

ECONOMIC VALUE: SELECTED WIMMERA RIVER EVENTS 2022



June 2022

1 Background

This brief document reports on the economic contribution of significant recreation events at three sites on the Wimmera River in 2022. It is part of ongoing broader assessments of the economic and social contribution made by the local weirs, lakes and rivers to the regional economy which has been under way for the past six years. The Wimmera River events were held at

- Horsham: Horsham Fishing Competition
- Dimboola: Barefoot Skiing Event
- Jeparit: Jeparit Fishing Competition.

2 Wimmera River Events

2.1 Horsham Fishing Competition

The Wimmera River is naturally an inland intermittent river. It weaves through suburban Horsham, with parkland and red gums lining long stretches of the river. The Wimmera River is popular for kayaking, canoeing and fishing. Horsham Rowing Club has a clubhouse and base on the riverbank.

The Horsham Fishing Competition is an annual event held on the banks of the Wimmera River Labour Day weekend each year.

The 2022 event was the 45th Annual Horsham Fishing Competition branded as the Weekly Advertiser Horsham Fishing Competition and held on the Sunday of Victoria's labour day long-weekend (March 13th). It was run as a COVID Safe event which involved some changes including:

- Social distancing
- Self-recording of catches by catching, photographing and releasing eligible fish (minimum of 30 centimetres) and returning them to the water (except carp). This enabled the removal of need for marshals to measure and record catches.
- Introduction of random draws for the major event prizes, while retaining 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes for various fish species in senior and junior categories and a range of other prizes.

There were 1,031 registered entrants in the 2022 event, and a total of 1,753 attendees (including non-fishing companions). Interviews with Fishing Competition participants were conducted on Saturday March 12th and Sunday March 13th with 128 participants individually and in groups. This represented 12.4% of all registered participants. Reported characteristics of participants in this document are based on this sample.

Key findings from the interviews are:

- 54.5% of participants were male and 45.5% were female.
- There was no dominant age-group among Fishing Competition participants as shown in Figure 1. People in the younger age-groups (up to 24 years) made up 40%, younger adults (25-44 years) made up 34%, and older adults made up 24% of participants.
- A very large percentage of participants were residents of Wimmera Southern Mallee region (31% from Horsham Rural City and 17% from other WSM Shires) and the percentage from Regional Victoria as a whole was overwhelming (90%). This reflects the timid return to travel, during the ongoing COVID pandemic even without restrictions, by people from metropolitan Melbourne and interstate. Figure 2 summarises the residential location of interviewees at the Horsham Fishing Competition.

Figure 1 Age of Horsham Fishing Competition Participants

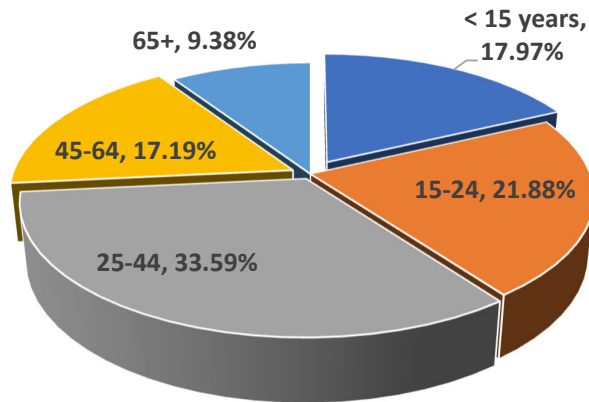
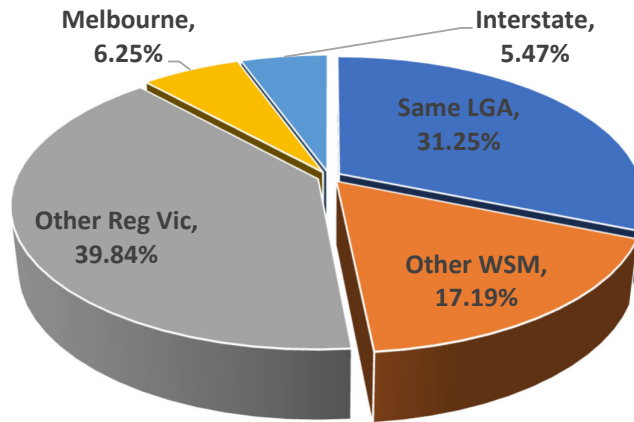


