

2026 - 2029

Central Coast Destination Management Plan





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Acknowledgment of Country

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

We pay our respects to Darkinjung country, and Elders past and present.

We recognise the continued connection to these lands and waterways and extend this acknowledgement to the homelands and stories of those who also call this place home.

We recognise our future leaders and the shared responsibility to care for and protect our place and people.

Thank You

Central Coast Council acknowledges the contribution made by stakeholders who took part in the consultation and development of this plan including Destination Sydney Surrounds North, NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service, Transport for NSW, Ecotourism Australia, Regional Economic Taskforce, Urban Enterprise, industry groups, local businesses and community members.



Bouddi National Park
Photo Credit: Dominic Loneragan

Mayor's Message

The Central Coast is known for our stunning coastline, beautiful national parks and lush hinterland. We enjoy an unparalleled lifestyle, and our beaches, festivals, creative communities and gourmet food scene draw visitors all year round.

As a tourism destination, we are highly accessible for day trips and holidays for people living in Sydney and Newcastle and attract national and international visitors for longer stays.

Our region has been recognised as a world leader in ecotourism, winning first place in the prestigious international Green Destinations Awards in 2024, demonstrating Council's commitment to achieving global best practice.

The Destination Management Plan 2026-29 describes our approach to growing and sustaining our visitor economy over the next four years. It builds on the achievements of our previous plans and presents a clear roadmap for the future of tourism.

The plan acknowledges the community's vision in our 10-year Community Strategic Plan for a thriving tourism industry that can offer rich visitor experiences. Attracting visitors to explore our region increases demand for services which in turn drives employment. People identified strong marketing, increased investment in tourism and support for local businesses as important for building a strong economy.

In this plan, we've identified that strengthening our identity, developing regional connectivity, increasing the choice and quality of experiences, investing in and attracting signature events and encouraging industry excellence will be key drivers for success.

And we plan to further strengthen our Love Central Coast brand, which continues to provide significant value to both visitors and the local community.

This new Destination Management Plan relies on collaboration between Council, government, and industry to deliver connected, sustainable and world-class destination experiences. The success of this coordinated approach is evident in our previous plan, that saw overnight visitation, visitor expenditure and visits to our hinterland all significantly increase.

Our plan supports long-term prosperity for our region, offers new approaches and will continue to strengthen our reputation as a destination of choice.

I look forward to the exciting opportunities this plan will create, and to ensuring our natural environment is protected and enhanced as we grow our visitor economy.



**Lawrie McKinna, Mayor
Central Coast Council**

Executive Summary

The Central Coast is a premier ECO Certified Destination of NSW, renowned for its stunning coastline, inland waterways and nature-based attractions. These natural assets are complemented by a growing array of food, arts and cultural experiences. With a strong brand and domestic appeal, as well as emerging international market potential, the Central Coast is well-positioned to become a compelling, class-leading Australian visitor destination.

The Central Coast Destination Management Plan (DMP) 2026–2029 will guide the growth of the visitor economy, reflecting the shared aspirations and needs of the community, industry and Council.

Background

The Central Coast Destination Management Plan 2026–2029 is a strategic roadmap that will guide the sustainable growth and development of the region's visitor economy over the next four years. This Plan sets out a shared vision for the Central Coast visitor economy and provides clear strategic themes, objectives, strategies and actions to ensure its long-term strength, success and sustainability.

This DMP has been informed by independent research, analysis, and consultation with industry representatives, community, businesses and Government stakeholders.

Key elements that the DMP has considered in its development include:

- A comprehensive audit of tourism product and drivers of visitation as well as supporting infrastructure;
- Assessment of governance, visitor services and marketing approach;
- A thorough engagement process allowing for in depth insights from Council, industry, community and stakeholders;
- Detailed assessment of the visitor economy including visitor trends, projections, economic benefit and market segment analysis; and
- A robust strategic framework identifying areas of priority and measurable and achievable actions.

The Central Coast

The Central Coast is ideally located on the New South Wales coastline and is situated strategically within 45 minutes of both Sydney and Newcastle, providing access to a market of almost 6 million people.

Central Coast is a peri-urban Local Government Area bordering the Northern Beaches to the South and Lake Macquarie to the North, with the Pacific Motorway dissecting the region.

Central Coast is a geographically diverse region, with coastal scenery, estuary systems, lakes, forests and farmland. These elements shape the Central Coast experience, creating distinct subregions and unique towns and villages.

The region is defined by six subregions as identified in the diagram below. Within the region there are three primary destinations which attract the largest number of visitors. This includes Gosford, Terrigal and The Entrance. Each of these destinations attract more than 500,000 visitors per annum.



The Visitor Economy

Central Coast has a vibrant visitor economy, attracting approximately 5.6 million visitors in 2024. Majority of visitors to Central Coast are day trip visitors, owing to its peri-urban location between the major population centres of Sydney and Newcastle.

Visitors

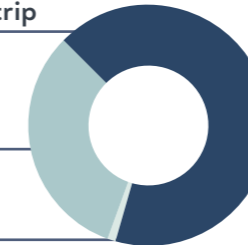
5.6 million



3.8M, 67%
Domestic Daytrip

1.8M, 32%
Domestic Overnight

41K, 1%
International



Visitor spend

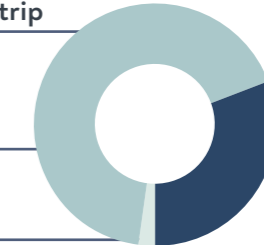
\$1.3 billion



\$397M, 31%
Domestic Daytrip

\$870M, 67%
Domestic Overnight

\$35M, 2%
International



Source: Tourism Research Australia (TRA), National (NVS) and International Visitor Survey (IVS), Year-ending (YE) December 2015 to 2024.

Products and Experiences

Nature remains the Central Coast's primary drawcard, with national parks, coast and lakes being at the heart of the visitor experience. Complementing this are the vibrant offerings of food and drink, arts and culture and a lively calendar of events and festivals.

There are several untapped opportunities for the Central Coast, including First Nations experiences, wellness and agritourism.

Primary Strengths	Secondary Strength	Emerging Strength
Beaches, Coasts & Waterways	Events & Festivals	First Nations
Nature, Wildlife & Outdoor Recreation	Food & Drink	Wellness
	Arts & Culture	Agritourism



Long Jetty

Stakeholder Insights

The stakeholder engagement program was conducted in May-July 2025 and involved a combination of face-to-face and virtual meetings, as well as a business survey.

