing an average annual growth rate of 5.1%. The Eaton town site (including the Millbridge locality) is the main population area containing approximately 76% of the total population. The Shire is set to experience a large population increase in the coming years with the future release of additional greenfield urban and industrial land.

Initially all businesses within the Shire of Dardanup were invited to become members with the aim being to have 116 members by the end of the third year. This figure was never reached and the organisation currently has 48 members. The original Business Plan anticipated that by the sixth year of operation (2014) FVMP would be self-funding as a result of income earned from membership subscriptions, sponsorship and fee for service promotional activities. The organisation never reached a self-funding position and has always been reliant on funding from the Shire of Dardanup.

The Board of Management is elected by the members every year and a part-time Marketing and Promotions Officer is employed. One Board member has responsibility for overseeing the running of the Visitor Centre in Dardanup and co-ordinating the volunteers who staff the centre.

While some funds are raised through membership fees the majority of funding each year has been received as a grant from the Shire of Dardanup, however the Shire has recently indicated that funding will be reduced and that in future only the funds raised from membership fees will be matched by the Shire.

In 2016 the FVMP received a grant from Tourism WA under the Visitor Centre Sustainability Grant Scheme to develop this Business Plan which is for a period of three years.

2. FERGUSON VALLEY MARKETING & PROMOTIONS INC

2.1 Organisation Role and Objectives

2.1.1 Objectives

The current FVMP Rules of Association (Constitution) state that the objectives of the association are to:

- Maximise the opportunities for each and every member of the community in the Ferguson Valley by ensuring that the valley reaches its economic potential
- Increase significantly the number of visitors and tourists coming and staying in the Ferguson Valley

- Increase significantly the number of people coming to live in the Ferguson Valley
- Increase significantly the level of investment in the Ferguson Valley

Clearly, because of the increase in population, the objectives of the organisation have changed over the last eight years. There is now an acceptance that the organisation should draw its membership from a wider geographical area than just the Ferguson Valley with the membership being those businesses within the hospitality, tourism and retail sectors that trade in or have an interest in the Ferguson Valley. For example, this could include a hotel in Bunbury that advises its guests to visit the valley or a tour operator who takes guests to the valley as part of a tour. It is timely for the objectives to be updated since changes to the Associations Incorporations Act 2015, that came into effect from the 1st July 2016, require Associations to review their Rules which includes their objectives. This will be undertaken with a view to completion and adoption of new Rules of Association prior to 30th June 2017. The new objectives of the association will be:

- a) To offer a high standard of visitor servicing and information through the Dardanup Visitor Centre.
- b) To market and promote the Ferguson Valley area through undertaking marketing activities and position the Ferguson Valley as a visitor destination.
 - To assist members in achieving their marketing goals through cooperative marketing activities.
 - To raise the level of awareness of the Ferguson Valley with local and regional stakeholders
 - Facilitate/coordinate 2 key events in the Ferguson Valley each year

2.1.2 Vision & Mission

The role of the organisation has changed during the past eight years which is reflected in a new vision.

VISION

To be the key sustainable organisation which represents hospitality, tourism and retail for the benefit of the Ferguson Valley.

MISSION

The organisation has adopted four strategic activities that in turn can be used as four mission statements that steer the organisation to achieve the vision.

- **Promote** the Ferguson Valley to drive local, intrastate and interstate visitation.
- **Represent** and communicate on behalf of members and stakeholders and be a regional voice for tourism.
- **Co-ordinate** membership, actions, activities and events.
- **Create** events and other venture opportunities.

2.1.3 Key Stakeholders

The Board have identified a number of key stakeholders that will influence the future direction of the organisation. These are:

- FVMP Members
- Shire of Dardanup
- Businesses within the Ferguson Valley
- Bunbury Chamber of Commerce & Industries
- South West Development Commission
- Australia's South West
- Department of Parks & Wildlife
- Harvey, Bunbury, Collie and Donnybrook Visitor Centres
- Bunbury Wellington and Boyup Brook Regional Tourism Strategy group
- State and Federal members of parliament who have influence over the region.

FVMP will work closely with its key stakeholders for the betterment of its members and businesses in the Ferguson Valley.

2.2 Structure & Governance

Board Composition

The composition of the Board is set out in the Rules of Association (to be revised) and consists of the allocation of places to elected members from the Shire and to individuals elected from the membership. The Board is elected at the Annual General meeting each year. It is recognised that successful associations set allocated areas of responsibility to individual Board Members to ensure an equal spread of the workload. For this reason, five areas of responsibility will be allocated to individual Board Members or groups of Board Members. Four of the five areas of responsibility align with the strategic activities identified in section 2.1.2. The areas of responsibility are:

Promote -The marketing and promotion of the Ferguson Valley is a core function for the organisation and one in which the membership seeks and expect results. This activity requires the Board Members to have a thorough understanding of not only destination marketing but also the effective use of social media as detailed in section six. Promotion and marketing will be the responsibility of several Board Members.

The key activities to be addressed by this group are:

1. Develop a marketing plan
2. Develop a communication strategy
3. Maintain and update an events calendar, and publicise it on a weekly basis in "What's Gnoming On"

Represent - FVMP does not exist in isolation and to become and remain a regional player there is a requirement to communicate with and influence external organisations, particularly those working at a regional level. The Board Members tasked with this activity will be required to

represent FVMP on appropriate committees and liaise with all the stakeholders listed above to ensure that the views of FVMP are known and a high profile for the organisation is maintained.

