

Moorooduc Coolstores Master Plan

Tourism Analysis and Positioning

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Prepared by



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Master Plan for the Moorooduc Coolstores is aimed at creating a strong, sustainable tourist destination in its own right. New uses and redevelopment is required to achieve this.

The aim for the Moorooduc Coolstores is to position it as a “Peninsula Food, Wine and Events Centre” catering primarily to tourists.

The existing approved Development Plan envisaged the development of the site as a tourist and entertainment precinct. Whilst the Vision for the site remains valid, the original tourist uses on the site failed, for a variety of reasons.

The State and Local Planning Policy Framework supports the establishment of well-sited, integrated uses that complement the Peninsula’s tourist and recreational role.

The strengths of the Coolstores include its gateway location, its “brand” and the existing Peninsula Lounge as an “anchor” attraction. These strengths provide a sound basis for establishing the Coolstores as a strong tourist destination.

The tourism positioning for the Coolstores will be achieved through:

- Establishing a complementary mix of tourist and entertainment uses that achieves a critical mass of activities. In other words, instead of relying on one key attraction (as has occurred in the past), a range of complementary activities would be offered that, together, provide a significant “drawcard” to attract visitors to the Peninsula;
- Focusing on regional food and wine to strengthen the Coolstores association with the “Mornington Peninsula”. This would be achieved through the establishment of the Peninsula Food and Wine Centre and utilising Peninsula produce in the restaurants and cafes on the site;
- Establishing facilities that provide amenities and services for the visitor and a reason to stop. This includes public toilets, tourist information, interpretive information relating to regional food and wine, information on how to get to the wineries and farm gate outlets and food and wine tastings/classes;
- Building on the growing role of the Coolstores (through the Peninsula Lounge) as a leading event and function venue in Melbourne, through the provision of expanded function facilities;
- Integrating the functions, events, tourism and food elements of the Complex in order that they leverage off one another;
- Improving access and car parking to support the proposed uses;
- Improving the appearance and functionality of the site, through a consistent design approach, themed landscaping and uniform signage.

The development of the Moorooduc Coolstores in accordance with the Master Plan will have significant tourism and economic benefits for the Peninsula. These benefits include increased visitation to the Peninsula, increased length of stay and expenditure by visitors, and dispersal of visitors throughout the Peninsula.

Increased Visitation and Length of Stay

The Mornington Peninsula has the highest visitation of all tourism regions in Victoria, outside Melbourne, with 5.1 million visitors in 2003. Of these, an estimated 4.8 million visitors travel by car or bus to the Peninsula annually.

Anecdotal evidence from tourism operators suggests that most visitors use the Moorooduc Highway when travelling to the Peninsula. The Coolstores has a prominent position on the Moorooduc Highway, at a gateway to the Peninsula and has the potential to attract a larger percentage of these visitors passing through, on their way to the Peninsula.

It is estimated that the Visitor Information Centre at Moorooduc Coolstores could capture 250,000 visitors annually, particularly given the other facilities and attractions on the site (public toilets, café, restaurant and food and wine centre).

It is estimated that the Coolstores could attract around 150,000 people per annum to the Food and Wine Centre. It is assumed that many of these customers will also use the visitor information centre.

Visitor information services located at the Coolstores would not only encourage visitors to stop at the Coolstores but also increase visitor awareness of the Peninsula's food and wine tourism product. The Moorooduc Coolstores is an excellent strategic location on the Peninsula to distribute visitors to the hinterland region to experience the food and wine product and hence increase visitor yield.

The Visitor Information Centre at Moorooduc Coolstores would increase the level of visitation to attractions in the hinterland and increase the average length of stay of visitors. In quantitative terms, it is estimated that the visitor information component at the Coolstores would add another 32,000 visitor nights per annum to the Peninsula.

Increased Visitor Expenditure

Total additional visitor expenditure as a result of the redevelopment of the Moorooduc Coolstores is estimated at \$4.1 million per annum, based on the estimated increase in patronage.

The redeveloped Coolstores is aimed at attracting the market segments that visit food and wine product on the Peninsula. Visitors that are attracted to food and wine product on the Peninsula spend \$589 per person per visit, compared to the average overnight visitor expenditure on the Peninsula of \$372 per visit.

Encouraging Dispersal of Visitors

The visitor information services and interpretive information at the Moorooduc Coolstores will help disperse visitors into areas of the Peninsula, which are less known such as areas of the hinterland and Western Port villages. The location of the Coolstores would itself encourage dispersal as it is a key entry point to the Peninsula and there is good access to other parts of the Peninsula from that point.

1 INTRODUCTION

Urban Enterprise Pty Ltd, consultants in urban planning, property and tourism, has prepared this report on behalf of RMCO Pty Ltd, the owner of Moorooduc Coolstores. The report outlines the tourism potential and positioning that can be achieved for the Moorooduc Coolstores, to support the proposed Master Plan for the site.