Specifically, the engagement program included:

- An Industry Workshop attended by over 30 representatives from accommodation, hospitality and visitor-related businesses;
- A business survey distributed to over 14,000 businesses by Council to broaden the understanding of challenges and opportunities across the region;
- One-on-one meetings with key government agencies and other tourism-related organisations identified by Council;
- A Council Workshop attended by staff members from key units related to the visitor economy; and
- A Marketing and Visitor Economy Workshop attended by staff members from the Marketing and Visitor Economy team, including Central Coast Visitor Centre (CCVC) staff.

Table 1 provides a summary of the key findings from this stakeholder engagement process.

Table 1: Local Insights & Findings

Aspirations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver exceptional experiences that captivate visitors. • Improve transport options to ensure a seamless movement within and to the region. • Bookable packages to grow dispersal and length of stay in the region. • Leverage technology to enhance visitor information and interaction. • Clear and effective wayfinding to improve visitor navigation. • Leverage further benefit from the large visiting friends and relative's market. • Increase yield and length of stay to boost the local economy. • Establish a strong destination identity. • A shared vision across industry to ensure cohesive approach to tourism. • Collaboration among all visitor economy stakeholders. • Business attraction to support new and exciting attractions. • Ensure accessible and inclusive tourism experiences for all visitors.

Target Markets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-generational visitors who travel with groups of families, looking for different activities to suit different generations. • VFR market to leverage the large population base in Central Coast. • International visitors who are travelling into Sydney. • Grey nomads who are often travelling for extended periods of time. • Those from within a 2 to 3-hour radius of the Central Coast for a day trip. • Sporting groups who are travelling for multi-day sporting events and often travelling with family. • Business events market to support mid-week visitation and the off season. • Attract and service the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) market. • Urban explorers looking to explore and have unique experiences. • Extending the length of stay of event visitors who are travelling for a specific event.

Product and Experience Gaps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of marina and wharf facilities, hindering the ability of visitors to access the water. • Lack of water-based tours and activities. • Inadequate visitor signage and wayfinding throughout the region. • Poor consistency of quality food and beverage establishments throughout the region. • Lack of indoor events facilities to support exhibitions, business events and conferences. • Lack of high-end, luxury products and experiences. • Need to develop additional products and experiences in the Central Coast Hinterland, including agritourism. • First Nations led and developed product and experiences. • Experiential accommodation, including wellness retreats and eco cabins. • Developing engaging curated itineraries that can attract and retain visitors. • Strategic events program to grow off-peak visitation. • Effective wayfinding signage and clear trail maps are needed to enhance visitor experience. • The CCVC doesn't serve visitors as they enter the region.

Industry Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessing and retaining skilled workers. • Limitations imposed by zoned land can restrict development and operational flexibility. • Navigating Council planning restrictions and regulations can be complex and time-consuming. • The cost of doing business presents a substantial hurdle for many businesses, including insurance. • Managing seasonality effectively is critical for businesses reliant on tourism or weather-dependent activities. • Securing adequate grants/funding is a consistent challenge, especially when competing with larger metropolitan areas for metropolitan comparative funding.

Key Considerations for the DMP

The following considerations outline the key challenges and opportunities for the Central Coast visitor economy.

They distil insights from all research and analysis undertaken for the DMP. These considerations have directly informed the strategic framework and recommendations for the region's visitor economy.

Calga

Comparative Advantages and Key Opportunities

Love Central Coast Brand and Marketing

The development of Central Coasts identity and associated marketing and collateral provides a significant platform to build on. Love Central Coast and the transition to an Ecotourism certified destination provides a framework for improvement of perception and development of product that is contemporary and aligned to new consumer expectations.

Proximity to Sydney and Newcastle

Central Coast has a population of over 6 million residents within 45 minutes. It is well positioned for growth given its accessibility from these core markets. It will be critical that product, experience and infrastructure meets future needs. The high level of daytrip visitation is directly linked to its accessibility to large source markets.

Outstanding Natural Assets

Central Coast is home to amazing natural assets including beaches and waterways. It also has two of the top 10 visited National Parks in NSW including Brisbane Water National Park and Bouddi National Park. There is opportunity to further leverage from these assets through improved visitor services to disperse visitors and strengthen connection of these assets with towns and villages of the Central Coast.

Access to International Markets

Three international airports will be accessible to Central Coast within 1.5 hours by 2026. This includes Sydney Airport, Western Sydney Airport and Newcastle Airport. Access to international airports presents opportunity to grow important international visitation to Central Coast.

ECO Certified Destination

Central Coast is an Ecotourism certified region. The status, proximity to Sydney and incredible natural assets provide a platform for growth in international and interstate markets.

Extensive and diverse tourism offerings, including international ready products

Central Coast has a diverse supply of product suited to a range of markets. In addition to this, a number of operators are internationally ready and can support further growth in international tourism. There is opportunity for the region to leverage off strong internationally ready product to create dispersal and yield.

Gosford State Significant Centre

Gosford is designated as a State Significant Centre, which means it will support substantial investment and growth. It has numerous visitor economy assets including polytec Stadium.

Culturally Significant Assets

The Central Coast boasts a rich and continuous Indigenous cultural heritage, with over 3,000 registered cultural heritage sites of significance. The Darkinjung are working with Council to deliver on First Nations tourism opportunities.

Engaged Tourism Industry

Central Coast Council has established a strong relationship with its tourism industry and has a high level of industry engagement. This provides opportunity to strengthen product and service across the region to meet visitor need.

Challenges

Connectivity between the coast, hinterland and key visitor destinations

Improving connectivity between the coast, hinterland and surrounding visitor destinations is essential for enhancing visitor dispersal and access across the Central Coast. Poor connectivity is the result of the physical, geological constraints.

Township presentation and amenity in key centres

Township presentation and public amenity in key town centres, such as Gosford and The Entrance, are currently poor, impacting visitor experience and the region's overall appeal.

Significant infrastructure spending needs in the Central Coast

Overall, the Central Coast lacks critical infrastructure that is found in other competitor destinations such as quality township streetscape amenity, foreshore and open space amenities, footpaths and cycleways.

Seasonality of visitors

Visitation to the Central Coast is highly seasonal, with a significant proportion of visitors travelling in the summer and spring months. This presents a challenge for the financial sustainability of businesses and reduces the confidence in year-round investment.

Proportion of overnight visitors

Low levels of overnight visitation result in lower visitor yield, creating a less sustainable visitor economy where more visitors (day trippers) are generating comparatively less economic benefit.

24-hour Economy

Central Coast, particularly Gosford, is becoming increasingly urbanised with a suite of public and private investments coming online. However, the region lacks a sufficient range of night-time economy products for a region of its size and population.

On-water commercial activation

The waterways within the Central Coast present a significant tourism opportunity. At present, the lake system is used extensively for private boating with very few commercial operators providing experiences for visitors.

Sense of place and destination definition

A lack of clear definition between destinations, including inadequate township gateways, wayfinding and directional signage across the Central Coast, leads to a confusing visitor journey.

