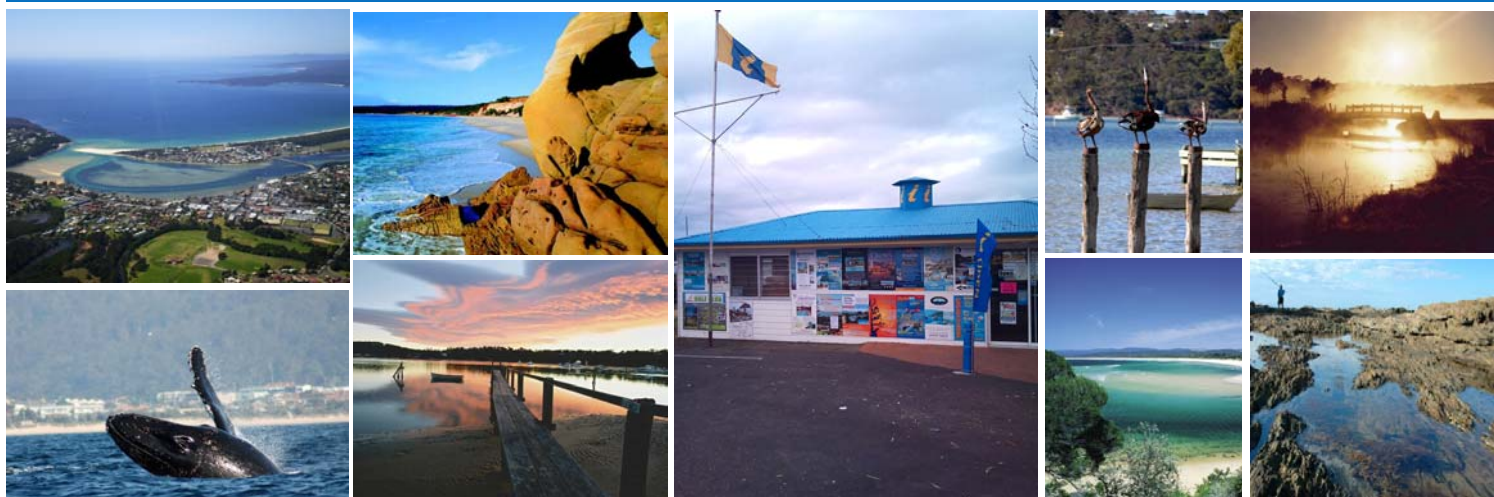




Sapphire Coast



Sapphire Coast Tourism Ltd trading as
Merimbula Visitor
Information Centre
2011 - 2012 Membership
Prospectus



About Us

Merimbula Visitor Information Centre

Merimbula is otherwise known as 'the heart of the Sapphire Coast'. Its picturesque lagoon, lakes and ocean are separated by pristine white sands and fringed by unspoilt bushland stretching up into the mountains. Boats head out of Merimbula Bar to explore the stunning coastline or enjoy abundant fishing.

Water and recreational activities and experiences abound with the lure of swimming, surfing, kite surfing, canoeing, diving, fishing or golf. Discover and explore our national parks and bushwalks or simply relax and enjoy the cosmopolitan setting of the town and beautiful surrounds of Merimbula.

The Merimbula Visitor Information Centre (MVIC) is a fully accredited Level 1 Visitor Information Centre open 7 days a week to service our visitors needs and promote your businesses. Accredited VIC's are the only information centres able to display the 'yellow *i*'. This symbol denotes genuine, high quality Visitor Information Centres and is linked through the Australian Visitor Information Centre (AVIC) network. These centres have achieved specific industry standards and are recognised as providing exceptional service and advice.



The MVIC is a key tourism infrastructure facility for Merimbula. It services and promotes local businesses to the socio-economic benefit of the community by providing information on local businesses, tourism activities and experiences.