The Master plan has been prepared in response to:

- A recognition by the Council that the site is an important gateway into the Mornington Peninsula and as such, presents significant opportunities to be a strong tourism node;
- A desire by RMCO and existing tenants occupying parts of the site to improve the viability of the Complex and to strengthen the tourism positioning of the Complex;
- The existing role of the Peninsula Lounge as a “destination” venue, attracting patronage from all over Melbourne and the potential to leverage off this activity;
- A desire by both RMCO and the Council to establish a soundly based framework for guiding future use and development of the site, to support a planning scheme amendment to give effect to that framework.

The Master plan is aimed at developing and positioning the Moorooduc Coolstores as a “Peninsula Food, Wine and Events Centre”.

This report outlines the background to the site’s development; the existing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats relating to the site; and the potential for tourism development on the site and how this could be achieved.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Site

The Moorooduc Coolstores Complex is located at 475 Moorooduc Highway, Moorooduc on the southeast corner of Eramosa Road West and Moorooduc Highway. Eramosa Road and Moorooduc Highway intersect at a roundabout.

The Coolstores site is irregular in shape and has a total area of 2.9 hectares.

Eramosa Road is a two-lane road linking Moorooduc to Somerville in the east. Moorooduc Highway is a four-lane divided arterial road linking the southeast suburbs (including Frankston) to the Mornington Peninsula.

2.2 The Buildings

The Complex was formerly known as the Two Bays Orchard Packing Sheds and comprised many gabled sheds with corrugated iron roofs, mainly built of timber but with some brick structures. It also comprised the former Moorooduc Post Office (circa 1910) and a 1920s timber house, possibly the orchard manager's house.¹

The coolstore and packing buildings were all converted to accommodate the current uses, including the addition of major roof forms and glazing to the main buildings and Edwardian-style bull nose verandas. The interiors of most of the sheds have also been converted. Despite these additions, the outward form and finish have been retained.² Figure 2.2.1 shows the buildings prior to redevelopment.

The Coolstores, packing shed and associated Monterey pine tree rows have heritage significance within the Mornington Peninsula as the most extensive built reminders of what was once a vast orchard and nursery industry. The comparatively large size of the company is clearly expressed by the remaining original buildings and the extent of the pine hedgerows.

2.3 Existing Uses

The site currently supports the following uses:

- Restaurant/tavern/function centre (Peninsula Lounge);
- Café;
- Community Radio Station (3RPP).

¹ Shire of Mornington Heritage Study, 1994

² *ibid*

Figure 2.2.1 – Photograph showing the Coolstores and packing sheds prior to redevelopment



In the past, the site has been used for a variety of other uses including offices, TV Museum and art and craft shops.

The entire Moorooduc Coolstores Complex is owned by RMCO Pty Ltd. Each of the businesses located on the site are operated independently, under leases granted by RMCO Pty Ltd.

Surrounding land uses include rural and rural-residential uses to the north, east and south and the Mornington Railway (tourist facility) to the west.

2.4 Recent History of Site Development

In 1987, Council approved the development of the site as a tourism and entertainment precinct comprising 17 art, craft & antique sales areas, a 150-seat restaurant and parking for 92 cars.

In 1988, the Moorooduc Coolstores Complex opened for business.

Further approvals were obtained between 1988 and 1990 for a plant nursery, kiosk, museum, caretaker dwelling additions, function/reception centre and additional car parking.

The site has had a history of car parking problems with a shortage of car parking provided on-site and cars parking along Eramosa Road, creating safety and traffic management problems.

The Coolstores progressively and rapidly declined as a tourist centre after 1990. The original owner/developer/operator partnership broke up. The tenancy areas were vacated and the first-class restaurant deteriorated in quality. The financial viability of the site was under threat.

In 1994, approval was given for extended trading hours and a General License, with the emphasis being directed to operating a viable “pub” to try and maintain profitability across the site.

A further change of ownership in 1995 saw the site being operated with a view to maximising income and minimising costs as a means of maintaining profitability, including reducing management and maintenance costs for the buildings and the site. Some of the vacant tenancies were leased as offices and other tenancies were leased for a variety of other uses in order to generate income.

In 1999, the current owners, RMCO Pty Ltd, purchased the site. At this time the Coolstores Complex was in disrepair and six tenancies were vacant. The remaining tenants were unhappy with the lack of management and the general poor appearance and reputation of the Coolstores. The remaining tenants at that time included the Community Radio Station (3RPP), the Peninsula Lounge, the TV Museum and the café. The tenants relying on tourism visitation for business struggled but were well aware of the tourism potential of the Moorooduc Coolstores Complex by virtue of its location.

RMCO’s first priority was to stabilize the remaining tenancies, introducing a strict management and maintenance program. Some rental concessions were given to keep valuable tenants on board.

The newly painted and properly maintained Coolstores quickly became very popular with full occupancy achieved in mid 2000. However, most leasing enquiries were for office space and very few enquiries were forthcoming for tourist-related uses.

By 2001, the tavern/restaurant was operating unsatisfactorily culminating in it being closed and left vacant for 10 months. The restaurant/tavern component of the Moorooduc Coolstores has always been viewed as the main identity and consequently was referred to as “The Coolstores”.

In 2002 efforts were instigated to change the image and positioning of the Coolstores Complex. This commenced with the arrival of a new licensee in January 2003 and the opening of the refurbished premises named “The Peninsula Lounge”. To date, “The Peninsula Lounge” is still commonly referred to as The Coolstores.

