

# 2025 Wrap Up from Wangaratta's Economic Development & Tourism Team



What a year it's been!

2025 has flown by for the Economic Development & Tourism team, and we've been busy making things happen across the region. We want to share some of the highlights with you.

This year, we've worked side by side with local businesses to help them grow and achieve their goals. From supporting start-ups and guiding expansions to connecting businesses with funding opportunities and expert advice, our focus has been on practical, hands-on support. We've also delivered events that spark collaboration, launched campaigns to keep spending local, and built partnerships that open doors for new investment. Every project has one purpose which is to strengthen our economy and create opportunities for our community to grow.



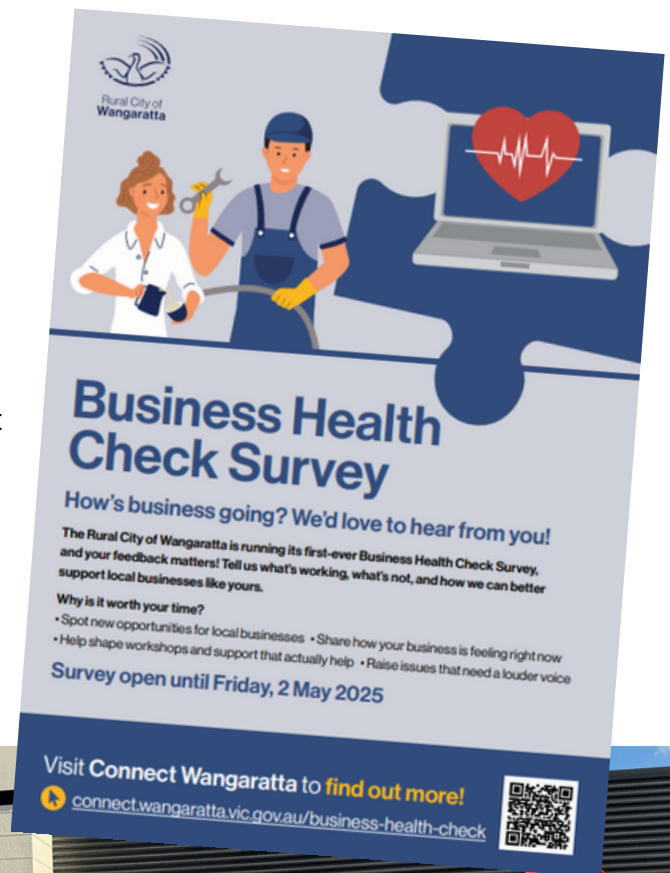
## THE TEAM

# BUSINESS HEALTH CHECK SURVEY

This year we launched our first annual business health check survey, inviting all businesses across the Rural City of Wangaratta to share their insights and experiences.

This year's survey provided vital input on trends, business sentiment, and key challenges, helping us shape our economic development planning, advocacy priorities and tailored workshops to meet the needs of our local business community.

Click [here](#) to view the results and keep an eye out for our next survey coming in February 2026!



# BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS

We stay connected with our business community through regular updates on our social media channels Facebook and Instagram (4,000 followers) as well as our fortnightly e-newsletter which reaches 1,300 engaged subscribers. These platforms allow us to share valuable resources, promote local initiatives, and keep business informed about the latest opportunities and events.



# BUSINESS CONCIERGE

We are the first point of contact for local businesses, answering hundreds of enquiries each year to provide guidance and support. Through our Business Concierge service, we help businesses navigate processes and access the resources they need.

In 2025, we assisted 43 businesses to ensure a smooth and efficient experience with permits and approvals, making it easier for them to focus on growing and thriving in our region.

# ANNUAL BUSINESS FORUM

The 2025 Annual Business Forum brought together around 100 local business owners and professionals for a day of insights and connection.

We heard from Michael Licenblat, a resilience and productivity expert, who shared practical strategies for overcoming setbacks and staying motivated. Attendees also had the chance to network, sparking new collaborations and partnerships.

Support resources from Business Victoria, AusIndustry, and AgBiz Assist were on hand to help businesses access growth opportunities and tailored assistance.

This event continues to strengthen our business community by providing knowledge, tools, and connections that drive success.

Don't miss the 2026 Annual Business Forum in February!

Click [here](#) to secure your ticket.



**2025 Annual  
Business Forum**  
with Michael Licenblat



# BETTER HOST PROGRAM

We launched the Better Host Program, a self-paced training initiative designed to help local businesses and their staff feel confident promoting everything our region has to offer.