ECO tourism destination certification

The ECO tourism certification is used heavily in the marketing of the Central Coast, however, is not reflected in some areas of the visitor experience.

Boutique and luxury accommodation

There is a gap in boutique and luxury accommodation offerings across the Central Coast. This limits the region's ability to attract high-yield visitors.

Perceptions of the Central Coast

The Central Coast has at times carried a reputation that did not fully reflect its unique strengths or vibrant community. While this perception has previously challenged the region's ability to attract visitors and investors, there are encouraging signs it is steadily shifting.

Destination businesses

Destination businesses are those that attract visitors specifically for their unique appeal, products, services or experience. Currently, Central Coast has very few destination businesses that act as a key drawcard for visitors.

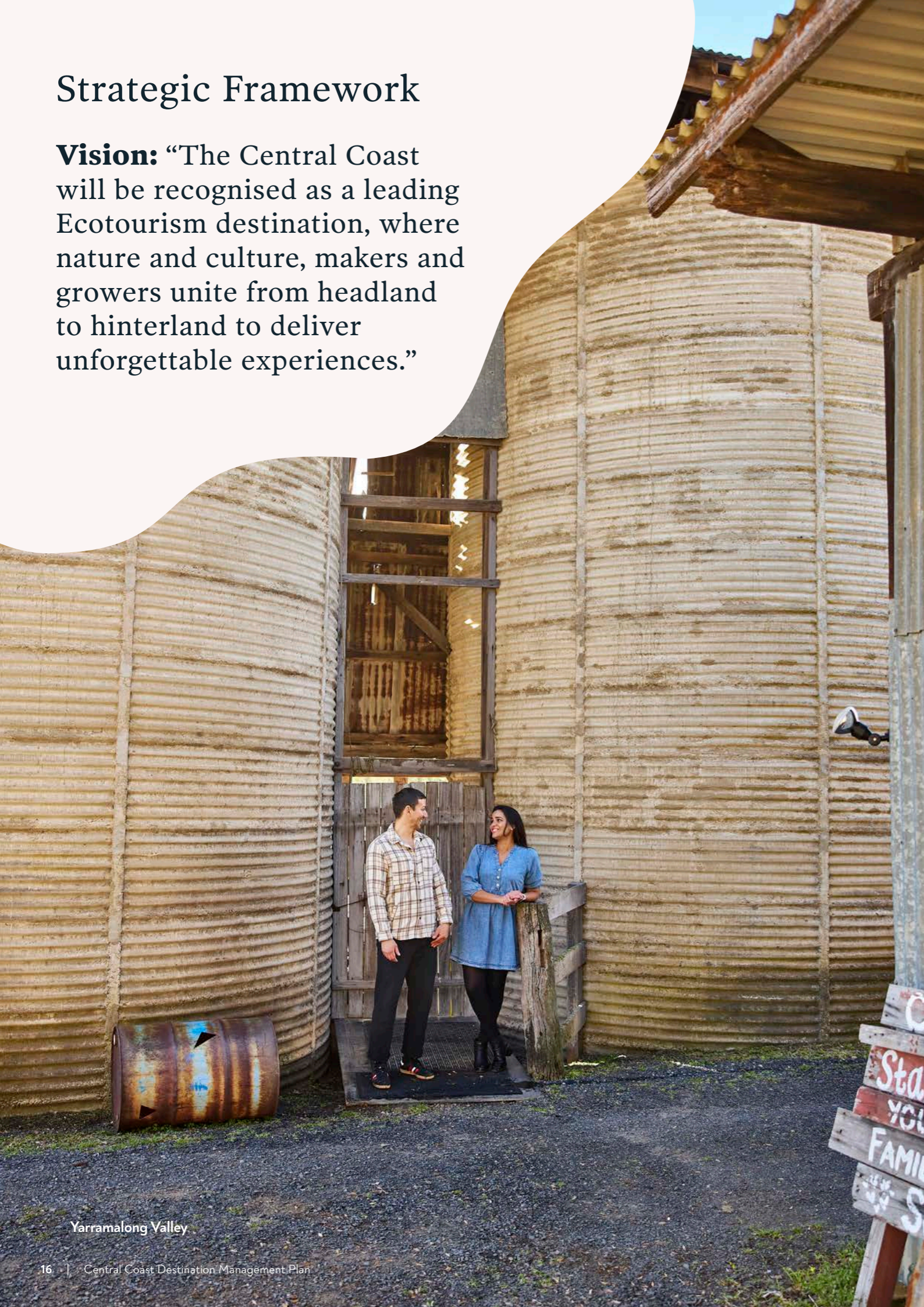
Visitor economy workforce shortages

The visitor economy workforce on the Central Coast is facing a number of challenges, including poor public transport connectivity, lack of affordable housing, seasonal demand of work force, poor pay and work conditions, lack of training and the negative perception of tourism as a career.



Strategic Framework

Vision: “The Central Coast will be recognised as a leading Ecotourism destination, where nature and culture, makers and growers unite from headland to hinterland to deliver unforgettable experiences.”



Kincumber



Guiding Principles

To support the Central Coast in achieving its vision and objectives, the following principles will apply to all product and experience development initiatives.

- 1 Brand Delivery**
Foster alignment between brand messaging and the visitor experience by ensuring that marketing initiatives accurately reflect the quality, character and authenticity of tourism offerings on the ground.
- 2 Ecotourism Credentials**
Embed Ecotourism principles into all products and experiences ensuring sustainable tourism management is at the core of the visitor experience and offer.
- 3 Visitor Centric**
Embed a tourism-first mindset across all initiatives on the Central Coast by consistently applying a visitor lens to planning, development and decision-making. Prioritise the needs, expectations and experiences of visitors to ensure the region remains an attractive, welcoming and sustainable destination.
- 4 First Nations**
Recognise and integrate the local First Nations story throughout the visitor experience, encouraging collaboration and understanding across all cultures.
- 5 Tourism Advocacy**
Develop a Council-wide, community and industry understanding of the value of the visitor economy to ensure a tourism lens is applied to all Council projects, delivering positive outcomes for both the community and visitors.

Themes and Objectives

The following themes and objectives set the strategic direction for the Destination Management Plan, shaping how the Central Coast can grow as a leading visitor destination. They provide a framework to strengthen identity and place, enhance connectivity, expand product and infrastructure, elevate signature events, and support industry development.