Figures 2.4.1 and 2.4.2 show photographs of the site as it is today.

In summary, the original Vision for the Coolstores as a tourist and entertainment precinct is still valid, but the delivery of that Vision failed for a variety of reasons. These reasons include:

- The reliance on only one major tourist drawcard for the site, namely the restaurant/tavern;
- The operational failure of the restaurant/tavern following a change of ownership;

- The inability of the art, craft and antique stores to draw enough tourists to the site to be financially sustainable. This was primarily a result of the lack of diversity in the product offering (all offering the same product) and a lack of diversity in the target markets (all positioned to capture a weekend tourist market, with little offer for the weekday visitor).

Figure 2.4.1. – Photograph showing the Coolstores frontage in 2002



Figure 2.4.2. – Photograph showing the current Coolstores frontage



3 POLICY AND STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

3.1 Mornington Peninsula Sustainable Tourism Development Plan

This Plan was prepared by Urban Enterprise and included substantial tourism industry consultation to identify issues and opportunities as well as to test proposed strategies. Consultation included face-to-face interviews, workshops and public exhibition of the draft report.

The Plan has been adopted by the Board of Mornington Peninsula Tourism and was also used by Destination Mornington Peninsula Inc as the basis for preparing its One Year Marketing Action Plan in 2005 and again in 2006.³ DMP is the Tourism Campaign Committee for the Mornington Peninsula tourism region, established with the support of Tourism Victoria.

The Plan sets out a blueprint for tourism marketing and development for the next five years.

Some of the key objectives of the Plan are consistent with the objectives for the Moorooduc Coolstores. For example, the Plan aims to:

“Identify opportunities to increase sustainable tourism infrastructure on the Peninsula”. The Coolstores project will provide a significant new tourist attraction for the Peninsula, within an existing site and existing development.

“Build awareness of the Mornington Peninsula as a major tourism destination” and ***“Increase total visitor nights, spend and dispersal across the Peninsula”***. The tourist information and interpretive information on Peninsula food and wine will contribute substantially to raising awareness of the Peninsula’s tourism product strengths and will facilitate increasing yield from visitors (longer stays and higher spend).

“Increase visitation during off-peak periods”. The events role of the Coolstores is aimed primarily at a mid-week market. The Food and Wine Centre is aimed at attracting the touring visitor throughout the week, including holiday home visitors, international and interstate visitors.

“Grow high yield market segments”. Recent research undertaken by Urban Enterprise for Mornington Peninsula Tourism⁴ clearly shows that the highest yield visitors to the Peninsula are those that visit wineries. These visitors tend to engage in far more activities during their stay than other visitors and also spend far more during their visit than most other visitors. The proposed Food and Wine Centre is targeting these high yield markets.

Relevant strategies in the Plan that support the Coolstores Master Plan include:

³ Urban Enterprise facilitated the process of preparing the One Year Marketing Action Plans on behalf of Destination Mornington Peninsula in 2005 and 2006.

⁴ Mornington Peninsula Visitor Profile, 2005, Urban Enterprise.

“Investigate the potential for establishing a Level 3 accredited VIC, co-located with a commercial tourism business, at Moorooduc Coolstores. The aim would be to establish an accredited VIC, operated by the commercial operator, at little or no cost to Council”

“Target food and wine and touring visitors as important non-summer markets”

“Investigate opportunities to establish signage at key gateways that identifies the arrival at the Peninsula as well as promoting the Mornington Peninsula brand. Key gateways include Western Port Highway, Nepean Highway, Moorooduc Highway, Mornington-Tyabb Road and ferry arrival points (eg Sorrento-Queenscliff, Stony Point-Cowes).”

It can be seen that the Plan acknowledges the gateway role of the Moorooduc Coolstores for Mornington Peninsula tourism through the above strategies addressing arrival/gateway signage and the location of visitor information. This gateway role was highlighted in the consultation sessions with the tourism industry.

3.2 Destination Mornington Peninsula One Year Marketing Action Plan, 2005 and 2006

The preparation of the Marketing Action Plan was facilitated by Urban Enterprise, through workshops with the DMP Executive. The Marketing Action Plan identifies food and wine as a key tourism product strength of the Mornington Peninsula.

The food and wine centre at the Coolstores will provide an additional opportunity to promote the wineries and farm gate outlets of the Peninsula, which, in turn will support the resources DMP directs to marketing the food and wine product of the Peninsula.

3.3 State Planning Policy Framework

Relevant Provisions

The State Planning Policy Framework includes a number of policies of greater or lesser relevance to the proposed master plan, being:

- Clause 15.01 - Protection of Catchments, Waterways and Ground Water
- Clause 15.05 - Noise
- Clause 15.09 - Conservation of Native Flora and Fauna
- Clause 17.04 - Tourism
- Clause 17.05 - Agriculture
- Clause 18.09 - Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage

In terms of proposed SPPF provisions, Melbourne 2030 is a seriously entertained document and will be introduced at Clause 12. The intention of Melbourne 2030 with regard to “green wedge” land is now partly reflected in the new rural zones and Clause 57. Direction 8 (Better Transport Links) also seeks to improve the safety and service of freeway links between Melbourne and the rural regions and regional towns.

