



# Central Coast ECO Operator Incentive Program **2021-23**

Growing a sustainable business  
environment where ecotourism thrives



**centralcoast**  
NEW SOUTH WALES



# Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians  
of the land on which we live, work and play.

We pay our respects to Elders, past, present  
and emerging and recognise their continued  
connection to these lands and waterways.

We acknowledge our shared responsibility to  
care for and protect our place and people.



“It’s increasingly evident that eco-friendly, sustainable and responsible travel is much more than a trend. **It must become the industry standard.**”

Glenn Fogel, CEO of Booking.com

## The tourism landscape

As a region, the Central Coast has a time-sensitive opportunity to lead the way for sustainable, nature-based tourism marketing and management. Looking nationally, Tourism Australia’s ‘Future of Tourism Demand’ Report cites the immersion into nature via landmarks and wildlife, and also local culture, as part of the 7 key experience clusters that global travellers seek.

“Sustainability is front and centre of the global psyche, shaping demand for low-carbon footprint travel options and experiences that touch the earth and its communities lightly, leaving places and people better off than when they arrived. However, it is not always easy for travellers to recognise sustainable options.

This is a significant opportunity for Australia and Australian tourism operators to educate and ensure understanding and awareness is raised and their sustainability impact is championed.”

### Local ecotourism landscape

Through the ECO Destination program, we’ve successfully identified key ecotourism products to enhance on the Central Coast, including:

- Immersive oyster tours
- Whale watching tours
- Marine education
- Wildlife conservation parks
- Stand Up Paddle Boarding (SUP)
- Kayaking
- Horse riding
- Cycling
- Farmgate tours
- Luxury national park stays
- Farm to plate dining
- Aerial obstacle courses
- Luxury bush tours
- Bushcraft educational tours

# What is “Ecotourism”?

Bridging nature tourism and sustainable tourism, the definition of ‘ecotourism’ adopted by Ecotourism Australia is:

**“Ecotourism is ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation.”**

Ecotourism is identified as a key strategic priority for the Central Coast. It’s a focus of both the Central Coast Destination Management Plan (2022-2025) and the Tourism Opportunity Plan (2019-24), further supported by the region’s overarching status as one of Australia’s first certified ECO Destinations, with one of the largest cohort’s of tourism operators on their ECO journey.

## What is an ECO Destination?

A certified ECO Destination has actively demonstrated its strong, well-managed commitment to sustainable practices and provides high-quality, nature-based tourism experiences to guests and locals.

An ECO Destination follows best practice from the Green Destinations Standard, accredited by the peak international sustainable tourism certification body, the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), mapped against the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals. This assesses the sustainability practices of the destination in environmental, social and economic sustainability, proven by fulfilling 80+ independently assessed criteria.

More info at

[lovecentralcoast.com/eco-destination-faqs](https://lovecentralcoast.com/eco-destination-faqs)

## What is the ECO Operator Incentive Program?

Led by Central Coast Council as a way to build back better after the 2019-2020 bushfires, in May 2021 Destination Central Coast invited local, nature-based tourism operators to pursue ECO Certification for their business.

This industry incentive was made possible through funding from WWF-Australia’s Wildlife & Nature Recovery Fund. 11x local operators successfully received a place on this pilot support program, each receiving \$500 incentive for their annual membership with Ecotourism Australia and bootcamp training sessions.

As part of Council’s ongoing commitment to the Central Coast as an ECO Destination since June 2022, Destination Central Coast continues to support both ECO Certified and ECO Applicant operators committed to their certification journeys.