Theme	Objectives
Theme 1. Identity, Awareness & Place	Continue to build and strengthen the Love Central Coast brand and ensure that experience of place aligns to visitor expectations and continues positively to shift public perception of the Central Coast.
Theme 2. Regional Connectivity	Strengthen connectivity of tourism product and destinations to create a seamless tourism region and a clear visitor journey with a strong sense of place.
Theme 3. Tourism Product & Infrastructure	Increase the choice, quality and quantity of tourism products and tourism infrastructure to provide compelling, class-leading experiences, with reference to needs and opportunities across Central Coast subregions.
Theme 4. Signature Events	Invest, attract and develop hero tourism events that can contribute to increased visitation and raise positive awareness of the Central Coast as a leading, year-round destination.
Theme 5. Industry Development	Encourage industry excellence and support tourism business growth and development to meet visitor needs.

Performance Targets

The following performance targets have been identified for the Central Coast to track the performance of the visitor economy over the life of this Plan.

1. Increase the proportion of overnight visitation to Central Coast to grow the value of the visitor economy.
2. Increase the number of international visitors to the Central Coast.
3. Improve diversity of the products, experiences and accommodation offering across the Central Coast through public and private sector investment.
4. Continue to improve positive perception and awareness of Central Coast in key target markets.



High-impact Tourism Opportunities

These projects are aspirational, potential game-changer initiatives for the Central Coast, representing ambitious long-term opportunities with significant impact. They align strongly with the Plan's objectives and address critical issues while unlocking distinctive regional opportunities. As such, they are a strategic wish list rather than confirmed commitments and may or may not be reflected in the formal action plan. In particular, these projects focus on the two destinations that attract the highest visitation (Gosford and The Entrance), yet require improvements to amenity, visitor experience and extending visitor yield.



Gosford Waterfront Revitalisation

The Gosford Waterfront Masterplan aims to revitalise the Gosford waterfront into a vibrant, mixed-use precinct that connects the city centre with the Brisbane Water foreshore. The outcome for the visitor economy will be a new and compelling destination in Gosford which will strengthen Gosford's connection to the water and lead to enhanced dining, entertainment and experience of the water.



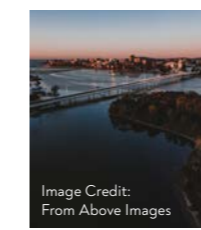
Central Coast Arts & Culture

Supporting the growth of arts and culture to strengthen cultural activity and participation. This includes fostering creative expression and expanding access to diverse arts experiences. The outcome for the visitor economy will be strengthening of year-round visitation to the Central Coast, growing higher yield markets and increased length of stay.



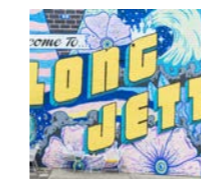
Reimagined Pelican Time Experience at The Entrance

The Entrance is renowned for its Pelican Time experience. There are opportunities to explore ways to create a leading wildlife year-round attraction. An enhanced experience will strengthen Central Coast's ecotourism credentials and strengthen the region's appeal in international markets, driving economic benefit for The Entrance.



Enhancing The Entrance

Uncover opportunities to improve the appeal of The Entrance as a key visitor destination for the Central Coast. This includes enhancing public amenity, improving the quality and functionality of public spaces, and strengthening the overall visitor experience to support year-round visitation and encourage longer stays and overnight accommodation in The Entrance.



Establish gateways to strengthen sense of place and arrival

Continue to investigate optimal gateway locations and design concepts that align with the Place Brand Strategy, enhancing the visitors' sense of arrival and showcasing the region's unique identity.



Improve inter-regional public transport

Support more frequent, accessible and flexible inter-regional public transport services that improve connectivity between communities, including expanded service coverage and alternative transport models.



Brisbane Water Water-Based Connectivity

A long-term aspirational vision for water-based transport that enhances connectivity between Gosford, Woy Woy and surrounding Brisbane Water towns.

Chapter 1

Context

The following section provides contextual information to support the development of the Destination Management Plan for Central Coast. It includes an overview of the region, as well as key policies and strategies that offer strategic directions for this report.

1.1 Introduction

The Central Coast Destination Management Plan (DMP) 2026–2029 is a key strategic document that will guide the growth and development of the visitor economy over the next four years.

The DMP aims to establish a shared vision for the region’s visitor economy and will outline themes, objectives, as well as strategies and actions to ensure its long-term strength, success and sustainability.

It is informed by independent research, analysis, and consultation with industry representatives, community, businesses and Government stakeholders.

Key elements that the DMP has considered in its development include:

- A comprehensive audit of tourism product and drivers of visitation as well as supporting infrastructure;
- A thorough engagement process allowing for in depth engagement with Council, industry, community and stakeholders;
- Detailed assessment of the visitor economy including visitor trends, projections, economic benefit and market segment analysis; and
- A robust strategic framework identifying areas of priority and measurable and achievable actions.



1.2 About the Central Coast

The Central Coast is a premier destination of New South Wales, renowned for its stunning coastline, waterways and nature-based attractions. These natural assets are complemented by a growing array of arts, food and cultural experiences. With a recently revitalised brand, strong domestic appeal and emerging international market potential, the Central Coast is well-positioned to become a leading contemporary Australian visitor destination.

Ideally located on the NSW coastline, the Central Coast is strategically located within 45 minutes of both Sydney and Newcastle, providing access to a market of almost 6 million people.

Central Coast is a peri-urban Local Government Area (LGA) bordering the Northern Beaches to the south and Lake Macquarie to the North, with the Pacific Motorway dissecting the LGA. This provides convenient access to metropolitan Sydney and disperses visitors into northern and western regional NSW via the Central Coast.

Central Coast has a large population of more than 350,000 residents and attracts more than 5 million visitors annually.

The region is geographically diverse with coastal scenery, estuary systems, lakes, forests and farmland. These elements shape the Central Coast experience, creating distinct subregions and unique towns and villages, which are explored in the DMP.

To better understand the unique challenges and opportunities across the Central Coast, six subregions have been identified, including The Peninsula, Terrigal and the Headlands, Central Coast Hinterland, Wyong and Tuggerah, Gosford and Surrounds and The Entrance and Northern Lakes. These subregions have been identified on the following page and are described in more detail in the DMP. These subregions have been informed by:

- Marketing strategy subregions;
- Existing visitor distribution;
- Landscape and townships characteristics;
- Access and transport routes; and
- Existing visitor markets and tourism offerings.