Commentary

There is clear State planning policy support for integrated, well planned and sited tourist facilities. Whilst the provision of such facilities needs to be balanced against other considerations such as the loss of productive agricultural land, servicing, amenity and environmental impacts, the employment and long-term economic, social and cultural benefits associated with tourist facilities are clearly recognised. It should be noted that the Moorooduc Coolstores is an existing site with established buildings, originally developed for the purpose of establishing a tourist and entertainment precinct. The Master Plan seeks to implement this original Vision, through a more appropriate and sustainable mix of tourist uses.

3.4 Local Planning Policy Framework

Relevant Provisions

The Local Planning Policy Framework is contained in the Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) at Clause 21. The MSS acknowledges the recreational role of the Mornington Peninsula as the most popular and formal recreation area in Victoria and in particular the importance of vineyards and wineries as a contributor to the marketing of the region as a recreational destination. The MSS notes that one of the key challenges to the area relates to sewerage and drainage infrastructure, which has the potential to pollute inland surface waters, beaches and groundwater.

The Mornington Peninsula Strategic Framework Plan contained at Clause 21.04 locates the subject site in the "Agriculture – Rural Conservation" area. Strategic directions identified for this area include maintaining rural areas for their environmental, landscape, recreational and agricultural values.

The Strategic Framework and Peninsula's Settlement Pattern at Clause 21.06. Planning for Rural Areas is contained at Clause 21.09. The clause acknowledges that the Peninsula has a substantial rural population that is not directly or primarily engaged in traditional agriculture and that this "rural living" generates a set of demands and expectations. There are three components to Clause 21.09.

- Clause 21.09-1 - Conserving Environmental Values
- Clause 21.09-2 - Supporting Agricultural and Primary Production,
- Clause 21.09-3 - Maintaining and Enhancing Landscape, Cultural and Recreational Values.

The implementation of the planning strategy contained in the local Municipal Strategic Statement is contained within the Local planning policies at Clause 22. There are three local policies of relevance to the subject proposal.

- Clause 22.06 - Development on Highways, Main Roads and Tourist Routes
- Clause 22.07 - Commercial and Industrial Uses in Rural Areas
- Clause 22.14 - Mornington Peninsula Land Units.

The Highways, Main Roads and Tourists Route Policy addresses the establishment of commercial or industrial developments including service station, convenience shops, restaurants, takeaway food shops and associated advertising signs along main roads and tourist routes in rural areas.

The Commercial and Industrial Uses in Rural Areas Policy acknowledges that industrial and restrictive commercial uses are discretionary within the Rural Zone and encourages the "provision" of facilities and services that generally support the ability to experience of the Mornington Peninsula's natural and cultural recreational values, including short term and home hosted accommodation, host farms and similar facilities.

Clause 22.14 relates to the objectives and policy with respect to land affected by the Environmental Significance Overlays (in this case, Moorooduc Plain and Balcombe Valley).

Commentary

There is considerable Local Planning Policy encouragement for the provision of facilities that support the recreational role of the Peninsula.

This is particularly the case with regard to value-adding activities such as agricultural services, rural industries, visitor information and visitor accommodation, as well as for recreational facilities that are linked with the existing historic, agricultural, environmental and landscape features of the site / area.

There is also encouragement for the provision of facilities which support the recreational role of the Peninsula, promote an understanding of rural pursuits and / or rural / coastal environments, and help to meet the demands of visitors.

Again, this needs to be balanced against other strategic directions such as maintaining rural areas for their environmental, landscape, recreational and agricultural values; preventing the ribboning of non-rural uses along important tourist routes; and avoiding the proliferation of access points to rural highways.

The "Moorooduc Coolstores" as it presently exists was initially established in 1987. Prior to this it comprised the Two Bays Orchards Packing Sheds and Moorooduc Post Office dating circa 1910. The existing approved development was allowed given its historical context, "gateway" location and provision of tourism and entertainment-type uses.

The fact that the site has already been intensively developed for (principally) tourism and entertainment-type uses, distinguishes it from other sites and in particular, greenfield sites. The usual concerns relating to loss of agricultural land and impacts on the rural environment are therefore less relevant.

Conclusions

In summary, there is State and Local planning policy support for the existing tourist and entertainment uses on the site, and the proposed additions and alterations as envisaged by the Master Plan, because:

- The property comprises a strategically located island gateway site that has considerable potential for the provision of facilities that support the tourism and recreational role of the Peninsula.
- The site currently fulfils a limited tourist and entertainment role (primarily through the operation of the Peninsula Lounge). The Master Plan provides the opportunity to reinforce and expand this role through the provision of visitor information, provision of interpretive facilities that promote an understanding of the rural-related goods and services offered by the Peninsula, and provision of opportunities for tourists to experience Peninsula food and wine, all in the one location.
- The proper and orderly development of the site as proposed will provide employment and long-term economic, social and cultural benefits to the region.
- The nature and context of the site are such that it can be improved without further compromising the environmental, landscape, recreational and agricultural values of the surrounding rural areas, or promoting the ribboning of non-rural uses along this important tourist route. Indeed, the proposed improvements will enhance the environmental, landscape and recreational values of the site.

