



**TOURISM  
CENTRAL AUSTRALIA**

Your Tourism Voice

# TURBOCHARGING VISITOR SERVICING

PROVIDING BEST PRACTICE VISITOR INFORMATION SERVICES  
ALICE SPRINGS AND YULARA



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Tourism Central Australia's wider operating area

Photograph courtesy of David Silva/Tourism NT

## OVERVIEW

**T**ourism Central Australia is the official Regional Tourism Organisation for the visitor economy in the #RedCentreNT.

As a business led organisation, we work in partnership with a wide variety of stakeholders including individuals, businesses and all levels of government, to benefit the visitor economy in the #RedCentreNT.

Tourism Central Australia recognises the importance of tourism to the Northern Territory and Australian economy and the huge potential of the industry to further contribute to the economic development of the NT. Tourism contributes \$2.25 billion to the Territory economy, with \$851 million of this being generated in the #RedCentreNT<sup>1</sup>.

The #RedCentreNT's competitive strength as a leisure destination is in providing visitor experiences that deliver a unique blend of nature and culture. These remain powerful motivators for the #RedCentreNT's core visitor markets.

As Tourism Central Australia builds on the already significant performance of the region's tourism industry, our key foci are:

- Continuing to support the National Aboriginal Art Gallery and the National Indigenous Cultural Centre developments.
- The development of the East MacDonnell Ranges, Plenty Region and the Barkly Region.



Tourism Central Australia's Northern Territory Government funded operating area

- Supporting the Northern Territory Government's Turbocharging Tourism Policy.
- Continuing to market the #RedCentreNT's niche trail opportunities and Outback Adventure Experiences.
- Expanding Tourism Central Australia's visitor information services.
- Increasing our organisation's revenue and income streams aiming for financial self-determination.
- Continuing to be a strong voice and lobby on behalf of our members for key projects.

<sup>1</sup> Tourism NT, Year ending December 2017 Visitor data



At Tourism Central Australia, we strive to be a best practice Regional Tourism Organisation. We have won many awards since our organisation was established in the 1950s. An overview of the most recent of these awards is as follows:

- **2018**
  - **Winner** – Northern Territory Tourism Awards, Visitor Services
  - **Winner** – DK Shifflet Award, International Tourism and Travel Research Association
  - **Finalist** – Australian Adventure Tourism Awards
  - **Green Destinations Global Top 100 Sustainable Destinations**
- **2017**
  - **Winner** – Northern Territory Tourism Awards, Visitor Services
  - **Winner** – Skai International Sustainable Destination Award
  - **Silver** – Australian Tourism Awards, Visitor Services
  - **Green Destinations Global Top 100 Sustainable Destinations**  
the first time an Australian destination has achieved Global Top 100 status.
- **2016**
  - **Winner** – Northern Territory Tourism Awards, Visitor Services
  - **Winner** – Northern Territory Tourism Awards, Destination Marketing
  - **Winner** – Australian Tourism Awards, Visitor Services

Tourism Central Australia continuously improves, and because of this we are an organisation that delivers positive outcomes. Our awards demonstrate our commitment to being the best we can be, and therefore Tourism Central Australia is a solid investment for Government and private enterprise.

In this document you will find concept proposals for two developments that will interact with and feed off/from each other. Visitor servicing in the Red Centre needs to be repositioned, to meet new consumer demands and increase economic growth through tourism spend. Please read the proposals, and if you would like further information, some references are included in the document, or you can contact Tourism Central Australia's CEO Stephen Schwer on +61 (0)437 091 666 or [Stephen.schwer@discoverca.com.au](mailto:Stephen.schwer@discoverca.com.au). These proposals will build Northern Australia and the Northern Territory's economy for the future.