Responding to general information and visitor enquiries in and around Merimbula is the task of our trained local staff and volunteers; we pride ourselves on their local knowledge and their ability to meet customer needs. In 2010, MVIC serviced over 95,000 individuals over the counter of the centre and many more via phone and online inquiries. MVIC is a great socio-economic driver for the Merimbula community with businesses and activities promoted to increase visitation to your business and your benefit. Merimbula is heavily dependent on tourism. Tourism is the backbone of our economy and every dollar spent has a multiplier effect of 2.5 times within the local community.

By joining MVIC, the products and services of your business will be promoted through the centre to the local community and to our many visitors. A variety of benefits are available through a tiered membership structure. Different options are on offer to promote and advertise your business including accommodation and tour bookings sourced and booked on your behalf, business advertising via external signage of MVIC as well individual business brochure display (DL size)*.

Additional benefits of MVIC membership will also be available as part of the Sapphire Coast Tourism (SCT) joint membership structure, including tourism industry updates and developments, regional website facilities and a number of promotional options and co-operative activities.



About Us

Merimbula Visitor Information Centre

All accommodation bookings made through the Merimbula VIC across the front counter or via a phone inquiry either by a Tourism Officer or by a visitor will attract a 10% commission payable to SCT. Preference of bookings will be given to those operators who have their availability online and up to date. Accommodation operators may attract a 12% commission payable to SCT if availability is not online. The additional commission fee is to cover labour costs of manual availability checking and/or phone inquiries. All tour, charters and attraction bookings through MVIC will attract a 15% commission.

MVIC is managed and operated by Sapphire Coast Tourism (SCT) and MVIC membership will be in conjunction with SCT membership as a not for profit organisation with membership derived from a diverse range of backgrounds including accommodation providers, tour operators, retail businesses, restaurants, cafes, clubs, galleries and local organisations just to name a few. All of these businesses share one goal in common – success and growth in the industry and commitment to the development of sustainable tourism within our region and its economic benefits to the local community. It is the aim of MVIC and SCT to encourage the partnership of members and businesses, which will in turn benefit Merimbula and the region as a whole.

Merimbula Visitor Information Centre reserves the right to re-classify membership if considered appropriate.

*Advertising signage is as per agreement on an individual basis and DL size brochures are requested for ease of display and consistency of promotion across the wide variety of members. Business card display is accepted for Trades & Services. Non DL brochures can be displayed but will incur an additional fee which is subject to negotiation between both parties. Organisational or joint co-operative brochures will also be displayed subject to negotiation.



About Us

Sapphire Coast Tourism

SCT is the official regional tourism organisation for the Bega Valley Shire and is responsible for the regional industry development and strategic marketing of the Sapphire Coast region to domestic and international consumers, trade, media and business.

SCT is managed by a Board and consists of the following directors:

DIRECTOR	POSITION HELD	TIME PERIOD	YEARS NOMINATED
Bruce Leaver	General/Chairman	2 years	2010 – 2012
Gordon Beattie	General/Deputy Chair	2 years	2010 – 2012
Graeme Wykes	Council Rep	2 years	2010 – 2012
Barry Harrison	Tourism	2 years	2009 – 2011
Janette Neilson	General	2 years	2009 – 2011
Tim Shepherd	General	2 years	2010 – 2012
Grant Webster	General	2 years	2010 – 2012
Robert White	Tourism	2 years	2009 – 2011

The Strategic Plan

SCT has implemented a Strategic Plan that details the direction we aim to take in the development of a sustainable tourism industry in our region. The plan is available from our website www.sapphirecoast.com.au

Our Mission Statement

To identify and promote the region's compelling visitor statement to maximise the social, cultural, environmental and economic well being of the community through sustainable tourism.

Our Objectives

- To develop a strategic framework for tourism in the region
- To plan and implement branding, marketing and promotion
- To conduct research and provide information, advice and support to improve the range and quality of visitor experiences provided in the region
- To provide advice to government, industry and potential investors on opportunities, servicing, facility and infrastructure requirements and sustainability
- To develop partnerships and relationships with other bodies, which will assist SCT to achieve our mission statement.