The program features five short travel videos, each exploring a different destination:

- [Milawa](#)
- [King Valley](#)
- [Eldorado](#)
- [Glenrowan](#)
- [Wangaratta](#)

Each video is hosted by a local presenter who visits key attractions, meets the people behind the businesses, and shares authentic stories. At around 10 minutes each, the videos are fun, easy to watch, and packed with behind-the-scenes moments that make you feel like you've already experienced the area.

To support businesses further, we provide practical resources that fit around day-to-day operations, making it simple to apply what's learned and deliver exceptional visitor experiences.



Wangaratta



King Valley



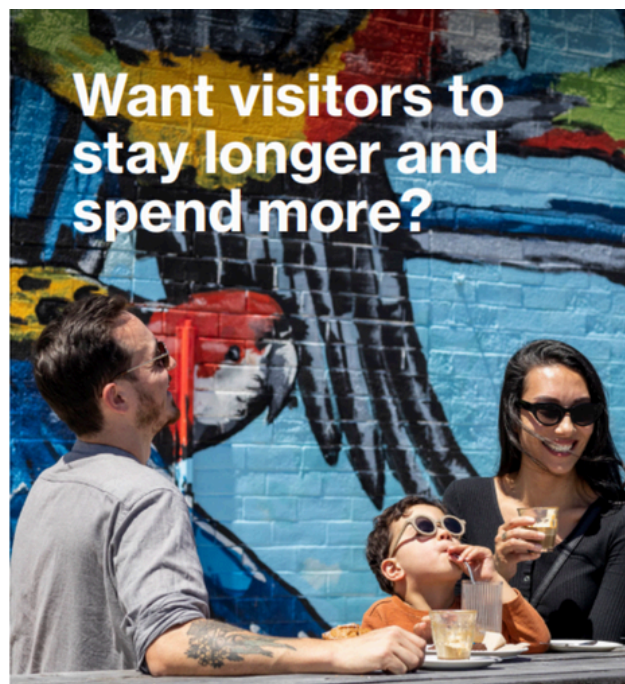
Milawa



Eldorado & Woolshed Valley



Glenrowan



Join the Better Host Program and turn local tips into business wins!



For more information, scan the QR code.

[visitwangaratta.com.au](http://visitwangaratta.com.au)

# SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

We hosted and supported over 340 businesses through a diverse range of workshops, forums, dinners, and networking events designed to build skills, foster connections, and drive growth.

Highlights included:

- **Marketing workshops** to help businesses strengthen their digital presence
- **AI Forums** exploring emerging technologies and practical applications
- **Grants and Funding** sessions to unlock financial opportunities
- **Small Business Bus** visits providing on-the-spot advice and resources
- **Farm Forestry information** sessions supporting diversification and sustainability
- **Quarterly Business Breakfasts** for networking and knowledge sharing
- **How to Use Chat GPT workshops** introducing AI tools for business efficiency

These initiatives empower local businesses with knowledge, tools, and connections to thrive in a rapidly changing economic landscape.



# OCCUPANCY MAPPING

Every quarter, we conduct occupancy mapping in the Wangaratta CBD. This involves visiting over 400 businesses to identify vacant shopfronts and track business changes. It's also an important opportunity for our team to connect with business owners face-to-face and strengthen local relationships.

For December 2025, our vacancy rate was 5.6%, which is down 1.2% from last year and remains well below the statewide average of 7.7%. We also welcomed 27 new businesses opening their doors in the CBD, highlighting strong confidence in our local economy.



# NED KELLY DISCOVERY HUB SILVER AWARD WINNER

We were proud to announce that the Ned Kelly Discovery Hub won two Silver Awards at the 2025 Victorian Tourism Awards, recognised in the Tourist Attractions and Cultural Tourism categories.

This follows the Hub's Bronze Award for Best New Tourism Business last year. Since opening in September 2023, it has received several awards for tourism and design, and welcomed its 100,000th visitor this month!



# NEW BUSINESS WELCOME GUIDE

We developed and launched the New Business Welcome Guide to support all new businesses establishing themselves in Wangaratta. This comprehensive resource provides:

- **Clear Permit Guidance** – Covering planning, building, health, and community safety requirements.
- **Step-by-Step Application Support** – Helping businesses navigate processes with confidence.
- **Capability Building** – Information on grants, training programs, and workshops to strengthen skills.
- **Industry Connections** – Links to business support programs and networks for ongoing growth.
- **Investment Assistance** – Guidance for businesses looking to invest or expand locally.

