Rural City of Murray Bridge
Tourism Development Plan
2016-2020

The Rural City of
MURRAY BRIDGE

Bridge to Opportunity

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1. Executive Summary

Tourism has been identified as one of the key opportunities for the Rural City of Murray Bridge to build and diversify its economy.

The recently released Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020, Economic Development Strategy 2015 – 2030 and Riverfront Strategy place emphasis on the need to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the river, indigenous cultural heritage and history, natural environment, geographical location and proximity to Adelaide.

This Tourism Development Plan sets out the first 4 years' work.

2. Plan Development Process

The preparation of the Tourism Development Plan (TDP) involved:

1. Background familiarisation: including a review of existing, relevant strategies and plans including:

    ≥   The Rural City of Murray Bridge's Community Plan 2015-2032

    ≥   The Rural City of Murray Bridge's Economic Development Strategy 2015 -2030

    ≥   The Rural City of Murray Bridge's Strategic Plan 2016 -2020

    ≥   The Rural City of Murray Bridge's Riverfront Strategy

    ≥   The Murray River Lakes and Coorong 2015 – 2017 Destination Action Plan

    ≥   The Murray River, Lakes & Coorong Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2012-13 to 2015-16.

    ≥   The South Australian Tourism Commission's 2020 Tourism Plan

    ≥   The South Australian Government's Nature Like Nowhere Else Action Plan

2. A SWOT analysis of the region's current situation

3. A review of regional tourism statistics and projected growth

4. Consultation with key stakeholders:

    ≥   Internal consultation: with Strategic Planning Officer, Manager of Organisational Development, Tourism Development Officer, RCMB events team, Business Unit Managers at the Rural City of Murray Bridge

    ≥   Tourism Development Manager of the Murray River Lakes and Coorong Tourism Alliance

3. Current Situation

3.1 Regional Overview

Tourism to the Murray River, Lakes and Coorong has grown over the past 8 years, with a 16% increase in visitor numbers and 22% increase in visitor nights. This rise has been driven by an increase in the Intrastate market which is up 20% and international visitors which are up by 10%. The interstate market has grown by 1%. *

The Destination Action Plan prepared by the Murraylands Tourism Partnership in conjunction with the South Australian Tourism Commission, predicts that tourism expenditure in Murray River Lakes and Coorong is expected to grow by 31% over the next 4 years (to Dec 2020), by increasing visitation by 59% through the implementation of a holistic Destination Action Plan. The Murray River, Lakes and Coorong will target the intrastate and interstate family market and the Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) market with the objective to increase their length of stay and spend.

During consumer testing, the diversity of Murray River, Lakes and Coorong nature and adventure experiences was seen as attractive, but the emotional intensity of those experiences weren't as strong as for other regions. The Council and regional tourism organisations will actively address this challenge.

"The River" is a unique proposition for South Australia, so it can be leveraged by tourism experiences and events. Diversity and proximity to Adelaide are key strengths of the Murray River, Lakes and Coorong region with Murray Bridge further advantaged with its location on the main transport route to the eastern states.

The Murray Bridge – Coorong region has strong cultural heritage links with the Ngarrindjeri people. It has played a significant role in post-colonial history with the first bridge across the Murray River. Many historical sites still exist and are maintained in the region.

*Source: Tourism Research Australia, International Visitor Survey and National Visitor Survey; ABS, Demographics; BITRE, International and Domestic Aviation Activity (unpublished data); ABS, Survey of Tourist Accommodation; TRA, Tourism

3.2 Regional Strategic Focus

The focus is on building tourism products and experiences to create increased demand for the river and in particular the Murray River, Lakes and Coorong. These include:-

1. Driving Demand – Getting the right message to the right markets

2. Working Better Together – Fostering a stronger more collaborative industry

3. Supporting what we have – Utilising existing infrastructure to foster quality contemporary experiences

4. Increasing the recognition of the Value of Tourism – Promoting a better understanding of the value of tourism which shapes policy and delivers infrastructure

5. Using events to grow visitation – Build on existing events and look for new opportunities that are consistent with our brand

6. Providing a supportive environment – making it easier to do business and ensuring that foundations for growth are laid

3.3   Local Overview

Within this broader strategic context there is scope for the Rural City of Murray Bridge to establish an unique tourism product offering through destination and event development.

