

# Coffs Coast Tourism Strategy 2023

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The City of Coffs Harbour acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet, the Gumbaynggirr people, who have cared for this land since time immemorial. We pay our respects to their elders past, present and emerging, and commit ourselves to a future with reconciliation and renewal at its heart.

City Garlambirla junga-ngarraynggi yaanga gungangulam wajaarrgundi yilangandi ngiyaa gawbarri. yaam Gumbaynggirr girrwaa yaamanga-ndi yaam wajaarr jalumbawnyarr ngarraynggang.

Ngiyalagay garla-ngarraynggi yanggidamgundi Guuyunga, Jurruya jalumbawnyarr, giili, waybunyjigam. Baya ngiyalagay yilaana minggiya gunganbuwa ngayinggirra Girwaanbiya; garra-buugili.



# 1. THE COFFS COAST TOURISM STRATEGY

The Coffs Coast Tourism Strategy 2023 is a five-year plan to support and grow the vibrancy, diversity and resilience of the Coffs Coast visitor economy.

Tourism in the Coffs Coast is a \$282.5 million\* industry with potential for growth that contributes to sustainable economic development and community wellbeing. The aim of this Plan is to promote and support the Coffs Coast as a **premier regional visitor destination** defined by a diversity of authentic experiences built on its natural features, iconic attractions, recreational, heritage and cultural assets and many sporting, entertainment and cultural events. This will serve to attract high-yield domestic and international visitors who also value the landscape they are travelling in and who seek to immerse themselves for extended periods in high-quality ecotourism experiences.

Designed to help realise the vision for the City of Coffs Harbour as **the premier regional city of NSW to live, work, visit and do business**, the Coffs Coast Tourism Strategy presents initiatives designed to facilitate a thriving visitor economy that respects the Coffs Coast's natural environment and provides local economic and employment opportunities.

Importantly, this Strategy builds on City of Coffs Harbour's continuing commitment to support a vibrant visitor economy and a number of notable achievements, which have been realised since the adoption of the previous Strategy in 2016.

Informed by **targeted stakeholder consultation** and a well-developed understanding of the region's visitor economy in a broader context, the Coffs Coast Tourism Strategy articulates City of Coffs Harbour's commitment to pro-actively engage with national, state and regional tourism organisations, key government



stakeholders, tourism operators and the community to leverage the City's **ECO Destination status** to grow new and emerging high-yield / high value visitor markets. High-value travellers are likely to spend more, stay longer and disperse more regionally.

As the custodian of the Tourism Strategy, City of Coffs Harbour works on the premise that tourism has shared community value in that it does not occur in isolation, but rather, contributes to investment and jobs throughout a range of industry sectors that make up the visitor economy across the region.

Aligned with the **MyCoffs Community Strategic Plan** and other key strategies, the Coffs Coast Tourism Strategy guides decision-making in key areas, with a series of initiatives that are focused on the enablers of a vibrant visitor economy, including tourism asset and infrastructure planning, marketing and branding, festivals and events and local business community engagement and support.

*\*2021/22 total value added - National Economics (NIEIR), Profile id.*

## 2. SUPPORTING A VIBRANT VISITOR ECONOMY

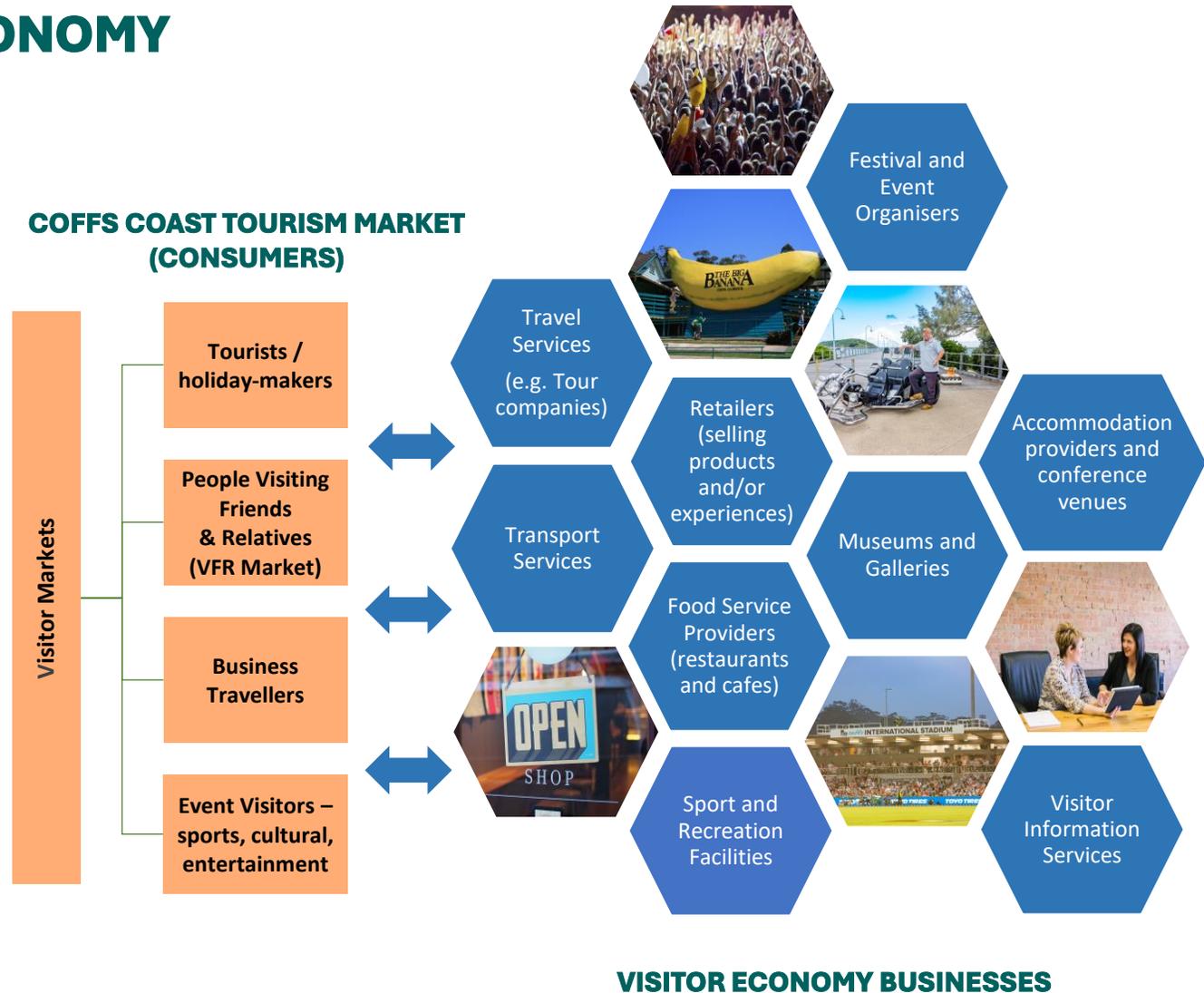
Tourism is a mainstay of the Coffs Coast economy, with tourism and hospitality accounting for 9% of all jobs in the Coffs Harbour LGA compared to the NSW average of 8%, and for 7.9% of local industry value-added compared to 4.7% for NSW.