This initiative ensures new businesses have the tools and support they need to succeed, reinforcing Wangaratta as a welcoming and business-friendly region.



# SHOP LOCAL PROGRAM

Throughout the year, we ran a series of Shop Local campaigns to remind our community about the importance of supporting local businesses. These campaigns encouraged people to spend locally, discover new businesses and keep money circulating within the Rural City of Wangaratta.

From seasonal promotions to social media initiatives, the program helped boost visibility for local operators and created stronger connections between businesses and customers.



## Choose Local. Choose Community!

When you shop local, you're helping to create jobs, support families, and keep small businesses thriving.



## Faces of Small Business

Meet the faces behind some of Wangaratta's small businesses.

Shop Local Wangaratta logo

Invest Wangaratta logo

## Local Stories Wangaratta

Shop Local. Play Local. Eat Local.

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### Local Stories

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Shop Local. Play Local. Eat Local

Rural City of Wangaratta logo

# TWILIGHT SHOPPING

Thursday 18 December 2025

Icons: candles, hat, gift, flip-flops, bicycle, wine glasses, shopping bag, ice cream.

# GOOD FOOD & WINE SHOW

We partnered with five outstanding local producers to showcase Wangaratta's food and wine at the Good Food & Wine Show held at the Melbourne Exhibition Centre. Among 300 exhibitors, our region was represented by:

- Gehrig Wines
- King Valley Estate
- Darling Estate
- La Cantina
- King Valley Popcorn

This collaboration provided valuable exposure for our producers, connected them with new customers, and strengthened Wangaratta's reputation as a premium food and wine destination.



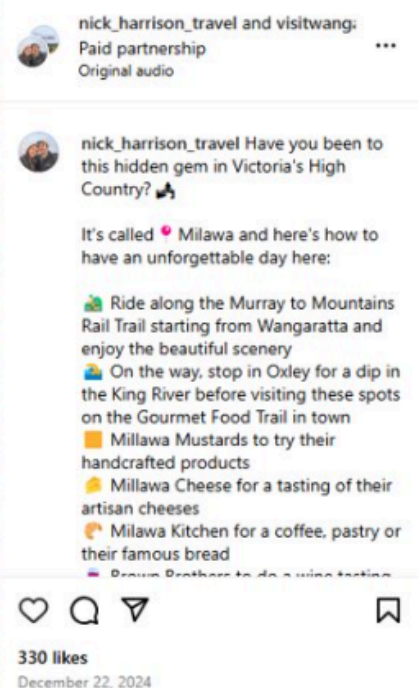
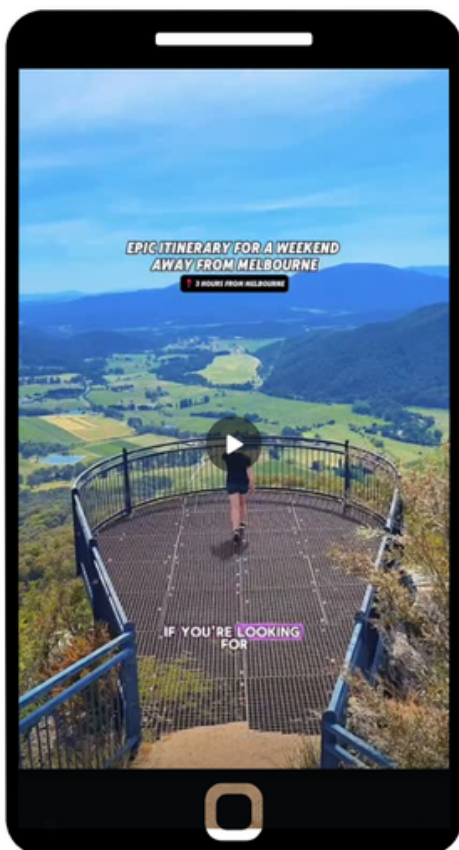
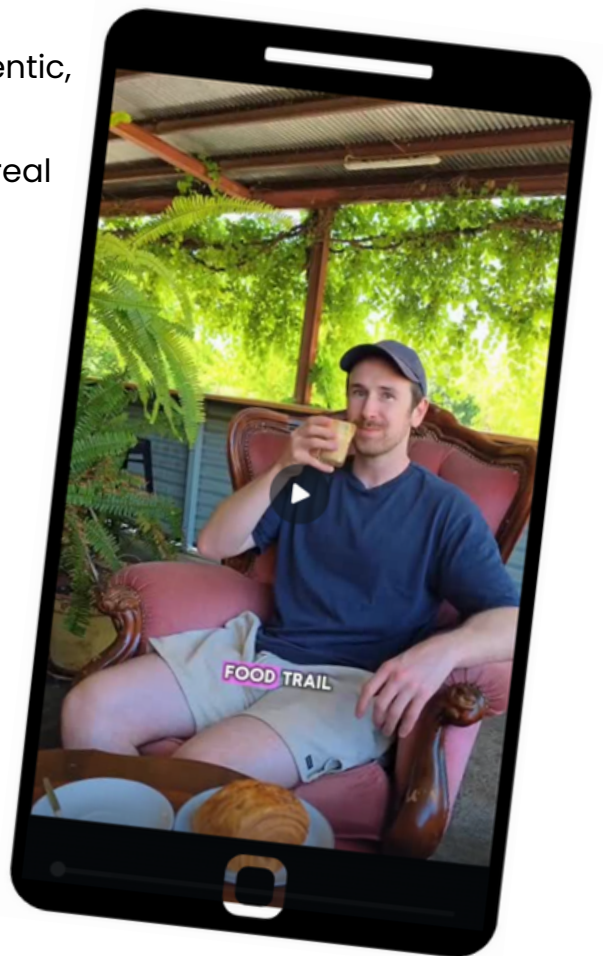
# VISIT WANGARATTA TRAVEL REELS