Council's Strategic Plan 2016-2020 contains four key themes that articulate the desired future of our community gleaned from the *let's talk* consultation undertaken during July to September, 2015.

The themes are:

≥   Valued Environment;

≥   Great People and Lifestyle;

≥   Dynamic Economy; and

≥   Connected Communities.

Each theme is supported by a range of objectives that have guided Council's planning and decision making. Tourism is seen as a key driver in the development of a Dynamic Economy, delivering better social and economic outcomes for the region due to its real and potential contribution to job creation and economic growth driven by increased knowledge and awareness of the history, culture and our regions natural assets.

The Rural City of Murray Bridge is actively involved in promoting tourism, providing infrastructure and services to support tourism whilst managing the potential impacts of tourism.

4. Current Environment

4.1 Current Role of the Rural City of Murray Bridge

The Council is committed to playing a lead role and partnering with key industry bodies, stakeholders, local businesses and the Business Alliance to assist with the delivery of sustainable outcomes for the region. Its involvement in destination development, management and marketing include:

≥ Investment of over $300,000 a year to deliver an Events Program, comprising mainly sport-related events, delivered through an arrangement with Sports Marketing Australia. These events attract approximately 38,000 attendees and it is expected that further events will be added during the four year life of this Plan.

≥ Managing an accredited Visitor Information Centre providing friendly and professional services to visitors, providing information on the region and a booking service to encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more in the region.

The VIC is staffed by three Council employees with the assistance of approximately 20 volunteers.

The booking service supports local accommodation establishments and bus ticketing. The Centre also sells souvenirs, gifts and local produce and offers photocopying services.

Visitor numbers to the Visitor Information Centre have been declining over the past few years. This has been attributed to the increased use of the internet and mobile services by independent travellers to make decisions about itineraries – including what they will see and do at a destination – as they travel.

≥ Provision of various tourism assets such as the Roundhouse, Captain's Cottage, RV-friendly area, swimming pool, Regional Gallery and Town Hall, Library plus management of a range of nature-based tourism assets such as reserves, parks, trails and conservation parks.

≥ Tourism infrastructure such as destination signage, information bays, playgrounds and promotion through its website, brochures and regional maps.

4.2 Other Partners

South Australian Tourism Commission:

The South Australian Tourism Commission (SATC) is a statutory body of the South Australian Government and the State's lead marketing, destination and experience development and major events agency.

The South Australian Tourism Commission is committed to achieving $8 billion in tourism expenditure by 2020.

The SATC's role is to work with industry to deliver marketing, events and development programs that support tourism growth. Based in Adelaide, the organisation works closely with representatives in the State's 11 key regions, including the Murray River Lakes and Coorong to promote the State's tourism assets intrastate, interstate and internationally to ensure that South Australia is a compelling part of any Australian holiday. It concentrates on developing the State's competitive strengths – vibrant Adelaide, food and wine, festivals and events, and accessible nature.

Regional Development Australia Murraylands & Riverland

Regional Development Australia Murraylands & Riverland (RDAMR) is part of a national network of 55 committees made up of local leaders who work with all levels of government, business and community groups to support the development of their regions to achieve economic benefit.

The RDAMR builds partnerships to develop strategies and deliver sustainable infrastructure and services to the region. Their regional plan outlines the following priorities:

- ≥ Regional diversification
- ≥ Innovation
- ≥ Building community capacity

Tourism plays a key role within these priorities with RDAMR supporting its commitment by funding the Murray River Lakes and Coorong Alliance and accommodating and providing administrative assistance and funding to the Regional Tourism Manager.

Regional Tourism Organisations – Murray River Lakes and Coorong Tourism Alliance

The Murray River Lakes & Coorong Tourism Alliance (MRLCTA) was established in 2016 by regional tourism stakeholders; Rural City of Murray Bridge, Coorong District Council, Mid Murray Council, Alexandrina Council and Regional Development Australia Murraylands & Riverland (RDAMR) as the Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO).

The Alliance is funded by the Rural City of Murray Bridge, Mid Murray Council, Coorong District Council, Alexandrina Council, SATC and RDAMR to employ the Tourism Development Manager and finance the implementation of the Murray River Lakes and Coorong Tourism Alliance Annual Business Plan.