**TOURISM  
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**TOURISM  
EMPLOYS  
16,300**

people in the NT, up 1.2%<sup>2</sup>



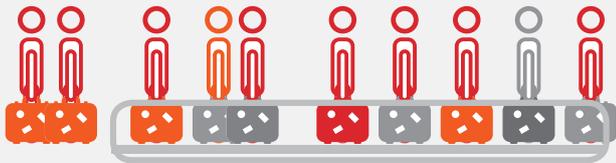
**9,100**

people directly employed



**7,200**

people indirectly employed



## PASSENGER MOVEMENTS AT #REDCENTRENT AIRPORTS

**ALICE SPRINGS AIRPORT 617,186<sup>3</sup> • AYERS ROCK AIRPORT 364,818<sup>3</sup>**



**TOURISM  
IS WORTH  
\$851m**

in visitor expenditure  
to the #RedCentreNT<sup>4</sup>



**419,000  
OVERNIGHT  
VISITORS**

come to the #RedCentreNT  
every year, with an average  
stay of 4.8 nights<sup>4</sup>



**\$1,599**  
is generated in the  
**VISITOR ECONOMY**

for every \$1 of Government  
funding provided to Tourism  
Central Australia (11% higher  
than like organisations)<sup>5</sup>



**ALICE SPRINGS VISITOR  
INFORMATION CENTRE SERVES**

**>90,000**

people each year, and a further  
>50,000 are serviced through our  
website, over the phone and by email.



## HELP US ACHIEVE OUR 5 YEAR STRATEGIC VISION, 2018 – 2023

### ADVOCACY

- National Aboriginal Art Gallery and National Indigenous Cultural Centre
- East MacDonnell Ranges/Plenty Region Tourism Masterplan
- Improve Drive Access
- Leverage and Support the Turbocharging Tourism Policy
- Barkly Region Tourism Masterplan

### MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

- Niche Trails
- Outback Adventure Experiences

### VISITOR INFORMATION SERVICES

- Alice Springs Visitor Information Centre Operation and Location
- Visitor Information Delivery Expansion

### INCOME DEVELOPMENT

- Membership Review Implementation
- Sales Conversion Opportunities
- Leverage the Partnership Agreement With the Northern - Territory Government

### EVENTS

- #RedCentreNT Regional Events Strategy Implementation

### MEMBER CAPACITY BUILDING

- Digital capacity development



Your Tourism Voice

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## VISITOR INFORMATION SERVICES

### Alice Springs Visitor Information Centre Operation and Location

**T**ourism Central Australia manages and operates the Alice Springs Visitor Information Centre. The multi award-winning Visitor Information Centre provides travel, cultural and historic information about the region and further afield to visitors, as well as offering unique merchandise to increase customer spend in the local economy. The Alice Springs Visitor Information Centre collaborates with other Visitor Information Centres (particularly Coober Pedy, Katherine, Darwin and Tennant Creek) to produce streamlined information services to tourists. Receiving around 85,000 people through the doors each year, plus answering thousands more enquiries over the phone, through the website and via email, the Alice Springs Visitor Information Centre is a critical component of the Visitor Economy.

