

Waterwheel Hub Strategic Plan (Integrated Version)

Transition → Activation → Regional Leadership

1. Vision (The North Star)

To establish the Waterwheel as a **sustainable, community-led hub** that connects visitors, makers, and local experiences while fostering **creative incubation, cultural expression, and regional resilience**.

2. Purpose (Why We Exist)

The Waterwheel exists to:

- Showcase the **arts, culture, and environment** of the Upper Yarra
 - Inspire **visitation, connection, and participation**
 - Act as a **living bridge** between locals, tourists, and creators
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3. Core Pillars (What We Stand On)

These are your structural beams. Everything must map back to these:

1. **Revenue & Sustainability**
 2. **Volunteerism (Inclusive & Valued)**
 3. **Tourism & Visitor Experience**
 4. **Arts, Culture & Heritage**
 5. **Environment & Place-Based Connection**
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4. Strategic Priorities (How We Operate)

Across all phases, Waterwheel focuses on:

- **Financial viability & diversified income**
 - **Strong governance & operational clarity**
 - **Visitor experience & digital accessibility**
 - **Community participation & partnerships**
 - **Activation of physical space (gallery, deck, grounds)**
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5. Phased Strategic Roadmap

Phase 1: Stabilise (0–3 Months)

Theme: “Secure the roots”

Objectives

- Establish governance clarity and reduce risk
- Secure operational continuity
- Understand true financial position

Key Actions

- Finalise lease, MOU, compliance, licences
- Access all financials, contracts, obligations
- Confirm operating capacity and cash position
- Set up core systems (Square, website foundations)
- Begin SEO + digital presence

Outcomes

- Clear operational picture
 - Risks identified and addressed
 - Stable foundation for growth
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Phase 2: Foundations (3–12 Months)

Theme: “Build the bones without burning out”

Objectives

- Improve visibility and access
- Build internal systems
- Introduce early revenue streams

Key Actions

- Launch website (visitor hub + bookings + directory)
- Create volunteer induction + training system
- Improve retail layout (no major fit-out yet)
- Clarify product mix (artisan vs merchandise)
- Trial low-risk income streams:
 - commissions
 - listings
 - digital ads

Outcomes

- Better visitor experience
 - Functional internal systems
 - Reduced reliance on single income stream
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Phase 3: Activate (12–24 Months)

Theme: “Turn the wheel”

Objectives

- Drive revenue growth
- Activate partnerships and programming
- Increase community and tourist engagement

Key Actions

- Commission-based ticketing + experiences
- Events, markets, and cultural programming
- Partnerships with:
 - local artists
 - tourism operators
 - schools & community groups
- Expand artisan support:
 - QR storytelling
 - display systems
- Introduce membership / sponsorship models

Outcomes

- Diversified income
 - Stronger regional presence
 - Increased visitor dwell time and spend
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Phase 4: Grow (24+ Months)

Theme: “Become the destination”

Objectives

- Achieve long-term sustainability
- Establish cultural leadership
- Position Waterwheel as a regional icon

Key Actions

- Major fit-out (strategic, one-time, well-planned)
- Flagship events (e.g. Creative Spring Festival)
- Indigenous and cultural partnerships
- Curated tours and immersive experiences

Outcomes

- Financial resilience
 - Recognised regional destination
 - Deep community integration
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6. Future State (3–5 Year Vision)

The Waterwheel becomes:

- **A self-sustaining visitor hub**
- Generating ~\$250K annual revenue with profit margin
- Open 7 days, supported by:
 - volunteers + paid coordinator
- Offering:
 - artisan retail + gallery sales
 - tours + bookings
 - events + workshops

- local trader showcases
 - Known for:
 - accurate visitor info
 - strong community connection
 - vibrant creative culture
 - Recognised at a **state tourism level**
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7. Key Strategic Opportunities

- Expand **retail + own merchandise**
 - Activate underused spaces (gallery, deck, grounds)
 - Introduce:
 - open studios
 - artist residencies
 - Partner with:
 - schools
 - indigenous artists
 - environmental groups
 - Develop:
 - bike hub monetisation
 - hospitality operator
 - Align with:
 - regional arts strategies
 - tourism networks
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8. Success Measures

You'll know this is working when:

- Revenue is **diversified and growing**
 - Volunteers are **engaged and retained**
 - Visitors:
 - stay longer
 - spend more
 - Artists report **real value and income**
 - Waterwheel becomes:
 - a **destination**, not just a stop
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9. Governance Direction

- Transition to **incorporated association** (if not already complete)
 - Expand board skill diversity
 - Introduce:
 - volunteer coordinator role
 - structured operational systems
 - Strengthen council + community relationships
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10. Strategic Essence (If you had to say it in one breath)

Waterwheel is not just a building.

It's a **living ecosystem** where:

- creativity meets tourism
- locals meet visitors
- and value circulates back into the region

The goal isn't just survival.

It's to become the **pulse point of the Upper Yarra**.