The **Murray River Lakes and Coorong Alliance** core functions are:

- ≥ Collaborative destination (MRLC and Murray River)/ product/ experience marketing and promotion)
- ≥ Tourism product and experience development
- ≥ Tourism business networking/information sharing/communication/collaboration
- ≥ Tourism business capacity and capability building
- ≥ Mentoring, skills and professional development opportunities
- ≥ Advocacy and lobbying policy makers
- ≥ Research

Industry

According to the 2014 Local Government Area profile produced by Tourism Research Australia the Rural City of Murray Bridge comprised 183 tourism related businesses who directly deliver the experiences, products and services that visitors will come to Murray Bridge for.

South Australia Tourism Industry Council

South Australian Tourism Industry Council (SATIC) is the peak tourism body in South Australia, representing the interests of tourism business, the industry and regions. SATIC strongly promotes the value of tourism and provides a united voice to advocate for a positive tourism business environment.

SATIC supports a quality standard of tourism in South Australia through the administration of accreditation programs (including VIC accreditation) , the South Australian Tourism Awards, training and the annual Tourism Conference 'Inspiring each other, improving together'. SATIC is a membership based organisation.

5.   The Plan

5.1   Our Vision

Adelaide's Playground.

In 20 years we're expecting Adelaide to have a much larger population that is looking for interesting and different non-city entertainment. Murray Bridge will be a highly desirable, fun and family friendly river-based destination only an hour from the capital for overnight travellers, day trippers, and retirees.

5.2   Making it happen

Our vision will be delivered through focusing on four themes:

≥   Activities and infrastructure that enrich our environment and heritage

≥   Festivals and Events that grow visitation

≥   Collaboration to achieve economic benefit

To ensure that tourism is contributing to a diverse economy and creating opportunities we have planned our approach to tourism development by focusing on:

1. **Working better together** – engaging and involving our communities;

2. **Supporting what we have** – developing our products, assets and infrastructure;

3. **Informing and engaging our visitors** - providing excellence in visitor servicing

4.   **Improving our image**– developing a unique and desirable tourism **identity** for the Rural City of Murray Bridge.

5.3   So by 2020 we will have:

≥   **Further** iconic hallmark events that epitomise and enhance our brand and attract thousands of visitors

≥   Accessible and appealing **nature based and heritage** attractions;

≥   A business community that is aware of, and is capitalising on the benefits of tourism;

≥   A distinct identity as a fun, family friendly destination.

5.4 The Strategies

Strategy 1
Working better together – Engaging and involving our communities

The communities that support our tourism offer are engaged and informed on tourism development in the region.

We will do this by:

2016/17

1.1. Establishing a network of tourism related businesses to promote collaboration in the implementation of the Rural City of Murray Bridge Tourism Development Plan.

1.2. In collaboration with the Business Alliance support the local business community to maximise the benefits of tourism

1.3. Working with indigenous partners and Council's cultural development teams to consider indigenous cultural tourism opportunities.

2017/18 - 2020

1.4. Building upon relationships and networks to build the region's tourism attractions and identity.

We know we will have achieved this when we have delivered:

Activities and infrastructure that enrich our environment and heritage	Festivals and events that grow visitation	Collaboration to achieve economic benefit
Communication systems and processes ensure that the our communities have access to information that stimulates tourism activity • By 2018 we are delivering regular communications with the business and tourism community • By 2018 business groups are engaged and involved in the decision making processes • By 2020 partnerships are used to deliver community outcomes • By 2020 our networks are supporting and building on our tourism attractions and identity	Our communities are engaged in the development and promotion of regional events that are attracting visitors to the region • By 2018 our communities understand and appreciate the value of tourism and events • By 2018 there will be increased attendance at industry network forums & functions • By 2020 community groups initiate and lead local events • By 2020 at least three projects are delivered through a partnership approach	We have a culture of co-operation to achieve results • By 2017 we have strong, involved community leaders and groups • By 2020 we have productive relationships with our indigenous community, environmental and heritage groups and township associations through the development of tourism initiatives. • By 2020 we have strong relationships with neighboring regions and developing cross regional tourism projects

Strategy 2

Supporting what we have – We will develop our tourism products, assets and infrastructure by building upon the historic, indigenous and natural assets of the area.