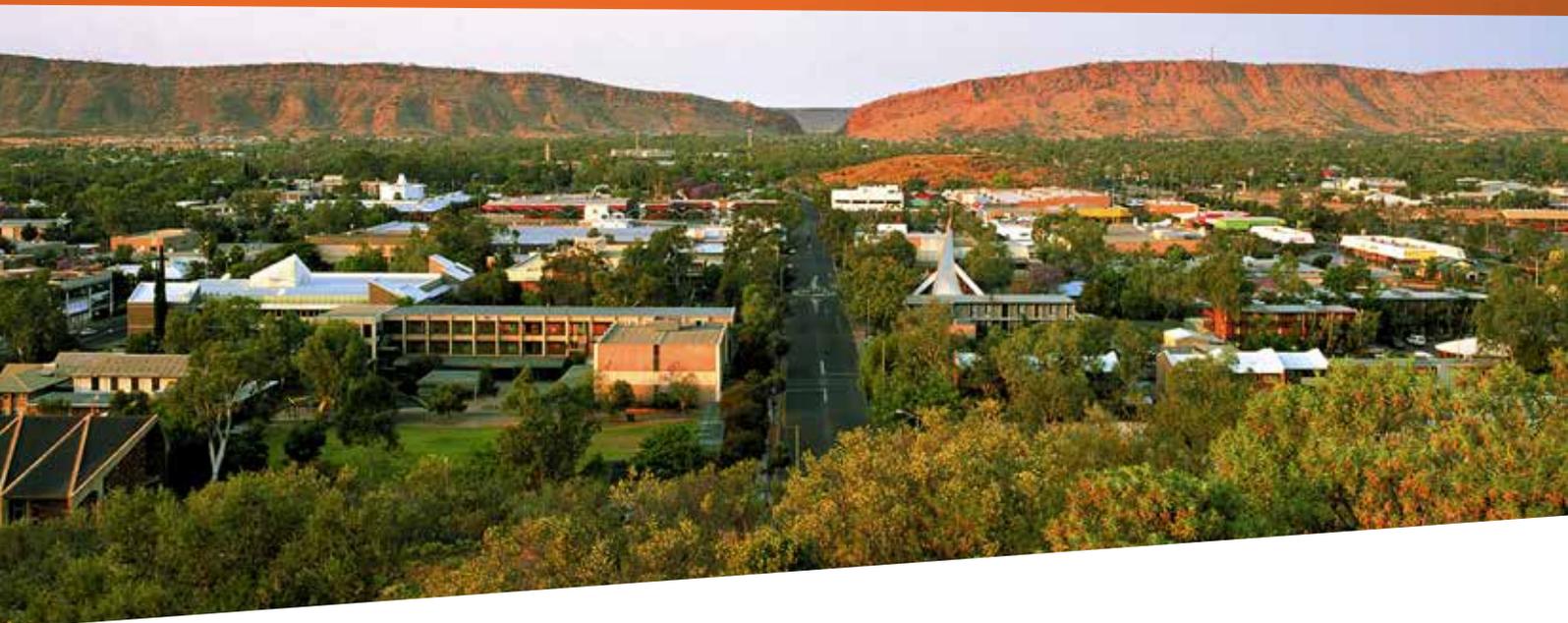
Tourism Central Australia wants to remain at the forefront of the tourism industry in servicing visitors and providing value for its members. Our fixed premises for the Alice Springs Visitor Information Centre is currently on the corner of Parsons Street and Todd Mall in Alice Springs, with the licence to occupy this premises expiring in 2021. This along with the traditional Visitor Servicing model no longer being relevant (businesses can be booked and have brochures displayed at many outlets other than Visitor Information Centres, businesses can advertise on many websites so are not as reliant on regional websites as they once were), planning for the future of Visitor Servicing in Alice Springs is crucial for Tourism

Central Australia.

The Alice Springs Visitor Information Centre features four times in case studies of best practice Visitor Information Centres in the newly released research 'A National Perspective on Visitor Information Servicing' (copies available on request). This document provides insight into the benefits of Visitor Information Centres, and the challenges they face. Tourism Central Australia continually adapts its business model to meet and exceed the needs of visitors, which is reflected in the income growth, positive feedback and multiple awards it receives.

In 2019, Tourism Central Australia will undertake a consultative process to understand what the ideal Visitor Servicing options for the organisation are. We aim to:

- Understand the needs and wants of members and stakeholders from Visitor Servicing and the potential impacts of an updated location.
- Consult with the Board of Tourism Central Australia, staff and ambassadors to understand their needs and wants from Visitor Servicing and the potential impacts of an updated location.
- Provide a series of recommendations that the Board of Tourism Central Australia can use to inform their decision making around Visitor Servicing into the future, including:
  - o What constitutes a best practice Visitor Servicing model in Alice Springs
  - o Facilities provided by best practice Visitor Information Centres



- o An informal review of locations in Alice Springs for the potential relocation of the Alice Springs Visitor Information Centre.

To remain a best practice, national award-winning Visitor Information Centre, new premises will be required. This may be a green fields site, or the substantial re-fit of an existing site. It may also be co-located with another attraction, such as incorporating the Centre within the National Aboriginal Art Gallery development (the preferred option). The type of development is subject to the findings of the report.

Since the Territory election in 2016, Tourism Central Australia has requested that the Northern Territory Government co-locate the Alice Springs Visitor Information Centre with the National Aboriginal Art Gallery. On 23 April 2018, Acting CEO of the Department of Tourism and Culture Michael Tennant sent a letter to Tourism Central Australia offering assistance. As was acknowledged in that letter, the licence to occupy the current Alice Springs Visitor Information Centre site was to expire in four years (now three years). The Acting CEO offered the following welcomed commitment.

