



» INNOVATION IS KEY: CHDC GM Sandra Hobbs and TDO Peter Grigg are busy developing the '101 Things to See and Do in Queensland's Sandstone Wilderness and Sapphire Gemfields' fold-out booklet. INSET: A draft front cover of the booklet. PHOTO: EMMA BOUGHEN

Tourism off and running

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THIS year CHDC tourism development officer Peter Grigg is determined to tell the "story" of the Central Highlands.

From the region's inclusion in the Sandstone Experience Cluster, stretching 82,000 square kilometres through Central Queensland, to the appeal of the Sapphire Gemfields, Mr Grigg said there was no point in having "all of this natural beauty if we're not willing to market it".

His resolution comes on the back of the release of the Central Highlands Marketing strategy, unveiled in June 2015, which outlined goals to increase visitor numbers by 53,135, and their spend by \$87 million by 2020.

"The best thing is that we have a clean canvas ready to paint our picture, because there's been this renewed focus in tourism recently, we're not plagued by 'the past'," he said.

The first initiative in the

Central Highlands Development Corporation's (CHDC) artillery is their '101 Things to See and Do in Queensland's Sandstone Wilderness and Sapphire Gemfields' fold-out booklet.

Local businesses are encouraged to contribute an offer to the booklet, which will take up one of 101 squares.

CHDC aims to print at the end of February and then distribute them to prospective visitors, encouraging them to take advantage of the incentives and spend their money locally.

"To reach our 2020 targets we need to increase the number of people that come to the area, the amount of time they stay and the money they spend," Mr Grigg said.

The major difference between the Central Highlands version of the book and those of other regions Mr Grigg said was "our pay it forward story".

"The idea is that after visitors have been and gone they will pass on the

Central Highlands Tourism

A snapshot from the CH marketing strategy...

- » CH generates 33% of all visitor expenditure for the Capricorn Region.
- » Total visitation has increased by 11.9% since 2012.
- » International visitors comprise of only 3% of the visitor market, with domestic day travellers making up the majority.
- » Holiday visitors generate 20% of all visitor nights in the year ending September 2014.
- » Families generate the majority of visitor nights in the Sandstone Region at 23%.
- » Following Tourism Research Australia's forecasted yearly growth rates, the Central Highlands region is predicted to reach about 692,059 visitors in 2020, creating approximately 53,135 more visitors to the region.
- » Last year the Emerald visitor information centre saw an increase in visitation of 13%.

booklet to other travellers headed our way," he said.

"There is no use-by date, and they don't require a stamp or to be torn out."

Mr Grigg encouraged all businesses to see the benefit in the tourism industry, not just traditional tourism operators.

"This deal could be a buy-one-get-one free, or 10% off a haircut, we have people coming to us asking where they can get their glasses

replaced and dentures fixed, there is something to be gained for all businesses."

On the 5000 copies printed Mr Grigg expects there to be a return of up to three to four times.

Mr Grigg cites the biggest change to the local tourism industry over the past three years to be recognition of its opportunities from the council and local business.

"After the coal industry took a hit the council saw

the need to invest resources into other industries," he said.

Capricorn Enterprise tourism and marketing manager Deanne Bowd said the booklet was "a fantastic approach" to extend the length of stay and expenditure from tourists.

"Tourism figures for our destination as a whole have been growing each quarter for the last year, and this is against the state wide trend, which is great news for the Central Highlands," she said.

"2016 is shaping up to be a great year for tourism.

"The industry as a whole is feeling very positive about the direction we're headed.

"Tourism is an important industry because, in the next 10 years, four million Australians will retire and they're going to want to go somewhere."

There are still about 30 spots vacant in the fold-out booklet.

For more information or to book a spot contact tourism@chdc.com.au.