## Support package 2021

Central Coast businesses who joined the ECO Operator Incentive Program became part of the Central Coast's wider ECO Destination journey, benefitting from:

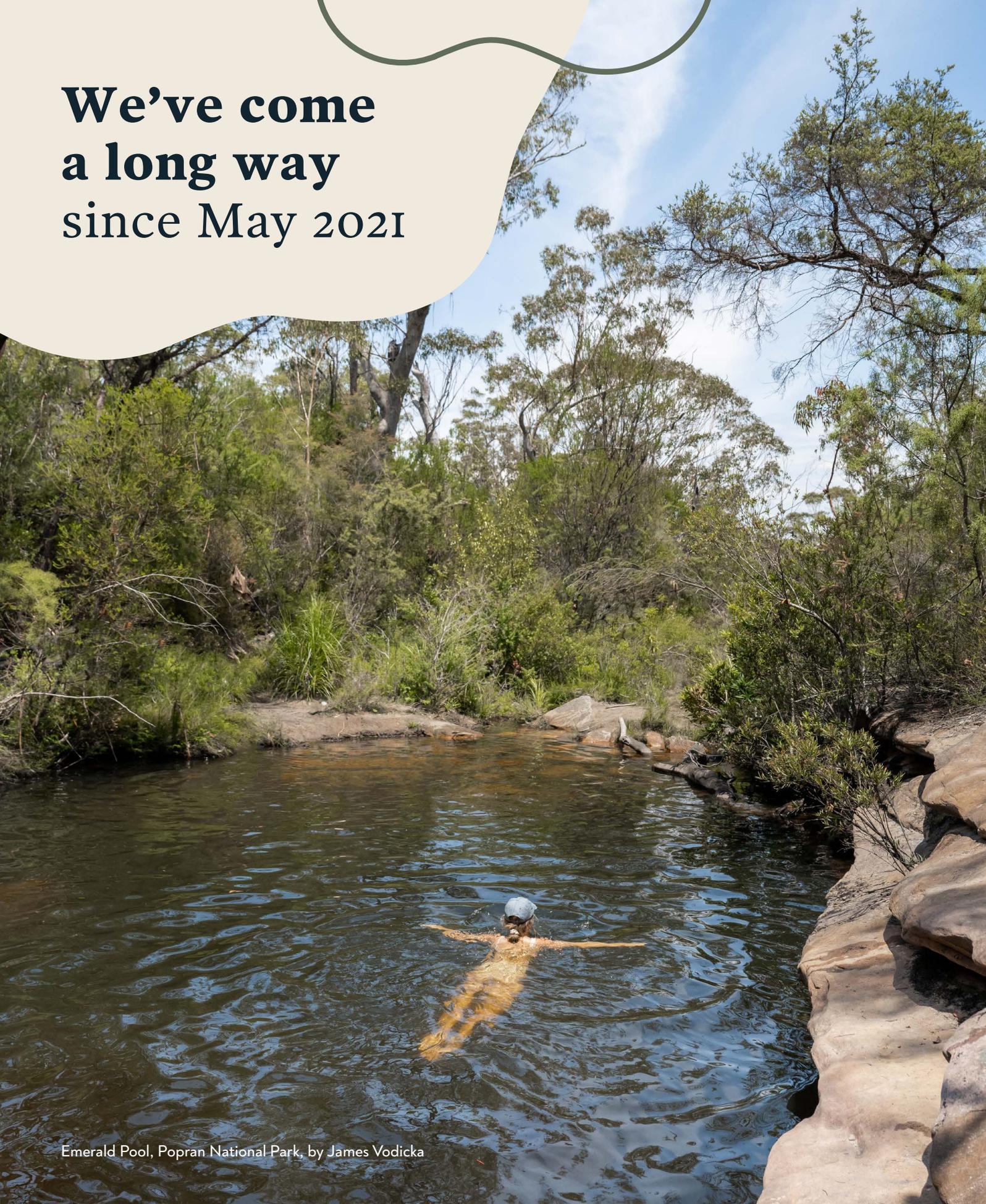
- \$500 funding for Ecotourism Australia annual membership fee from WWF-Australia.
- ECO Destination Assets Toolkit – [available here](#).
- Tailored Love Central Coast Business Listing with ECO Certified badge.
- Profile on LoveCentralCoast.com [Ecotourism Hub](#).
- Social media features in ecotourism campaigns to 65k+ audience.
- Submit 'Good Practice Story' for marketing opportunities.
- LoveCentralCoast.com 'News' editorial feature (once certified).
- Profile in [The Green Travel Guide](#) Central Coast destination page (once certified).
- Media and photo shoot opportunities on eco and sustainable travel themes.
- Speaking opportunities at industry events.
- Pitch for Ecotourism Australia socials and monthly newsletter to 12k+ audience.
- Referral letters for award nominations from Council and/or Ecotourism Australia.