The term ‘**visitor economy**’ is used to reflect a more contemporary definition of tourism. It spans those traveling for holidays, education, events or business and those visiting friends and relatives – both domestic and international – as well as the businesses and destinations that serve them. It comprises businesses and service providers that provide goods and services to international and domestic visitors on day or overnight trips.

**City of Coffs Harbour gets directly involved in tourism** through its role in providing visitor information services, in marketing and promotion, infrastructure provision (including sports and cultural facilities), regulation, ECO Destination certification, destination management, and industry support and development.

As a region, the Coffs Coast needs to ensure its means of information delivery responds to **how tourists prefer to source their information**. As digital technology continues to evolve, facilitating all stages of the customer journey and experience, more visitors are researching destinations online before they leave home.

City of Coffs Harbour will continue to assess visitors’ information needs and preferred methods of sourcing information, to determine which model will work best for the Coffs Coast moving forward, on the understanding that a **modern approach to visitor information delivery**, which responds to user preferences, will be pursued.



### 3. CAPITALISING ON OUR COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE

**Located on Gumbaygnirr Country between the mountains and the sea,** the Coffs Coast is a ‘pocket of paradise’ mid-way between Sydney and Brisbane on the North Coast of NSW. The Coffs Coast is geographically unique as it is the only place in NSW where the Great Dividing Range meets the Pacific Ocean. This ‘place of plenty’ is filled with charming villages, 13 significant National Parks and State Forests, mountain escarpments, sandy beaches, islands and marine reserves.

**With the vibrant city of Coffs Harbour at its heart,** this destination offers all the benefits of a progressive and thriving urban centre, tantalising local food and beverages, first class entertainment, cultural and sporting facilities, unique nature-based experiences, connections via land, sea and air, a rich First Nations cultural heritage and a myriad of year-round festivals and events.

**The beaches are part of NSW’s oldest marine park,** the Solitary Island Marine Park stretching along 75km of coastline. Located on the edge of the marine park is the National Marine Science Centre. Home to the Solitary Islands Aquarium, where visitors can encounter animals and habitats from the marine park, the Science Centre is one of the world’s best situated facilities for studying coastal and marine habitats and their inhabitants.

**The Coffs Coast is NSW’s first recognised ECO Destination,** certified by Ecotourism Australia to meet international standards. This certification establishes the region as a world leader in ecotourism and proves the destination’s strong, well-managed commitment to responsible and quality nature-based tourism. Niigi Ningi (Sealy Lookout) in Orara East State Forest was Coffs Harbour’s first ECO Destination Certified tourism attraction.

Building a **strong and cohesive brand and identity** is key to realising the vision for the Coffs Coast as a premier visitor destination. To stand out from other destinations, it is not enough anymore to have just beautiful beaches, hills and valleys. Today’s high-yield visitors are looking for unique experiences in places that offer specific flair and atmosphere, creating long-lasting memories. A strong and cohesive identity attracts desired target markets.

The Coffs Coast’s **ECO Destination status provides a credentialed foundation** upon which to grow the region’s visitor economy, and eco-tourism strengths and opportunities form a key pillar of this Tourism Strategy. Looking ahead, to be economically, socially and environmentally sustainable, the Coffs Coast experience offering needs to be diverse and of a quality standard. The Coffs Coast offers a range of attractions and experiences that can be enjoyed year-round and which reflect the region’s built and natural advantages.

This Strategy presents a pathway to further build on tourism as **an important foundation of Coffs Coast’s economy**. The initiatives capitalise on existing advantages and support the development of new products to capture emerging, high-yield, and high-value visitor markets. This includes initiatives to build on the region’s key assets, to add value to the Coffs Coast tourism offer and generate synergies between activities targeting domestic and international leisure markets, eco-travellers, and business, sporting and cultural event visitors.