4 STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

4.1 Strengths

The strengths of the Moorooduc Coolstores Complex include:

- **The location.** The Coolstores is located:
 - At a major ‘gateway’ to the Mornington Peninsula from Frankston, reinforced by the existing roundabout treatment, the intersection with Eramosa Road West and the existing built form which is prominent in a largely rural setting;
 - On one of the most important access roads to the Mornington Peninsula from metropolitan Melbourne. This, together with the extensive frontage to Moorooduc Highway, provides excellent exposure to high volumes of passing traffic, particularly vehicles travelling in a south-westerly direction;
 - Opposite an existing and growing tourist attraction – Mornington Railway. There is evidence that a large proportion of visitors to the Railway also visit The Coolstores. Discussions with the Mornington Railway operators have confirmed there is an existing beneficial relationship between the Coolstores and the Railway and that there is potential to increase the mutual benefits through improvements at the Coolstores.
- **The “brand”.** There is substantial brand recognition for “The Coolstores”, supported by tourism signage on Moorooduc Highway and notations in Melways.
- **A strong business anchoring the Complex.** The Peninsula Lounge is a successful entertainment and functions business that attracts substantial numbers of non-local customers to the Complex each week. A professional, respected and well-resourced licensee operates “The Peninsula Lounge”. There has been substantial growth in visitation to “The Peninsula Lounge” based on functions and events, since commencing operations.
- **The existing tourist-related uses.** There are established tourist-related uses in the Complex, namely the Peninsula Lounge and the Café, although these uses need the support of other complementary tourist and entertainment uses.
- **Commercial viability.** Long-term sustainability depends on the ability to develop and maintain financially viable tourist and entertainment uses on the site.

4.2 Weaknesses

The Boutik Regional Art and Wine Centre, located towards the rear of the Coolstores site recently closed after operating for only one year. Its closure continues the history of failures of small tourist-related retailing on the site and can be attributed to the weaknesses of the site as outlined below, in particular the lack of a critical mass of tourism/entertainment product, poor access and the lack of a consistently applied design theme to the site.

- **Poor access to the site.** Vehicle access is limited to one access/egress point on Eramosa Road West. The access is relatively narrow and the frontage is partially obscured by vegetation. The existing buildings also obscure the visibility into the site.
- **Poor visibility of the site.** Despite the extensive frontage to Moorooduc Highway, the site and its purpose are not immediately obvious when travelling through the roundabout at Eramosa Road West. This is due in part to the lack of signage and the layout and design of the buildings. For example, the buildings at the rear of the site are not visible from the Moorooduc Highway at all. Feedback from existing visitors to the Coolstores Complex highlights the lack of signage as a key issue. Customers of the former Boutik Art and Wine Centre were surprised that it existed – they could not see it and had “stumbled” upon it.
- **Lack of critical mass of tourism-related product.** Apart from the Mornington Railway, the Coolstores is the only tourism-related development in the area and hence must be a strong enough destination in its own right to ensure continued viability as a tourism node.
- **Lack of a strong identity, image and “positioning”.** Since the failure of the original tourist uses on the site, the positioning of “The Coolstores” has been unclear. Feedback from visitors to TV World and the café indicated that there is a perceived lack of attractions of interest in the Complex.
- **The disparate nature of the uses on the site.** The range and disparate nature of the uses in recent years has contributed to the absence of a strong “positioning” for the Complex.
- **Inadequate car parking in peak times.** There is inadequate car parking on-site at peak times, usually when there is a large function or show conducted at The Peninsula Lounge. This is highlighted by customer feedback.
- **The lack of a consistent design theme for the site.** This includes a consistent approach to internal and external signage and building design (materials and form). This contributes to an absence of a strong identity and image for the Complex. Appropriate design themes can significantly contribute to the desired “positioning” of the Complex.
- **The lack of brand support.** “The Coolstores” brand reflects and acknowledges the history of the site. It is well known particularly in the local and regional community. However, the Complex does not utilise “The Coolstores” brand. There is no evidence, in the existing uses, of the history of the site.

4.3 Opportunities

The opportunities for the Moorooduc Coolstores Complex include:

