



FERGUSON VALLEY VISITOR CENTRE  
FERGUSON VALLEY MARKETING INC

**Co-ordinators Report to FVM AGM  
27 October 2022**

It is difficult to compare the past three years, but 2021 delivered both greater overall numbers and greater gross retail sales. Significant influencing factors – both positive and negative - have been the covid pandemic in 2020, the DAS Spectacular and FVVC Xmas Fete in 2021 and discretionary spending in 2022 being impacted by a significant increase in the cost of living. As well, the opening of borders in 2022 created additional opportunities for WA based travellers to head interstate, overseas and back to Bali. Although the DAS Spectacular was presented in a modified format in 2022, as a result there was a marked impact on visitor numbers and retail sales when compared to 2021. The introduction of EFTPOS facility in December 2020, whilst challenging on several fronts, has proven to be a positive move.

Whilst there is an argument to be made for information being available online – and the [www.fergusonvalley.net.au](http://www.fergusonvalley.net.au) website is certainly a very valuable resource, visitors to the FVVC range across a broad demographic. School holidays see many families, tourists staying at the varying range of accommodation options in the Valley and grey nomads who are taking advantage of the overnight stay available at the Dardanup Town Hall are examples. The single most valuable resource FVVC has to offer is local knowledge. Experiential tourism is the current buzzword, and the more personalised information Visitor Centre volunteers can offer the greater the value to visitors to the Valley.

Budget permitting in the future I would like to see more famils - not necessarily restricted to the Ferguson Valley but embracing the BunGeo region. It would be a positive outcome if the Ferguson Valley and its surrounds came to be known as the destination point for more than simply a 'weekend away'.

Year on year volunteer numbers have remained constant with a pool of 25 – 27 providing their time to assist visitors to the Ferguson Valley. The winter months are always a little more challenging as many volunteers take this opportunity to head toward warmer climes. That said, there is a core group who willingly pick up extra shifts when necessary. This allows this essential service, supported by The Shire of Dardanup together with the FVM Board and FVM Members, to encourage tourism in the Ferguson Valley to flourish.

- The attached graph records year on year visits, hours FVVC was open and retail sales from 2018 to date. Currently FVVC has thirty-five suppliers with a diverse offering ranging from honey and olive oil through art, wooden platters and trays, gnomes, historical books, jewellery, glassware, soft toys, stationery, candles, stunning silk scarves and felted garments together with beautifully crafted products made by local artisans. In October, the **Ferguson Valley – ‘I found it!’** tee shirts were introduced.
- In July, following resignation of Brigitte Milligan from the position of EO Admin with the FVM Board, the Position Description for the FVVC Co-ordinator was revised. Tasks now include Square end of month reporting to the Board and the processing of goods received into Square now managed by the FVVC Coordinator.
- Following the success of the 2021 FVVC Xmas Fete, the 2022 event is scheduled to be held on Sunday 20 November between 10 am and 3pm. Currently there are seventeen confirmed participants offering artisan products to complement the array offered for sale within the Visitor Centre. The event is being held in conjunction with the Dardanup Heritage Collective’s launch of the new Interpretative Signage Trail, a display of vintage cars and maypole demonstrations by the Dardanup Schools to commemorate 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries.
- New Volunteers during 2022 include Jonine Duncombe, Sylvia Maunder, Norma Hurst, Louise Wallman and Piari Skeers. Sherryl MacDonald resigned.

## TIMELINE

### 2020

- Gae Bessen was appointed FVVC Co-ordinator commencing in January 2020. Little did we know the fast-approaching Covid 19 pandemic would herald the most challenging period Australian tourism has ever experienced.
- On 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020, the FVM Board elected to temporarily close the FVVC. This was considered circumspect to protect the health and wellbeing of our Volunteers and in response to the lack of tourists/travellers in the area due to borders closures. The decision was revised on 23 May as covid conditions changed and the FVVC was 'unofficially' open on weekends between 11am and 3pm, expanding to include Thursday and Friday during School Holidays.
- Commencing on 1 July 2020, Dardanup Shire Council approved a 5-year lease for the return of the Visitors Centre to the Don Hewison Centre. Re-location was completed 1-3 August 2020.
- Drive Trails brochure was launched at the Visitors Centre on Wednesday 2 September. Official guests included Mick Murray together with representatives from Dardanup Shire Council, SW Regional Development Commission, FVM Board and the press. This publication was funded from a grant received from the State Government and a collaboration between the FVM Board and Australia's Southwest
- On 1 December 2020 we ceased to be a 'Cash Only' Visitors Centre transitioning to 'Square', an EFTPOS facility
- Our Annual Xmas Lunch was held at Bush Shack Brewery on 10 December 2020. 19 Volunteers attended together with three FVM Board representatives and invited guests Lu Standish and Karen Pantlin. Lu and Karen, together with Margaret Giumelli (still a volunteer) and Fiona Winn (apology as she was 'isolating') were acknowledged as past Visitor Centre Co-ordinators. Phil Smith (FVM Board Chair) presented a plaque for display in the Visitors Centre.
- New volunteers in 2020 were Rob and Maureen Webster, Cheryl Hutchinson, Judith Steele, and Coralie Wind. Resignations received from Pam Goyder, Karen Pantlin