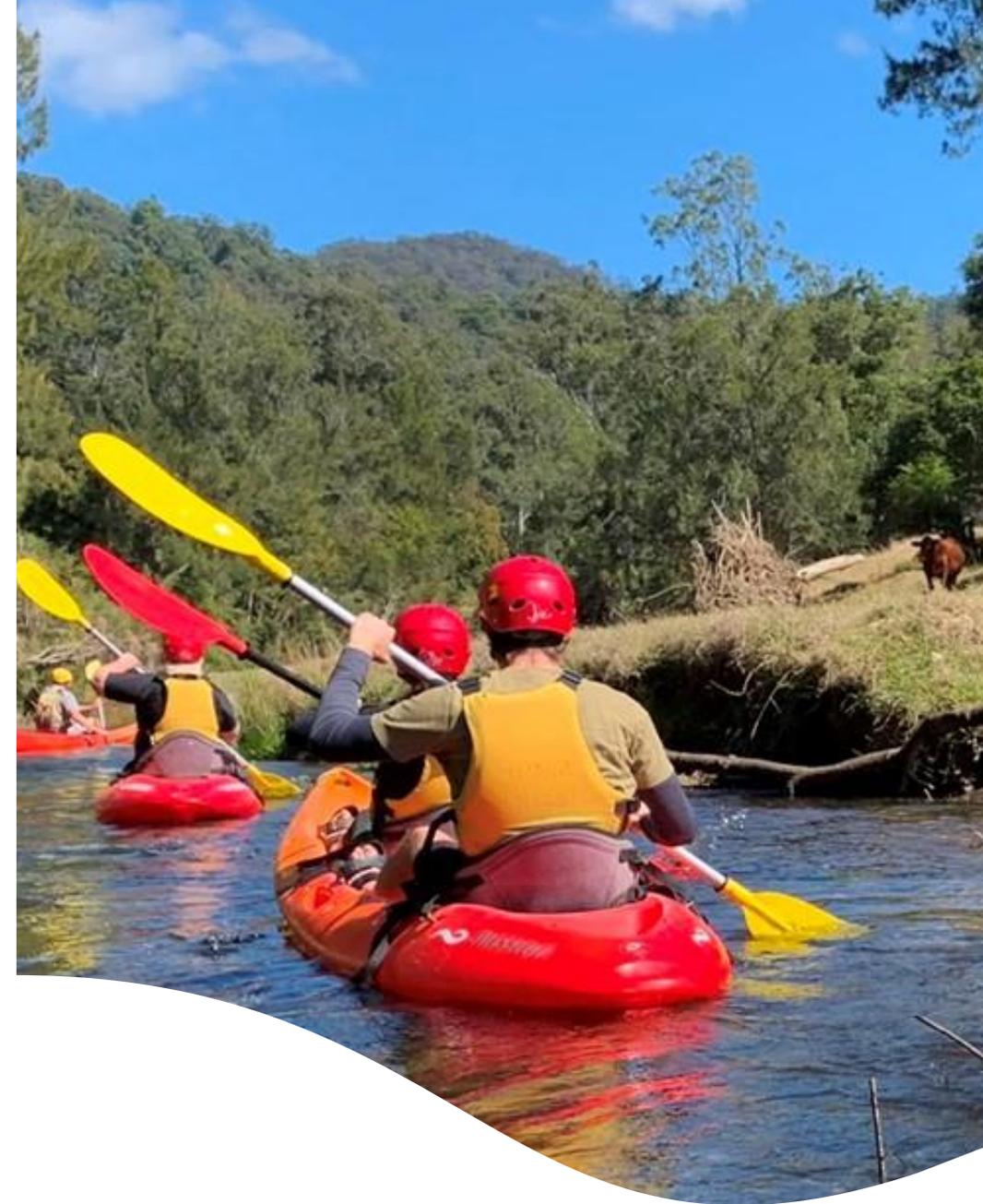
## 4. REALISING OUR ECOTOURISM GOALS

Having a **strong and well-informed approach** to tourism promotion and destination management that leverages the Coffs Coast's ecotourism credentials, and strengthens the destination brand, is essential for the region to stand out.

**The Coffs Coast is NSW's first ECO Destination, certified by Ecotourism Australia in November 2021.** This certification establishes the region as a world leader in environmental tourism and proves the destination's strong, well-managed commitment to sustainable tourism. ECO Destination Certification is about real, tangible environmental actions being demonstrated by how the community operates in the visitor economy space and beyond. Importantly, ECO Certification assures travellers that the Coffs Coast is backed by a strong, well-managed commitment to responsible tourism practices.

Ecotourism on the Coffs Coast is both sharing and protecting the region's natural and cultural values, consistent with *My Coffs Community Strategic Plan*. Achieving ECO Destination certification is just the start of the destination's ecotourism journey. The City is also working with tourism operators to grow and develop a cluster of Ecotourism Certified businesses and experiences.

Certification provides a credentialed and recognisable foundation upon which to target the growing number of domestic and international travellers who are demanding **authentic and unique ecotourism experiences**.



# 5. COFFS COAST VISITOR ECONOMY SNAPSHOT

The Coffs Coast is comprised of a series of coastal and hinterland village-based localities with Coffs Harbour at its core. **Key attributes**, which serve to attract a diversity of domestic and international visitors, include.