Co-ordinate – This activity includes the co-ordination of mainly internal FVMP functions and activities related to membership, actions and events. This also includes managing or following up Board actions assigned to FVMP members to ensure that all actions are completed in accordance with the Board’s directions.

It also has an important role in the development and communication of the member’s services which are not currently clearly defined. Future services will very much be influenced by feedback obtained from existing and potential new members as to what they would like to see from their FVMP membership.

Create –

1. New Ventures
 - Assist, where possible, new venture opportunities wishing to locate within the Ferguson Valley; and
 - Identify tourism opportunities within the Ferguson Valley and liaise with ‘Represent’ Board Member to bring these to the attention of appropriate organisations such as the local Shire and South West Development Commission and/or politicians.
2. Events
 - Identify at least two key events to create, or liaise with other groups to create; and
 - Identify other potential events or ventures that either could be supported, established or grown to attract increased numbers of visitors to the Ferguson Valley.

Governance & Finance – While the activities of the organisation are important it is also equally important to ensure good governance and financial monitoring are maintained and that any issues in regards to financial matters are identified at an early stage and steps taken to rectify those issues.

Each Board member will give a verbal report on their area of activity at monthly Board meetings.

FVMP will update this Business Plan objectives annually with a new Business Plan developed every three years. The Business Plan will be used to set strategic direction for the organisation and to support any funding applications that are submitted. Primarily this Business Plan is about setting direction and should be updated during the third quarter of each financial year to plan for the following financial year. The format of the Business Plan will be flexible and each year will reflect the priorities for the coming year. It will be important to involve the Board in the Business Planning process to give them ownership of the document.

2.3 Membership

The current membership of the organisation is 48 which is a decrease of membership numbers in recent years. A major focus for the organisation over the coming 3 years will be to increase membership numbers from businesses not just within the Ferguson Valley but also those businesses located externally having an interest in the valley. Targets for membership numbers are:

Year	No Members
2017	65
2018	80
2019	95

Given the limited number of businesses in the valley it would be expected that the main increase in numbers will come from businesses located geographically outside the valley which means that members benefits will also need to be beneficial to businesses located externally.

It is acknowledged that tourism related businesses are predominately small businesses that have many demands on their finances from organisations wishing them to become members. Therefore, it is important not only to have a competitive membership fee but also to offer tangible benefits that are relevant to members.

There is a tiered membership structure based on the number of employees which will be applicable for 2017 and will be reviewed annually.

Membership Level	Cost	Current Numbers
Individual & Not-for-Profit Organisations	\$80	12
Level A – Business with no employees	\$150	25
Level B – Business (1-5 employees)	\$320	10
Level C – Business (6-10 employees)	\$430	1
Level D – Business (11 plus employees)	\$600	1
Non-member racking (Visitor Centre) annual fee	\$60	-

Members Benefits

- Weekly 'what's on' newsletter listing events throughout the valley – this is currently produced and received mixed comments from members.
- List of Actions from monthly Board meeting – a major criticism of from existing members was the lack of communication of what is happening and knowledge what the Board are discussing. A list of actions, possibly by activity, would be of benefit with very little cost to produce.
- Members will be offered the opportunity to host a familiarisation visit for the Visitor Centre volunteers and members. They will be able to give a talk on their business and do a tour of the business.
- Members offered the opportunity to host or attend a bi-monthly FVMP networking event at which the Chair will give a brief presentation on current activities.
- Members offered the opportunity to attend the bi-monthly Visitor Centre volunteer visits to other member's businesses.

- Once a year the Visitor Centre will run a familiarisation for regional visitor centre staff with the member being given the opportunity to host part of this day.
- Ability to participate in specialist training to be offered exclusively to members for a small fee.
- Ability to purchase banner advertising on the FVMP website monthly.
- Given the opportunity to advertise their name, website and phone number on new maps for a small fee.
- Receive one pad of maps for distribution to visitors. Should this be deleted or amended?

Many small businesses have difficulty in accessing relevant business training such as training in social media that would particularly benefit their business. FVMP can source cost effective training through the likes of the Tourism Council or Small Business Centre that could be offered to members for a fee on which FVMP will make a small profit.

The website can have a display banner which can be sold to members monthly. This gives a unique opportunity to members to be able to target potential visitors to the Ferguson Valley. Banner space can be sold.

All actions are detailed in Section 11.

3. DARDANUP VISITOR CENTRE

The Dardanup Visitor Centre is located at 5 Ferguson Road, Dardanup in what was the original Dardanup state school, a listed heritage building. The building is owned by the Shire of Dardanup and leased to FVMP for a peppercorn rent. Adjacent to the building is the Memorial Rose Garden which attracts visitors. The Visitor Centre, which is staffed by volunteers, endeavours to set the highest levels of customer service always. Since 2008 visitor numbers to the centre have grown from 1260 per annum to nearly 4000 per annum. Visitation is evenly spread across the year with April and October being the busiest months.

Successful Visitor Centres are usually located in areas with high numbers of passing traffic, either pedestrian or vehicular. In the Shire of Dardanup, the location with the highest volume of vehicular traffic is the Forrest Highway with an average 10,000 vehicles a day just north of Bunbury¹. Unfortunately, no traffic information is available for Ferguson Road, Dardanup. The current location is not ideal if the aim is to attract visitors into the Ferguson Valley, the ideal location would be on the Forrest Highway within the shire boundaries and before the Eaton turnoff. The City of Bunbury is currently considering the location of its Visitor Centre with one of the options being a location on the Forrest Highway. The possible establishment of a new Visitor Centre on the Forrest Highway is a long-term project however the board will monitor the current situation and if the opportunity arises investigate the feasibility of relocation further.

