

DERWENT VALLEY AND CENTRAL HIGHLANDS TOURISM ASSOCIATION INC.

2026 AGM

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

1. ABOUT DVCHTA

The **Derwent Valley and Central Highlands Tourism Association Inc. (DVCHTA)** is the local tourism association for the Derwent Valley and Central Highlands, representing tourism operators, businesses, community organisations and regional stakeholders. Supported by **Destination Southern Tasmania** and working with councils, industry and community partners, DVCHTA promotes the region through destination marketing, event development, industry collaboration and tourism advocacy, delivering benefits beyond its membership to local communities, businesses and visitors.

Committee member Cally Lyons was an appointed Director for the Regional Representative position on the Destination Southern Tasmania Board.

Incorporated: 2022 – Incorporation Number IA12994

Structure: Incorporated Not-for-Profit Association

Governance: Volunteer Management Committee elected by members

Local Tourism Associations

This year, DST continued to play a guiding role in supporting the Local Tourism Associations (LTAs), which serve as essential connectors between the tourism industry, communities, and all levels of government. These grassroots networks provide valuable insights from across southern Tasmania, and we're proud to collaborate with their dedicated members and local operators. Our partnership with local government remains key to the strength of this model, with ongoing support across seven distinct sub-regions: Far South Tasmania, Bruny Island Tourism, Tasman Business and Tourism Association, Heritage Highway, Coal River Valley Tasmania Tourism Association (CRVTTA), Derwent Valley and Central Highlands Tourism Association, and the Huon Valley Tourism Network (HVTN).

Autumn Photography Competition

DST held our third Autumn photographic competition throughout autumn, to align with the Derwent Valley and Central Highlands Autumn Festival. The competition received an estimated 550+ entries via the Instagram hashtag #autumntasmania26. The major prize for the competition was supplied by The Tasman, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Hobart. 24 finalists were selected, five highly commended and one overall winner, with the media invited to the winning entry announcement, held at The Tasman.



Cally Lyons Appointed Director for Regional Representation

Curiosity, passion, energy, positivity, resilience and grit shaped Cally's successful business ventures, from travel consultancy, corporate catering, events, international accommodation and now Rathmore. She is offering an authentic country experience, featuring heritage accommodation and events.

Cally is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors with Graduate Diplomas in Finance and Investment, Financial Planning and Technical Analysis and worked in communications, equities, financial planning, philanthropic investing and property development.

Cally sits on the Derwent Valley and Central Highlands Tourism Association Inc committee and is a Women's Network Australia member. With decades of collaborative experience through challenging cycles of adversity, Cally is determined to contribute to Tasmania's sustainable tourism future – one incorporating innovative events, all-seasons festivals, agri-tourism and compelling road trips.

Figures 1-3: Destination Southern Tasmania Annual Report 2025-26

2. 2025-26 MEMBERSHIP

The cost of membership remained at \$120 per business per year on a rolling basis. The following members joined or renewed their membership during the financial year:

1826 Bar & Bistro	Maydena Bike Park
20 th Century Artifacts	Maydena Mountain Cabins & Alpacas
28 Gates Farmstay & Fishery	Meadowbank Wines
7K Distillery	Miss Arthur
Arthurs Lake Roadhouse and Restaurant	Mt Field Retreat
Base Camp Tasmania	Old Beach Berries
Central Highlands Council	Plenty Cider
Clyde Mill Distillery + Kitchen	Rathmore
Communitas Retreats	Rock Hill Estate
Create Do & Mend by the artHouse	Sassafras Springs
Curringa Farm	Tassie Bound Adventure Tours
Derwent Distillery	The Agrarian Kitchen
Derwent Estate	The artHouse New Norfolk
Derwent Valley Railway Preservation Society	The Bush Inn
Explorers Lodge	The Drill Hall Emporium
Flywheel	The Finer Things
Giants Table and Cottages	The Woodbridge, Boutique Hotel Tasmania
Glass and Brown Paper Pantry	Welcome Swallow Brewery
Glen Derwent	Westerway Raspberry Farm
Hamlet Downs	Willow Court Asylum Tours
Henden Ryse	Willow Court Nurses Quarters
Kumara Boutique Accommodation	and Ladies Cottage
Marked 749	

3. AGM AND GOVERNANCE

The Association held its 2025 Annual General Meeting at The ArtHouse New Norfolk, with 19 members in attendance. Eight members were elected to the Committee, representing a broad range of tourism and hospitality businesses across the Derwent Valley and Central Highlands. Destination Southern Tasmania supported the AGM by attending and sponsoring the food provided by The ArtHouse.

The AGM established two subcommittees to support the Association's key event initiatives - the Tasmanian Autumn Festival and New Norfolk Regatta.

