



Naracoorte Caves Connection

Business Prospectus

Naracoorte is a unique destination for visitors in the Limestone Coast. By making the most of what we have at the Naracoorte Caves, the town can attract more visitors and everyone's business can benefit.



Introduction

The world heritage listed Naracoorte Caves represent a unique opportunity for the region to improve its economic and social prosperity.

Tourism within South Australia is now a \$6.8 billion a year business and visitor spend in the Limestone Coast is \$321 million. Tourism attracts over 2 million interstate and overseas visitors a year. Next to Adelaide, the most visited region in South Australia by international visitors is the Limestone Coast, so the potential to grow visitation to Naracoorte is right on our doorstep.

Tourism is not just about tourists. Attracting more customers to a region underpins the growth of many businesses and infrastructure development. For example, more tourists seeking food and accommodation support the viability of these businesses for locals to use and they feed a diverse network of local suppliers, businesses and jobs.

Unlike all other regions in the State and most in the country, the Naracoorte region has something special... the World Heritage Naracoorte Caves. The Naracoorte Lucindale Council has recognised that this is a unique opportunity to attract more visitors and economic prosperity to the region. Creating a stronger link between the town and the Caves will generate greater benefits for both locations.

I strongly endorse this great initiative by Council and encourage you to embrace the opportunities outlined in this prospectus.



Mayor Erika Vickery

Purpose and Objectives

The intention of this prospectus is to detail ways in which local businesses and individuals can leverage the opportunities linked to the Naracoorte Caves.

It is part of a broader plan started in 2017 to examine a range of ideas that could better connect the Caves to the town of Naracoorte and the surrounding region.

The specific objectives of the Naracoorte Caves Connection Project are:

- To position Naracoorte Township as a visitor destination and starting or ending point for the Caves experience.
- To improve the perceived connection between the town and Caves.
- To ensure that Naracoorte and Limestone Coast businesses generate greater benefit from the significance and popularity of the Naracoorte Caves.
- To uncover and promote new commercial opportunities that can be linked to and derived from the Caves.

The World Heritage Listed Naracoorte Caves

Naracoorte Caves National Park is South Australia's only World Heritage site.

The Naracoorte Caves are part of the 800,000 year old Naracoorte East Range. They are World Heritage listed, and one of the world's most important fossil sites.

For half a million years the caves acted as pitfall traps and predator dens. Animals would fall in through a hole in the ground and not be able to escape. Bones collected – layer upon layer, year after year – creating a rich fossil record of the ancient animals that roamed the area. The fossil record covers several ice ages and the arrival of humans in the area and the extinction of Australia's iconic Megafauna roughly 60,000 years ago.


Palaeontologists have excavated and dated many of the fossils in the Naracoorte Caves. They have reconstructed the skeletons of many of the Megafauna that lived so many years ago.

Of the 28 known caves in the park, four are open to the public. Other caves are set aside for scientific research or to protect the caves and their contents. Many of the caves contain spectacular stalactites and stalagmites.

With the caves staying at a constant 17 degrees centigrade, Naracoorte Caves is a destination for all seasons. Self-guided, guided and adventure caving tours are offered year-round.

Naracoorte Caves, along with the Riversleigh fossil site in far north-west Queensland, form the Australian Fossil Mammal Sites World Heritage Area. Both sites were officially recognised in 1994 for their importance in telling the story of Australia's unique animal heritage.





A World Heritage site is a place of cultural or physical significance to the planet, as determined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

To be listed as a World Heritage site, a property must meet at least one of ten very strict criteria. Six of these criteria describe cultural values and four describe natural values.

Only exceptional places around the world are listed. These sites are held in trust for future generations and require host governments and communities to make a complete commitment to their protection for '*peoples of the world*'.

The sites fulfil two of the four natural criteria for World Heritage status:

- To be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features (Criterion 8).
- To be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals (Criterion 9).

Listed fossil sites must also represent major stages of earth's evolutionary history, significant ongoing geological processes and the evolution of life on earth, and be the best example of such a site.