FVMP can promote the Ferguson Valley at locations throughout the South West as well as events in Perth which is a major target market. To be able to attend additional locations a pop up Visitor Centre

¹ Main Roads WA

will be required to be developed. This would be a compact mobile display that could be transported in a small car but would be designed in such a way as to have an impact where ever it was erected.

Even the most successful and prominently sited Visitor Centre's rarely service more than 5-6% of total visitation to an area. It's often forgotten that the major dispensers of information to visitors are the frontline staff in accommodation houses, caravan parks and tourism related businesses. The implementation of systems to keep these people up to date on local attractions and services can significantly boost the level of information available to visitors. Similarly, effective brochure distribution systems to local accommodation houses also means that information is readily available to people at the time when they are most likely to be making decisions about what to see and do. Therefore, it is important that it is not only the volunteers that work in the Visitor Centre who are kept informed of product within the Valley but also people working within the tourism industry, who meet visitors. Another important business type for the valley are tour operators who increasingly bring visitors to the valley. A volunteer and member familiarisation visit will be organised bi-monthly with members being given the opportunity of either hosting or attending the visit. The host would give a short talk about their business and a tour if applicable. This will raise the level of knowledge of local product across the industry

The four surrounding regional Visitor Centres at Harvey, Bunbury, Collie and Donnybrook should be a focus for developing close links to cross promote each other's product. The Dardanup Visitor Centre will host a familiarisation day once a year to take staff from the other regional Visitor Centres around members so they can experience their product first hand. Dardanup Visitor Centre will also be instrumental in ensuring that regular meetings of the five visitor centres take place.

The Visitor Centre is currently working towards achieving WA Visitor Centre Accreditation (level 2). There are however two major obstacles to this, being the lack of a disabled car parking space next to the centre and the provision of a parking bay for cars towing caravans. Discussions have taken place with the Shire regarding these issues and it is expected that funding may be made available in the 2017/18 financial year. An option may be to apply for funding in the next round of the Visitor Centre Sustainability Grant.

The current system where a member of the FVMP Board has responsibility for the overall management of the Visitor Centre works well. The Coordinator is supported by a group of volunteers which enables the centre to be open, daily, from 10am to 4pm. It is important to keep the volunteers motivated and involved and therefore monthly meetings of all volunteers will be held which will alternate with the volunteer and member familiarisation visits. The monthly meetings are important to keep the volunteers informed of any changes to the tourism product and events that will be happening in the future. These meetings are also useful for discussing feedback from visitors on Dardanup and the valley.

Gaining feedback from visitors and information on visitor demographics is important and its importance will be conveyed to volunteers on a regular basis. Each shift a sheet is filled in by the volunteer noting the number of visitors and a general comment on their interest in the valley. Where possible the post codes of visitors or their country of residence if they are international will be recorded. Once a month this information is collated by the Coordinator and a brief report given to the Board. Visitor feedback forms will also be available.

Consideration will be given to introducing a gold coin donation box in the centre to gain some income from visitors.

Brochures displayed at the Dardanup Visitor Centre are required to be A4, A5 or DL in size and must be of an appropriate quality. The centre will display member's brochures if those brochures are delivered to the centre by the member. The centre will advise the member when new stocks of brochures are required. Brochure racking at the centre will be made available to non-members supplying West Australian tourism product. Charges for non-members will be \$60 for 12 months racking.

Goods and services retailed by FVMP through the Visitor Centre will reflect the Centre's locality and the buying patterns of visitors in local art & craft, souvenirs and other merchandise. Wherever possible, stocks held will be locally produced and provide a showcase of the attributes and attractions of the valley. Generally, visitors expect to see locally produced products or at least Australian made. International visitors have a keen interest in local culture and heritage including Indigenous culture. Unique to the valley is Gnomesville and the centre stocks a range of gnomes to satisfy demand.

No free Wi-Fi is currently available within the centre however this is something that is increasingly expected by tourists particularly international tourists. Wi-Fi can be used for gathering e-mail addresses when people log on which can then be used for marketing purposes. Investigations will take place on the feasibility of installing Wi-Fi for visitors.

The Visitor Centre has a Policies and Procedures Manual which details all operational procedures and forms part of the requirement for obtaining and retaining level 2 accreditation. The Manual will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

The feasibility of introducing a Ferguson Valley wine sampling centre will be investigated. This would be particularly beneficial to those wineries that do not have a cellar door but could be open to all existing wineries. The feasibility would have to consider such aspects as insurance and responsible service of alcohol.

A potential way for the Visitor Centre to generate income is to install a digital TV in the centre and to offer members the opportunity of having their product displayed on the TV on an ongoing basis. The cost to individual businesses would be relatively modest but they would gain exposure to a wider audience. The feasibility of this will be investigated.

4. SWOT ANALYSIS

A SWOT analysis gives the ability to focus on everything that could potentially impact on an area or organisation as it moves forward. In this section a SWOT Analysis has been developed for both the area and the organisation since the analysis for each of those will be different.