	A rich ecosystem including world-heritage National Parks, State Forests, flora reserves and the Solitary Islands Marine Park.
	The only place in NSW where the Great Dividing Range meets the ocean.
	A network of vibrant village communities offering a variety of shopping, art, culture, food, recreation, leisure and entertainment.
	A vibrant and evolving tourism sector built on food and nature, arts and culture, history and heritage.
	Sites of great significance to the Traditional Owners of the land, the Gumbaynggirr People.
	An enviable lifestyle, which appeals to locals and visitors alike.
	NSW's premier regional sports hub with world-class facilities.
	Strategically located with proximity to visitor markets, by road, rail and air.
	The first globally-recognised and certified ECO Destination in NSW, celebrated for its diverse cultural community, committed to balancing responsible practices with first-class, nature-based visitor experiences.

**These attributes provide** the foundations to stimulate, attract and maintain a sustainable level of population growth, visitation (tourism), business activity, investment and employment in the Coffs Coast region.

The Coffs Coast's **key economic and visitor economy metrics** include:

	A \$282.5 million visitor economy as measured by industry value-added, which is 7.9% of total Gross Regional Product (compared to 4.7% for NSW).
	Domestic visitation in 2022 was 1,384,000 - 14% of total tourism on the North Coast.
	Home to 6,500 businesses, around 840 of which (14%) are 'tourism businesses'.
	In 2022, total tourism sales in Coffs Harbour LGA was \$747 million.
	Tourism provides for approximately 2,750 local jobs or 9% of all local jobs, which is marginally above the NSW average (8%).
	Coffs Harbour LGA had approx. 3,196,000 domestic visitor nights in 2022.
	Visitation to the Coffs Coast typically comprises domestic overnight visitors (45% of the total), domestic day-trippers (40%) and international visitors (5%).
	The majority of international visitors to the Coffs Coast (84%) visit for holidays while approximately half of all domestic overnight travellers visit for holidays.
	International visitors spend \$461 per trip, domestic overnight travellers spend \$531 per trip, while domestic day trippers to the Coffs Coast spend \$159 per visit. Business event visitors spend an average of \$333 per day.
	The average length of stay for visitors to the Coffs Coast is 4 nights for domestic overnight visitors (compared to 4.2 nights for the NSW North Coast) and 6 nights for international visitors (compared to 7 for the NSW North Coast).

Sources. profile.id (2022), Tourism Research Australia (2019 and 2022) and estimates by SC Lennon & Associates

## 6. A STRATEGIC FOCUS ON THE ENABLERS OF A VIBRANT VISITOR ECONOMY

City of Coffs Harbour is pro-active in its commitment to the design and delivery of initiatives which serve to support the local visitor economy and the region's prosperity. Its mission is to work in collaboration with national, state and regional tourism organisations, the tourism industry and the community to enhance the City's ECO Destination status and to deliver associated marketing, product development, visitor servicing and support infrastructure programs.

In order to sustainably grow the Coffs Coast visitor economy, City of Coffs Harbour has a key role to play in addressing the 'enablers' of a vibrant visitor economy. These enablers, which underpin the four Strategic Activity Areas, include:

- **A conducive natural, built and social/cultural environment** – the natural environment must be maintained with proper management of all aspects of land, air and water and habitats for flora and fauna; the built environment must be attractive and safe (i.e.. liveable) and based on the principles of ecologically responsible development; and the social / cultural environment must provide for education, recreation, sports, leisure, wellbeing and artistic pursuits, and promotion of local social and cultural heritage.
- **Quality infrastructure and services** - including transport and communications, hospitality services, accommodation, world-class sporting and cultural facilities, entertainment and events, and cultural attractions.
- **Effective information management** - including research, visitor information, branding and marketing and wayfinding.
- **Business support and development** - including customer service training, digital learning and business promotion.



Underpinning the City's focus on these enablers is a commitment to **collaborative governance**. The development of a strong and resilient visitor economy also requires the Coffs Coast to embrace its connections with the wider region.

This can be achieved by leveraging the marketing and promotional power of the Coffs Coast's location within the North Coast region of NSW and its hosting of, and proximity to, major attractions and events. The 2032 Olympic Games will also bring opportunities for locations in close proximity to this global event.

# 7. COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS AND STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Effective tourism promotion and development will be best served by **collaborative partnerships** between City of Coffs Harbour and other key stakeholders in government, training, education and research, business and industry and community.



**With a focus on initiatives to encourage tourism that respects the Coffs Coast’s natural environment and provides local economic and employment opportunities,** the Coffs Coast Tourism Strategy 2023 aligns with key national, state, regional and local plans and strategies, including:

- *MyCoffs Community Strategic Plan 2032*
- *Coffs Harbour Economic Development Strategy 2023*
- *Local Growth Management Strategy*
- *Local Strategic Planning Statement*
- *COVID-19 Pandemic Response and Recovery Plan*
- *Coffs Harbour Event Strategy 2020*
- *Creative Coffs – Cultural Strategic Plan 2017-2022*
- *Regional City Action Plan 2036*
- *Coffs Coast Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS) 2023 update*
- *North Coast Destination Management Plan 2023*
- *North Coast Regional Plan*
- *Ecotourism Australia - Blueprint*
- *Aboriginal Tourism Action Plan 2017-2020*
- *NSW Food and Wine Tourism Strategy & Action Plan 2018-2022*
- *NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2030*
- *Nature Based Tourism to NSW*
- *THRIVE 2030 (Austrade)*
- *Arts Mid North Coast*