4. 2025-26 COMMITTEE

President: Liz Virtue (Glen Derwent)

Vice President: Nigel Graham (Welcome Swallow Brewery)

Secretary/Treasurer: Sharmaine Mansfield (Willow Court Asylum Tours)

General Committee:

Meg Fraser (Glass and Brown Paper Pantry)

Cally Lyons (Rathmore)

Jane Parsons (Curringa Farm)

Michael Smith (Explorers Lodge)

Susie Parsons (28 Gates Farmstay and Fishery) – to 11 February 2026

5. SUBCOMMITTEES

The DVCHTA constitution allows for the creation of subcommittees and for members to be co-opted to a subcommittee whether or not they are members of the Association.

The Association's existing subcommittees are:

Tasmanian Autumn Festival Subcommittee

New Norfolk Regatta Subcommittee

6. CONSULTATION AND ADVOCACY

DVCHTA continued to support member participation in consultation processes and advocate for the interests of tourism and hospitality businesses across the region.

We promoted and participated directly in Derwent Valley Council's consultation on the Upper Derwent Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program (RPPP) and New Norfolk Structure Plan, including surveys, community workshops and the subsequent public exhibition of the draft plans and strategies. DVCHTA also engaged with Realm Studios, SGS Economics & Planning and WSP Australia Pty Ltd as part of this work.

We participated in a 2025 Derwent Valley Council Marketing & Promotion Workshop and with Destination Southern Tasmania presented at a January 2026 Derwent Valley Council workshop focused on the value of tourism to the region, presenting visitor statistics and information on the contribution of tourism and events to the local economy.

DVCHTA also shared opportunities for members to contribute to Hydro Tasmania's South-West Tasmania Community Benefits Sharing Program, while participating directly in relevant consultation on behalf of the Association.

Our advocacy included meetings with Derwent Valley Council representatives, Federal Member for Lyons Rebecca White, and Guy Barnett MP, Deputy Premier and Minister for Small Business. We also maintained engagement with State and Federal representatives regarding regional tourism priorities, including the Tasmanian Autumn Festival and New Norfolk Regatta.

Key infrastructure priorities identified by DVCHTA include river infrastructure such as jetties, pontoons and moorings, to support increased river traffic following removal of the old Bridgewater Bridge, and upgrading the Plenty Link Road connecting the Derwent Valley and Huon Valley.

We also responded to broader industry issues, including sharing the Tasmanian Government's consultation on the proposed 5 per cent short-stay accommodation levy and encouraging members to provide feedback. DVCHTA was also consulted by the proponent's consultant regarding a proposed electric hydrofoil passenger ferry service on the River Derwent, providing a tourism industry perspective on the opportunities and considerations associated with improved river transport and connectivity.

A significant advocacy outcome was supporting the return of Targa Tasmania to the Derwent Valley. In May 2026, it was confirmed that Targa Tasmania would return to New Norfolk on 22 November 2026, with Derwent Valley Council acknowledging DVCHTA's role in helping secure the event's return.

7. MEMBER SUPPORT AND INDUSTRY INFORMATION

DVCHTA regularly shared relevant **industry information, opportunities and resources** with members through our social media and other communication channels.

8. NETWORKING AND INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT

DVCHTA maintained strong relationships with **Destination Southern Tasmania (DST)** and other industry stakeholders, supporting collaboration, networking and representation of the region's tourism industry.

In July 2025, DVCHTA hosted a **member networking evening at Welcome Swallow Brewery**, featuring an update from DST CEO Alex Heroys and a presentation from Derwent Valley Mayor Michelle Dracoulis on the work of Colossal Biosciences and the University of Melbourne on thylacine de-extinction and conservation, including potential opportunities for Tasmanian tourism and ecotourism.

DVCHTA also partnered with DST to host the **February 2026 Tips and Tipples networking event at Derwent Distillery**, providing members with an opportunity to connect with other tourism operators and learn about sustainability and positive-impact practices.

The Association encouraged members to participate in DST's **Paint the Town Red** initiative, supporting regional promotion during Dark Mofo and providing opportunities for local businesses to be included in broader **Hobart & Beyond** and Dark Mofo promotion.

DVCHTA also participated in broader industry networking, including a **small business reception at Parliament House in Hobart** hosted by the Tasmanian Small Business Council and Rural Business Tasmania. Secretary/Treasurer Sharmaine Mansfield represented the Association, providing an opportunity to connect with other small business representatives and strengthen industry relationships.

9. SHARING OUR MEMBERS' ACHIEVEMENTS

DVCHTA regularly celebrated and promoted the **achievements, awards, milestones and media coverage of our members**, helping to amplify their stories and showcase the quality and diversity of tourism businesses across the Derwent Valley and Central Highlands.