Ferguson Valley Marketing & Promotions Inc SWOT Analysis	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board - diversity - enthusiasm, knowledge - experience and desire for change • Representation on BWGC/BCCI • Diversity of membership • Visitor Centre - structure - infrastructure - volunteers • Support from Shire • Quality of Ferguson Valley which we represent. • Well known 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial sustainability of Visitor Centre (accreditation) • Lack of credibility - members - other organisations • Lack of consistency of opening hours of members • Aging membership base • Lack of clarity of direction • Lack of marketing skills • Limited financial and human resources • Limited local business support • Visitor Centre volunteers • Reliant on Shire for majority of funding
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build regional links with stakeholders • Increase diversity of membership base • Visitor Centre accreditation and support • Encourage businesses to open longer • Development of indigenous tourism • Increase profile outside of valley • Build profile as wine region • Build profile as mountain bike region • Increase events and attractions • More effective marketing through social media • Lobbying for improved signage • Lobbying - Shire - Region - State - Federal - Industry • Build younger membership support • Funding opportunities - grants - Shire - State Government - Federal Government • Create money making business e.g. café Gnomesville 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability of funding model • Diminishing membership base • Parochial perspective • Emergence of alternative organisations and structures. • Swallowed by BCCI/Bunbury Geographe • Red tape for our members - liquor licence - Shire - Roads • Bypass road decreasing visitation to FVMP members.

5. REGIONAL CO-OPERATION

The general trend in tourism planning and destination marketing is for more regional cooperation between organisations creating a greater sustainability for the industry. A recent example of a regional approach was the merger of the Geopraphe Bay Tourism Association and the Margaret River Tourism Association to form the Margaret River Busselton Tourism Association. It is therefore important that FVMP adopt a regional approach and develop strong ties with other regional organisations. The type of cooperation will vary and may include anything from gaining membership, attending functions and networking opportunities and gain places on committees and Boards.

There are several organisations and groups that FVMP needs to develop ties with.

Shire of Dardanup is a local player but with many regional roles. In its latest Community Plan the Shire recognises the importance of tourism to the local economy and identifies more tourist accommodation as being desirable. It is important that close ties are maintained with the Shire both at officer and at Elected Member level and that the Elected Members who represent the Shire on the FVMP Board are ambassadors for the organisation. While the Shire may have indicated that funding for FVMP will reduce in the current year that decision can be influenced in future by adopting a new focus for the organisation through this Business Plan. It is also important for FVMP to comment on Shire documents and policies when they come up for public comment and particularly on planning matters and the availability of land for small developments in the valley.

The **Bunbury Wellington Boyup Brook Tourism initiative** is an alliance of the following local governments:

- City of Bunbury
- Shire of Dardanup
- Shire of Harvey
- Shire of Boyup Brook
- Shire of Capel
- Shire of Donnybrook/Balingup
- Shire of Collie

The Alliance developed the Bunbury, Wellington, Boyup Brook Regional Tourism Strategy which made several crucial recommendations. One of the main aims of the strategy is, to find a unified approach in regional tourism management, tourism product and infrastructure development, and marketing.

The strategy is intended to:

- Identify tourism opportunities, priorities and gaps for the Bunbury Wellington and Boyup Brook region;
- Guide seven or eight local government authorities (LGAs) towards unified tourism branding, marketing, governance and venture development; and

- Identify recommended infrastructure and product priorities that would complement the Tourism Futures South West and be consistent with the South West Regional Blueprint, a strategy developed by the South West Development Commission.

In the near future (within three months) a reference group will be formed and a Project Officer appointed to co-ordinate the implementation of the Strategy. It is very important that FVMP have representation of the Reference Group.

The **City of Bunbury** have recently been designated as the lead organisation and will be employing a project officer to move the project forward. Clearly FVMP needs to be involved in the process and should ensure that they have representation on any committees.

The **Geographe Wine Industry Association** Strategic Plan identified that expanding wine and food tourism was a key strategy in the development of the sector and that working with local tourism organisations was a key component. The organisation has promoted the region as being accessible and offering wines of an extremely high standard and lists 15 wineries in the Ferguson Valley. Their website also lists what's on and several self-drive trails. It is important to build links to this organisation not only at a strategic level but also at an operational level with things like links on the webpage.

Australia's South West (ASW) is the Regional Tourism Organisation covering an area from Margaret River to Albany. It is a not for profit incorporated association that receives funding from the state government to undertake tourism marketing for the region. It is also a membership organisation and therefore is competing with FVMP for members. Members can buy into specific marketing activities undertaken by ASW. ASW has been seeking to develop Memorandum of Understandings with Local Tourism Organisations across its region to enable it to work closely with them. From a marketing perspective, it is important for FVMP to work closely with ASW and take advantage of any marketing opportunities when they arise. As a minimum FVMP should become a member of ASW

Bunbury Chamber of Commerce is a major membership driven organisation that is positioning itself to play a significant role in tourism in the region. Membership consists of some of the region's leading businesses. The organisation holds events and networking functions and presents opportunities for FVMP to influence direction and gain insight.

The **South West Development Commission** is a statutory authority of the Western Australian government, with a board of management selected from the community, local governments and ministerial appointments. The organisation works to develop the region's economy by partnering with communities, government, business and industry to identify and support projects that benefit the region. The Commission has grant funding available for eligible projects and has funded several tourism related projects in the past. It will be important to monitor funding availability on an ongoing basis.