About Us

The Region and its Partnerships

The Sapphire Coast sits within the Bega Valley Shire and is located on the Far South Coast of New South Wales approximately half way between Sydney and Melbourne. The Shire's coastal fringe extends from Wallaga Lake (Bermagui) in the north to Cape Howe and the Victorian border in the south. Collectively, this 106-kilometre section of coastline forms the beautiful Sapphire Coast. The Sapphire Coast also travels inland to west of Bemboka – the higher peaks of the Great Dividing Range giving way to the rolling hills and hinterlands, numerous rivers, streams and lakes. Undoubtedly it is the natural environment and under-developed beauty that attracts both residents and visitors to our area.

The region of the Sapphire Coast offers a magnificent diversity of coastal, forest, mountain and rural country. Its natural, unspoiled environment provides the atmosphere for a peaceful, relaxing or adventurous visit in contact with Australia's unique flora and fauna. The variety of natural experiences and the mildness of our climate identifies the Sapphire Coast as an all-season destination.

The Sapphire Coast also takes pride in the richness of our cultural assets. From our many festivals; our extensive and quality artistic scene; our craft and artisan villages as well as our unique indigenous and European heritage and history – the Sapphire Coast offers a much broader dimension to the visitor, to complement the attractions of our beautiful natural environment.

Featuring country towns and villages, vast tracts of National Parks and State Forests, significant indigenous sites, abundant wildlife and vibrant communities, as a whole the Bega Valley Shire covers an area of some 6,052 square kilometres.

SCT is a member of the South Coast Regional Tourism Organisation (SCRTO), the peak marketing body for the greater region which includes six Local Government Tourism Organisations (LGTOs) spanning from Wollongong down to the Victorian border. Marketing of the South Coast as an entity is undertaken in partnership with Tourism NSW (TNSW) including extensive media advertising and journalist visits, on-line marketing, public relations, industry awards and trade marketing. The Sapphire Coast region is listed as part of SCRTO's website www.southcoast.net.au.

SCT will also work strongly with its neighbouring regions of Eurobodalla, Snowy Mountains (The Alps) and East Gippsland to take opportunity of cohesive industry opportunities and developments.

SCT also has access to the Sydney-Melbourne Coastal Drive (SMCD) under the umbrella of Sydney/Melbourne Touring (SMT), funded by Tourism NSW, Tourism VIC and Australian Capital Tourism.





About Us

The Region and its Partnerships

These organisations are responsible for the international and domestic marketing of the three touring routes promoted between Sydney and Melbourne. The Coastal Drive covers the beauty of the beaches and scenic drives along the coast passing through the Sapphire Coast, while the two inland touring routes of the Heritage Drive and the Great Alpine Road provide alternative touring options.

SCT will also work closely with Tourism Australia (TA) in marketing the region under the Australia's Coastal Wilderness (ACW). ACW is part of TA's National Landscapes program and it is our incredible good fortune to be part of a limited number of the world class '*best of Australia*' regions. The National Landscapes initiative is selecting Australia's top 15 nature experiences for TA's long term international marketing programs. ACW is a cross border initiative extending from Bermagui in the north down to Lakes Entrance in Victoria, taking in the Sapphire Coast and Destination Gippsland regions and was one of the first 8 National Landscapes to be announced in 2008.

The National Landscapes are now the only area-based tourism assets used by TA in their marketing, engagement with international media and through their extensive overseas partnerships programs. Inbound nature-based tourism is a strong growth area and 68 per cent of inbound visitors seek a nature-based experience.

The Coastal Wilderness brand toolkit is under development by TA and a specific detailed ACW web portal will be implemented 2011 and will set out the features and experiences that make our region one of the world's most outstanding areas of untouched temperate forested coastline.