## 8. KEY TOURISM DRIVERS

There are a number of **broader tourism trends influencing** prospects for tourism and the ways in which the Coffs Coast can respond. Current literature identifies a number of key trends and considerations for strategic planning that are particularly noteworthy for their current and future impact on tourism. They include:

- ✓ **Responsible travel** - demand for sustainable and responsible travel offerings will continue to grow.
- ✓ **Experiential, transformative and adventure travel** - more travellers are now searching for immersive, authentic, educational, local experiences that are unique to the places they visit. As travellers seek new and different experiences, this style of tourism continues to grow in popularity, including physical activity, a cultural exchange, or activities in nature.
- ✓ **Multi-generational travel** - the trend in multi-generational travel will continue, as families use their holiday time to bond and create memories together, influencing the type of customer experience they are looking for.
- ✓ **Caravan and camping** - the desire for authentic experiences will drive demand for exploring destinations on caravanning and camping holidays.
- ✓ **Personalisation of experiences** - digital technology has empowered visitors to take more control of their travel experiences and has increased their expectations. As a result, the expectation of personalised and tailor-made experiences is growing. Importantly, visitors are seeking out places to stop and stay that are compatible with the technologies they use including personal devices and new modes of travel such as electric vehicles.
- ✓ **Holidays with a purpose** - volunteering, understanding and caring for the environment and authentic engagement with communities are playing a bigger part in travel and destination choice.



In addition to being a recognised family-friendly destination, the Coffs Coast is well positioned to take advantage of these **high-value visitor markets** that will continue to grow and evolve:

- ✓ **Food and beverage tourism** - local produce and food and drink experiences will continue to play a role in destination choice, as a central part of the travel experience, and this space will become crowded.
- ✓ **Wellness travel** - travel for the purpose of wellness, both spiritual and physical, to activate the mind and body, will continue to grow in popularity.
- ✓ **Business events tourism** - conventions, corporate meetings, AGMs, corporate retreats, workshops, seminars and sales incentive rewards trips all hold promise for growth in Australia's regional visitor destinations.
- ✓ **Event tourism** - capitalising on regional cultural, entertainment and sporting event infrastructure development, attracting a diverse market to enjoy experiences beyond the events.
- ✓ **Accessible tourism** - this fast-growing sector accounts for around 17 per cent of total tourism revenue in Australia. An increasing number of people 65 and over who are also keen travellers may have accessibility needs.

# 9. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO GROW A SUSTAINABLE VISITOR ECONOMY

Understanding the challenges and opportunities to realise aspirations for a vibrant visitor economy drives the development of the Strategic Activity Areas. At a high level, they include.

Challenges	Trends and Impacts	Opportunities
Tourism offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The coast/beaches remain a key attractor.</li> <li>Not all attributes are being utilised (e.g. hinterland).</li> <li>Point of difference not fully articulated/understood.</li> <li>Competing with alternative regional destinations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leverage the City's ECO Destination accreditation.</li> <li>First Nations cultural tourism.</li> <li>Define and articulate the region's unique 'personality brand' and selling proposition.</li> <li>Export market readiness.</li> </ul>
Visitor markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Holiday market remains strong.</li> <li>Demand for experiences is changing (more sophisticated).</li> <li>Increase in domestic travel.</li> <li>Overseas visitation rebounding post-COVID.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Address threat of 'over-tourism' with careful marketing; focus on visitor yield; quality over quantity.</li> <li>Promote the local offer with food, nature and culture at its core - also engaging locals for 'visiting friends and relatives' market.</li> <li>Attract and retain an active, health-conscious visitor demographic.</li> <li>Inclusive and accessible tourism.</li> </ul>
Tourism product and service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tourism product not fully articulated.</li> <li>Skills shortages and customer service shortfalls.</li> <li>Night-time economy under-developed.</li> <li>Catalyst attractions and project plans in place.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate tourism product and service development.</li> <li>Business cases to secure funding for priority projects.</li> <li>Catalyst eco-tourism infrastructure investments.</li> <li>Operator engagement and support for tourism industry.</li> </ul>
Enabling infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gaps in infrastructure.</li> <li>Key services (like transport) are limited.</li> <li>Smart mobility / alternative transport options.</li> <li>Environmental hazards can compromise key tourism areas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business cases and advocacy.</li> <li>Investment in enabling transport infrastructure, including the airport.</li> <li>Bypass – town centre revitalisation; connectivity throughout the region.</li> <li>Risk management education for operators.</li> </ul>
Visitor information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Signage shortfalls restrict visitor movement.</li> <li>Visitor information needs are evolving (physical and digital).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investment in directional signage/wayfinding.</li> <li>New, cost-effective models of information delivery.</li> </ul>
Visitor accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some dated/tired visitor accommodation; lack of diversity.</li> <li>Demand for free camping (and associated land use challenges).</li> <li>Mooted investments on the horizon.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accommodation redevelopment opportunities.</li> <li>Investment promotion.</li> </ul>
Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current events capture only some markets (e.g. sporting).</li> <li>Diversity of events across the wider North Coast region.</li> <li>Coordination, planning and promotion is key.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Host new events for new markets (e.g. music, business events, outdoor adventure sports events).</li> <li>2032 Olympic Games presents an opportunity to attract overseas visitors.</li> <li>Events prospectus.</li> </ul>
Planning/Regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development restrictions (e.g. free camping).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate and quantify the market opportunity, any associated impacts and options.</li> </ul>

