

Kenzell Farm & McKeown's Rest Homestead



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Location: Jenolan Caves, Oberon

Manager: Jacqui Harman

Farm produce: Cattle

Size of farm: 100 hectares (250 acres) of the farm is leased from Jacqui's father for the agritourism business

Website: kenzellfarm.com.au

Why we decided to diversify into agritourism

In around 2016 my parents built a bed and breakfast to:

- Supplement and diversify the farm income.
- Reduce the need to work physically hard on the farm as they aged.
- Enable them to leave the winter cold – to earn money through the summer and travel through the winter, as a retirement lifestyle.

"My parents secured development approval for the homestead when he built it."

Agritourism offering



Accommodation

- Farm stay: six-bedroom homestead including breakfast (can book entire homestead or a room/s) (pets are allowed)
- Self-sufficient camping



Farm experiences

Bookings are essential on weekends and school holidays:

- Guided and self-guided farm tours, animal feeding, and donkey walks
- Camp oven meals around a campfire
- Guests can bring their picnic to enjoy on the farm
- Off-farm mobile farm (petting zoo of farm animals) for birthday parties and events

The farm has a menagerie of animals, including pigs, turkeys, llamas, geese, camels, peacocks, sheep, and miniature goats and cattle.

How I started my agritourism business

In 2019 I moved home to help manage the farm and the accommodation when my mother's health deteriorated. To enable the property to support two households – my parents' and my own – I leased a part of their farm from them for an agritourism business. This includes the farmstay, and farm experiences I have developed. The tourism income supports me, and the farming and the lease of land to me supports my parents.

To provide breakfasts and meals, I got a food safety license, but I ended up stopping cooking due to guests' dietary fussiness. The homestead includes a kitchen where guests can self-cater.

Before starting the farm experiences I had put up a shed to house animals, such as during lambing. Today I use the shed as a dry place for guests to be when it's wet, and for those with disability to be with the animals.

Accessibility for people with disability

The agritourism experiences are accessible in the following ways.

- Accessible parking and wide pathways in key activity areas.
- An accessible bedroom in the homestead.
- Flexible tours, and experiences tailored to individual's needs.
- Quiet, sensory-friendly spaces available for guests who benefit from calm environments.
- Support for NDIS participants, with personalised planning available.
- Staff are trained in inclusive communication and disability support awareness.

How the business has grown over time

- I integrated animals into the farm stay experience because it was fun for me – and it turned out that guests love them! The animal interactions attract enough visitors to keep my business running.
- I added farm tours to add income from a new type of guest: daytrip visitors.
- I further diversified the types of guests I serve to include groups of people with disability, and groups of children in school holiday day care programs. I also use my background as teacher to host school groups, where I teach students about sustainable agriculture.
- I'm currently training in forest bathing, which is a Japanese practice of therapeutic relaxation from spending time in a forest. I have 20 acres of natural forest on my property that connects to neighbouring pine forests and National Parks that I will use for a new wellbeing offering.

Learnings

- The toughest challenge for my business' survival is that not long after I opened, the Black Summer bushfires caused landslips and road damage, effectively closing down a source of mass visitation: Jenolan Caves, which normally attracts tens of thousands of visitors each year. Visitors to the caves drive right past my farm on the way. This has meant I've had to reinvent my business.
- I added a mobile farm / petting zoo as a way to take my agritourism experience off-farm to where customers are (since they are no longer driving past my farm).
- Insurance is expensive, and there are few options for petting zoos. I reached out to an insurance broker to help me but they couldn't find a suitable provider. I reached out to a horse-riding school to ask who provides them with insurance, and today I am with Affinity Equine Insurance.
- I find it difficult to know where to invest when it comes to marketing – to identify which tactics will provide the best return on investment, and end up in the most bookings and visits.
- I'd love to host weddings, but I'm not able to due to lack of available staff where I live.



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Support

- I've leveraged the help of the state tourism organisation Destination NSW a lot, such as by doing inbound trade ready training to help prepare for international visitors that will come to our region when Western Sydney International Airport opens.
- I reached out regularly to Service NSW for their free advice. In the beginning I had no business experience, so I got help to create a business plan and a risk management plan. The advice I have received has been really helpful for my business, such as learning about employing staff.
- I applied for grants from Women in Agriculture and Women in Business to do workplace health and safety (WHS) training.

Marketing

- My typical guests have changed from couples to families and groups. People like to come in groups for a special occasion, such as a 40th birthday or a hens or bucks party. I moved out of my room in the homestead so groups can book the whole house.
- I have brochures at nearby visitor centres, and I use social media, including influencers.
- I plan to add a sign onto a friend's property on the way out to my farm to let visitors know Kenzell Farm is coming up.
- Once the Jenolan Caves open again, their visitors will be my main source of customers.