The Naracoorte Caves are managed by the South Australian Government Department for Environment and Water:

Their website contains a wide range of information about the Caves, organised tours, camping and accommodation options: www.naracoortecaves.sa.gov.au/plan-your-visit/about-naracoorte-caves



The Opportunity

The Naracoorte Caves are a unique attraction that appeal to a wide range of people from young children living locally to international visitors keen to explore a different country. The opportunity is to grow awareness of the Caves and the connection between a Caves experience and the surrounding towns and region.

Visitation to the Naracoorte Caves has grown over 25% in the last 5 years. In 2017 over 55,000 people visited the Caves.

Across the border in Victoria, nearly 2 million visitors travelled along the Great Ocean Road, spending \$1.2 billion in the process. The Great Ocean Road is the second most popular tourist destination in Australia, and it is only a couple of hundred kilometres away!

Closer to home, the Grampians attract over 800,000 visitors a year, spending nearly \$400 million on meals, tours and accommodation each year.

As such, the simplest and best opportunity to build visitation to the Naracoorte region is to encourage some of these visitors to 'go the extra mile' to explore the Naracoorte Caves and region.

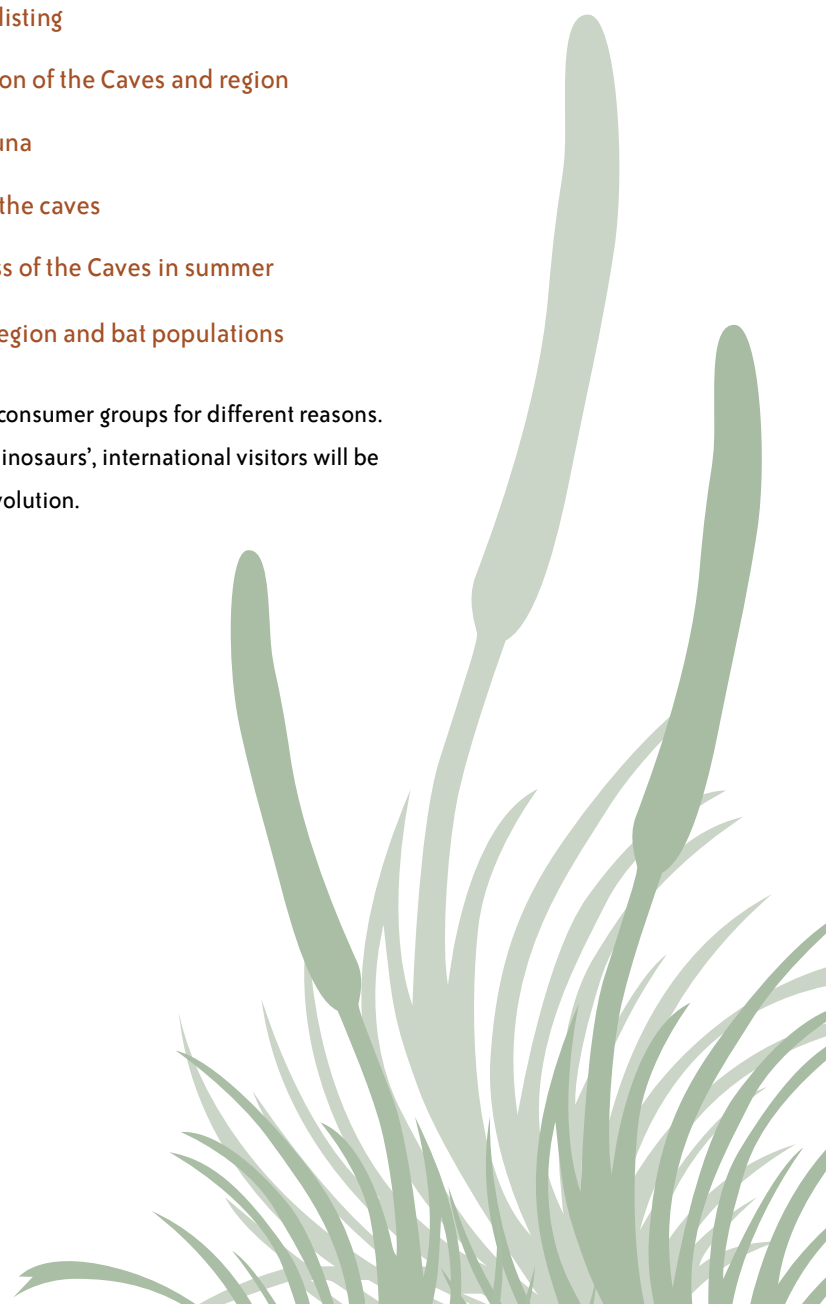
Motivating just 10% of people visiting the Great Ocean Road to visit Naracoorte would quadruple visitor numbers and tourism related expenditure. Ten percent of Great Ocean Road visitors is equivalent to an extra 196,900 visitors and expenditure of \$98,450,000.