During the year, we highlighted a range of member successes, including:

Derwent Distillery, recognised nationally for its commitment to sustainability and ethical practices.

Plenty Cider, named **Champion Cider at the 2025 Royal Tasmanian Fine Food Awards** for the second consecutive year.

Hamlet Downs Country Accommodation, awarded **two Gold medals and one Bronze medal** at the 2025 Royal Tasmanian Fine Food Awards for its sausage products.

Séverine Demanet and Rodney Dunn of The Agrarian Kitchen, named **2025 Tasmanian Tourism Champions** at the Tasmanian Tourism Awards. The nomination was made by DVCHTA committee member Cally Lyons, with supporting letters from DVCHTA and Destination Southern Tasmania.

Meadowbank Estate, which brought the prestigious **Jimmy Watson Trophy back to Tasmania** after winning the Melbourne Royal award for Best Young Red Wine for its 2022 Meadowbank Jimmy.

Cally Lyons of Rathmore and Shearers' Quarters Rathmore, whose work creating a new life for the historic woolshed was featured on ABC Country Hour.

Derwent Distillery, celebrating the opening of its new retail outlet in Hobart and its continued growth beyond the region.

DVCHTA also promoted achievements that raised the profile of the wider region. We supported **Bothwell's nomination as a finalist in the 2026 Tasmanian Top Tourism Town Awards**, encouraging community and visitor support for the Central Highlands town.

We also celebrated **New Norfolk's recognition in the Australian Traveller Top 100 Best Towns to Visit**, including its ranking at **No. 36 in 2025** and its recognition as **Australia's No. 3 emerging town to visit in 2026**. Our communications used these achievements to highlight the contribution of local tourism businesses, events and the wider community, while connecting New Norfolk's current visitor economy with its more than 200-year history as a place that has welcomed visitors.

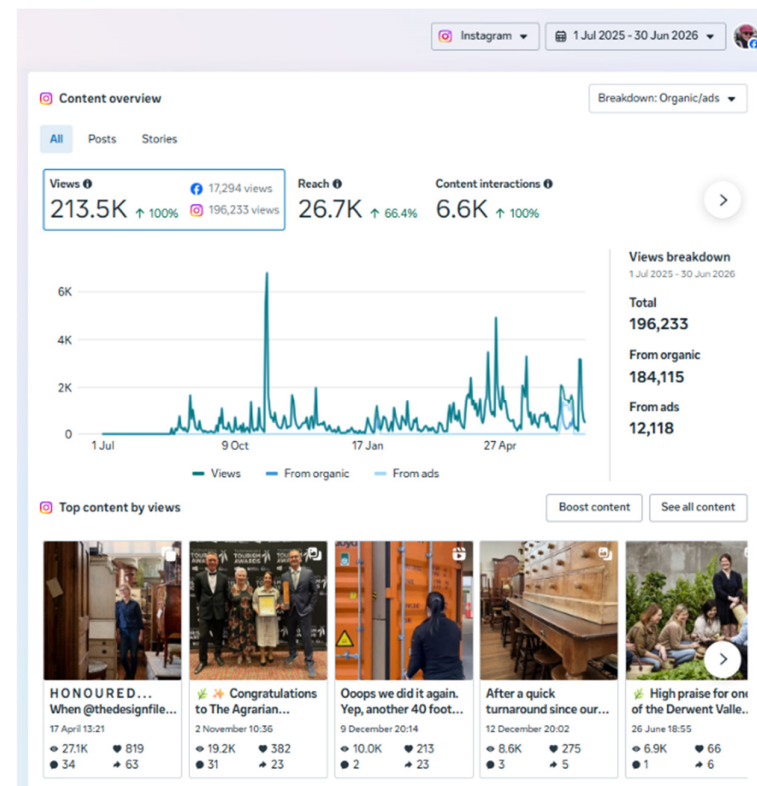
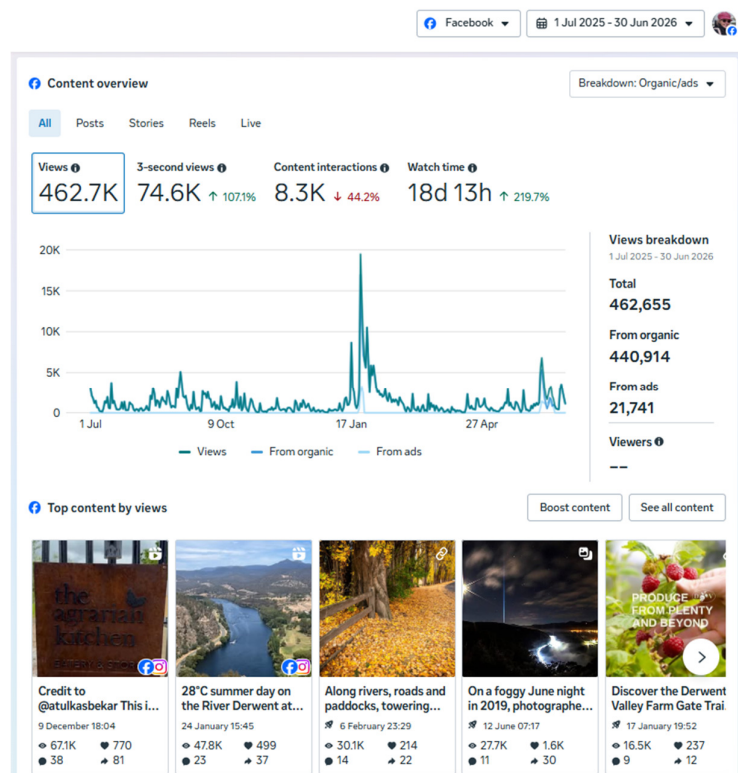
As our social media presence has grown, these channels have become an increasingly valuable way for DVCHTA to **recognise member success, share positive media coverage and provide additional exposure for individual businesses**, while demonstrating the strength and diversity of the region's tourism industry.

10. DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS, MARKETING AND EVENTS

10.1. DERWENT VALLEY AND HIGHLANDS TASMANIA

The **Derwent Valley & Highlands Tasmania** social channels continued to grow their audience during the year, with **867 new Facebook followers** and **588 new Instagram followers**.

The channels generated substantial organic reach, demonstrating the value of consistent destination content and storytelling with relatively minimal paid advertising.



10.2. TASMANIAN AUTUMN FESTIVAL

DVCHTA delivered its third annual Tasmanian Autumn Festival in April 2026, supported by funding from Central Highlands Council (\$2,000), Derwent Valley Council (\$2,000) and the Tasmanian Government through Events Tasmania (\$5,000).

The Festival continued to grow in both scale and reach, featuring 82 events across the month, supported by a Foodie Trail featuring 48 businesses, a Tipple Trail featuring 13 producers and a Retail Roundup promoting 16 retailers across New Norfolk and Bothwell. Together, these initiatives encouraged visitors to explore beyond individual events and discover more of the region's businesses, attractions and experiences. The interactive trails recorded 2,656 Foodie Trail views, 1,769 Tipple Trail views and 378 Retail Roundup views.

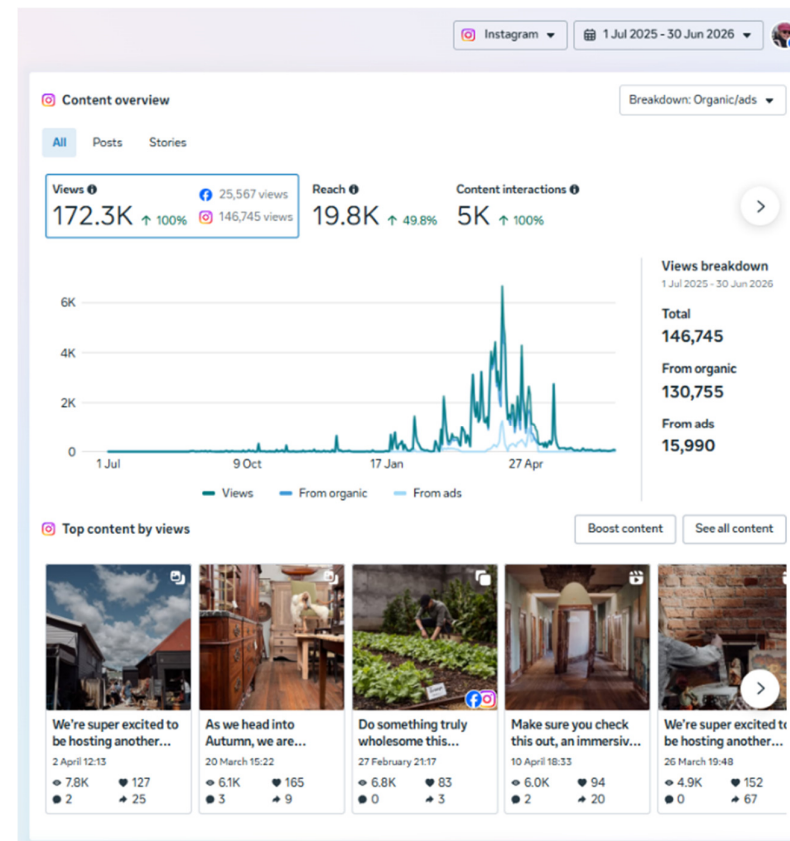
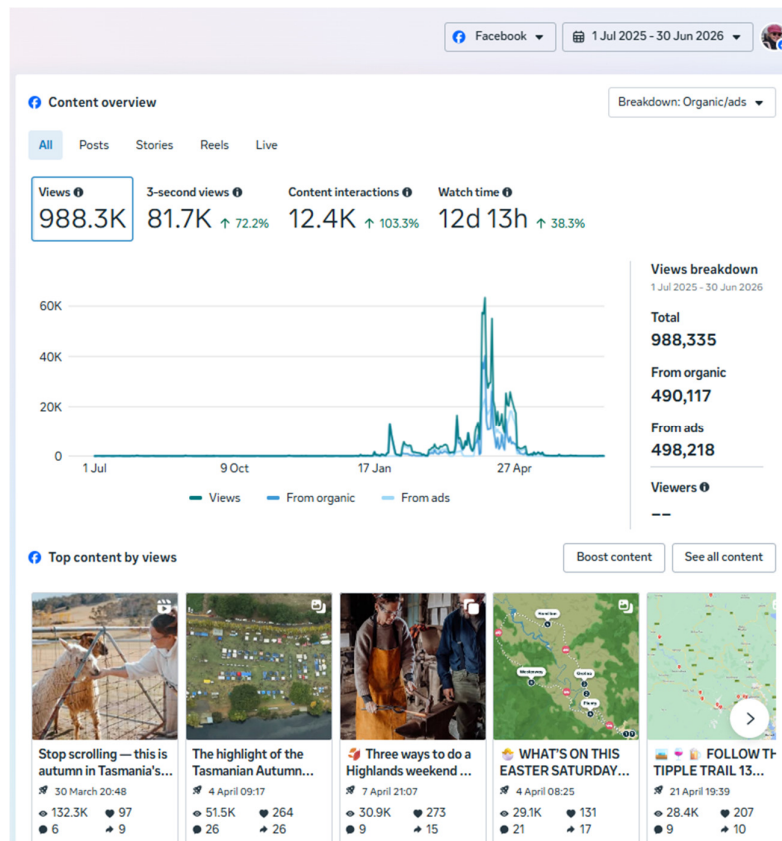
The Festival's digital audience continued to grow strongly during the year, with 1,522 new Facebook followers and 676 new Instagram followers, alongside growth in email subscribers to approximately 1,500. Across Facebook and Instagram, Festival content generated more than 1.1 million views, reached more than 235,000 people and recorded more than 17,000 content interactions. The email database also grew by approximately 750 subscribers between January and June, providing DVCHTA with a growing owned audience for future festivals and regional tourism promotion.

The 2026 marketing campaign was delivered across social media, email, radio, print and visitor information, with funding enabling a substantially broader campaign than could have been achieved through organic activity and volunteer effort alone. This included a four-week 7HOFM campaign, newspaper advertising and editorial coverage, and 20,000 professionally printed postcards promoting the Festival and its visitor trails. Business feedback indicated that visitors were actively using the postcards and QR codes to plan their visits and following the trails to discover additional businesses and experiences.