We will do this by

2016/17

2.1. Commencing work on the development and promotion of trails that expand and / or link the regions historic, cultural and natural assets. In particular, during the first half of 2017 we will concentrate on the development of a heritage trail in Murray Bridge and stage one of the Murray Coorong Trail and the Trail Strategy.

2.2. Working with the Council's events, arts and community development teams, local businesses and the community to develop and/or expand events, in particular:

- a New Year's Eve event commencing in 2018/19
- a Beer, Blues and BBQ's Festival
- a Kite Festival

2017/18 - 2020

2.3. Working with key stakeholders of the Captain's Cottage Museum and the Round House to maximise their tourism potential

2.4. Delivering and/or supporting a range of iconic Murray Bridge events including the International Pedal Prix, the SA Masters Games and other hallmark events that strengthen our identity

2.5. Continuing work on trails development, in accordance with the Council's Trails Strategy

2.6. Working with external stakeholders and community groups on the revitalisation of the Frank Jackman Lookout

2.7. Considering opportunities for other river and wetlands lookouts within the region

We know we will have achieved this when we have delivered:

Activities and infrastructure that enriches our environment and heritage	Festivals and events that grow visitation	Collaboration to achieve economic benefit
Murray Bridge and townships are interesting and exciting places • By 2018 we have developed a new heritage trail • By 2018 our trails, playgrounds, parks and sporting events provide activities for locals as well as being tourism attractors • By 2020 there is an increase in the number of visitors looking for nature based activities • By 2020 The Captain's Cottage Museum and the Round House are easily accessible and are desirable visitor attractions	Every weekend there are well publicised events and activities that appeal to locals and tourists • By December 2018 we have developed a New Year's Eve event and have a successful Kite and Beer, Blues and BBQ Festivals • By 2020 events are well attended by locals and visitors to the region • By 2020 our events tell the story of our region and promote who we are	Our communities value and preserve their significant cultural and heritage assets • By 2017 tourism is using local heritage and regional history in product development marketing and promotions • By 2020 the Captains Cottage Museum and the Round House have increased visitation • By 2020 we are managing and maintaining the Frank Jackman lookout

Strategy 3

Informing and Engaging our Visitors - Providing excellence in visitor servicing

Visitors to the region are well informed on the opportunities and options available during their stay resulting in memorable experiences, high levels of customer satisfaction and returned visitation.

We will do this by:

2016/17

3.1. Developing and implementing a marketing and communications plan to:

- Support the Council's events program by promoting the region's tourism offer to event participants, spectators and visitors.
- Provide appropriate information to key partners on activities and experiences available to visitors to the region.
- Ensure that our Visitor Information Centre staff, volunteers and key stakeholder are well informed.
- Attract new visitors to the region.

3.2. Auditing Council's way finding and tourism information infrastructure.

2017/18 - 2020

3.3. Undertaking a comprehensive review of visitor servicing including:

- A feasibility study on the development of a regional tourist hub and interpretive centre
- Develop a tourism signage plan including a costed action plan

We know we will have achieved this when we have delivered:

Activities and infrastructure that enrich our environment and heritage	Festivals and Events that grow visitation	Collaboration to achieve economic benefit
Our tourism experiences and assets are well promoted	Every weekend there are well publicised events and activities that appeal to locals and tourists	We are effectively capitalising on key tourism drivers
• By 2018 visitors, industry and key stakeholders are well informed on the region's events, activities and experiences.	• By 2018 the regions events will be well published on the ATDW, regional website, social media and traditional media.	• By 2018 we have completed a tourism and events communications and marketing plan.
• By 2018 the Visitor Information Centre staff and volunteers will be providing comprehensive information services.	• By 2018 visitors are well informed and have access to a wide range of activities and experiences.	• By 2020 bookings and sales through the Visitor information Centre have increased.
• By 2020 visitors are provided with clear and informative way-finding systems and information.	• By 2020 the annual number of visitor enquiries at the Visitor Information Centre has increased by 20%.	• By 2020 the level of visitation to the Murray River, Lakes and Coorong has increased by 20%.
• By 2020 the Murray Bridge Visitor Information Centre is a "must visit" state of the art regional tourism centre.		• By 2020 the Visitor Information Centre has relocated to a high profile location and is the regions tourism hub.