# 10. FLAGSHIP OPPORTUNITIES TO GROW ECOTOURISM

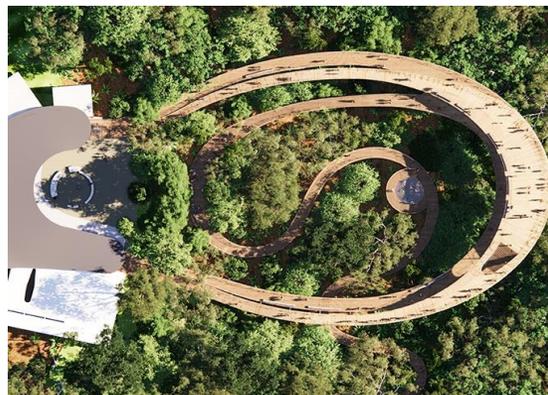
## Aboriginal Cultural Tourism Experiences

The revival of Gumbaynggirr language has been central to the strong cultural identity evident in the local Indigenous community on the Coffs Coast. The Coffs Coast is home to world-class Aboriginal tourism experiences that include Aboriginal owned and operated Nyanggan Gapi cafe located at Niigi Niigi/Sealy Lookout, near to where a planned eco-resort with 30 glamping sites is being built.



## Dorrigo Escarpment Great Walk

A new multi-day walk and a spectacular visitor centre will be completed in 2026 as part of a \$56 million investment in Dorrigo National Park. The development of the Dorrigo Escarpment Great Walk (also in Coffs Harbour LGA), and visitor centre aims to engage 200,000 extra visitors annually for longer periods with unique nature-based experiences.



## Mountain Bike Trail Network

A newly sanctioned trail network has put the Wedding Bells State Forest coastal trails on the map of mountain bikers from all over northern NSW. The network is managed by the Woolgoolga Mountain Bike Club who received \$400,000 in NSW Government grant funding to improve and expand trails and facilities. Other forms of cycling can also be promoted through events and marketed to adventure travellers.



## North Coast Regional Botanic Garden

This garden is the green heart of Coffs Harbour. The botanic garden blends a unique range of discovery walks amongst natural forests, planted garden areas including Australian plants, rainforests, sensory garden, international plants from seven regions, a tropical glasshouse and shade house, ponds and lakes. This garden is known as the best location for bird watching in the region.



## 10. FLAGSHIP OPPORTUNITIES TO GROW ECOTOURISM (continued)

### National Marine Science Centre

Located on the edge of the Solitary Islands Marine Park, the National Marine Science Centre is one of the world's best situated facilities for studying coastal and marine habitats and their inhabitants. Research projects include key global issues such as food security and the impacts of humans at local, regional, national and international levels. The Centre provides high-quality education programs from primary school to doctorate level providing a strong foundation on which to grow the Coffs Coast's market for domestic and international educational tourism.



### Solitary Islands Marine Park

Solitary Islands Marine Park is the oldest of its kind in NSW, and extends north from Coffs Harbour to Sandon River along about 75 km of coastline. The park's northern estuaries are some of NSW's most pristine, largely because the majority of adjacent land is located in Yuraygir National Park. The local Aboriginal communities within the Gumbaynggirr Nation have strong cultural links with the marine park and are actively involved in conservation planning.



### Solitary Islands Coastal Walk

Solitary Islands Coastal Walk links a string of idyllic golden beaches, rocky headlands and lush rainforest along the Coffs Coast. The walk traverses 60km of beaches and rainforest on the Coffs Coast. Visitors experiencing the walk can enjoy whale watching, birdwatching and swimming on their journey from Red Rock in the north through Coffs Coast Regional Park, Moonee Beach Nature Reserve and Muttonbird Island Nature Reserve to the coastal village of Sawtell.



### Coffs Coast Wildlife Sanctuary

The park is renowned for its dedication to wildlife conservation. Its transition from the beloved Dolphin Marine Conservation Park into the newly rebranded Coffs Coast Wildlife Sanctuary, continues its mission is to preserve marine ecosystems and promote environmental stewardship while offering exciting new experiences for locals and visitors. The sanctuary is and a committed to wildlife conservation and education.



# 11. FOCUS AREAS

The **aspirations, attributes, challenges and opportunities** for developing the Coffs Coast visitor economy highlighted during the targeted consultations and through the associated strategy research and analysis, have been drawn upon to inform a number of proposed initiatives.

Recognising that the ongoing development of the Coffs Coast visitor economy will be industry led, the recommended initiatives reflect the role of City of Coffs Harbour, as the custodian of this Strategy, in influencing the enablers of a vibrant visitor economy.

Having regard for City of Coffs Harbour’s role in addressing the enablers of a vibrant visitor economy, and its collaborative partnerships, initiatives are categorised under four mutually reinforcing Strategic Activity Areas:

1. **Tourism Marketing, Visitor Information and Branding**
2. **Tourism Asset and Infrastructure Planning**
3. **Festivals and Events**
4. **Visitor Economy Business Support and Development**

Recommended initiatives presented under each Strategic Activity Area are categorised according to whether they involve activities focussed on:

- **Planning** a course of initiatives to realise identified opportunities with an informed and targeted course of action to realise stated outcomes;
- **Enabling** a vibrant visitor economy through the provision of required infrastructure and services;
- **Supporting** the local visitor economy to prosper, particularly through engagement with local businesses; or
- **Promoting** the Coffs Coast’s tourism offer through resourced, strategic and co-ordinated branding, information management and delivery and marketing.