A media launch at Derwent Distillery, supported by DST, provided an opportunity to showcase the Festival and participating businesses ahead of the April campaign, while 7NEWS Tasmania coverage of Easter Saturday in New Norfolk provided additional exposure during the Festival.

Feedback from participating organisations was very positive. The ArtHouse New Norfolk specifically acknowledged DVCHTA's organisation, coordination and promotion of the Festival, noting that its program of workshops, exhibitions, markets and community activities brought both new and familiar faces through its doors. This feedback reinforces the Festival's role in creating opportunities for local businesses and community organisations to participate and attract visitors during April.

Overall, the 2026 Festival demonstrated continued growth in participation, audience reach and regional collaboration. The combination of events, trails and coordinated marketing provided visitors with more reasons to explore the Derwent Valley and Central Highlands, while strengthening opportunities for local businesses, community organisations and event organisers to participate in the region's autumn visitor economy.



10.3. NEW NORFOLK REGATTA

DVCHTA continued to progress the revival of the historic New Norfolk Regatta, with the event set for 12–14 February 2027, the weekend following the Australian Wooden Boat Festival.

Since securing the Regatta's key digital and administrative assets in August 2025 and establishing a subcommittee at the 2025 AGM, the project has moved from concept to active event development. The subcommittee has expanded to include additional Association members and co-opted non-members, with significant work undertaken to build partnerships, develop the program and establish the event's profile.

The Regatta has attracted strong support from tourism, government, boating and community organisations, including Destination Southern Tasmania, Derwent Valley Council, Marine and Safety Tasmania, the Australian Wooden Boat Festival, Motor Yacht Club of Tasmania, Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania, New Norfolk Rowing Club, Heritage Sailing Tasmania, New Norfolk Scouts and the Wooden Boat Guild of Tasmania.