6. MARKETING

6.1 Visitor Research

The visitor is the primary focus in all decisions made by FVMP. It is therefore important that the organisation understands the visitors to the area and what influences their decisions. Unfortunately to date little information exists on the types of visitors and why they come to the valley. What does exist is feedback from operators through their contact with visitors and conversations that they have. Members feedback has indicated that visitors are currently:

Geographe Source	Type	Interests
Perth	Daytripper's for lunch	Wineries Breweries
Mandurah	Couples	Good Food
Bunbury	Families	Adventure Tourism
Interstate	Grey Nomads	Nature Lovers
Perth	Overnight stays	Tours
International/Interstate	Visiting Friends & Relatives	Wineries/food

Statistical information which is gathered on a regional basis by Tourism WA is of little use when determining markets for the Ferguson Valley as it will include visitors to major regional centres who are motivated by different desires. It is therefore important that FVMP start to gather visitor information to focus its marketing activities. It will do this in two ways. Firstly, through the Visitor Centre and secondly through its members. Questionnaires will be developed which will be sent to members with questionnaires having to be returned quarterly. These questionnaires and the questionnaires gathered at the Visitor Centre will be collated and the results presented to the Board quarterly. The information gathered will determine any changes to promotional activities over the coming 3 months.

The following drivers and barriers table is based on consultation with local operators.

	Drivers	Barriers
Rational	Close proximity to Perth	Not child friendly
	Easy to access	Unknown offering beyond food & wine
	Quality food & wine experience	Perceived similarity to other wine regions
	Day trip	Expensive
	Beautiful landscapes	Variety of accommodation
	Events	Need a designated driver
Emotional	Relaxing drive	Traffic congestion on freeway
	Getting away to the country	Limited available time for day trips
	Feeling refreshed	
	Escaping the heat of the city	
	Clean air	

Information to influence the likelihood to visit is related to raising the awareness of the Ferguson Valley and highlight the area's point of difference. There are four types of information people want to know.			
Logistical Information	Range of Food and drink experiences	Things to do and places to visit	Persuasive reason to go
I need to know..... <i>How far is it</i> <i>How to get there</i> <i>Accommodation available</i> <i>Price expectations</i> <i>Package deals or tours</i> <i>tours</i> <i>Size of the area</i> <i>Local towns</i>	Tell me about..... <i>Restaurants</i> <i>Chefs</i> <i>Local Produce</i> <i>Cafes</i> <i>Coffee</i>	Tell me about..... <i>Walking trails</i> <i>Biking trails</i> <i>Local sites</i> <i>Local History</i> <i>Events</i> <i>Seasonality</i> <i>Tours</i>	Tell me why I need to go – what's so special? <i>Testimonials</i> <i>Is it for people like me</i> <i>Example itineraries</i> <i>Unique experiences</i> <i>Insider information</i>

6.2 Our Product Pillars

Primary

Food and Wine

Boutique food and wineries in a picturesque setting close to Perth.

Nature Based

Secluded valley and hill setting close to Perth offers spaces to play and indulge – National Park, rolling vineyards

Secondary

Adventure Tourism

World class mountain bike tracks offering unique experiences together with challenging road bike routes

Culture

Gnomesville offering a unique experience for families

History & Heritage

Indigenous Tourism

Eco Tourism

6.3 Competitors

Direct competitors for specific market segments for the Ferguson Valley are:

Food and Wine

- Margaret River
- Dunsborough
- Donnybrook
- Harvey

Nature Based

- Dwellingup
- Margaret River
- Pemberton
- Manjimup

Adventure

- Peel Region
- Collie
- Busselton
- Blackwood Valley

Culture

- Busselton
- Bunbury
- Mandurah
- Margaret River

Competitive advantages of the Ferguson Valley are:

- Close proximity to Perth.
- Not crowded during high season.
- Unspoilt natural environment.
- Diversity of attractions.
- Family owned boutique Wineries Breweries and accommodation with the owners and producers often available for conversation.
- Favourable price for products and services compared with neighbouring regions.
- Short distances between attractions and tourism establishments.

6.4 Venture Development

While venture development is not a primary function of FVMP it is important for the organisation to be active in encouraging appropriate new developments that will lead to the strengthening and diversity of tourism product within the valley. Listed below are number of possible developments that have been identified by various individuals and organisations some of which may be more feasible than others but all of which would add to the attractiveness of the Ferguson Valley to visitors.

Possible projects that have been discussed that could benefit the valley include:

- Install a Wi-Fi hotspot in Dardanup.
- Activate 2 new mobile phone towers to eliminate black spots in the Valley.
- Create a scenic drive loop - Bunbury - Ferguson Valley - Wellington NP - Collie.
- Enhance variety of accommodation.
- Upgrade tourism signage.

- Build 2 - 3 new family picnic areas to capture the beautiful valley views.
- Make upgrades to Gnomesville as recommended in the BWBB Regional Tourism Strategy Report.
- Make other recommended improvements and infrastructure upgrades to support tourism, as recommended in the BWBB report.
- Create an indulgence trail - Harvey - Ferguson Valley - Donnybrook Balingup.
- Establish a nature based adventure park.
- Develop new flora and fauna walk trails and signage.
- Department of Parks & Wildlife land – former gravel pit site.
- Wellington National Park - Class A Reserve - Discovery Forest, Eco Education Centre (potential lookout tower, flying fox).
- Outdoor Cinema.
- Mundi Bidi Track - accommodation and collection.
- Dardanup Foreshore development tourism opportunities.
- Establishment of a Regional Wine Centre.
- Development of Heritage Trail.
- Development of Indigenous Tourism including more tour operators.
- Development of Eco Tourism.

Some of these projects are already being pursued by other organisations and FVMP will have limited influence, however the organisation certainly will have a lobbying role in several them. This is particularly relevant in relation to tourism signage which has been the topic of discussion for many years with limited progress. Of particular concern is the lack of directional signage from the Forest Highway - currently is non-existent. There is an urgent requirement for a brown Ferguson Valley gateway sign followed by brown directional signage.