The www.australia.com website run by TA attracts over 50 million pageviews annually and is now available in 14 different languages. Web statistics show that of the 15 landscapes, ACW received the largest amount of inquiry and pageviews of all landscapes over the last 12 month period. There is a dedicated portal to the National Landscapes on the Tourism Australia website, and ACW has its own page <http://www.australia.com/campaigns/nationallandscapes/AustraliasCoastalWilderness.htm>.

Whilst we will always have a major domestic source market, there is increasing evidence of more international visitors coming to our region. Whilst ACW is targeted to the 'experience seeker' high yield international visitor, the increasing international recognition of what our area offers will be hugely interesting and highly attractive to a domestic tourism market that has yet to explore the best of what their own country has to offer.





Member Services

Web Page & Booking Service

A significant service offered to members is the exposure of your property in the online environment on www.sapphirecoast.com.au which promotes and provides regional information on the Sapphire Coast.

The SCT regional website www.sapphirecoast.com.au has received over 450,000 pageviews this last year and is only 4 clicks away from Tourism Australia's website www.australia.com. Attracting over 41,500 pageviews per month, www.australia.com is available in 14 different languages and provides us with invaluable exposure in the domestic and the international markets.

The online environment is without a doubt, a key distribution channel of information for customers planning a holiday. In modern tourism by far the majority of potential visitors are researching their travel decisions on the web. To support the website and provide additional benefits to members, SCT also provides an online booking facility as part of its services.

Membership with SCT will provide you with a number of options to promote your business on the Regions premier website. Members will enjoy a business display listing with the opportunity to link to your own website, together with online banner advertising options as well as linking to our 24/7 online booking system.

The online booking environment is a must have service for savvy customers searching for accommodation and special travel deals and provides you with additional options to promote different products and packaged deals. The online booking facility offers another means of accommodation booking in addition to the telephone, email and walk in booking enquiries SCT receives.

All accommodation bookings made online at www.sapphirecoast.com.au or at any of the VICs either by a Tourism Officer or by a visitor will attract a 10% commission payable to SCT. Preference of bookings will be given to those operators who have their availability online and up to date. Accommodation operators may attract a 12% commission payable to SCT if availability is not online. The additional commission fee is to cover labour costs of manual availability checking and/or phone inquiries. All tour, charters and attraction bookings will attract a 15% commission.



The Marketing Program

The annual marketing program conducted by SCT provides opportunities for members to actively get involved with co-operative activities to be offered that best suit your marketing needs.

Official Regional Visitor Information Guide

The Sapphire Coast Visitor Guide is a key promotional product for the region that captures the true essence of our beautiful and diverse region. The guide will promote and provide a variety of emotive reasons and visitor experiences and will include major destination information and motivational editorial and imagery. The guide will be distributed externally to the region with the main objective to grow visitor inquiry and increase visitation to the Sapphire Coast. Participation will be offered to all businesses for wider collective support and joint promotion of the Sapphire Coast and our tourism industry in order to provide a true representation of the region.

Consumer Travel Shows

SCT will continue its participation at a number of consumer holiday travel shows in our key target markets of Melbourne, Canberra and regional VIC and NSW but will ask the industry to collectively help man these stalls.

By attending these consumer travel shows, the Sapphire Coast region will be promoted to tens of thousands of prospects via exposure at these consumer shows, promoting the Sapphire Coast to increase interest and visitation to the region.

Co-Operative Advertising

Online and traditional print advertising will be offered via co-operative opportunities. Seasonal marketing prospectus will be created and offered to members at key times throughout the year to participate in co-operative endeavours for 2011 – 2012.

Additional campaigns will be made available via South Coast Regional Tourism Organisation (SCRTO) with Tourism NSW. By working with SCRTO, larger campaigns can reach thousands of prospects and are valued at hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Tourism NSW funds, plans and controls the media and content of these campaigns. Campaigns are managed by SCT and members of SCRTO via different levels of campaign participation. Funding (dollar for dollar) will be available for set levels of campaigns.