**More than 75%**  
of travellers are committed  
to sustainability in some way

Tourism Australia's 'Future of  
Tourism Demand' Report 2022



**We've come  
a long way  
since May 2021**



Emerald Pool, Popran National Park, by James Vodicka



**centralcoast**  
NEW SOUTH WALES



Central Coast ECO Operator  
Incentive Program 2021-23

# Central Coast 'ECOhort' est. 2021

Since launching in 2021, the ECO Operator Incentive Program has identified a like-minded cohort of sustainability-led tourism operators, producing four newly ECO Certified businesses, and attracting another 10 participants to pursue accreditation.

## 1. Central Coast Marine Discovery Centre



## 2. Aquafun Avoca Lake



## 3. TreeTops Adventure



## 4. Noonaweena



## 5. Iris Lodge Alpacas



## 6. Terrigal Ocean Tours



## 7. Rocky Trail Entertainment



## 8. Sydney Oyster Farm Tours

## 9. Glenworth Valley Outdoor Adventures

## 10. Grace Springs Farm

## 11. Australia Walkabout Wildlife Park

## 12. Jake Cassar Bushcraft Tours

## 13. Canton Beach Paddleshack

## 14. Bombora Ettalong Beach SUP

## 15. Bells at Killcare

## 16. Elixir Journeys

## 17. Pretty Beach House

## 18. Australian Reptile Park

# Brand partnerships & positioning

All participants on the ECO Operator Incentive Program are connected to a regional, national and global network of sustainable tourism organisations and brands.

- Destination Central Coast
- Central Coast Council
- Ecotourism Australia
- Green Travel Guide
- WWF-Australia
- Green Destinations
- Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)

## centralcoast



centralcoast  
NEW SOUTH WALES



Central Coast ECO Operator  
Incentive Program 2021-23

# Love Central Coast

## Website performance 2021-23

### Ecotourism digital hubs

- [lovecentralcoast.com/ecotourism](https://lovecentralcoast.com/ecotourism)
- [lovecentralcoast.com/industry-hub-ecotourism-for-business](https://lovecentralcoast.com/industry-hub-ecotourism-for-business)

### ECO hubs

- +7,700 Pageviews.
- Excellent Avg. Time on Page: 2:36 minutes.

### ECO Program Business Listings

- +52,000 Pageviews.
- ECO Certified logo badge.
- ECO Certified category search tag.

### Social presence

- +73.3k Instagram & Facebook following.
- Dedicated 'ECO' link in bio.
- 'ECO-Certified' Instagram Highlight feature.
- Regular Love Central Coast content calendar features

## Hero stats

2:36 minutes  
Avg. Time on Page

+64,700  
Pageviews

## ECO feature articles

- +5,000 Pageviews.
- Excellent Avg. Time on Page: 2:56 minutes.
- [Cycling in nature becomes the Central Coast's newest ECO Certified adventure.](#)
- [The Coast's marine tour guides celebrate their new ECO Certified status.](#)
- [Jilliby's interactive alpaca lodge joins our ecotourism family.](#)
- [Certified eco-luxury tours prove the perfect elixir for conscious travel.](#)
- [The NSW Central Coast is now a certified Australian ECO Destination.](#)
- [The Central Coast Sustainability Pledge.](#)
- [Central Coast celebrates second year in global Green Destinations Top 100 List.](#)
- [The NSW Central Coast selected in Green Destinations Top 100 List.](#)
- [3 Amazingly easy ways you can help keep the Coast green.](#)
- [The Central Coast's journey to become a sustainable destination.](#)



centralcoast  
NEW SOUTH WALES



Central Coast ECO Operator  
Incentive Program 2021-23

## Tourism Social Ad Campaign

ECO Destination messages embedded in 'Always On' social ads from July to August 2022. Investment: \$4k.