The developing program includes historic vessels Egeria and Rhona H, try sailing, rowing, a community raft race, dragon boating and water skiing. We will also curate an on-shore experience along the New Norfolk Esplanade, bringing together food and beverage, local producers, artisans, maritime heritage, entertainment and activities and a Regatta Feast featuring local producers and chefs.

The revival of the Regatta became possible due to the reopening of the Derwent River to navigation following removal of the old Bridgewater Bridge, creating significant opportunities for New Norfolk and the Derwent Valley. DVCHTA has engaged with government and maritime industry representatives around this opportunity, including participation in a Bridgewater media event on 9 January 2026 and aboard the MYCT's historic motor launch Egeria as it passed beneath the new Bridgewater Bridge with the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Kerry Vincent, on 18 June 2026.

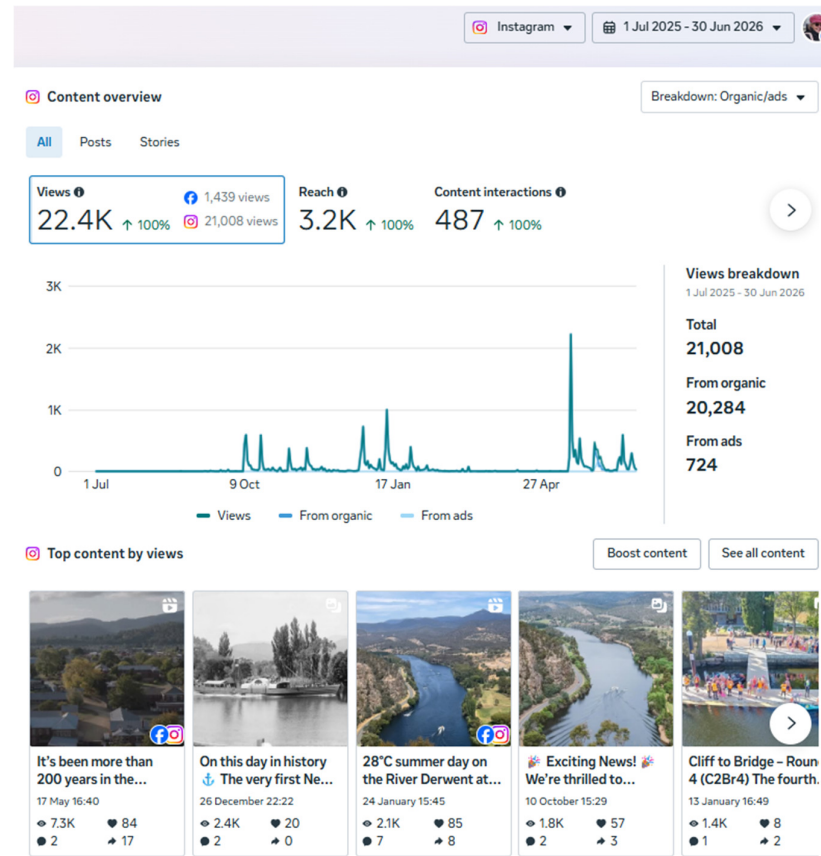
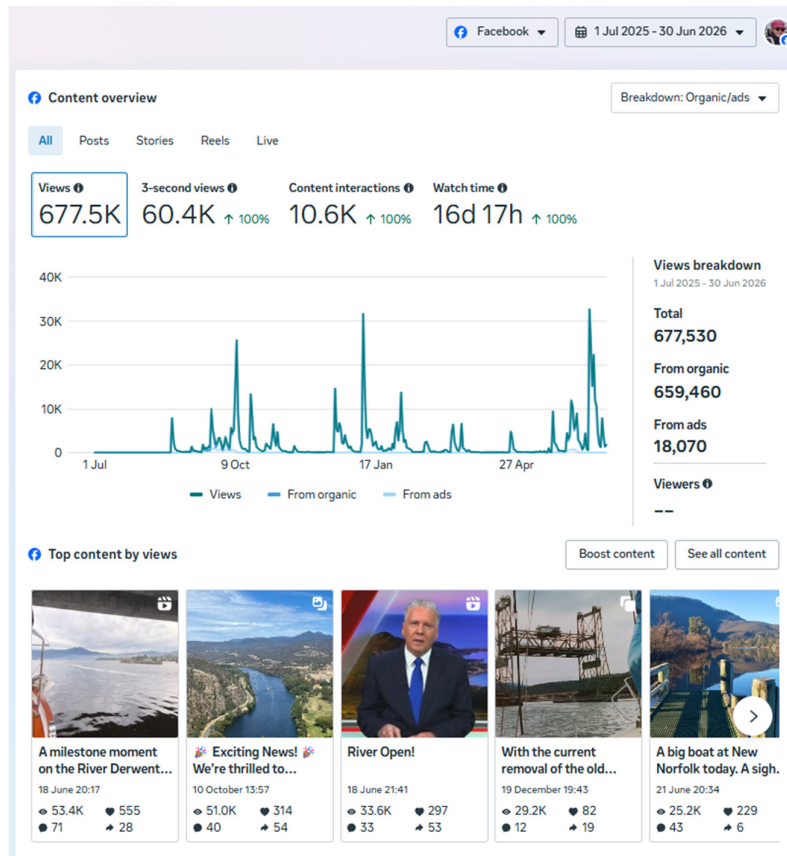
The river reopening has also generated media opportunities, including a January ABC Hobart radio interview with DVCHTA President Liz Virtue about the tourism and economic opportunities for the region and the planned 2027 Regatta. The Regatta's timing following the Australian Wooden Boat Festival is intended to encourage boat owners and visitors to extend their stay and travel upriver.