Australian Standard AS1742.6 clearly allows for brown signage directing to a recognised tourism area. The following is an example of a brown gateway sign.



The Board will keep pressing the relevant authorities for appropriate signage.

A recurring criticism of businesses in the valley is that they are only open part time and therefore it is very difficult to grow visitation throughout the week if some businesses are not open. The venues argue that they don't open because there isn't the volume of people coming through to pay the costs of opening. FVMP will actively encourage businesses to open throughout the week through its newsletter, networking functions and demonstrating that visitor number are rising.

6.5 Digital/Social Media

In 2013 Google reported 90% of travel decisions are made online. They also found that the growth in search is through mobile devices – 180% growth in search on tablets, 68% growth on mobile devices and no growth in desktops. Consumers are searching for information 24 hours a day while on the move. To assist in servicing the visitor at all stages of their travel cycle FVMP must ensure that the website (www.fergusonvalley.net.au) is mobile responsive and that Wi-Fi is available to enable visitors to upload their experiences to social media platforms and share their photos, videos and experiences with friends while in the valley.

Strategies to achieve success from digital and social media:

- a. Reconfigure existing website to enable mobile access.
- b. Optimise search rankings.
- c. Investigate online product booking.
- d. Increase amount of industry video content uploaded to You Tube.
- e. Maximise areas exposure through referrals increasing operator rankings on third party websites such as TripAdvisor.
- f. Provide Social media training for members.
- g. Build following on Facebook account.
- h. Explore Instagram, Twitter and Blogging as means of communicating events etc.

Crucial to success in building the online presence is to have somebody who is not only willing to devote time to undertaking the tasks but also somebody who understands the how to use the various tools effectively. There are many more strategies that could be adopted than those listed above including the likes of Twitter and Instagram but using these effectively will take somebody with time to devote to the task. A key approach for the Board will be to encourage a small group of members to take on the task of building and managing the online presence through the establishment of a Marketing Sub Committee.

6.6 Traditional Media

In addition to using social media and an increased online presence it is important to continue with marketing using more traditional media. The aim is to drive increased visitor numbers, nights and yield through marketing initiatives.

This is a key focus area for FVMP and therefore more than one Board Member will be responsible for marketing.

The actions are:

- a. Develop a Marketing Plan with input from the industry.
- b. Redesign and print the current map (subject to funding).
- c. Negotiate regular Ferguson Valley section in Bunbury Mail.
- d. Work with industry to package product and promote experiences.

- e. Work with Ferguson Valley Wine Growers to promote wine experiences in the area.
- f. Work with Australia's South West to maximise promotional opportunities.
- g. Build imagery of the area to be used by members.

While a lack of funds means that promotional opportunities are limited, working with other organisations represents the most effective way in which to raise the profile.

Gnomesville is an internationally recognised site which is unique and can attract a significant number of visitors. There is a website (www.gnomesville.com.au) and Facebook page that has over 4,000 followers. The group of volunteers that oversees the maintenance will be contacted to discuss how both organisations can raise the profile of the valley.

The current map is no longer valid as it has the dates of events included in it. The making of a new map is a high priority. All Attractions, Tourism, Hospitality, and selected retail businesses will be included on the map. Enhanced listings with contact details and opening times will be available to members of the FVMP at a small cost.

It is also important that the organisation can respond quickly to requests for familiarisation visits by journalists as this can create significant coverage with a high dollar value at very little cost. Several familiarisation itineraries will be developed and appropriate organisations such as Tourism WA and Australia's South West be advised that these itineraries are available.

7. EVENTS

Festivals and events are an important part of the tourism industry and particularly in regional areas where they attract visitors to a destination outside the peak seasons and create a greater awareness for the region, providing economic benefits for local businesses and the community.

The Ferguson Valley hosts a significant number of small events every year, most of which are organised by local businesses to boost their own profile and sales. In 2016 there were 60 events held at various locations which included lunches, plays, art events and tours and in addition the valley has proved to be a popular venue for weddings. The biggest annual event is the Bull and Barrel Festival, which is held in September each year however it does not attract significant numbers of visitors to stay overnight which can bring economic benefit. The Ferguson Valley needs an iconic event, which will attract significant numbers to fill accommodation not just in the valley but further afield. Successful iconic events build on an area's strengths or current tourism activities and usually start small then over a period become very successful. There are several potential ideas that could be developed into events that have the potential to grow into an iconic event generating income for FVMP. These include:

- White water canoeing
- Triathlons
- Tour de Ferguson Valley (Cycling)
- Food & Wine Festival
- Mountain Biking / Mundi Bididi Trail
- Walking / Bibbulmen Track

- Gnomes Festival

The issue is defining the extent of the role FVMP should have in establishing or operating events since successful events meet several objectives of FVMP being they bring people and subsequent economic benefit to the valley.

It may be financially beneficial for the Board to own and run events, however it may also work with others to ensure that existing events are well publicised and promoted by FVMP and that new events change from ideas to reality when feasible.

The Shire of Dardanup is active in organising several community related events and it will be important for FVMP to work closely with the Shire officers to ensure that opportunities for members are maximised particularly in regards to the 'Looking Glass' events.

8. FUNDING & SUSTAINABILITY

Clearly organisations such as FVMP face challenges in establishing a sound financial base on which to grow and remain sustainable. The aim for FVMP is to have the funding and resources to provide leadership and direction while acting with integrity, openness and transparency as a community based organisation.

