



MEDIA RELEASE

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Huon Valley Visitor Information Centres update

At a Special Meeting on 11 March 2020, the Huon Valley Council committed to retaining ownership of the Visitor Information Centres in Geeveston and Huonville, with a view to improve the current service models for their continued operation.

“Council has agreed to explore other models for running the Geeveston Visitor Centre over the next 12 months with the aim of achieving a cost-neutral or close to cost-neutral arrangement,” said Huon Valley Council Mayor Bec Enders. “Council also gave in-principle support for an investigation into the location for the Huon Valley Visitor Centre and service model options. This will inform the development of a longer-term vision and plan to continue the centre’s information services in Huonville.

“With regards to the Geeveston Visitor Centre, we will be engaging with the community and more information will be provided soon.”

The Council has completed a comprehensive review of the visitor information centres, which involved a consultant report and an analysis of its delivery of visitor information services in the Huon Valley. A number of workshops were held to discuss Council’s continued management and ownership of the visitor centres.

Cr Enders said the review provided a range of options for the future of the visitor information centres, including options that would ensure they can continue to deliver economic and community value in the long term.

In the 2019 Huon Valley Customer Service survey, 74 per cent of respondents stated that they felt Council did have a role in operating visitor information centres. Council’s visitor information centres also provide the right environment for Council to deliver the *Huon Valley Economic Development Strategy 2015-2020*, *Arts and Cultural Strategy 2018-2022* and the Huon Valley Brand Plan.

“Our visitor centres bring important benefits for our towns, however they are complex businesses to operate,” said Cr Enders. “Like any business, they are impacted by business disruption that result from disasters and pandemic emergencies such as the coronavirus.

“Although the centres currently both operate as a cost to ratepayers, we are already seeing a reduction in expenditure through a targeted approach to reduce operating costs. Council

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is also considering the risk to Council of breaching competitive neutrality principles because of the retail aspect of the business. The retail spaces do provide a much-needed outlet for local professional artists and makers to feature and sell their works.”

A report will be presented at an Ordinary Meeting of Open Council on 22 April 2020 to provide the community with information about the decisions. This document will be available on Council’s website at www.huonvalley.tas.gov.au. Reports on the progress of the review are also available to be viewed on the Council’s website.

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