In turn, SCT can offer members the opportunity to include tactical offers at a highly reduced rate in major publications and on-line channels. Just another huge opportunity for our members to promote their businesses.



The Marketing Program

Online Opportunities

SCT continues to develop our social media strategy and has a blog attached to the regional website. A blog is an open form of online communication where locals, visitors and prospective tourists can all share information and communicate online. Various social media programs and other initiatives will be investigated and considered to increase the exposure, awareness and 'online chatter' of the Sapphire Coast region in the online domain.

Access to SCT Image Library

SCT has many hundreds of images of the region, which are used in all promotional marketing. A digital library will be developed in for ease of catalogue and availability. Many of these images are available to members to use in their brochures and websites and is another service and reason to support and work with Sapphire Coast Tourism.



Membership Benefits

With future sustainability obtained via the recent council Tourism Levy, there has never been a better time to be part of your local, vibrant Visitor Information Centre and to support your regional tourism organisation and industry.

*Tourism is our **business** on the **Sapphire Coast** – it is the **Backbone** of our **Economy***

MVIC/SCT Membership Benefits & Opportunities Summary:

1. MERIMBULA VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE	2. SCT WEBSITE & ON LINE BOOKING SERVICES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trained & motivated customer service staff• Individual promotion of your business• One standard brochure display (DL size only*) or business card for Trades & Services• Larger displays for special events subject to negotiation of premium surcharge• Open 7 days a week• Signage advertising available on negotiation• Familiarisations program <p><small>*Non DL sized brochures, organisational and co-op brochures subject to negotiation</small></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Business display listing on the regional website www.sapphirecoast.com.au• Direct business weblinks• Free promotion of your business online• Listings in multiple sections and event listings• 24/7 on line booking service• Option to participate in online banner campaign• Comprehensive range of local information• Over 450,000 pageviews 2010-2011
3. MARKETING, PROMOTIONAL & BUY-IN CAMPAIGNS	4. INDUSTRY COMMUNICATION & DEVELOPMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Co-operative marketing• Consumer Travel Shows• Direct Mail & eMarketing campaigns• Packages• Visitor Guide• Niche Marketing Campaigns• Visiting Journalist Program• Media & Public Relations Campaign• Event Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regular newsletters• SCRTO, Tourism NSW and Tourism Australia events, seminars, workshops and industry development and information• Industry familiarisations• Special workshops and seminars• Networking opportunities• Shire wide VIC volunteer familiarisations



Membership Fees

Merimbula Visitor Information Centre – Membership categories

MVIC membership categories will follow the same structure as 2010-2011 year and are based on the different kinds of business categories and size of your business:

1. Associate

This level of membership is available for Chambers of Commerce, trades and services and not for profit tourist attractions

2. Small

- Accommodation: up to 3 master bedrooms*
- Small tour operators kayaking/canoeing, guided walk tours
- Galleries, antiques, collectables, specialities
- Cottage industries eg. produce making, working from home
- Gardens open to the public
- Small equipment hire outlets eg. bikes, surfboards, canoes
- Wholesale and retail nurseries
- Restaurants and cafes seating under 15
- Retail outlets, individual retail providers
- Small sporting facilities, outlets and operations, gyms
- Wineries without restaurants

3. Medium

- Accommodation: 4-20 master bedrooms*
- Attractions and activities (including man-made & natural attractions)
- Gardens with tearoom/café
- Boating operations, Cruises, Tours, Charters & Marinas
- Restaurants and Cafes with seating 15-50
- Wineries with restaurants

4. Large

- Accommodation: over 20 master bedrooms*
- Registered Clubs
- Restaurants seating with 50+ seating
- Entertainment venues
- Local & State Government instrumentalities

By joining MVIC you will automatically receive the benefits of being an SCT full member – details over the page.

*For tourists parks, 20 tourist sites (tent or van) = 1 master bedroom



Membership Fees

Sapphire Coast Tourism

SCT is the official regional tourism organisation for the Bega Valley Shire and is responsible for the regional industry development and strategic marketing of the Sapphire Coast region to domestic and international consumers, trade, media and business.