The marketing opportunities provided by the Caves are:

- The uniqueness of the world heritage listing
- Understanding the history and evolution of the Caves and region
- Fossils, ancient skeletons and megafauna
- The formation, geology and beauty of the caves
- The constant temperature and coolness of the Caves in summer
- The unique Australian wildlife of the region and bat populations

Each of these opportunities will appeal to different consumer groups for different reasons. For example, young children will be fascinated by 'dinosaurs', international visitors will be interested in Australia's unique animals and their evolution.



Creating a Strong Regional Brand

Bill Barker, the Marketing Director for the Sydney 2000 Olympics, and later a global expert in place branding, defines a regional brand as “the totality of perceptions thoughts and feelings that customers hold about a place”.

The two key words in this definition are totality (the good, bad and indifferent) and customers (the people who use, visit, invest, trade or live in a precinct or region).

In this sense, a brand is simply a set of perceptions and associations that sit in people’s minds that are activated by a need or awareness. These simple, often naïve, associations have an important influence on purchase decisions and travel choices.

These associations usually come from direct experience with a place or region, rumours, reviews and media commentary / stories and sometimes advertising, brochures and websites.

The associations we keep in our minds generally have two characteristics... they are distinctive for example the shape of a Coke bottle or sound of a Harley Davidson (even though we may have no interest in motor bikes or soft drink) or they are relevant (information we need to retain because it is useful or valuable to us).

For destinations, this is why distinctive physical icons such as The Eiffel Tower or the 12 Apostles and the destination or precinct’s function / relevance, for example Adelaide Oval or Broadway are key ingredients of destination marketing.





Whether it is a region, a service, food product or a land development a brand can be defined by a simple formula:

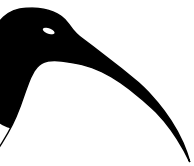
BRAND = COMMODITY + PERSONAL MEANING

All regions have tourist attractions, but the degree to which they have attractions and experiences that have personal meaning determines their strength as brands. The more personal meaning attached to a commodity, the stronger the brand. Without personal meaning, all products and services are commodities and trade exclusively on price.

Many people believe that you need to spend a lot of money on advertising or need a flashy logo to create a strong brand. Nothing could be further from the truth. Brands, like reputations, are created by what you do, not just what you say or how you look.

As tourists the things that have the greatest meaning to us are unique experiences that involve us and create lasting memories. Promoting experiences is very different to promoting tourism products. When you market a tourism product you communicate what the product is and how to get it. When you market an experience you communicate what the product does to the customer, how they will feel and what they will remember.

Ideas that bring a connection to the Caves alive and involve visitors in activities, interests or experiences are likely to have the greatest appeal and generate the highest return on any investment.



Customer Segment Profiles

From data collected by Caves' staff in 2017 it is clear that visitors to the Caves come from different locations.

- Visitors from Adelaide (33%, 18,150)
- Visitors from Overseas (25%, 13,750)
- Visitors from Victoria (16%, 8,800)
- Visitors from Other SA regions (14%, 7,700)
- Total visitor numbers 55,000

Each of these customer groups have different characteristics, different needs and different motivations for visiting the Caves.

Visitors from Adelaide

Visitors from Adelaide make up the largest group of visitors to the Caves. They are mainly families on driving holidays and their visitation peaks over summer, Easter and school holiday periods. The uniqueness of the Caves, the connection to 'dinosaurs' and the adventure of being under ground are strong appeals for this group. Staying with 'friends and relations' and 'camping and caravanning' account for nearly 60% of the accommodation choices made by this group.

This group really is after experiences so they quickly tire of displays and boring exhibits. They want to have fun and be involved in family activities.