## 2021

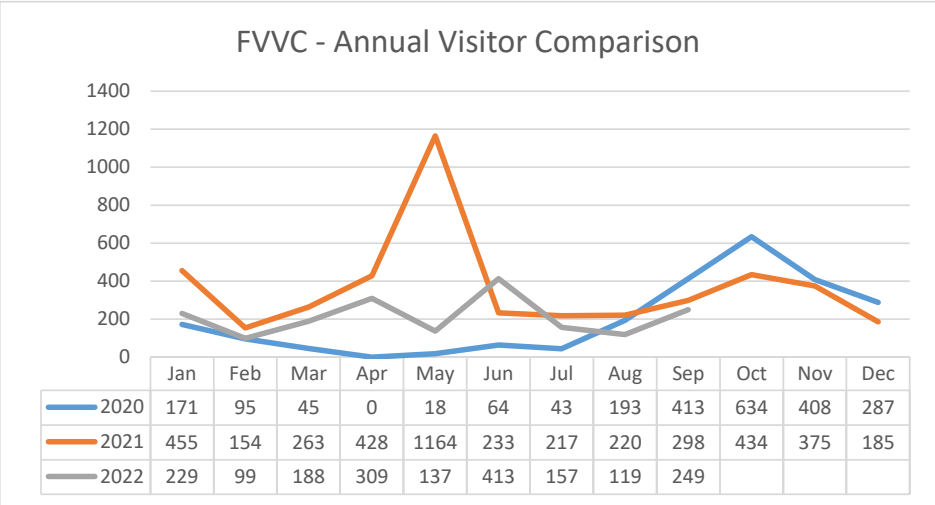
- FVVC enjoyed a visit from Dardanup Shire Councillors on 31 March 2021 – nostalgia played its part as they enjoyed their picnic lunch in the ‘Lunch Shed’ adjoining the FVVC (original Primary School).
- Inaugural Xmas Fete held in the grounds of the FVVC on Saturday 13 November 2021 between 10am and 2pm with thirteen participants.
- Volunteers Xmas Lunch held at Ferguson Falls Café Friday 3 December. Attended by 15 Volunteers and 4 Board Members. Retiring Volunteer Jenny Gardiner received a small gift to acknowledge her many years of service to the FVVC.
- Volunteer Shirley Wells reported as follows:  
*‘Just had a couple in that had been told we are the best Visitors Centre in the area. All the staff are “onto it”*
- New Volunteers included Lynne Mitchell and Julie Lawrence. Resignation received from Jenny Gardiner.

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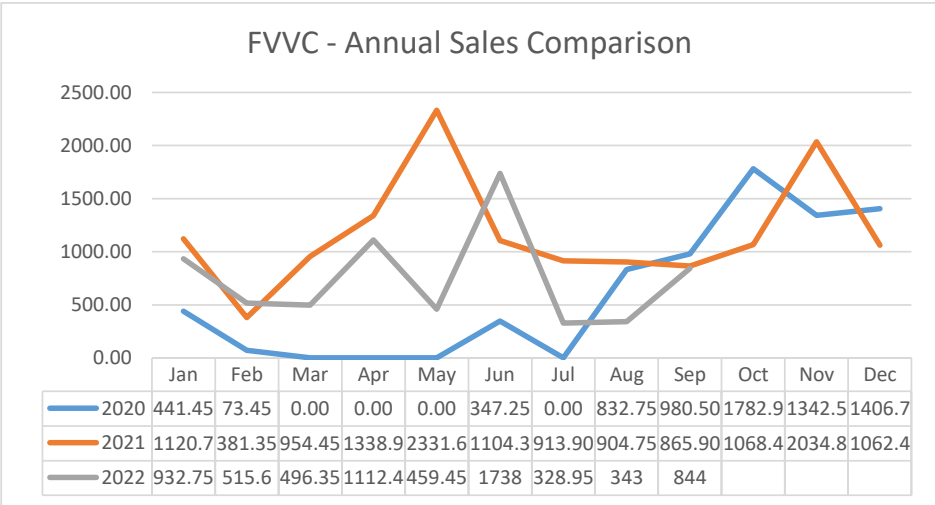
**Visitors - Annual Comparison**

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Jan	171	455	229	
Feb	95	154	99	
Mar	45	263	188	
Apr	0	428	309	
May	18	1164	137	
Jun	64	233	413	
Jul	43	217	157	
Aug	193	220	119	
Sep	413	298	249	
Oct	634	434		
Nov	408	375		
Dec	287	185		



**Sales - Annual Comparison**

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Jan	441.45	1120.77	932.75	
Feb	73.45	381.35	515.6	
Mar	0.00	954.45	496.35	
Apr	0.00	1338.90	1112.4	
May	0.00	2331.60	459.45	
Jun	347.25	1104.30	1738	
Jul	0.00	913.90	328.95	
Aug	832.75	904.75	343	
Sep	980.50	865.90	844	
Oct	1782.95	1068.40		
Nov	1342.50	2034.85		
Dec	1406.74	1062.40		



Note 1 - Mar/Apr/May/June 20 total sales identified in June 20

Note 2 - July/Aug 20 total sales identified in August 20

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