Figure 2 Residential Location of Horsham Fishing Competition Participants

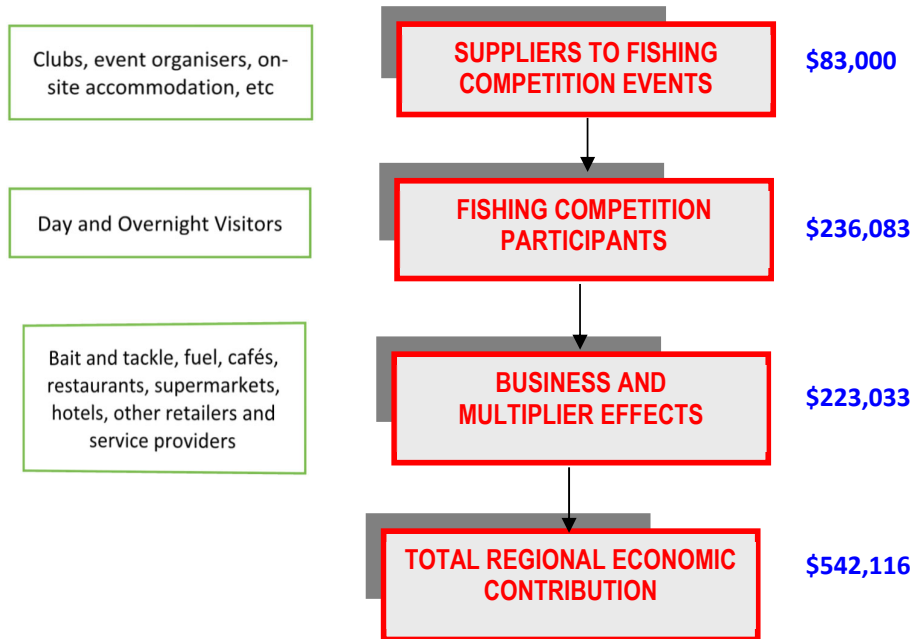


The 2022 Fishing Competition attracted an estimated 504 day visitors and 1,248 overnight visitors staying 3,745 visit nights. The resultant estimated economic contribution is detailed in Figure 3 and Table 1.

Table 1: Estimated Visitor Expenditure Horsham Fishing Competition 2022

	Food Service	Groceries	Other retail	Fuel, Equipment, Sundries	Accommodation	Total
Visitor Expenditure	\$80,283	\$37,757	\$22,799	\$77,872	\$17,372	\$236,083
% of Expenditure	34.01%	15.99%	9.66%	32.98%	7.36%	100.00%

Figure 3 2022 Estimated Recreational Water Economic Contribution: Horsham Fishing Competition





2.2 Dimboola Barefoot Skiing Event

In Dimboola, the Wimmera River flows between the town and the Little Desert. Barefoot skiing competitions and events are organised by Dimboola Boat and Water Ski Club which has a long history of community engagement and a focus on the health of the Wimmera River.

The Dimboola Boat and Water Ski Club believes the protected conditions for competitors at the Wimmera River are among the best in the world for barefoot skiing. The river setting in Dimboola has been enhanced by the work of club members, including rejuvenation of lawns, boat ramp, toilets, barbecues, table and chair settings, shade areas and retaining walls. Many local Dimboola’s club members have competed in barefoot skiing at a national level.

The Club noted that the 2022 event was “the biggest barefoot event we’ve had by far.... What we see on the river over the two days is some of the best action you would hope to see anywhere in the world and it all happens in a highly charged environmental setting under lights with commentary and music. There is nothing quite like this event”.

The event brought skiers and officials from across regional Victoria, from Warrnambool to Echuca and interstate from South-East Queensland, Tasmania, South Australia and New South Wales. There were four vans at the river site offering food and coffee and a range of community clubs with barbecues and merchandise. The event was held over three days and nights and included a night-jump event and fireworks.

There were 40 skiers with another 68 travelling companions (family and support group) and a total of 2,200 attendees including all spectators over the three days. Event organisers were interviewed as part of the assessment and participant characteristics were derived from interviews with 116 recreational water participants in Dimboola in 2020-21, including participants at a small barefoot skiing event.

Key findings from the interviews are:

- 52.5% of participants were male and 47.5% were female.
- There was a larger proportion of younger participants in recreational water activities at Dimboola as shown in Figure 4. People in the younger age-groups (up to 24 years) made up 61%, younger adults (25-44 years) made up 18%, and older adults made up 21% of participants.
- The majority of participants were residents of Hindmarsh Shire (46%), and elsewhere Regional Victoria (28%), although the percentage from Melbourne and interstate was also significant (26%). Figure 5 summarises the residential location of interviewees at Dimboola in 2020-21.