- **Creating a strong tourism “positioning” for the site focused on food, wine and events.** The opportunity exists to build on the existing tourism and events strengths of the Complex, currently represented mainly by the Peninsula Lounge. The Moorooduc Coolstores Complex has an opportunity to develop as a centre for Peninsula Food, Wine and Events. This would also assist in reinforcing the association of the “Coolstores” brand with regional produce. Food and Wine is a recognised tourism product strength of the Mornington Peninsula.
- **Establishing a strong tourism “anchor” with sufficient “scale” to create a sustainable tourist node.** Sufficient scale is needed for the Coolstores to become a strong tourist destination in its own right. A strong tourist “anchor” is needed to complement the existing tourist and entertainment uses on the site. The tourist “anchor” must appeal to a broad range of market segments and “draw” people into the site. The Peninsula Lounge currently plays this anchor role but it needs the support of another anchor use.
- **Developing additional tourism-related uses to reinforce the tourism positioning focused on events.** This could include building on the significant and popular music events and functions operated by the Peninsula Lounge and could include developing events themed on food and wine (eg wine show, farmers’ market, musical performances themed with wine and/or food). Developing the events role could also include establishing facilities for corporate meetings and small conferences and catering more effectively to niche markets such as weddings.
- **Promoting the Coolstores brand as a means of reinforcing the food, wine and events positioning as well as the location.** The opportunity exists to interpret the Coolstores’ heritage and the food and wine strengths of the Peninsula, through displays, interpretive information and design themes.
- **Capitalising on the location.**
 - Improving the vehicle access point on Eramosa Road West through widening and removal of some introduced vegetation will facilitate greater visibility and access to the site.
 - Improved tourism signage on Moorooduc Highway on the approaches to Eramosa Road would assist in diverting tourist traffic into the site;
 - The “gateway” location of the Coolstores provides a significant opportunity to establish visitor information services for tourists visiting the Peninsula. The site would be a convenient and high profile stopping point for visitors seeking information as well as providing opportunities to peruse, sample and purchase regional food and wine. The visitor information component could be operated in conjunction with a Peninsula Food & Wine Centre, as a Level 3 Accredited VIC;
 - The re-positioning of the Coolstores Complex as a strong tourist node would complement the Mornington Railway tourist attraction and consolidate the “gateway” precinct as a tourist destination.

4.4 Threats

The threats for the Moorooduc Coolstores Complex include:

- **Maintaining financial viability of the Complex.** The Complex has already changed ownership three times as a result of difficulties in sustaining financial performance over time. The financial viability of the Complex in the short-term is heavily dependant on the continued successful operation of The Peninsula Lounge. The Master Plan aims to improve viability by establishing additional tourist uses that complement the Peninsula Lounge and add to the tourist mix.
- **Maintaining the core tourism and entertainment uses of the Complex.** The Peninsula Lounge is the anchor tenant on the site that draws people to the site on a regular basis. The continued operation and growth of The Peninsula Lounge business is critical to the sustainability of the site as a tourism destination. Prior to the Peninsula Lounge commencing operation in 2003, the tavern business was largely operated as a local “pub” and struggled until it closed. This had a significant adverse effect on the operation of the Coolstores Complex generally. The original tourists retailing uses on the site failed and have been subsequently replaced with office uses. The recent closure of the Boutik Regional Art and Wine Centre due to lack of trade continues this trend.
- **Inability to establish additional tourist-related uses in the Complex.** The Peninsula Lounge provides a good base to re-position the Coolstores as a regional Food, Wine and Events Centre for the Peninsula. However, unless a strong Food and Wine Centre is established the Complex is unlikely to achieve this re-positioning as a major tourist node.

5 OBJECTIVES FOR THE COOLSTORES COMPLEX

Based on the SWOT analysis, the key objectives for the Coolstores Complex are to:

- Re-position the Complex as a tourist precinct based around Peninsula Food, Wine and Events;
- Establish the Complex as a strong tourist destination in its own right;
- Maintain the core uses of the Complex that complement the tourism positioning based around Food, Wine and Events;
- Develop additional uses and facilities to strengthen the desired tourism positioning based around Food, Wine and Events and to ensure the long-term sustainability of this tourism positioning;
- Ensure the commercial viability of the Complex, both in the short-term as well as the long-term;
- Reinforce the tourism positioning through appropriate design themes (building forms and materials) and signage;
- Reinforce the tourism positioning through establishing visitor information services and interpretive information relating to the Peninsula's wineries and farm gate sales product.

Other objectives for the Coolstores Complex are to:

- Complement and support the Mornington Railway tourist attraction;
- Capitalise on the existing recognition of The Coolstores brand.

6 MASTER PLAN CONCEPT

The Master Plan is based on:

- Retaining and strengthening the existing Peninsula Lounge as a key entertainment venue drawing visitors from all over Melbourne;
- Establishing a Regional Food and Wine Centre, incorporating displays and sales of packaged regional food produce (eg jams, preserves, sauces, olive oil) and regional wines. This would include displays and information about regional wineries, wine identities, how to get to cellar doors and upcoming food and wine events;
- Subject to Council approval, the Regional Food and Wine Centre would incorporate a Level 3 Visitor Information Centre for the Peninsula, operated by the Food and Wine Centre at no cost to Council;
- The sale of packaged beer and spirits would also be included in the Food and Wine Centre to avoid the establishment of a separate bottle shop as part of the Peninsula Lounge;
- Establishing corporate meeting/conference facilities, as part of the Peninsula Lounge operation, to attract the midweek corporate meetings market. This would complement the entertainment and functions role that the Peninsula Lounge currently plays, aiming primarily at drawing patronage on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights;
- Establishing new public toilets to cater to visitors stopping en route to the Peninsula from Melbourne. This occurs already even though the toilets are not designed for public use (they are part of the Peninsula Lounge), nor promoted as a tourist facility;
- Providing the necessary infrastructure to support the successful operation of the Coolstores as a tourist and entertainment destination, including additional car parking, improved car access and an attractive, landscaped environs.

6.1 Peninsula Lounge to Be Retained and Strengthened

The existing Peninsula Lounge would be retained and strengthened under the Master Plan as outlined below.