Visitors from Overseas

Many international visitors to the region are there as an extension of a visit to the Great Ocean Road. Around 45,000 visitors from overseas come to the Limestone Coast region each year, bringing with them an estimated \$16m spend (SA Regional Visitor Strategy). They are interested in Nature and Wildlife, Food and Wine and Coastal experiences. About a quarter of international visitors are travelling as couples (over 55 years), over half are singles (under 35 years). The majority are from Europe (58%), but the number of visitors from China is growing rapidly.

They are interested in Australia's history and its unique animals and their evolution.

International visitors mainly use the internet to source information about what to see and do and where to stay.

Visitors from Victoria

Of the visitors from Victoria, just under half are from Melbourne. The majority are over 50 and travel by car. One in five towed a caravan or camping trailer. The things they enjoy are the scenery, experiencing nature and the natural environment and visiting interesting towns.

The main sources of information for this group are Auto Clubs, State Tourism travel centres and websites and the Internet.

Visitors from other SA regions

This group is similar in many ways to visitors from Victoria. They are mainly families and older couples on driving holidays. They are interested in unique and entertaining experiences and source information from friends, relations and local sources.



Caves Connection Business Ideas

A workshop held in November 2017 among local organisations and businesses identified a range of great ideas that met the Caves Connection Project objectives. These ideas are free for anyone to implement or they may inspire new thoughts and ideas that link to your business.

The ideas were developed in five categories:

- Food & Beverages
- Tours & experiences
- Events & Public Spaces
- Accommodation
- Souvenirs & Gifts

At the end of the workshop the audience voted on the ideas that they thought had the most appeal and best delivered against the objectives.



Food & Beverages

Top 3 ideas:

1. **Aged food and wine**
 - a. Mega meals and Aged steaks at cafes and hotels
 - b. Progressive dinners
 - c. Fermented foods and beverages

2. **Ice Age Foods**
 - a. Special icy poles – stalactites and stalagmites
 - b. Restaurant dishes featuring items frozen inside
 - c. Ice makers available for public and tourist use

3. **Old Fashioned Foods and Drinks**
 - a. Food and drinks popular in previous generations but not around today

Other Ideas:

- Sedimentary (layer cakes) available in local stores with cave names
- A Paleo Cafe - Pete Evans inspired foods
- Caves Dining Experience – Special dinners held in caves for corporate functions/events
- Cave Water – Bottled water extracted from local caves or lakes
- Cave Explorer lunch packs – local foods in picnic pack available from local cafes and pubs for visitors to take on Cave tours or picnics

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Tours & Experiences

Top 3 ideas:

1. **Walking/Cycling Trail between town and Caves**
 - a. Caves Marathon – Annual Race
 - b. Horse & Cart experience
 - c. Bat peddle cars for kids
 - d. Fossil Hunt – discover lost objects along the way

2. **Visitor Centre**
 - a. More immersive interactive experiences – video walls, 3D printing of fossils etc
 - b. Simulated Adventure Caving experience – crawl through darkened tunnels, find objects etc group team building exercises. Safe, clean and convenient in Naracoorte rather than the Caves

3. **Bat Cave Experiences**
 - a. Learn about bats, adopt a bat to look after and protect.
 - b. Simulate finding your way around objects in a room using sonar glasses
 - c. Stay overnight in a Cave

Other Ideas:

- Fossil Hunt– Visit various sites around town to collect fossils or fossil stamps that can be redeemed for local products and experiences

3 Events & Public Spaces

Top 3 ideas:

1. **Mega Fauna Playground in Naracoorte Park**
 - a. Containing Caves Tunnel, Wonambi Slide, Fossil sandpit etc
 - b. Flintstone's Cars on track
 - c. Kangaroo/Leo bouncy animals
 - d. Café offering bat biscuits, wonambi hot dogs, bat burgers and bat blood drinks
 - e. Native plants and story trees
2. **Walking and Bike Trails**
 - a. Wonambi Snake trail
 - b. Large metal animals (like entrance statements) along the trail as photo or info stops
 - c. Public art and sculpture inspired by fossils, bats or caves
3. **Caves Interpretative Centre in town**
 - a. Caves experiences, information and displays
 - b. Pop up caves displays in empty shops or on windows