*'While I am unable to commit to co-locating the VIC [Visitor Information Centre] with the NAAG [National Aboriginal Art Gallery], I can commit to my Department of Tourism and Culture [DTC]... working closely with the TCA [Tourism Central Australia] about the future of the VIC in Alice Springs. DTC will assist the TCA to explore solutions to meet the needs of TCA members and tourists on the ground in Alice Springs.'*

This commitment was well received by the Board and members of Tourism Central Australia, and since this time, an open dialogue about a new location for the Alice Springs Visitor Information Centre has been had with the Minister for Tourism and Culture and DTC staff.

This open dialogue has been positive and fruitful, and given the mutual goodwill that exists between the NTG and TCA, we believe now is a good time to act on our discussions. It is time for this positive dialogue to evolve into plans for a new location, preferably co-located with the NAAG, given that there are only three years left of the licence to occupy on the current VIC site.

**Northern Territory Government investment = Consideration in future budgets (2020-2021 and 2021-2022) for the construction of a new Visitor Information Centre in Alice Springs. As a guide, the development cost could be \$10-\$20 million unless co-located with the National Aboriginal Art Gallery, in which case development cost would be incorporated in the overall project.**

#### **Return on investment =**

- **Economic**
  - o Increased visitor dispersal.
  - o Increased visitor spend.
  - o Increased length of stay.

The ongoing funding support to operate the Alice Springs Visitor Information Centre through the current five-year partnership agreement is appreciated, and ensures that ongoing costs are covered.



## Visitor Information Delivery Expansion – Yulara Visitor Information Centre

Another visitor servicing project Tourism Central Australia has recently commenced is the opening of an Information Outlet at the Uluru Kata-Tjuta National Park Cultural Centre. This unstaffed information outlet is the result of two years of planning and negotiation with the Federal Government (Parks Australia), the traditional owners of the area, the Northern Territory Government and members of Tourism Central Australia. The outlet features free Wi-Fi for visitors, brochures to browse and two digital touch screens locked down to the regional website (discovercentralaustralia.com). Future developments will include a heat map to determine the number of people accessing the site, and a free hotline service to our contact sales centre in Alice Springs to help travellers with their requirements.

Creating an accredited VIC in the Lasseter Region would service travellers better across the whole Red Centre. It would increase dispersal and provide return visit opportunities. Operating a VIC comes at a cost, however the losses generated through the VIC need to be understood in the broader context of visitor servicing. Many studies have shown that people who have contact with a VIC stay longer and spend more.<sup>6</sup>

Over 300,000 people visit the National Park each year. To have such a ready stream of information hungry travellers is an excellent base for a Visitor Information Centre. Since the Northern Territory Government's installation of WiFi at the Cultural Centre in July 2018, over 6,000 individuals have accessed this service (with an average session time of 23 minutes), demonstrating good demand for information at that site.

To achieve a VIC in Yulara would be impossible without design and construction from the Northern Territory Government, and recurrent operational funding. This

investment must be seen in the context of the increased length of stay and expenditure that VICs create.

It is the intention of Tourism Central Australia to eventually build a best practice Visitor Information Centre at Yulara, to service travellers more effectively than an unstaffed site at the Cultural Centre can. With adequate funding, this vision can be realised, and will see the first ever accredited Visitor Information Centre established near one of Australia's most famous icons; the Uluru Kata-Tjuta National Park.

**Northern Territory Government investment = Consideration in future budgets (2020-2021 and 2021-2022) for the construction of a new Visitor Information Centre in Yulara. As a guide, the development could cost \$10-\$20 million. Re-current operational funding of an estimated \$500,000 per annum is also required.**

**Return on investment =**

- **Economic**
  - o Increased visitor dispersal.
  - o Increased visitor spend.
  - o Increased length of stay.
  - o Opportunities for Indigenous training and employment.
- **Cultural**
  - o Promotion of Indigenous businesses in and around a World Heritage listed site.

The Federal Government has been made aware of this project, and funding has also been requested from them. A joint project between two levels of Government is ideal.

Voyages Ayers Rock Resort are a partner in this process, and we look forward to working with them and the Northern Territory Government to achieve the goal of a fully staffed, accredited Visitor Information Centre at Yulara.

<sup>6</sup>For example, see the South Australian VIC Review at [https://www.tra.gov.au/documents/srr/DVS\\_SRR\\_SA\\_Regional\\_Visitor\\_Information\\_Centres\\_WEB\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.tra.gov.au/documents/srr/DVS_SRR_SA_Regional_Visitor_Information_Centres_WEB_FINAL.pdf)



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