### Likes Campaign

- 1.2K Reactions, 57 comments, 41 shares.
- 4,582 Post Engagements.
- 441,726 Impressions.
- 96,175 unique viewers.
- 3,771 Page Likes generated.

### Newsfeeds

- Ad #1 - Beach view - 507 page likes.
- Ad #2 - Hinterland image - 285 page likes.
- Ad #3 - Bushwalk - 2,979 page likes.



## Central Coast Council

Media Releases focused on regional tourism, ecotourism and the ECO program.

- Oct 2022 - [Central-Coast-celebrates-second-year-global-green-destinations-top-100](#)
- June 2022 - [Special-announcement-ahead-world-environment-day-central-coast-one-of-the-first-Australian-destinations-to-achieve-ECO-Certification](#)
- June 2022 - [Administrator's Message](#)
- Nov 2021 - [New-opportunity-local-businesses-to-tap-eco-conscious-traveller-market](#)
- July 2021 - [More-local-tourism-operators-becoming-eco-certified](#)
- Nov 2020 - [Major-boost-eco-tourism-on-coast](#)

## AD CREATIVE - Likes



AD #1



AD #2



AD #3

‘Destination Central Coast content campaigns and media opportunities will now have ECO messaging embedded as standard, placing sustainable tourism principles at the core of our destination brand and destination marketing.’



# ECO Destination Coverage

## The Green Travel Guide

All participants on the ECO Operator Incentive Program who achieve ECO Certification for their business receive a Green Travel Guide profile and are connected to the Central Coast's destination profile and interactive map.

[greentravelguide.org/destination/central-coast](https://greentravelguide.org/destination/central-coast)

## Ecotourism Australia

Australian destinations recognised for global tourism sustainability.

3 Businesses join Ecotourism Australia community in New South Wales.

Two regions named finalists in Green Destinations' Top 100 Stories competition 2022.

Australian Certified ECO Destinations recognised on the global stage at ITB Berlin.



## Destination PR & Media coverage

Participants on the ECO program were considered in Destination Central Coast's annual PR Plan, with proactive pitching and paid sponsored content successfully elevating the region's ECO operators.

### **QANTAS Travel Insider** – Dec 2022 7 of the Best Outdoor Experiences on the Central Coast

3,000,000 reach; \$75k Advertising Value Equivalent (AVE)

### **The Urban List** – Nov 2022

6 Nature-Filled And Eco-Friendly Ways To Explore The Central Coast  
400,000 reach; \$35k AVE

### **Sitchu Sydney** – Nov 2022

20 Things to do on the Central Coast: NSW's Newest Eco Destination  
200,000 reach; \$30k AVE

### **Hunter Hunter** – Nov 2022

85,000 reach; \$6k AVE  
Celebrating its title as an ECO-Destination, it's time you visited the Central Coast

### **Yahoo Lifestyle Australia** – Nov 2022

Have breakfast with the alpacas at Iris Lodge Alpacas

YouTube video and TikTok video  
292,500 - 400,000 reach; \$9-30k AVE

### **Sydney Weekender** – Sept 2022

200,000 reach; \$70k AVE  
Eco-friendly Central Coast

### **Australian Women's Weekly**

– August 2022 print edition  
Travel News: Pride of Place, Central Coast Makes The Grade  
1,471,000 reach; \$21k AVE