Other Ideas:

- Caveland Festival
 - *Prehistoric Food*
 - *Flintstones dress up, cars etc*
- James Quarry Fossil Experience – find your own fossils
- Extend the railway area for picnics and eating



Accommodation

Top 3 ideas:

1. **Themed Pub / Motel Rooms**
 - a. As simple as Cave names on rooms or more elaborate decorations
...rock walls, special furnishings
 - b. Vouchers, offers or brochures in rooms to visit Caves

2. **Underground Accommodation**
 - a. Similar to Coober Pedy
 - b. Find private operator to set up one of the many unused caves to do this

3. **Camping at the Caves**
 - a. Blanche Cave set up as 'glamping' experience

Souvenirs & Gifts

Top 3 ideas:

1. **Adopt-a-Bat**
 - a. Get a certificate, name a bat and get an App that tracks his/her movements via GPS device
 - b. Donate to bat welfare – food, cave preservation etc
 - c. Bat Rescue – Drive to save endangered species
2. **Caves Lubricant**
 - a. Range of Olive Oils containing fossil replica or fossil label
3. **Paleo Pack**
 - a. Cave explorer pack for kids containing torch, poncho etc.

Other Ideas:

- Mega Fauna soft toys
- Skeleton wooden assembly kits
- 3D print a mega fauna skeleton
- Million year old dirt in a bottle / Fossil dust / Unique Egg Timer
- Preserved Fruits in special caves style packaging
- Cave Water – special million year old water

Implementing the Ideas and Finding Partners

There are some great ideas on the previous pages, but the real challenge is to find the one you can turn into a new business or add to your existing business.

Many of the ideas developed can be implemented inexpensively and quickly by simply changing menus, signage or the names of commonly used items in existing businesses. Others require longer term planning and partnering with other businesses, charities and/or local and state government departments.

Below are some tips and tools to help you take the first step...

Grants & Funding

Funds are available from a wide range of local, State and federal Government sources to support investment into regional tourism ideas and promotions:

Australian Government

www.business.gov.au/assistance/building-better-regions-fund

South Australian Government

driveyourfuture.sa.gov.au/start-your-own-business/funding-for-small-business

Council

Naracoorte Lucindale Council are keen to encourage local businesses to find ways to leverage the connection to the Caves

www.naracoortelucindale.sa.gov.au/cavesconnection

www.naracoortelucindale.sa.gov.au/entrepreneursfund

Partners

While some of these ideas are easy to implement quickly and inexpensively others will require time, proper planning and funding. In these cases, it will be necessary to find and seek involvement with other partners. For example, the SA Museum or one of Adelaide's Universities may be interested in helping to develop an Interpretative Centre in the region to expand its geological or paleontology displays, research and work. Hoyts may be interested in launching a new 'Batman' or 'Jurassic Park' movie in the region. National Food and Beverage companies may want to promote or produce unique products linked to the Caves brand or experience. These companies and organisations have more resources and wider networks that could be used to bring some of these ideas to life.



Marketing Tools & Tips

One of the biggest challenges and opportunities of this project is to grow awareness of the Caves and Caves Connection ideas and businesses. Greater awareness can be achieved by using traditional tools like advertising but also by using social and special interest networks.

Below are some tools to consider to create awareness for any of the Caves Connection ideas:

Signage

Given that there are already a large number of visitors in the vicinity... from the Great Ocean Road, Grampians and Limestone Coast, one of easiest and most direct way to attract attention is with improved signage. Changing existing signs to reflect your Caves Connection or using some of the ideas in this prospectus to create new signs will quickly give visitors a feeling that Naracoorte is a 'Caves Experience' town.

Using or placing signs in Victorian towns or locations close to the Great Ocean Road may encourage some travellers to extend their journey.

Brochures and Leaflets

While many visitors plan their trips on the Internet, many still make spontaneous decisions in response to information they collect from Information Centres, Auto Clubs, local stores and points of interest in the region. Having simple brochures highlighting how your business connects to and expands their Caves Experience is a simple, direct and inexpensive way of promoting your business and its connection to the Caves.