We partnered with travel influencer Nick Harrison to create a series of engaging travel reels showcasing the best experiences Wangaratta has to offer. Using authentic, visually driven storytelling, these reels inspired audiences to explore our region and highlighted real experiences that resonate far beyond traditional advertising.

The campaign delivered outstanding results:

- 120,000 views
- 3,000 saves
- 2,400 likes
- 2,600 shares

This initiative successfully leveraged short form video to reach new audiences, build trust, and spark interest in visiting Wangaratta.



# OVER THE FARM GATE PROGRAM

Through the Over the Farm Gate Program, we delivered practical support and social connection for our farming community. Key highlights included:

- Free Skin Health Checks – Helping farmers prioritise their health with on-site screenings.
- Three Farmers' Night Out Events – Bringing farmers together for an evening of laughter and learning, featuring comedians and guest speakers.

This program continues to promote wellbeing, reduce isolation, and strengthen community ties across our agricultural sector.



LOOK FOR THE BLUE VAN

ALPINE  
TAFISO

Free  
Skin Health Checks  
for Farmers & Friends

15-17 April 2025 | Wangaratta Livestock Exchange

Free Event!

**Farmers Night Out**  
Free Dinner & Presentation from the Unbreakable Farmer, Warren Davies

TIME: 5:30pm  
Onwards

DATE: Thursday  
18 July 2024

VENUE: The Poughon  
Barn, Wangaratta

PPPP  
Visit [www.alpinerural.com.au](http://www.alpinerural.com.au)  
for sustainable business,  
free dinner and talk  
Or call 08 8378 2444

You are invited to attend Farmer's Night Out. Hosted by the Rural City of Wangaratta, this event is designed to support the mental health and well-being of our local farmers. Recent dry conditions have significantly impacted our agricultural community, requiring ongoing support and intervention. AgriCare Victoria has been key in offering resources and recovery services. Your support for this upcoming event will help us continue supporting our farming community together.

# TOURISM EVENTS AND SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Our Tourism Events and Sponsorship Program supported 10 major events throughout the year, helping attract visitors and boost the local economy. Supported events included:

- Wangaratta Cruise Night
- Wangaratta Caravan Camping Leisure Roadshow
- Back to Wangaratta
- Wangaratta Marathon
- Wangaratta Historic Motor Show and Fly-In
- Wangaratta Rock and Roll Dance
- Makietie at the Maze
- La Dolce Vita
- King Valley Challenge
- Wangaratta Swap Meet

A total of \$37,500 in funding was provided, generating an estimated \$2.8 million economic impact for the region.



# THIS IS WANGARATTA BUSINESS PODCAST

We partnered with the This Is Wangaratta podcast to launch the Wangaratta Business Podcast, a new series celebrating the people behind our local businesses. Each episode highlighted unique stories, experiences, and community connections that make Wangaratta's business landscape so vibrant.



This initiative:

- Strengthened engagement with the business community.
- Promoted local entrepreneurship by sharing real success stories.
- Showcased inspiring journeys that reflect the spirit and resilience of our region.

A big thank you to the participating businesses (listed below) for sharing their stories and helping us shine a spotlight on Wangaratta's thriving business community.