Strategies to achieve sustainability:

- a. Secure ongoing commitment from the Shire of Dardanup for the next three years.
- b. Establish a 3-year financial forecast and annual budget, including stakeholder funding and relevant programs for raising capital from industries and other sources.
- c. Grow membership base so that it makes a significant financial contribution.
- d. Generate income via the Visitor Centre.
- e. Generate income from promotional activities.
- f. Secure grant funding where applicable.

Grant funding for projects comes available from time to time from a variety of organisations and therefore it is important for the Board to be aware of what is available and when it will be available. Much of the funding comes through the South West Development Commission who currently have two funding rounds each year for their Community Chest grants and their Regional grants programs which are funded using Royalties for Regions funding. In most cases, there must be matching cash funding or in-kind support from the applicant. Indications are that up to \$100,000 can be applied for.

It is understood that there will be another round of the Visitor Centres Sustainability grant and consideration will be given to a further application under that program for a Popup Visitor Centre or possibly disabled access and caravan parking to meet accreditation criteria.

Income generation in the past has included selling number plates and merchandise sales through the Visitor Centre. FVMP will consider income generating activities as and when they arise.

9. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

FVMP has produced this three-year Business Plan to guide its actions and initiatives. The plan is the Board’s key governance document used to define its direction. It is the framework by which the Board has identified priorities and allocated organisational resources. The Business Plan is also the main document against which success is measured.

Key Performance Indicators for this plan are:

- Fully functioning Board and sustainable organisation.
- An engaged industry.
- Increase in numbers through the Visitor Centre of 15% over three years (currently 4,000 PA) Q - will this be achievable? I understood the increased use of social media/gps etc has shown to be impacting numbers to the Visitor Centre. I may be wrong.
- Increase in visitor satisfaction (determined through annual member’s visitor surveys).
- Increase in membership by 15 over 3 years.

Year	No Members
2017	65
2018	80
2019	95

- Increase in number of hit on website by 100% over three years.

10. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Excluding grants for various projects the organisation generated \$45,911 in income in the 2015/2016 financial year which with expenditure of \$38,476 gave an operating profit of \$7,435. Of the income generated over half (\$25,000) was sponsorship from the Shire of Dardanup. This clearly demonstrates the overreliance on the Shire for funding on an ongoing basis and certainly since the Shire have indicated that they will only match income generated by membership fees which based on current figures would reduce Shire funding from \$25,000 per annum to approximately \$12,000 per annum. In future income, will be generated from the following sources:

- Shire of Dardanup
- Visitor Centre income
- FV Licence Plates
- Grants
- Commercial activities

While it is anticipated that visitor numbers through the Visitor Centre will increase it is not expected that this will result in a significant increase in merchandise sales. The sale of Ferguson Valley Licence Plates generated \$2,100 in the last financial year however it is not expected that there will be an increase in licence plates in the coming year.

Applicable grants will be applied for as and when they become available however in most cases grants must be matched with dollars from the applicant and while they are important for specific projects they do not contribute to general revenue.

Therefore, generating income from commercial activities over the three-year period of this Business Plan will be a priority for the organisation. The Board will follow up on what it perceives as opportunities within the region as they present themselves.

11. ACTIONS

This section details preliminary actions that will be undertaken to implement this Business Plan. The Actions have been listed by the four key activities which align with the four key organisation activities. Board members will be allocated to each of the activities.

PROMOTE				
No	Description of Action	Resources	Measurement of Success	Complete by
1.	Develop a Marketing Plan	Time	Plan completed	March 2017
1.1	Ensure marketing is accepted as a responsibility for several Board Members.	Time	Responsibilities established	February 2017
1.2	Introduce visitor survey forms and report results monthly	Time	Forms introduced	Ongoing
1.3	Consider options and risks for introducing gold coin donation. Report options to Board	Time	Board approval	February 2017
1.4	Investigate the feasibility of establishing free Wi-Fi at the VC	Time \$ to be determined	Wi-Fi established (if feasible)	June 2017
2.	Develop a Communication Strategy			
2.1	Reconfigure existing website to enable mobile access	Time	Reconfiguration complete	March 2017
2.2	Investigate feasibility of introducing online booking system for local product.	Time	Feasibility established (or not) and system introduced (if feasible)	July 2017
2.3	Initiate campaign to encourage members to have video content uploaded to You Tube And encourage visitor comment on TripAdvisor	Time	Campaign ongoing	Ongoing
2.4	Negotiate with Bunbury Mail to have regular Ferguson Valley section	Time \$ to be determined	Section established	Ongoing
2.5	Investigate the feasibility of making banner advertising available on the website	Time	Feasibility established and banner introduced if applicable.	May 2017

PROMOTE (Cont)				
No	Description of Action	Resources	Measurement of Success	Complete by
3.	Promote the Ferguson Valley to External Groups	Time	Plan completed	
3.1	Develop famil itineraries	Time	Itineraries developed	Ongoing
3.2	Establish links with Australia's South West and Determine how to leverage off their marketing	Time \$ to be determined	Links established	Ongoing
3.3	Organise bimonthly Famil to member's premises for Visitor Centre volunteers and other members.	Time	Famils held	Ongoing
3.4	Organise Famil for other regional Visitor Centre Staff	Time + Members time	Famil held	Annual