Reviews and Social Media

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Trip Advisor and Instagram have become important sources of travel reviews and channels to communicate unique local experiences. Remember these are 'social' media so the messages need to be personal, friendly, fun and engaging. Also, because they have a short life, these messages need to be constant, repeated and adapt to the 'conversations' occurring at the time. These messages are conversations, not ads and need to be responded to quickly and appropriately. Encouraging or incentivizing your guests or visitors to use social media to promote the experiences they have had in the region helps get the word out to a wider audience.



Cross Promotion

By finding and working with other local businesses developing and employing Caves Connection ideas helps build a network that can feed off each other. Displaying or recommending other local businesses involved in the campaign will build momentum and encourage others to get involved. Simple ideas like 'tent cards' on tables, on shop counters or in rooms, posters on walls and point of sale displays / offers can build awareness of activities and experiences that will build connections between the Caves and the town.

Shop windows and Street Banners

Often visitors are intimidated to ask for advice, particularly if their English is poor. Window displays, posters and banners highlighting Caves Connection experience, particularly if they are also in foreign languages not only prompt people walking around, when shops may be closed but adds to the feeling that the town is very involved with the Caves and Cave experiences.

Language and word of mouth

One of the most powerful influences of all is 'word of mouth' recommendation from locals. Having a list of Caves Connection experiences on paper or that locals are aware of arms them with information to respond to a visitor's simple question... "what is there to do around here?" Being friendly, helpful and enthusiastic is more influential than any other marketing tools in encouraging visitors to stay or experience other attractions in the region.

Websites, newsletters and blogs

Asking to be featured or supplying material to popular tourism websites and online newsletters is a great way to increase awareness and get in front of people planning a visit to the region.

Increase your online exposure and have your business seen by more travellers for free, simply by listing with the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW). The ATDW is Australia's national online tourism database and distribution platform which represents over 40,000 small and medium sized tourism products and destinations. The ATDW supports Australian Tourism Operators and businesses servicing visitors with digital marketing to help extend your exposure and attract more business online.

By listing a product once in the ATDW database, you will benefit from being listed on South Australia and Naracoorte Lucindale Council's consumer websites, the Australia.com website and through ATDW's extensive network of over 200 tourism distributors.

Local papers and radio stations

A large proportion of visitors to the region are travelling in cars. Chances are a number of them are listening to a local radio station while driving through the region. This is a great opportunity to promote your business and its link to the Naracoorte Caves. The same can be said for the local paper. Visitors staying overnight in the region or with friends or family have the time to pick up and read the local paper. Small regular ads have a good chance of motivating them to visit a local attraction or get involved in a Caves Connection experience.

Service stations, Camp sites, Motels and Information Centres

Linked to the previous point, visitors in cars need to stop for fuel, refreshments or to stay overnight. These stops should be viewed as opportunities to encourage people to do other activities and experiences in the region. Briefing local operators and staff, giving them badges, leaflets or other materials and offers to hand out to their customers will build awareness.

Logos and branding

The region already has a wide range of 'megafauna skeletons' as entrance and exit statements. No new 'Caves Connection' logo has been developed to highlight this initiative because it was felt that each business should be allowed to interpret the opportunities to link to the Caves in keeping with their own identity, customers and opportunities. The most important thing is to embrace the concept of finding ways to link your business to the Caves Experience rather than conform to a graphic style guide.



Summary

The Naracoorte Caves Connection project has the potential to not only attract more visitors and income to the Naracoorte region but to lift the vibrancy and life of the region. The World Heritage Naracoorte Caves are a unique experience that no other region in South Australia and few in the world can offer.

The opportunity exists to leverage the appeal of the Caves to benefit the town and surrounding region but only if local businesses and individuals create and promote experiences, products and services that clearly connect to the Caves and position Naracoorte as either a starting point or essential part of a visit to the Caves.

While government and councils can assist, it is up to individual and local businesses to implement these ideas and realise this opportunity.

Or to use the words of Margaret Mead a famous anthropologist...

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has”



Further Information

To obtain more information or assistance about the Naracoorte Caves Connection Project contact the Naracoorte Lucindale Council.

Naracoorte Lucindale Council

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[#visitnaracoorte](https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/visitnaracoorte/)



Naracoorte Lucindale Council