The Regatta has generated strong digital interest. From 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026, the Facebook page recorded 677,530 views and 10,600 content interactions, with 659,460 views generated organically. The page had grown to 2,036 followers by 30 June, while Instagram recorded a further 22,419 views and 487 interactions.

Local businesses, including The Bush Inn New Norfolk, have also begun considering ways to welcome visiting boaters and benefit from increased river and Regatta activity.

DVCHTA launched Friends of the Regatta at the end of June, providing an opportunity for individuals and businesses to contribute through donations of \$10 or more and helping build community ownership of the event.

On 30 June 2026, DVCHTA received \$10,000 in seed funding from Hydro Tasmania to support development of the event.

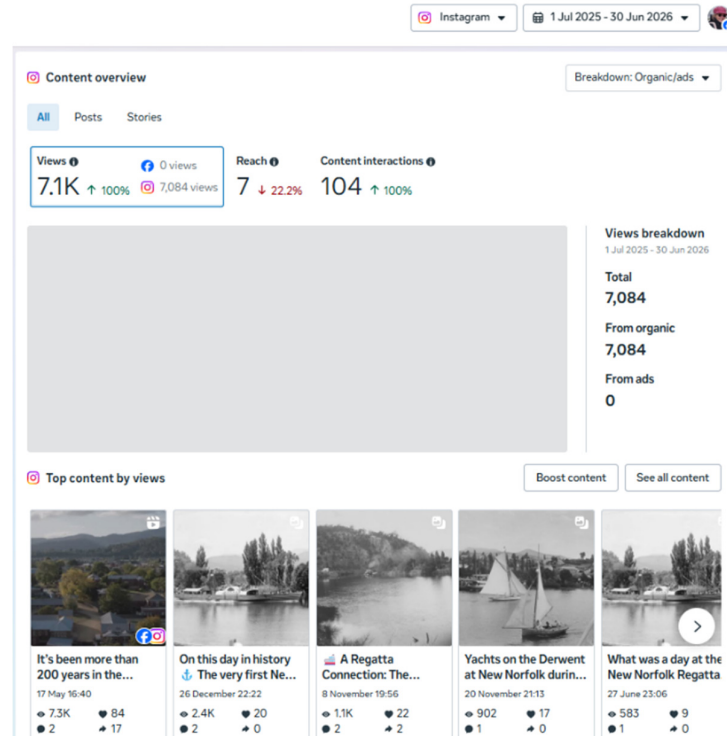
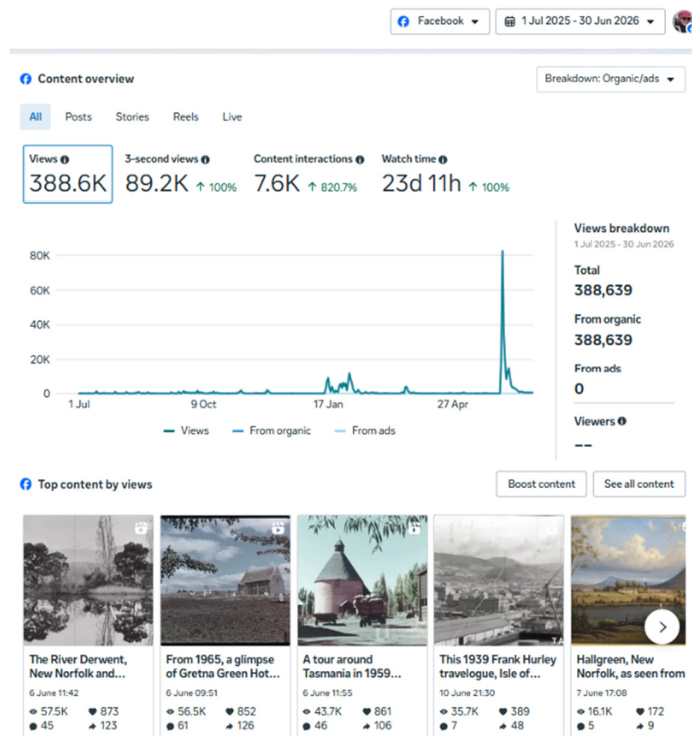


10.4. TASMANIA'S HISTORIC DISTRICT OF NEW NORFOLK

The *Tasmania's Historic District of New Norfolk* pages continued to perform well, particularly on Facebook, which gained 1,324 new followers during the reporting period.