Figure 4 Age of Dimboola Recreational Water Participants

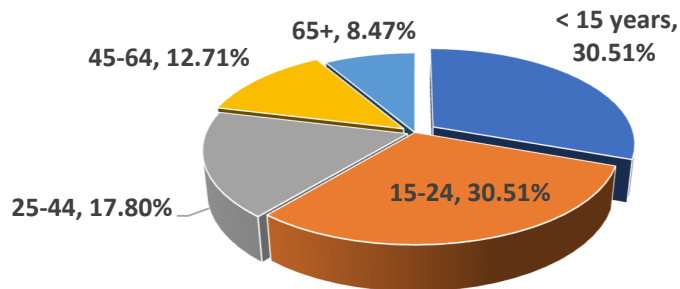
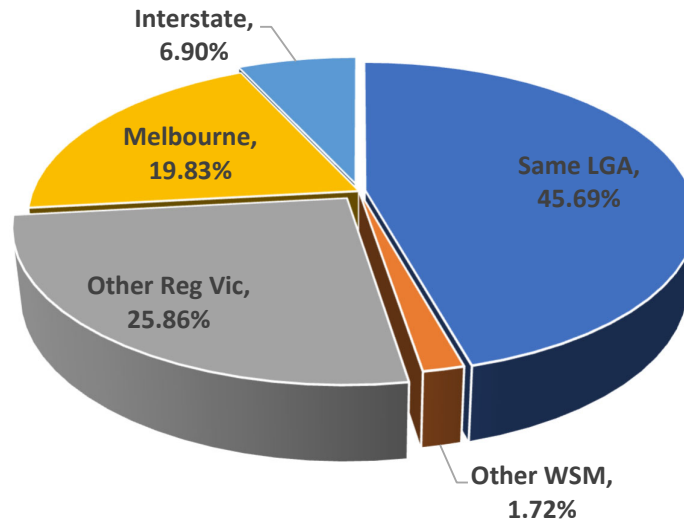


Figure 5 Residential Location of Dimboola Recreational Water Participants



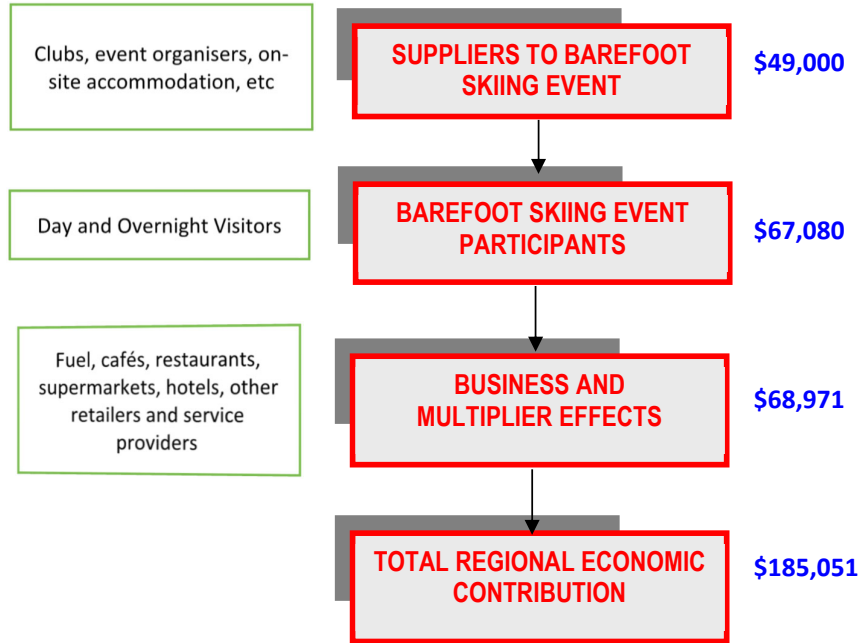
The 2022 Barefoot Skiing event attracted an estimated 2,200 visitors and spectators including 149 overnight visitors staying 447 visit nights. The resultant estimated economic contribution is detailed in Figure 6 and Table 2.