Sapphire Coast Tourism (SCT) will offer a tiered membership structure with a variety of benefits and options according to the level selected. Help support your official tourism organisation in its endeavours for the development of tourism and increased visitation to the socio-economic benefit of the wider community and tourism industry.

Level 1 membership:

Basic support level. By taking this option you and your business will be supporting SCT and the tourism industry of our region. You will be kept up to date via regular SCT e-letters and information will be provided containing general industry updates, trends and developments. You will be informed of strategic planning, BVSC lobbying, SCRTO and ACW information and generic promotional activities.

Level 2 membership:

This level of membership will offer all of the benefits of level 1 including access to wider and more detailed state and national tourism industry information and statistics and the opportunity to participate in industry workshops, seminars and professional development.

Regional co-operative marketing and promotional initiatives will be developed and offered to you and your business to participate in. These may include advertising and promotional activities; social media opportunities; TV, media and PR campaigns; trade activities; visiting journalist programs; shire wide Visitor Information Centre familiarisations, and consumer travel show exposure.

A limited web package for the SCT website is available in Level 2 membership offering an individual business listing* and a direct weblink* to your business from the SCT regional tourism website.

Level 3 membership:

This level of membership offers all of the benefits of Levels 1 & 2, including a full web package. The full web package includes not only an individual business listing* and direct weblink* to your business from the SCT regional tourism website but also provides the additional benefits of the regional online booking facility (if applicable).

* One listing per membership



Terms & Conditions

<p>MEMBERS RESPONSIBILITIES For all members:</p> <p><u>Approvals, insurances, and licenses</u> It is the responsibility of members to have all necessary licenses, insurance policies and statutory approvals required to operate their business in agreeance with any local, state and federal authorities and within the law.</p> <p><u>Promotion (online and printed)</u> As a member of SCT it is a requirement that you review your business listing on www.sapphirecoast.com.au keeping it up to date with accurate information and liaise with SCT if amendments are required. SCT reserves the right to remove inaccurate or inappropriate information/images from the website, or to remove a members listing from the website.</p> <p><u>Contacting You</u> It is a condition of membership that accommodation and tour operators be readily available and accessible to answer inquiries, from either visitors or tourism team members, on a 7-day basis within reasonable hours. Members may risk losing business if they are not readily available or contactable. It is the responsibility of the member to ensure all contact details are up to date and alternative contact arrangements are in place. This includes your address, phone numbers, email and web contact details.</p> <p><u>Membership Fees</u> Membership fees are non-refundable.</p>	<p>MEMBERS RESPONSIBILITIES Online Booking Service:</p> <p>All accommodation bookings made online at www.sapphirecoast.com.au, or any of the Visitor Information Centres either by a tourism officer or by a consumer, attract a 10% commission (GST inclusive).</p> <p>Preference of bookings will be given to those operators who have their availability online and up to date. Accommodation operators may incur an additional fee if availability is not online to cover labour costs of manual availability checking and/or phone enquiries.</p> <p>SCT has an online 24/7 real time accommodation booking system. Access to this system is only available to full accommodation members of SCT via the following process:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. All eligible members will receive:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Username and password to log onto the on line administrative member console- Free product listing on the SCT site including photographs.2. Access to the management console is through the www.thebookingbutton.com.au/extranet3. As a member you will be required to enter all business details, pictures, descriptions, availability, rates, special conditions and special rates into the on line booking system. SCT will provide access to an on-line user manual and initial technical support.4. Accuracy of all information published by any media, including availability and tariff rates, is the sole responsibility of the operator. The booking system is real time. It is accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week. A search engine operates through a questionnaire pro forma and selects suitable products based on user entries. If product/s meet the search criteria of the customer they will be presented with an option to book the product on line. Responsibility for the accuracy of all information, including availability and tariff rates, belong solely to the operator.	<p>MEMBERS RESPONSIBILITIES Code of Conduct:</p> <p>The SCT code of conduct outlines professional guidelines so the conduct of SCT members will enhance the regions tourism industry and contribute positively to the community, environment and quality of life. SCT members are expected to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Act professionally and with high levels of duty of care, safety and concern towards other SCT members, customers and the Bega Valley community.2. Deliver with integrity, all advertised products and services, meeting all legal responsibilities including trading only under a register business name.3. Comply with the laws of Australia and ensure all contracts and terms of business are clear, concise and honoured in full, ensuring all dealings are ethical and fair.4. Speak and act respectfully and not denigrate or slander anyone or discriminate on the basis of race, gender, religious belief, sexual orientation or political persuasion.5. Ensure claims in advertising and marketing a product or service are true, not misleading or exaggerated and are not negative about another member's product or service.6. Manage their businesses effectively and efficiently, enhancing the reputation of tourism within the Bega Valley and to respond and resolve customer complaints in a timely and courteous manner and to change business processes and policies when necessary.7. Operate a safe, healthy and satisfying working environment for staff, customers and the public.8. Manage their staff/employees fairly and equitably. Consider environmental best practice guidelines, conserving water, energy and the natural environment.
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Terms & Conditions