The strongest content reflected clear interest in New Norfolk's heritage, historic imagery, river setting and local stories.

Instagram remains a smaller but complementary channel, providing a visual platform to build awareness of New Norfolk's heritage identity and support future destination marketing activity.



11. DESTINATION MARKETING AND PROMOTIONAL REACH

11.1. WEBSITES

Derwent Valley and Highlands Tasmania

www.derwentvalleytasmania.com.au

The Derwent Valley and Highlands Tasmania destination website provides a regional visitor platform promoting places to stay, things to do, events, local experiences and travel inspiration across the Derwent Valley and Central Highlands.

The site supports DVCHTA's destination marketing role by showcasing the region's **natural landscapes, heritage, food and drink, events, outdoor experiences and seasonal appeal**, while encouraging visitors to explore beyond Hobart and stay longer in the region.

Tasmanian Autumn Festival

www.tasmanianautumnfestival.com.au

The Tasmanian Autumn Festival website provides a dedicated event platform promoting the Festival as a month-long celebration of the Derwent Valley and Central Highlands' **autumn landscapes, heritage, food and drink, local experiences and artisan community**.

The site supports event marketing through festival information, trail content, accommodation prompts, interactive mapping, social media engagement and program updates, helping encourage visitors to explore the region and participate in seasonal activities throughout April.

New Norfolk Regatta

www.newnorfolkregatta.com.au

The New Norfolk Regatta website provides a dedicated platform for promoting the revival of the historic Regatta as a **river, heritage, boating and community event**.

The site supports early event marketing by sharing event information, historical context, partner recognition, updates and subscriber opportunities, while building awareness ahead of the **12–14 February 2027** Regatta weekend

11.2. SOCIAL MEDIA

Purpose	Page	Date created	Platform	Followers as at 16 Sep 2026	Annual Views 1 Jul 2025 to 30 Jun 2026
Industry and Member Communications	Derwent Valley and Central Highlands Tourism Association Inc	22 Jan 2023	Facebook	1,019	112,925
Visitor and Community Focussed Channels	Derwent Valley & Highlands Tasmania	18 Dec 2016	Facebook	11,033	462,655
			Instagram	5,554	204,620
	What's On in Tasmania's Derwent Valley and Highlands	1 Nov 2017	Facebook	3,472	233,091
	Tasmania's Historic District of New Norfolk	13 Aug 2018	Facebook	5,071	388,639
			Instagram	193	7,084
Events	Tasmanian Autumn Festival	7 Oct 2023	Facebook	5,057	988,335
			Instagram	1,818	171,901
	New Norfolk Regatta	25 Aug 2025	Facebook	2,593	677,530
			Instagram	87	22,419
TOTALS				35,897	3,269,199

12. OTHER DIGITAL ASSETS

12.1. TIDYHQ AND STRIPE

We use **TidyHQ** as a membership, communications and financial management platform, supporting member engagement, event registrations, invoicing and financial reporting. **Stripe** provides secure online payment processing for memberships, event registrations, ticketing and other transactions and integrates with TidyHQ to streamline payment processing and financial administration.

12.2. MYOB AND COMMBANK

We use **MYOB** and **CommBank** to support financial administration, including accounting, bookkeeping, bank reconciliation, payments and reporting requirements for the Association.

12.3. ATLIST

We use the **Atlist** platform to create custom interactive maps that can be embedded in websites and shared through social media, helping visitors easily discover local attractions, experiences, events and businesses.

12.4. EVENTLAB

Event Lab is used to support event planning and coordination.

12.5. SOCIABLEKIT

We use **SociableKIT** to integrate Facebook events and social media feeds into our websites, helping keep event information and destination content current.

12.6. AUSTRALIAN TOURISM DATA WAREHOUSE (ATDW)

In September 2025, the Association acquired an **Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW) account**, enabling us to monitor, create and manage tourism listings for attractions, experiences, events and businesses.

ATDW content is distributed through **Tourism Tasmania, Destination Southern Tasmania and other tourism platforms**, providing another practical way for the Association to support the online presence of regional tourism operators and increase the visibility and reach of tourism experiences across the region.