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Warrnambool's May Racing Carnival delivers strong economic impact

The Warrnambool Racing Club (WRC) is extremely pleased to announce the 2018 TAB Warrnambool May Racing Carnival economic impact study has shown that the local event delivered outstanding financial benefits, greater than previous year, to the city of Warrnambool.

The Carnival generated a total expenditure impact of \$14.7 million; \$12.5 million of this was spent in Warrnambool, with \$8.9 million representing new money generated for Warrnambool.

WRC Chief Executive Officer, Peter Downs said the results of the Economic Impact Statement was excellent and showed significant increases across the board.

"We are very proud to be contributing such a strong economic benefit to Warrnambool and it's great to see the results up by 20% on last year. During Carnival week, the benefits of the event are clearly visible, particularly within the retail, hospitality and accommodation sector. But it also filters right through to other areas in the months following; all of which are supporting small business and jobs within the town." Downs said.

WRC funds the May Racing Carnival at a cost of nearly \$1.5m annually and prides itself on delivering one of the most iconic regional racing Carnivals in the country. Carnival is one of Australia's hallmark country racing events and is actively supported by the Warrnambool community each year. In 2017, the Carnival won Silver at the RACV Victorian Tourism Awards, and won Event of the Year at the 2016-17 Bet365 Country Racing Victoria Awards.

"The Carnival continues to grow each year and with the number of visitors to Warrnambool increasing, we trialed a number of new initiatives in 2018 to ensure that we address the challenges of accommodation availability and aim to convert overnight stays from other parts of Victoria to greater visitor nights in Warrnambool. Through a partnership with Warrnambool Visitor Centre and the promotion of an Accommodation Drive, we were able to achieve an increase of more than 4,500 visitor nights for Warrnambool and in effect decreased nights stayed in other parts of Victoria. We are really excited to be working towards an even bigger event next year and look forward to welcoming back our faithful attendees as well as attracting new visitors to our city." Downs said.

Warrnambool Racing Club, with support from the Warrnambool City Council, engaged the services of an independent body to analyse the performance of Warrnambool's May Racing Carnival.

Data compiled by IER Pty Ltd found the 2018 TAB Warrnambool May Racing Carnival was responsible for;

- Total attendance of 31,696; more than 69% of these attendees were from outside the Warrnambool region
- Bringing 15,024 individuals into the region who otherwise may not have visited (76% increase on previous year)

- Generating 30,695 bed nights in Warrnambool (increase of 17%) and 8,174 bed nights in other parts of Victoria (decrease of 23%). Overall, the carnival generated 38,869 bed nights (5% increase on previous year).
- Achieving extremely positive customer experience outcomes, with an overall satisfaction rating of 9.4 and a very high likelihood of return next year.

WRC acknowledges and thanks the Warrnambool City Council for contributing funding towards the study.

Warrnambool City Council (WCC) Manager Visitor Economy, David McMahon said that these results are yet another example of the hard work and professionalism of the entire team at the Warrnambool Racing Club.

“As not just Warrnambool’s largest event but the regions, the May Racing Carnival is also a major promotion for our city and one we should all be very proud of. I believe many underestimate the genuine economic impact and importance of this event and months of effort and significant investment by the WRC. These important new dollars into our economy are crucial not just to tourism operators but have a major impact across all sectors of our business community and create jobs.” said Mr McMahon.

“Another new and successful initiative this year was the national campaign with Racing.Com (the dedicated national racing TV & digital broadcaster). WCC in partnership with the WRC and the Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Board funded this nationwide campaign that saw Warrnambool promoted to hundreds of thousands potential visitors – in the weeks before the event and prior to, during and after each of the 30 races across the 3 day event with dozens of adverts and promotional videos as well as live interviews promoting our city across the country.” McMahon said.

Mr McMahon said this new approach to targeting our promotion and forming new partnerships has yielded great results and forms one of the key pillars of the new Events Strategy to grow our event visitation results, which WCC adopted in May this year.

“Events are delivering real results for our economy, and Warrnambool should be very proud of how well we host and deliver major events, such as the May Racing Carnival, Speedway and Lifesaving to mention just a few.” McMahon said.

Tickets, including dining and hospitality packages, for the 2019 TAB Warrnambool May Racing Carnival will be on sale in the New Year.

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