REPRESENT				
No	Description of Action	Resources	Measurement of Success	Complete by
2.1	Ensure representation of the Bunbury, Wellington, Boyup Brook Regional Tourism Strategy Reference Group	Time	Representation endorsed	January 2017
2.2	Enhance links with Shire of Dardanup	Time	Ongoing liaison	Ongoing
2.3	Ensure representation of the Bunbury, Wellington, Boyup Brook Regional Tourism Strategy Reference Group	Time	Representation endorsed	January 2017
2.4	Establish links with the City of Bunbury and the newly appointed Tourism Strategy Project Officer	Time	Links established	Ongoing
2.5	Establish links with the Geographe Wine Industry Association and promote wine experiences	Time	Links established	Ongoing
2.6	Build relationship with Australia's South West	Time	Relationship Established	Ongoing
2.7	Build relationship with Bunbury Chamber of Commerce	Time	Relationship established	Ongoing
2.8	Establish relationship with South West Development Commission	Time	Relationship established	Ongoing.
2.9	Lobby with state government Collie-Presto candidates, and successful elected MP	Time	Relationship established	March 2017 and ongoing
2.10	Lobby and maintain relationship with federal MP	Time	Relationship established	ongoing
2.11	Establish links with group that owns www.gnomesville.com.au to investigate mutually beneficial activities	Time	Relationship established	Ongoing

CO-ORDINATE				
No	Description of Action	Resources	Measurement of Success	Complete by
3.1	Introduce & manage activities for the Board or other FVMP members	Deputy Chairperson	All Board assigned activities are completed	Each Board meeting
3.2	Coordinate all FVMP membership activities, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual membership recruitment drives (w/ Admin Officer) • Coordination of member activities & inputs to the Board • Member development &/or training programs • Quarterly membership questionnaires • Ensure all members are paid-up (w/ Treasurer) • Other member-related activities, as assigned by the Chairperson or the Board 	Deputy Chairperson & Admin Officer & Treasurer	All FVMP members are being communicated to and are satisfied; that member development & training programs are considered by the Board; that all assigned member activities are being coordinated by a relevant Board member; and that members are current with their FVMP fees	Annually & Ongoing
3.3	Ensure that FVMP map/brochures are developed and kept current	Deputy Chairperson & Admin Officer	Status reports, as required	Ongoing
3.4	Ensure that all approved FVMP promotions and events are assigned and are being supported by the relevant members	Deputy Chairperson & Promotions Officer	Action Lists to list all assignments due dates and actual completion dates for all activities	Ongoing
3.5	File monthly update reports at the Board meetings, and support the Chairperson as required with any other FVMP internal coordination activities	Deputy Chairperson	Reports at the Board Meetings	Monthly & Ongoing
3.6	Ongoing liaison with members to encourage more frequent opening	Time	Longer opening throughout valley	Ongoing
3.7	Design & develop new map pads (?) including costings for member's participation	\$ to be determined	Maps printed and distributed	March 2017
3.8	Introduce monthly list of Board actions for distribution to membership	Time	Information distributed monthly	Ongoing – implement immediately
3.9	Develop a members benefits list to be sent to all members	Time	List distributed	Ongoing send to new members

CO-ORDINATE (Cont)				
No	Description of Action	Resources	Measurement of Success	Complete by
3.10	Organise bimonthly members networking event held at member's premises	Time / hosted by members	Function held bi-monthly	Ongoing
3.11	Implement plan for recruiting new members	Time	Recruitment in line with targets	Ongoing
3.12	Establish regional Visitor Centre Working Group	Time	Working Group Established	March 2017
3.13	Work towards level 2 accreditation consider applying for grant towards cost of Disabled bay and caravan parking.	Time	Grant awarded / Accreditation achieved.	November 2017
3.14	Introduce monthly volunteer information meetings	Time	Monthly meetings ongoing	Ongoing
3.15	Obtain quotes and apply for grant for Pop-up Visitor Centre	\$ to be determined	Grant awarded and Pop-up VC constructed.	April 2018

CREATE				
No	Description of Action	Resources	Measurement of Success	Complete by
4.1	Check (through new registered ABNs) to identify new business's locating in the valley and make contact to introduce	Time	Ongoing contact	Ongoing
4.2	Liaise with 'Represent' Board Member to Monitor planning applications to local Shire for new ventures	Time	Ongoing contact	Ongoing
4.3	Develop plan for monitoring approved developments and contact when active	Time	Plan template/ongoing	Ongoing
4.4	Use networking opportunities to identify potential tourism opportunities	Time	Attend minimum 6 events per year	Ongoing
4.5	Liaise with 'Represent' Board Member to bring identified potential tourism opportunities to the attention of appropriate organisations	Time	Report when appropriate	Ongoing
4.6	Utilise networking opportunities and other available resources to identify at least two key events to create, or liaise with other groups to create	Time	Attend minimum 6 events per year	June 2018
4.7	Research and document grant funding opportunities to support events	Time	Grant Funding Plan	March 2017 / Ongoing
4.8	Develop grant funding time line and key parameters plan	Time	Ongoing	March 2017
4.9	Develop grant funding applications to support the implementation of planned events	Time	Complete minimum 2 funding applications per year	Dependant on grant funding timelines
4.10	Use networking opportunities to identify additional events or ventures	Time	Attend minimum 6 events per year	Ongoing
4.11	Prepare 'Create' report for each FVMP Board Meeting	Time	Completed reports equal to number of Board Meetings each year	Ongoing

Corporate Governance and finances

No	Description of Action	Resources	Measurement of Success	Complete by
1.	Review Policies & Procedures Manual	Time	Review complete	Annually
2.	Develop annual budgets			
3.	Review and update Constitution			
4.	Develop board agenda to review business plan framework			
5.	Develop Volunteer and staff management plans			
6.	A system in place to annually review policies			