6.1.1 The Peninsula Lounge

Existing Description

The Peninsula Lounge primarily operates as a venue for functions and cabaret shows, but also incorporates a restaurant and bar.

Functions specifically catered for include weddings, 21st birthdays, 18th birthdays, engagement parties, other parties celebrating special occasions, conferences, and corporate trade launches. The cabaret shows feature the biggest music entertainment acts in Australia (including Billy Thorpe, Jimmy Barnes, Paul Kelly) offering a unique cabaret format with dinner & show packages.

The Bistro offers value-for-money meals and is open 7 days a week.

The Peninsula Lounge offers a tavern lounge with pool tables, giant television screen, live bands, TAB, bottle shop and bar meals.

The Peninsula Lounge operates primarily as a destination venue, ie customers make a conscious and planned decision to visit the venue. The Peninsula Lounge does not attract, nor does it rely on, pedestrian or passing trade. Its success is therefore dependant on providing a flexible range of hospitality, entertainment and event options that are unique on the Mornington Peninsula.

It is open seven days a week. Trading hours are generally 7-00am to 1-00am on Monday to Saturday and 10-00am to 11-00 pm on Sunday.

Patronage

This is reflected in customer numbers which are influenced enormously by the nature and timing of functions and cabaret shows. Customer growth has been progressively and steadily increasing since opening, having more than doubled since the first quarter of operation. On current customer numbers, the Peninsula Lounge attracts almost 80,000 customers to the Moorooduc Coolstores on an annualised basis.

Day trade is very slow and peak times are weekends, particularly evenings. Functions bookings are predominantly Friday to Sunday evenings, as are the entertainment and cabaret shows. However, The Peninsula Lounge is now targeting groups to visit the Mornington Peninsula, stopping at The Coolstores to have a meal before touring the Peninsula. Groups being targeted include Probus Groups, motorcycle and auto groups and sporting clubs. Other regular groups include Cerberus who hold their graduations at The Peninsula Lounge.

The Function Rooms are currently booked out three to six months in advance.

The primary market is people aged 25-50 years.

Origin of Customers

The catchment for The Peninsula Lounge bistro is diverse and depends on the product offer. Customers primarily using the venue for food & beverage or functions come from the surrounding area (10-kilometre radius) with strong patronage from Cranbourne, Langwarrin, and Carrum Downs through to Flinders and Portsea. This market comprises residents wishing to hold special occasion functions (weddings, engagements, 21st birthdays), charity functions (community groups) and local sporting groups.

A broader market exists for The Peninsula Lounge's major cabaret shows and music events attracting customers from all over the Melbourne metropolitan area (including as far as Doncaster and Werribee).

Tourism Benefits

Apart from attracting non-local patronage on a regular basis, there is an existing trend for customers who have a holiday home or who are staying with friends and relatives on the Peninsula to book in for a show and then stay the weekend. In other words, The Peninsula Lounge acts as a catalyst for increasing overnight visitation to the Peninsula.

The Peninsula Lounge provides substantial business for accommodation establishments on the Peninsula. The cabaret shows and social functions (weddings, 21st birthdays, engagement parties etc) held at The Peninsula Lounge attract patrons who stay overnight on the Peninsula. The Cerberus functions cater to families throughout Australia and accommodation on the Peninsula is booked out when these functions are held. Previously these functions were taking place in Dandenong.

This encourages visitors to the Peninsula to stay longer and spend more.

6.1.2 Cafe

Existing Description

The café was formerly a kiosk but converted to a café/bar in 2001, seating approximately 50 people.

It is a fully licensed restaurant/café/bar serving breakfast and lunch Wednesday through to Monday.

Patronage

Customers are an even mix of locals and non-locals (visitors), with many of the latter coming from the Mornington Railway complex.

Patronage is steady all year round.

Tourism Benefits

There is a clear linkage between the café and the Mornington Railway tourist attraction.

6.2 Additional Uses

Peninsula Food and Wine Centre

Development of a Peninsula Food and Wine Centre within a new building on the Moorooduc Highway frontage, adjoining the Peninsula Lounge. The Food and Wine Centre would accommodate:

- a) The display and sales of packaged gourmet food produce from the Peninsula (including interpretive information regarding the origin of the products);
- b) The display and sale of packaged regional wines (including interpretive information regarding the wineries);

- c) The display and sale of other packaged liquor;
- d) A café with indoor/outdoor dining;
- e) A Level 3 Accredited Visitor Information Centre (subject to Council approval); and
- f) Public toilets.

Restaurants

Establishment of three restaurants within the existing buildings, catering to a range of markets and with a variety of product offer and price points. This would include:

- a) A family restaurant, with affordable food catering primarily to families visiting the Peninsula. Market segments would include:
 - i. Families on a day trip from Melbourne;
 - ii. Families visiting friends and relatives on the Peninsula and/or utilising the holiday homes of friends and relatives. Holiday homes account for 75% of all overnight stays on the Peninsula;
 - iii. Families who are renting a house on the Peninsula;
 - iv. Visitors to the Mornington Peninsula Tourist Railway opposite the Coolstores site.
- b) A premium restaurant, with quality, signature food catering primarily to high yield visitors to the Peninsula. Market segments would include:
 - i. Interstate and international visitors to the Peninsula;
 - ii. Holiday homeowners and visitors utilising the holiday homes of friends and relatives. Holiday homes account for 75% of all overnight stays on the Peninsula;
 - iii. Golf visitors who are on a short break. Golf and winery visitors are the highest yield visitors on the Peninsula (stay longer and spend more than the average);
 - iv. Customers of the major shows held at the Peninsula Lounge, drawn from all over Melbourne;
 - v. Delegates attending meetings/conferences at the Peninsula Lounge.
- c) An indoor/outdoor cafe, with bistro-style food catering to a broad range of markets visiting the Peninsula, including couples, families and groups. Adult couples make up the bulk of the visitor market to the Peninsula.