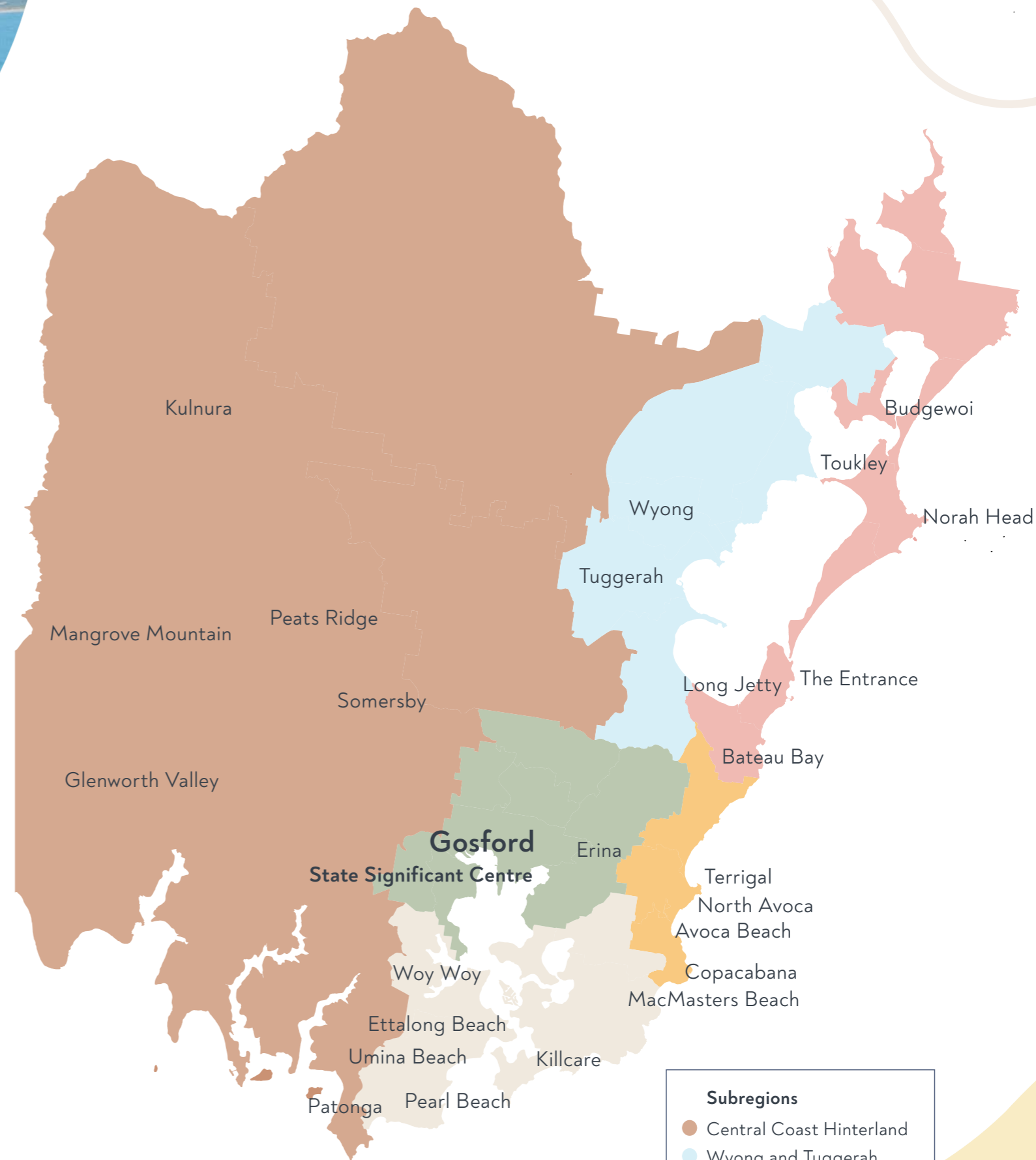


Figure 1: Central Coast Council Context Map

1.3 Best Practice Destination Management

Destination Management Planning is based on the holistic consideration of a region’s tourism industry, and the tourism industry’s position in the regional economy.

Destination Management Plans reflect the attributes of each destination, providing a blueprint for future investment in tourism including new experiences and attractions, and infrastructure requirements to support visitor growth.

The DMP for Central Coast follows the Guide to Best Practice in Destination Management, as developed by the Australian Regional Tourism Network (ARTN). This will ensure Council can support growth in and the sustainable management of the visitor economy.



1.4 Ecotourism Destination

In 2025, Central Coast Council furthered its commitment to sustainable and responsible tourism by advancing to Ecotourism level in Ecotourism Australia’s ECO Destination Certification.

Ecotourism Australia defines ecotourism as: “Ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation”.

An Ecotourism Destination is a nature-based tourism destination with a strong commitment to ecotourism principles. This involves cultural and natural interpretation, as well as education for visitors and local business engagement in sustainability.

Being an Ecotourism Destination recognises the Central Coast as a world-class destination for sustainable, nature-based tourism. It highlights the Central Coast’s commitment to quality and sustainable practices and gives travellers a clearer choice of the best eco-friendly, nature-based experiences, attractions and accommodation the Central Coast has to offer.

The Central Coast is home to 12 ECO certified operators, as well as another 18 applicants on their sustainability journey, supported by Ecotourism Australia.

To ensure the region maintains its ecotourism status, there are a number of considerations that are needed to inform the DMP, including:

- Environmental Impacts.
- Social Impacts.
- Economic Impacts; and
- Cultural Impacts.



1.5 Tourism Governance

Tourism on the Central Coast is led by Council’s Marketing and Visitor Economy Team, with expertise in events, marketing, visitor services, destination management and communications.

There are several local and regional tourism organisations that support the visitor economy. This diversity has implications for ensuring strong coordination, effective communication, and clear roles and responsibilities within the tourism sector.

Council actively collaborates with state tourism bodies to support strategic planning, cooperative marketing and industry development. Key partners include Destination New South Wales (DNSW), the State Government’s leading agency for tourism, and Destination Sydney Surrounds North (DSSN).

Table 2 outlines the current tourism governance structures responsible for delivering tourism on the Central Coast.

Table 2: Overview of Key Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Role	Responsibilities
Tourism Australia	Tourism Australia (TA) is the Australian Government agency responsible for promoting Australia as a compelling destination for international and domestic travellers, driving demand and supporting the growth of the visitor economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing and promotion • Tourism research and insights • Conduct market research and analysis • Advocacy
Destination New South Wales	Strengthen connectivity of tourism product and destinations to create a seamless tourism region and a clear visitor journey with a strong sense of place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement a regional DMP • Advocacy • Business and industry development (workshops, resources etc) • Interstate and international marketing
Destination Sydney Surrounds North	<p>Destination Sydney Surrounds North (DSSN) is one of seven Destination Networks (DN) in Regional NSW, encompassing 10 LGAs: Central Coast, Cessnock, Dungog, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Muswellbrook, Newcastle, Port Stephens, Singleton and Upper Hunter.</p> <p>The primary responsibility of the network is to drive growth of the visitor economy in the region to support the goal of NSW being the premier visitor economy of the Asia-Pacific.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement a regional DMP • Advocacy • Business and industry development (workshops, resources etc)
Central Coast Council	Council provides a range of tourism services including overseeing and delivery visitor information services, digital media and communication, major events attraction and support, marketing, industry development and investment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy • Implement and build destination brand • Marketing and promotion, including co-operative marketing campaigns with Local Tourism Industry and Destination NSW • Events attraction and promotion • Infrastructure and asset maintenance • Industry networking • Industry development and capacity building • Collateral development
Local Tourism Industry and Business Groups	There are a range of formal and informal tourism industry and business groups, committees and associations that Council engages with.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy • Industry networking • Events development and operation • Local collateral development in partnership with Council • Visitor and customer experience

1.6 Central Coast DMP 2022-2025

The 2026-2029 Central Coast DMP will build on past work undertaken by Council through the previous 2022-2025 Central Coast DMP.