Strategy 4

Improving our image – developing an unique and desirable tourism **identity** for the Rural City of Murray Bridge

We reinforce a strong, positive, aspirational identity as a fun, family friendly destination focusing on the river and natural environment, with a distinct country feel with easy access to Adelaide.

We will do this by:

2016/17

4.1 Participation in the identity project.

4.2 Implementing quick win projects that reflect the region's tourism identity.

4.3 Ensuring visitors are *front of mind* with regards to Council's delivery of services and presentation of assets.

2017/18 - 2020

4.4 Reinforcing our identity through Council's tourism collateral and infrastructure

We know we will have achieved this when we have delivered:

Activities and infrastructure that enriches our environment and heritage	Festivals and Events that grow visitation	Collaboration to achieve economic benefit
• In 2018 we are working in collaboration and contributing to the identity project • In 2018 Council's services and infrastructure development consider tourism in delivery • In 2020 the community values and promotes the region's identity • In 2020 the Murray Bridge identity is reflected in all visitor servicing methods and communications	• In 2018 event development will respond to our diversity, heritage and indigenous culture aiming to reinvigorate community pride • In 2020 our identity is strengthened through iconic events	• In 2018 the business community will be kept informed on the progress of Council's identity project • In 2020 the business community is promoting and enhancing the Murray Bridge identity through their marketing and promotional campaigns

6. Action Plan 2016-17

Action	Milestones	Completed by:
1. Working better together – Engaging and involving our communities The communities that support our tourism offer are engaged and informed on tourism development in the region.		
1.1 Establish a network of tourism related businesses to promote collaboration in the implementation of the Rural City of Murray Bridge Tourism Development Plan	Develop a Communication Plan that clarifies: 1. how we will continue to inform, engage and collaborate with the target audience; and 2. the desired results/outcomes of the engagement	November, 2016
	Identify and engage with target audience	December, 2016
	Implement Communication Plan	December , 2016 Ongoing
	Quarterly updates on progress to Manager Organisational Development	November, 2016 February, 2017 May, 2017 August, 2017
1.2 In collaboration with the Business Alliance support the local business community to maximise the benefits of tourism	Provide ongoing support, advocacy and referrals for tourism related enquiries	Ongoing
	Work with and encourage industry to embrace the MB Identity and regional branding	Ongoing
	Work with and encourage industry to register with the ATDW	Ongoing
1.3 Working with indigenous partners and Council's cultural development teams to consider indigenous cultural tourism opportunities.	Engage with and develop relationships with our indigenous and cultural leaders for the development of indigenous cultural and tourism activities	October, 2016 Ongoing

	Action	Milestones	Completed by:
1.4	Build upon relationships and networks to build the region's tourism attractions and identity	Maintain current roles and responsibilities with industry networks • Tourism Connect (Murray River Lakes and Coorong Alliance) • South Australian Tourism Commission • South Australian Tourism Industry Council • Australian Regional Tourism Network • South Australian Accredited VIC working party	Ongoing
		Develop and strengthen relationships with neighbouring regions • Adelaide Hills • Alexandrina Council including Langhorne Creek • Coorong District Council • Mid Murray Council • Adelaide	Ongoing
2.	**Supporting what we have** - We will develop our tourism products, assets and infrastructure by building upon the area's historic, indigenous cultural and natural assets.		
2.1	Commencing work on the development and promotion of trails that expand and / or link the regions historic, cultural and natural assets In particular, during the first half of 2017 we will concentrate on the development of a heritage trail in Murray Bridge and stage one of the Murray Coorong Trail and the Trail Strategy.	Develop project team and terms of reference	August, 2016
		Research, identify and agree on the region's historic and cultural assets to be included in the trail in collaboration with relevant community groups.	September, 2016
		Design of trail agreed by ELT	October, 2016
		Marketing and Distribution Plan (including launch)	November, 2016
		Collateral designed and produced	March, 2017
		Launch Trail	Week prior to Easter, 2017

	Action	Milestones	Completed by:
2.2	Working with the Council's Events, Arts and Community Development team to deliver an iconic event during 2016-17	Establish Working Party and Terms of Reference	November, 2016
		Develop Event Plan and budget to be agreed by ELT	December, 2016

3. Informing and Engaging our Visitors - Providing excellence in visitor servicing

Visitors to the region are well informed on the opportunities and options available during their stay resulting in memorable experiences, high levels of customer satisfaction and returned visitation.