7 ECONOMIC AND TOURISM BENEFITS

The development of the Moorooduc Coolstores in accordance with this master plan will have a significant tourism and economic benefits for the Peninsula. These benefits include:

- Additional visitation to the Peninsula, generated by the proposed conference activities, particularly mid-week visitation;
- Increased length of stay and expenditure by visitors using the proposed visitor information centre at the Coolstores;
- Increased dispersal of visitors to the Peninsula, through the provision of visitor information.

7.1 Visitation

The Mornington Peninsula has the highest visitation of all tourism regions in Victoria, outside Melbourne. In 2003 the Peninsula captured 13.7% of all visitors in country Victoria, attracting a total of 5.1 million visitors. Visitors to the Peninsula mainly travel by car (89%) or bus (5%). This equates to an estimated 4.6 million visitors travelling by car and 255,000 visitors travelling by bus. In total there are 4.8 million visitors that travel by car or bus to the Peninsula annually.

There are three main entry points to the Mornington Peninsula including Moorooduc Highway, Westernport Highway and Nepean Highway. Whilst accurate data is not available for the proportions of visitors that use these three entry points, anecdotal evidence from tourism operators suggests that most visitors use the Moorooduc Highway when travelling to the Peninsula. It is therefore conservatively estimated that more than 2.5 million visitors pass by the Moorooduc Coolstores each year.

The Coolstores has a prominent position on the Moorooduc Highway, at a gateway to the Peninsula, although vehicle access to the site is currently poor. The Coolstores has the potential to attract a larger percentage of these visitors passing through, on their way to the Peninsula through the provision of additional tourist facilities, including visitor information, and through the provision of direct access into the site from Moorooduc Highway.

7.1.1 Estimated Usage of the Visitor Information Centre

From studies undertaken by Urban Enterprise for the Ballarat and Lorne Visitor Information Centres, it is estimated that approximately one in ten visitors, on average, use a Visitor Information Centre. It is therefore estimated that the Visitor Information Centre at Moorooduc Coolstores could capture 250,000 visitors annually, particularly given the other facilities and attractions on the site (public toilets, café, restaurant and food and wine centre).

7.1.2 Estimated Usage of the Food and Wine Centre

Based on the experience of other Regional Food and Wine Centres located on Highways, it is estimated that the Coolstores could attract around 150,000 people per annum to the Food and Wine Centre. It is assumed that many of these customers will also use the visitor information centre.

7.2 Increased Yield and Visitor Dispersal

Visitor information services located at the Coolstores would not only encourage visitors to stop at the Coolstores but also increase visitor awareness of the Peninsula's food and wine tourism product. The Moorooduc Coolstores is an excellent strategic location on the Peninsula to distribute visitors to the hinterland region to experience the food and wine product and hence increase visitor yield.

A study undertaken by Symonds, Travers Morgan on the economic impact of Visitor Information Centres in New South Wales found that 13% of visitors that used Visitor Information Centres stayed additional nights, 21% undertook additional tours and 56% visited additional attractions that they would not have done so without information provided by a VIC. This suggests that the Visitor Information Centre at Moorooduc Coolstores would increase the level of visitation to attractions in the hinterland and increase the average length of stay of visitors.

In quantitative terms, it is estimated that the visitor information component at the Coolstores would add another 32,000 visitor nights to the Peninsula.

Based on the average daily expenditure of \$103 per person⁵, total additional visitor expenditure as a result of the redevelopment of the Moorooduc Coolstores is therefore estimated at \$4.1 million per annum.

In a study undertaken by Nova Scotia Tourism Partnership Council, it was found that 36% of visitors, who are counselled by Visitor Information staff, visit a part of the province that they would not have otherwise visited. This indicates that visitor information services at the Moorooduc Coolstores will help disperse visitors into areas of the Peninsula, which are less known such as areas of the hinterland and Western Port villages. The location of the Coolstores would itself encourage dispersal as it is a key entry point to the Peninsula and there is good access to other parts of the Peninsula from that point.

The Coolstores would be aimed to attract the market segments, which visit food and wine product on the Peninsula. A recent survey undertaken by Urban Enterprise indicates that visitors that are attracted to food and wine product on the Peninsula spend \$589 per person per visit, compared to the average overnight visitor expenditure on the Peninsula of \$372 per visit⁶.

⁵ Bureau of Tourism Research, National Visitor Survey, Dec 2003

⁶ Urban Enterprise P/L, Tourism Indicators for the Mornington Peninsula, 2004