The 2022-2025 DMP identified six key themes and relevant strategies and actions to be completed by Council and tourism partners.

Table 3 provides an overview of themes, projects and actions, and key Central Coast achievements actioned against these. Council has made significant progress against brand development, marketing, messaging and industry support. Physical product development and infrastructure which requires investment attraction and funding remains an area of need for the visitor economy on the Central Coast.

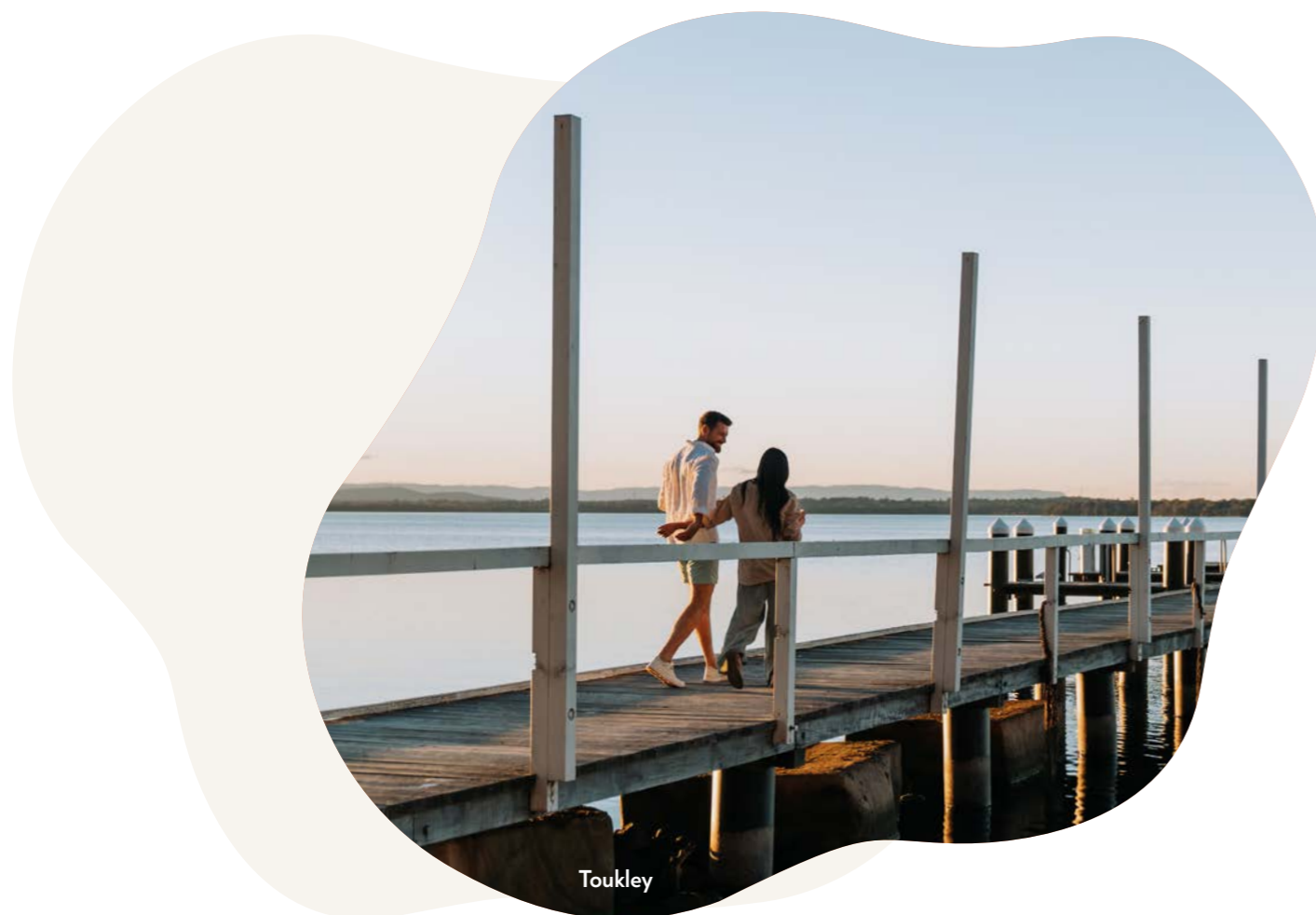
Targets were identified and monitored throughout the 2022-2025 DMP. Overall, these targets were exceeded between 2021 and 2024, with the Central Coast experiencing a 29% increase in overnight visitation, 49% increase in visitor expenditure and 25% increase in Hinterland visitation. It is important to note that destinations across Australia were still recovering from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021.



Whilst Council has delivered strong progress against the previous DMP, as shown in the Table 4, future targets in the 2026-2029 DMP may need to be more conservative, considering current and future economic trends, including increased interest rates and cost of living impacting domestic travel across Australia.

Table 4: Review of 2022-2025 DMP Performance Targets

2022-2025 DMP Performance Target	10% growth in overnight visitors to Central Coast by 2025.	15% increase in visitor expenditure.	20% increase in visitation to Central Coast Hinterland by 2025.
2021	1.4 million	\$872 million	355,000
2024	1.8 million	\$1.30 billion	443,000
Performance	▲ 29%	▲ 49%	▲ 25%