# 11.1 TOURISM MARKETING, VISITOR INFORMATION AND BRANDING

Tourism branding, marketing and promotion, supported by efficient and effective visitor information management and delivery, is essential for articulating the Coffs Coast's unique selling proposition underpinned by its eco-tourism credentials, to attract high-yield visitors and establish its status as a premier regional visitor destination.

## PLAN



- Improve ECO Destination messaging to clarify its purpose and to build on the Coffs Coast's Unique Selling Proposition (USP).
- Maintain ECO Destination certification through continued improvement and audits.
- Ensure Annual Marketing Plan aligns with Destination NSW visitor data and insights to drive year-round visitation.
- Visitor information is delivered based on best practice, current research and technology.

## ENABLE



- Prepare and distribute a series of new, branded maps highlighting key tourist route connections and visitor services and facilities.
- Roll out the new Coffs Coast Visitor Experience App and Immersive Augmented Reality Trails.
- Curate digital itineraries to connect visitors with up-to-date information on key events and visitor attractions.
- Encourage visitor dispersal across attractions, experiences and villages (e.g. niche interest areas such as business event attendees, golfing holidays and adventure tourism).
- Work with key operators and organisations to embed educational ECO Destination messaging to minimise negative environmental impacts from tourism.

## SUPPORT



- Develop a 'brand resource library' for Coffs Coast tourism operators and engage with local businesses and other tourism industry stakeholders to use the Coffs Coast branding in their own marketing.
- When local businesses acquire their ECO Certification, showcase this achievement in local media and on the Coffs Coast and City's website and social media.

## PROMOTE



- Ensure the Coffs Coast is showcased at state and national MICE events (meetings, incentive and conferences) highlighting the City's ECO certification, assets and operators to develop key relationships for Coffs Coast investment and brand promotion.
- Promote the food and beverage sector through our Coffs Coast Harvest and Place of Plenty branding.
- Market unique assets such as the National Marine Science Centre to grow the Coffs Coast's market for domestic and international educational tourism focussed on marine biodiversity and ecology, aquaculture, estuarine and coastal processes and coastal management.
- Showcase the region's lifestyle, flagship tourism experiences and ECO Destination status in the City's investment prospectus and business cases.
- Implement destination marketing campaigns to key market segments with a focus on high-value travellers.

HIGHLIGHT = ACTION FROM COFFS HARBOUR  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2023

# 11.2 TOURISM ASSET AND INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

Tourism asset and infrastructure planning (and delivery) is essential for accommodating, entertaining, informing and transporting visitors to and throughout the Coffs Coast.

## PLAN



- Create a set of guidelines for wayfinding and signage.
- Collaborate with Destination North Coast to ensure alignment on strategic projects.
- Explore RV Friendly status for City of Coffs Harbour.
- Work with accommodation providers to initiate new or upgraded facilities.
- Work with State Government to enhance Jetty Foreshore open spaces (e.g. a super playground) and to strengthen its identity as a recreation and tourist destination.

## ENABLE



- Work with providers to explore environmentally friendly transport options, e.g. bike hire.
- Work with National Parks to provide additional and upgraded signage and connectivity along the Solitary Islands Walk.

## SUPPORT



- Maintain relationships with relevant community and business groups to engage on key tourism projects.
- Work with Coffs Harbour Airport Management to expand operations, flight routes, and offer destination marketing support.

## PROMOTE



- Promote Yarrila Place to help grow the Coffs Coast's arts and cultural tourism sector.
- Promote nature-based assets (e.g. North Coast Regional Botanic Gardens, MTB trails, Solitary Islands Marine Park and Coffs Coast Wildlife Sanctuary) for adventure and experiential tourism opportunities to domestic and overseas markets.
- Promote the Coffs Coast's accessible tourism assets including accommodation and activities, to diversify our tourism offer.
- Pilot a street art program to activate key laneways.

HIGHLIGHT = ACTION FROM COFFS HARBOUR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2023

## 11.3 FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

Festivals and events are a key component of the Coffs Coast tourism offer, which can be further developed and diversified to bring both locals and visitors together in celebration of local culture, sport, music, food and drink and the natural environment.

### PLAN



- Develop a strategic and coordinated approach to events planning, promotion and delivery which maximises City venues (e.g. Stadium and Wiigulga) and leverages opportunities presented by the 2032 Olympic Games.
- To extend the visitor season explore opportunities for new and iconic conferences and events (including executive retreats) that utilise existing conference facilities and boutique smaller venues throughout the region.

### SUPPORT



- Work with all event organisers so they deliver professional, diverse and exciting events that attract local, regional, and national visitation.
- Work with all event organisers to utilise Coffs Coast marketing assets and digital platforms to maximise event and destination awareness.

### PROMOTE



- Attract to Coffs Harbour a major music event annually featuring a headline national or international performer to complement the Coffs Coast's established sporting events calendar.
- Package and promote naturally occurring events (e.g. whale watching season) to create annual, seasonal visitor experiences.
- **Develop an Event Prospectus to attract at least two new major sports, ecotourism, business or cultural events.**
- **Increase awareness of the Coffs Coast events calendar and other destination activities (using rate notices and other council channels).**

### ENABLE



- Engage with event organisers to create nationally recognised annual adventure-sport events that explore the region's various trails and points of interest (e.g. trail running, gravel riding).

**HIGHLIGHT** = ACTION FROM COFFS HARBOUR  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2023

# 11.4 VISITOR ECONOMY BUSINESS SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Providing support for businesses operating in the Coffs Coast visitor economy, including those in accommodation and food services, arts and culture, recreational services and retail trade, will ensure they are well-equipped to engage with and service an evolving visitor market which values the region's eco-tourism credentials, products and experiences.