Table 2: Estimated Visitor Expenditure Dimboola Barefoot Skiing Event 2022

	Food Service	Groceries	Other retail	Fuel, Equipment, Sundries	Accommodation	Total
Visitor Expenditure	\$48,542	\$6,052	\$2,750	\$979	\$8,757	\$67,080
% of Expenditure	72.36%	9.02%	4.10%	1.46%	13.05%	100.00%



Figure 6 2022 Estimated Recreational Water Economic Contribution: Dimboola Barefoot Skiing Event



2.3 Jeparit Fishing Competition

The Wimmera River flows through Jeparit as its final town, prior to draining into Lake Hindmarsh. It flows alongside the Jeparit township and has a relatively high number of both active and passive day users. The annual Jeparit Fishing Competition is the major local event using the river. It is conducted on the Easter long-weekend.

The 2020 Fishing Competition event was cancelled by the COVID pandemic restrictions, it returned in 2021 with a reduced number of entrants and was further expanded in 2022.

There were 370 registered entrants in the 2022 event, and an estimated total of 648 attendees (including non-fishing companions). Interviews with Fishing Competition participants were conducted on Easter Saturday April 16th with 129 participants individually and in groups. This represented 19.9% of all attendees. Reported characteristics of participants in this document are based on this sample.

Key findings from the interviews are:

- 67.4% of participants were male and 32.6% were female.
- The 25-44 years cohort was the dominant age-group among Fishing Competition participants as shown in Figure 7. People in the younger age-groups (up to 24 years) made up 25%, younger adults (25-44 years) made up 54%, and older adults made up 21% of participants.
- The majority of participants were residents of Wimmera Southern Mallee region (23% from Hindmarsh Shire and 41% from other WSM Shires) and the percentage from Regional Victoria as a whole was overwhelming (92%). This reflects the timid return to travel, during the ongoing COVID pandemic even without restrictions, by people from metropolitan Melbourne and interstate. Figure 8 summarises the residential location of interviewees at the Jeparit Fishing Competition.

Figure 7 Age of Jeparit Fishing Competition Participants

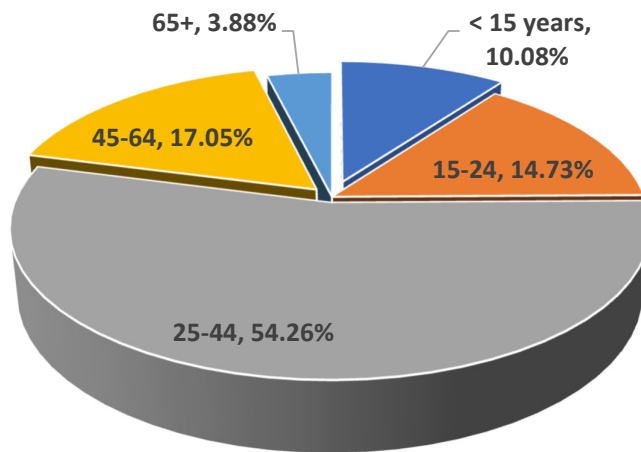
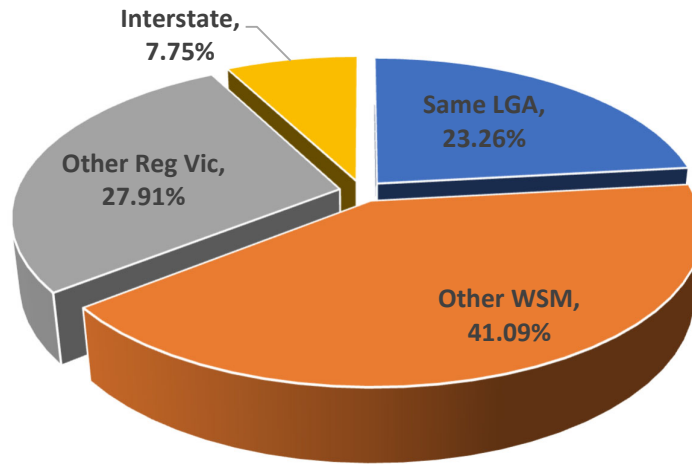


Figure 8 Residential Location of Jeparit Fishing Competition Participants



The 2022 Fishing Competition attracted an estimated 174 day visitors and 474 overnight visitors staying 1,471 visit nights. The resultant estimated economic contribution is detailed in Figure 9 and Table 3.

Table 3: Estimated Visitor Expenditure Jeparit Fishing Competition 2022

	Food Service	Groceries	Other retail	Fuel, Equipment, Sundries	Total
Visitor Expenditure	\$8,053	\$26,762	\$1,744	\$11,460	\$48,018
% of Expenditure	16.77%	55.73%	3.63%	23.87%	100.00%

Figure 9 2022 Estimated Recreational Water Economic Contribution: Jeparit Fishing Competition