### **Australian Traveller** – 2021-2022

350,000 reach; \$24k AVE per feature

The Central Coast and Margaret River become certified ECO Destinations

Your guide to the ECO-certified Central Coast

Do the Central Coast like a (green) local

The NSW Central Coast journey to sustainability

20 ECO-certified attractions around Australia

25 ECO-certified accommodation options around Australia

26 ECO-certified tours around Australia

26 incredible things to do on the Central Coast

The very best Central Coast accommodation

### **Vacations & Travel** – June 2022

12 Central Coast eco experiences you have to try

### **Sustainable Tourism World** – June 2022

Sustainable Tourism News: Ecotourism Australia

### **Destination NSW - Media Centre** – June 2022

It's official. The Central Coast is now an ECO Destination

### **Spice News** – February 2023

Let your heart lead the way to Central Coast

### **COAST Magazine** – March 2023

The Natural Wonders of the Central Coast

**81% of global travellers confirm that sustainable travel is important to them, and 67% want their travel choices to support the recovery of the destinations they visit.**

Booking.com Sustainable  
Travel Report 2022

## Benefits of ecotourism

Whether it's our destination certification or your business pursuing accreditation, the benefits are experienced by the entire visitor economy and community.

- Build the Central Coast's profile as a region rich in unique, authentic ecotourism experiences.
- Attract eco-conscious travellers who stay longer and spend more than average visitors.
- Develop our signature ecotourism products.
- Grow traveller interest in our region's local community, nature and culture.
- Encourage more eco-conscious, sustainably-minded operators.
- Provide sustainable local employment and training opportunities.
- Activate ECO accreditation framework as a business development tool.
- Create an environment where the Ecotourism Industry thrives.
- Join a global network of like-minded sustainable tourism organisations.
- Share best practice among our ECO operators through networking and mentoring.
- Destination management practices align with international best practice sustainability standards.

# Industry Testimonials

## Andrew Jones, Terrigal Ocean Tours

“Beautifully done. We really appreciate the great work that you guys are doing. Thank you.”

## Juliane & Martin Wisata, Rocky Trail Entertainment

“I would like to THANK YOU and the Central Coast Council for originally encouraging us and providing us with the opportunity to get to know the ECO Certification team and invite us to the presentation. At the time, in the height of COVID measures for the events industry, this was such a motivation to keep pushing on with our business and use the time to keep working on the innovation and improvement of internal processes and event delivery practices.

The certification process was inspiring and so supportive. Our assessor was absolutely amazing and provided such valuable input and feedback - for us this certification is not a sign-off as such, but rather the continuation of our business journey to make a difference in our small realm of nature tourism and trail-based tourism activity.

Martin and I are absolutely committed for our business to keep innovating and improving and to inspire our riders, supporters and business network to raise the awareness of eco-friendly business practices.

It’s been a good process for us and we look forward to being part of this active community in future. We’re at the start of our journey in this space and I believe it will really add a lot of value to our business.”





**centralcoast**  
NEW SOUTH WALES



Central Coast ECO Operator  
Incentive Program 2021-23

Contact us to discuss how your  
business can lead the way for  
ecotourism on the Central Coast  
as an ECO Advocate.

[LOVECENTRALCOAST.COM/INDUSTRY-HUB-ECOTOURISM-FOR-BUSINESS](https://LOVECENTRALCOAST.COM/INDUSTRY-HUB-ECOTOURISM-FOR-BUSINESS)

Project lead | Whitney Edwards  
[whitney.edwards@centralcoast.nsw.gov.au](mailto:whitney.edwards@centralcoast.nsw.gov.au)

Industry lead | Emma Perham  
[tourism@centralcoast.nsw.gov.au](mailto:tourism@centralcoast.nsw.gov.au)

Certification manager | Nadine Schramm  
[nadine@ecotourism.org.au](mailto:nadine@ecotourism.org.au)

  @LOVECENTRALCOASTNSW | #LOVECENTRALCOAST



**centralcoast**  
NEW SOUTH WALES