Toukley

Table 3: Review of 2022-2025 DMP

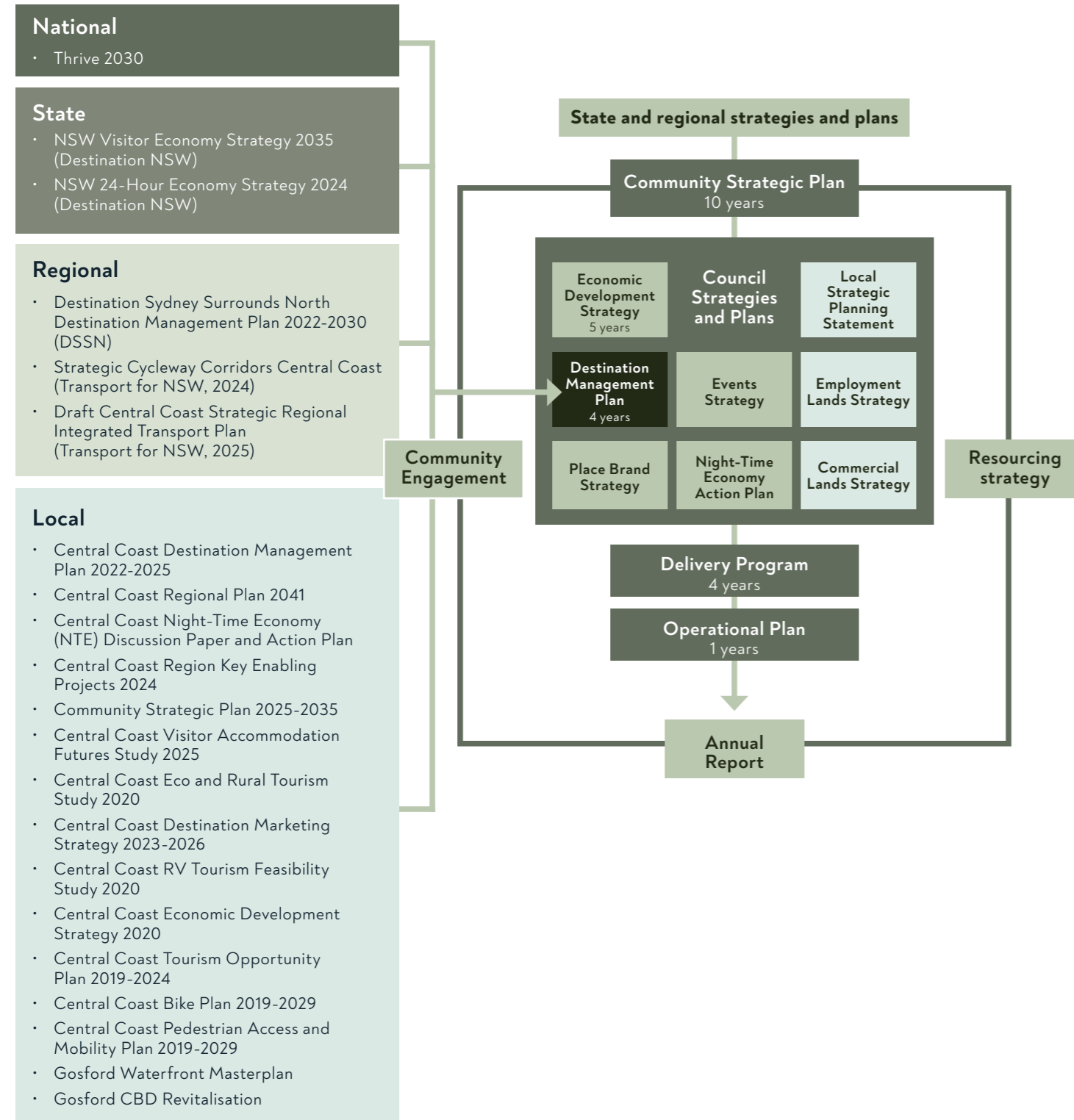
Theme & Overview	Key Projects/Actions Delivered
<p>Identity, Awareness & Placemaking</p> <p>Building a strong brand identity to ensure the Central Coast is recognised as a premium and compelling holiday destination. Creating rich and active places across the seasons, a vibrant night-time economy and a sense of place will rewrite the Central Coast narrative.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refined and improved web presence, social media presence and brand activation and messaging. Completion of Woy Woy Masterplan. Completion of Gosford Waterfront Masterplan. Entrance Masterplan underway. Seasons of Central Coast Marketing Campaign. Night-Time Economy Report Completed.
<p>ECO Destination, Nature, Water & Trails</p> <p>Celebrating the unique coastal and hinterland environment through product development and supporting infrastructure, facilities and services to create unparalleled and motivating nature-based and wellness experiences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coastal Management Programs underway. Waterways messaging and promotion on Love Central Coast. Establishment of an ongoing Partnership with Darkinjung LALC. Norah Head National Surfing Reserve. Magenta shared pathway.
<p>Produce, Creators & Culture</p> <p>Showcasing diverse local narratives and telling the stories of the Coast's makers and creators, the abundant natural produce, and the layers of culture and heritage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch of Central Coast Makers Trail. Oyster experience development on Hawkesbury River. Business attraction in breweries and distilleries.
<p>Events, Festivals & Conferencing</p> <p>Delivering signature events aligned to the region's comparative strengths, utilising the regions natural assets to build a strong events brand and growing the business and conferencing events sector to develop a robust and sustainable year-round visitor economy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Destination Central Coast business hub established. Business Events Marketing and Attraction Plan. Regional representation at DNSW Business Event Showcase 2024. Regional representation at Asia Pacific Incentives and Meetings Event (AIME). Development of food events – Harvest Festival and Taste of Wyong.
<p>Enabling Infrastructure</p> <p>Developing strong foundations for visitor economy growth through infrastructure, transport connections, accommodation, accessible destinations and visitor services that support a thriving Central Coast.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refurbishment of the Central Coast Visitor Centre. Accommodation Futures Project completed
<p>Industry Development & Collaboration</p> <p>Empowering and supporting industry development through engagement, collaboration, training and enhanced connection to create a resilient and visitor ready industry across the Central Coast.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivered Tourism Excellence Program and Tourism Fundamentals Playbook. Quarterly workshops including Tourism Industry Networking events, Premium Experience Design Course, Tourism Excellence Program, Digital Deep Dive and attendance at trade events. NSW First Program in collaboration with DNSW.

1.7 Strategic Alignment

Alignment with existing strategic policy and direction is critical to the success of the Central Coast DMP 2026-2029. Key local, regional, state and federal government plans and strategies have been reviewed. These documents have informed the strategic direction of the DMP 2026-2029 and have been drawn upon throughout the document as relevant.

A comprehensive list of all documents reviewed is provided in Figure 2. A summary of key strategic documents and their relevance is included in the Appendices.

Figure 2: Documents Reviewed



The NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2035 is the key strategic document guiding development of the NSW visitor economy and outlines five strategic pillars, including:

1. Make it easy or more people to visit;
2. Focus on attracting visitors;
3. Drive growth through events;
4. Focus on experiences;
5. Leverage data and insights..