## PLAN



- Expand on the Coffs Coast Champions Program with strategic direction from the Destination Coffs Coast Committee (DCCC) annual Industry Development Plan so the industry gains knowledge to promote the destination and other visitor economy business and experiences.
- Deliver industry network collaborations, programs and events.
- Work with Destination NSW to develop tourism product around catalyst opportunities (i.e. Dorrigo Escarpment Walk).

## ENABLE



- Deliver programs to businesses operating in the visitor economy, in order to enhance their digital marketing capabilities.
- Partner with organisations who deliver career matching events to showcase employment pathways and opportunities (e.g. Coffs Coast Career event).
- Maximise tourism opportunities resulting from the Bypass construction project.
- Collate and report on visitor trend data to inform new initiatives.
- Work with industry and tourism organisations to drive return visitation (e.g. special deals, retarget marketing, business/ event visitor offers).
- Deliver quarterly programs for tourism businesses, introducing international best practice for sustainable tourism.

## SUPPORT



- Provide support to Coffs Coast businesses to become ECO Certified enabling them to provide high quality recognisable products to consumers whilst increasing the region's ecotourism development goals.
- Provide information, advice and support (e.g. Grant Guru, Profile id) for operators seeking grant funding for tourism and event projects.
- Provide industry with the necessary tools, knowledge and contacts needed to enter the export tourism market.
- Work with key tourism organisations to explore new flagship tourism products (e.g. Explorer Cruising).

## PROMOTE



- Provide support for the promotion and development of arts and cultural tourism including Indigenous cultural tourism work with industry to identify, prioritise and develop arts and cultural experiences including First Nations projects.
- Leverage our Eco Destination Certification, and highlight businesses delivering accessible, sustainable and cultural tourism products across all Coffs Coast marketing.
- Explore opportunities to facilitate volun-tourism through local not-for-profit organisations.

HIGHLIGHT = ACTION FROM COFFS HARBOUR  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2023

## 12. IMPLEMENTATION AND RESOURCING

The Coffs Coast Tourism Strategy 2023 has been prepared in the context of the role of tourism promotion and destination management in the City's broader program of work and strategic objectives. The Plan will be implemented in line with determined priorities as well as the availability of resources and the capacity of the City of Coffs Harbour to progress the initiatives identified.

The initiatives presented in this document represent an achievable plan to help support a vibrant Coffs Coast visitor economy. It contains a combination of:

- **Catalyst project planning and development initiatives** which require action combined with a well-planned course of project implementation for the desired outcomes to be realised over time; and
- **Initiatives focussed on strategic program implementation** that can be addressed as part of City's day-to-day tourism planning, marketing and destination management functions in a strategic manner.

Some of the recommended actions seek to build on or continue initiatives already in place. Some are already resourced while others will be resourced in future (depending on implementation priorities).

The majority of actions will be 'City of Coffs Harbour-led' in that they involve specific tasks and an allocation of human, physical and financial resources. Other initiatives refer to 'City of Coffs Harbour-supported' activities and these are advocacy or support initiatives where implementation is to be led by other agencies. The Plan will be used to assess and prioritise funding needs and to inform key advocacy and partnership initiatives to secure funding support from all levels of government.

Through the implementation of the actions presented in this Strategy, and in line with its focus on the enablers of a vibrant visitor economy, City of Coffs Harbour will lead, deliver, support, facilitate, promote and advocate on behalf of the Coffs Coast's businesses and communities to foster sustainable tourism in line with the vision for the City of Coffs Harbour as ***the premier regional city of NSW to live, work, visit and do business.***



## 13. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Coffs Coast Tourism Strategy contains a range of initiatives, which are designed to promote and support the Coffs Coast as a premier regional visitor destination defined by a diversity of authentic experiences built on its natural features, iconic attractions and its recreational, heritage and cultural assets.

The City will monitor progress of the Strategy with a view to realising this objective. Means of monitoring and evaluating implementation progress will include the use of both ‘output’ measures related directly to the recommended actions and their implementation as well as some broader ‘outcome’ targets (metrics).

### **Strategic planning outcomes include the following:**

- The Coffs Coast will achieve an increase in average length of stay by domestic overnight visitors from the current average stay of 3.1 nights.
- The Coffs Coast will increase international visitation from 5% of total visitors to the region (pre-COVID).
- The Coffs Coast will achieve an increase in average length of stay by international visitors from the current average stay of 6 nights.
- There will be an increase in the value of total tourism sales made in the Coffs Coast.
- There will be an increase in the tourism sector’s direct contribution to gross regional product (value-added), from the current level of approx. \$200 million.

These desired outcomes will be monitored and measured using data sourced from Tourism Research Australia, economy.id, NIEIR and the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ Tourism Satellite Account.

### **Key output measures that will be used to track progress on set tasks include:**

- Simple tracking progress of each prioritised action plan in this Strategy – implementation rates (ongoing).
- An increase in the number of ECO certified businesses operating on the Coffs Coast.
- Success in retaining and assisting local businesses as well as supporting business start-ups, captured through industry engagement (ongoing).
- Regular tourism operator confidence surveys and community satisfaction surveys on the City’s approach to promoting and supporting a vibrant visitor economy in line with this Plan and identified priorities.

The Coffs Coast Tourism Strategy 2023 will be reviewed annually with an update anticipated in five years.