<p>MEMBERS RESPONSIBILITIES For all members (cont):</p> <p>For Accommodation Members: <u>AAA Star Rating Certificates</u> If your accommodation product has been assessed by AAA Tourism and has a current AAA Star rating certificate, SCT requires a copy of this certification. If operators fail to provide a current AAA Star rating certificate, SCT will use AAA Tourism's online star rating for that property. Those operators who have not been AAA Star Rated may provide a self-rating of their property but the AAA Star Rating 'star icons' will not be used.</p> <p><u>Payment information</u> Payments to operators will be made via EFT to bank account nominated on the application form and the remittance emailed to the nominated email address within 10 days of the end of the month following stay by the customer.</p> <p>-end-</p>	<p>MEMBERS RESPONSIBILITIES Online Booking Service (cont):</p> <p>The system will require the customer to enter their credit card details and pay 100% of the fee up-front. The system is not designed to take deposits. Payments will be processed using a secure payment gateway. Members will be notified via email when a successful transaction is completed. The customer will be notified by email that they have a confirmed and paid for the booking. Both the customer and the property contact details will be included in the e-mails. Responsibility for accuracy, including availability, tariff rates and double bookings belongs solely with the operator. If a double booking occurs the provider is responsible for providing alternative accommodation. Inability by a member to access or maintain tariffs, calendar or availability must be reported immediately to the SCT office at Merimbula. NB: Responsibility for the booking belongs to the operator. SCT will not be liable for any failure of, or interruptions to hardware, third party Internet Service Providers, browsers, domains or any other software. If a booking is altered or cancelled, you will need to notify SCT of any changes. Preference of bookings will be given to those members who have their accommodation availability online and up to date.</p> <p>5. Payments to operators will be made via EFT to bank account nominated on application form and the remittance emailed to the nominated email address within 10 days of the end of month following stay by the customer.</p> <p>6. Failure to honour bookings made through the real time system will incur a minimum \$75.00 admin fee payable by the operator.</p> <p>-end-</p>	<p>MEMBERS RESPONSIBILITIES Code of Conduct (cont):</p> <p>Be ambassadors for tourism on the Sapphire Coast and help remote community understanding of the importance of tourism as a vibrant contributor to the local economy. Tourism is the backbone of our economy.</p> <p>9. Membership of SCT is subject to review and acceptance by the Board or their authorised agent</p> <p>10. Breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct may result in suspension of membership and associated benefits including brochure display, website listings and bookings. Members have the right to address the Board should a breach be alleged against them</p> <p>It is understood that by signing the membership application form you agree to follow the Members Responsibilities and the Members Code of Conduct.</p> <p>-end-</p>
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