



Enhancing visitor services in Victor Harbor

The City of Victor Harbor is changing how it delivers its visitor services. The major change will involve the consolidation of the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) and SA Whale Centre into one location, the site of the SA Whale Centre in Railway Terrace.

Why is Council consolidating its visitor services?

The City of Victor Harbor is unique as it is responsible for a number of visitor servicing businesses like the SA Whale Centre and VIC, as well as being the owner of the iconic Victor Harbor Horse Tram. While these services provide important economic and social benefits to our community, the Council have a responsibility to ensure these services are operated efficiently and continue to meet the needs of visitors, aligning with the Council's strategic vision for Victor Harbor.

By combining the two businesses there is an opportunity to enhance the service, reduce operating costs and facilitate re-direction of resources into destination marketing to better meet the needs of our community.

Consolidating the VIC and SA Whale Centre will enable more resources to be channeled into enhancing Victor Harbor's online visitor information offering and catering for a broader market.

It will also allow Council to increase its efforts in promoting the wonderful aspects of our city to visitors through modern digital and online tools.

Adapting to changes in visitor behavior

Each year around 1.2 million visitors come to Victor Harbor, injecting \$153 million into the local economy. The VIC and SA Whale Centre currently service only around 5% of these visitors. This is evidence of the strong shift towards visitors sourcing travel information (both while planning a holiday and at the destination) from digital and online platforms.

Staff and volunteers are highly valuable advocates for local tours, attractions and experiences. They are also great ambassadors for Victor Harbor and will remain at the heart of our visitor services delivery. For this reason, face-to-face visitor information services will continue to have an important place in our service offering.

Eliminating duplication of services and achieving cost savings

The Council currently invests around \$664,000 each year to operate the VIC and SA Whale Centre. While each has its own identity there is a duplication of services provided in terms of visitor information, bookings and advertising.

Savings under a consolidated model are expected to be in the order of \$150,000 per annum. However, it may take up to two years for the full extent of the savings to materialise.



Increasing our focus on local tourism businesses and experiences

Since 2011 the VIC has provided a booking service. This service is available both at the centre and via the Council's tourism website, www.encountervictorharbor.com.au. Bookings can be made for tours, attractions and accommodation. A booking service is also provided within the centre for Sealink and Kangaroo Island. As well as being highly resource intensive, more than half of the products booked by the VIC are for businesses or experiences located outside of the Council area.

While the Council's visitor service will continue to play an important role in promoting the region and South Australia, it is the Council's intention to increase the focus on promoting local and transition to a concierge type service that facilitates bookings directly between the visitor and tourism business.

The Council will complement the concierge service with the introduction of free advertising for tourism businesses located within the City of Victor Harbor council area.

When will the transition occur?

While a number of service changes will commence immediately, it is planned that the VIC service will move into the SA Whale Centre in early 2021.

Current lease agreement for VIC premises

Council's current lease of the VIC premises provides an exit clause requiring Council to give two years notice of its intention to vacate. This formal notice has been provided to the landlord.

The VIC is currently located in a prominent position on Victor Harbor's foreshore. The Council understands the importance of activating this space and opportunities are being explored for sub-leasing the site.

To minimise disruption during the transition, the Council is exploring opportunities for mobile 'Ask me' services facilitated by staff and volunteers to assist visitors with information, directions and a general concierge service promoting all things Victor Harbor. This would be in addition to the visitor information service delivered out of the SA Whale Centre, and could potentially be a regular feature during peak periods if successful. This will ensure the delivery of visitor information where it is most needed at times of the year that Victor Harbor has lots of tourists.

Upgrades to the SA Whale Centre

Moving the VIC service into the SA Whale Centre will require some building works and changes to the current floorplan to accommodate the VIC service. Council has prepared some preliminary plans for this purpose, and intends to seek input from staff and volunteers before the plans are finalised.

To assist with the costs associated with building alterations, the Council intends to pursue grant funding opportunities. It is expected that these works will occur later in the year, while construction works are being undertaken for the Railway Terrace upgrade. This streetscape upgrade will also enhance the amenity outside of the SA Whale Centre building, drawing more visitors into the area.

Keeping up to date with progress

Council will now commence preparing for the transition. As this progresses and there is more detail to share, further updates will be provided to the community via our website, monthly e-newsletter and written updates to volunteers.

Further questions about the changes should be directed to localgov@victor.sa.gov.au or (08) 8551 0500.