	Action	Milestones	Completed by:
3.1	Developing and implement a marketing and communications plan to: • Support Council's events program by promoting the region to event participants, spectators and visitors • Provide appropriate information to key partners on activities and experiences available to visitors to the region • Ensure that our Visitor Information Centre staff, volunteers and key stakeholder are well informed • Attract new visitors to the region	Identify and review current tourism and event related collateral, marketing and promotional methods	November, 2016
		Identify and review current dissemination methods	November, 2016
		Develop a regional events calendar in conjunction with MRLC, SATC, MMC and CCD for forward planning	November, 2016
		Identify and engage with stakeholders	December, 2016
		Identify target markets	December, 2016
		Develop a communications and marketing plan	December, 2016
		Produce quality collateral highlighting the regions experiences and activities	January, 2017
		Produce a distribution program for printed ,electronic & digital collateral	January 2017
		Develop a Social media content calendar for the RCMB, MRLC and other relevant sites	February, 2017
		Produce an annual visitor rewards program to compliment the visitor engagement collateral program	April, 2017
		Produce a monthly What's on in Murray Bridge Poster to both compliment the visitor engagement collateral program	December, 2016

	Action	Milestones	Completed by:
		Distribute the What's on in Murray Bridge Poster to high traffic areas, retail outlets, schools, neighbouring Regions, Neighbouring VIC's and Media Outlets	December, 2016
		Events and broader experiences to be listed on the ATDW website, Discover Murray and appropriate third party websites	Ongoing
		Provide ongoing training support and updates on the regions trails, touring routes and nature base activities to the VIC staff and volunteers	Ongoing
		Commence an audit on councils way finding and tourism information infrastructure including GPS co-ordinates and photographic documentation	June 2017
		Develop a recommendation on improvements, upgrades and the installation of new way finding products and services	June 2017
3.2	Auditing Council's way finding and tourism information infrastructure	Develop a recommendation on improvements, upgrades and the installation of new way finding products and services	June 2017
		Key tourism related collateral, including signage and way finding systems reflect the identity once established	June, 2017
4.	**Improving our image -** developing a unique and desirable tourism **identity** for the Rural City of Murray Bridge We reinforce a strong, positive, aspirational identity as a fun, family friendly destination focusing on the river, natural environment, with a distinct country feel with easy access to Adelaide.		
4.1	Reinforcing our identity through Council's tourism collateral and infrastructure	Key tourism related collateral, including signage and way finding systems reflect the identity once established	June, 2017
4.2	Implementing quick win projects that reflect the regions tourism identity	Communications / marketing and promotions • Industry and stakeholder communications • Regional tourist guides and maps • Regional events poster	June, 2017

	Action	Milestones	Completed by:
		• Regional branded merchandise Way finding and signage Install and upgrade VIC Signage	
4.3	Ensuring visitors are front of mind with regards to Council's delivery of services and presentation of assets	Engage with Department Managers to ensure that "Town Pride" becomes a team meeting agenda item. Town Pride is a reflection on our image and ensuring that visitors to our region are greeted with a clean, tidy, inviting and warm welcome.	November , 2017

The Rural City of
MURRAY
BRIDGE

Bridge to Opportunity

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Murray Bridge SA 5253
t 08 8539 1100 F 08 8532 2766
council@murraybridge.sa.gov.au

Visitor Information Centre
3 South Terrace
Murray Bridge
t 08 8539 1142

Lewin Nursing Home
67 Joyce Street
Murray Bridge
t 08 8539 1185

Works Depot
21 Hindmarsh Road
Murray Bridge
t 08 8539 1160

Youth Centre
3-5 Railway Terrace
Murray Bridge
T 08 8539 2122

Public Library
Level 2
Murray Bridge Market Place
Murray Bridge
t 08 8539 1175

Town Hall
13-17 Bridge Street
Murray Bridge
t 08 8539 1430

Regional Gallery
27 Sixth Street
Murray Bridge
t 08 8539 1420

Swimming Pool
Flavel Terrace
Murray Bridge
t 08 8532 2924