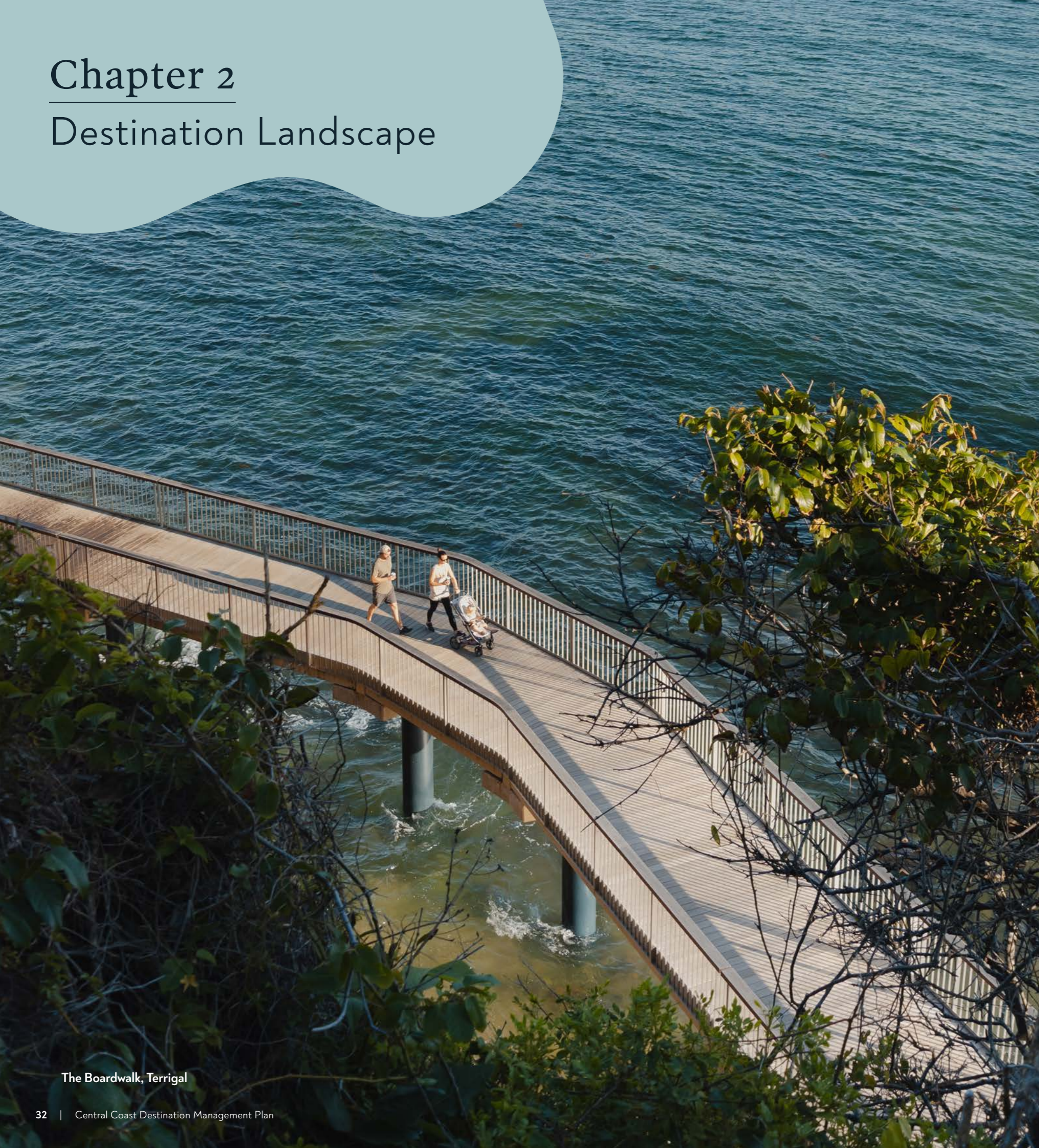
Each strategic pillar has key areas of focus to achieve the NSW Government’s vision to ensure the state becomes the premier visitor destination in the Asia Pacific. The Central Coast is identified as one of 16 current hero destinations in NSW. Key NSW priorities, as relevant to the Central Coast DMP 2026-2029 have been summarised in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Key NSW Priorities



Chapter 2

Destination Landscape



This section provides an overview of the Central Coast visitor economy, including a profile of current visitors and analysis of existing products and experiences. This section also identifies the target markets for the region, both existing and emerging markets, based on their potential to drive visitation and yield.

2.1 Visitor Economy Snapshot

The Central Coast has a vibrant visitor economy, welcoming 5.6 million visitors in 2024. The region's peri-urban location, adjacent to major population centres of Sydney and Newcastle, makes it a popular day trip option, attracting 3.8 million visitors (67% of total visitation).

Day trip visitors to the Central Coast are relatively low-yield, contributing \$397 million in visitor spend (31%), with an average expenditure of \$105 per visitor per trip. This is comparatively low when measured against other regions, including the North Coast (\$129 per visitor per trip) and the Hunter region (\$178 per visitor per trip).

Although domestic overnight visitation is less than half the number of day trip visitors, approximately 1.8 million, it accounts for majority of the overall visitor expenditure (\$870 million or 67%). This is driven by the higher average spend for overnight visitors, at \$484 per visitor per trip.

Domestic overnight visitor expenditure on the Central Coast remains significantly lower than comparable destinations, such as the North Coast (\$792 per visitor per trip) and the Hunter region (\$649 per visitor per trip). This is largely attributed to the high proportion of visitors staying with friends and relatives, as well as the dominance of low-yield tourism products and experiences in the region.



The Central Coast ranks 6th in Regional NSW for domestic overnight visitation and 4th for day trip visitation, highlighting its competitive position, but also the opportunity to elevate visitor spend by improving overnight appeal, experience quality, and product diversity.

In the 10 years since 2015, Central Coast has seen a strong average annual growth rate (AAGR) in both day trip visitation (+1.5% p.a.) and overnight visitation (+4.0% p.a.), outperforming the Regional NSW average. This is likely driven by the region's rapid population increase, which presents a significant opportunity for Central Coast to further capitalise on.

Over the same 10-year period, the AAGR of international visitors to the Central Coast has declined (-1.3% p.a.) and currently sits below the AAGR for Regional NSW (+0.4% p.a.). This trend is likely a result of the slower post-pandemic recovery. However, international visitation is expected to strengthen with improved accessibility through the introduction of new international travel routes via Newcastle Airport and the upcoming new Western Sydney Airport.

Visitors

5.6 million



Visitor spend

\$1.3 billion



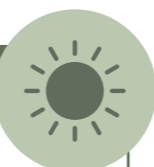
Domestic Daytrip Visitors

3.8 million 67%
\$397 million 31%

+1.5%

Average Annual Growth Rate (10 year)
0.9% for Regional NSW

Spend per visitor per trip
\$105 Central Coast
\$129 North Coast NSW
\$178 The Hunter NSW
\$157 Regional NSW



Domestic Overnight Visitors

1.8 million 32%
\$870 million 67%

+4.0%

Average Annual Growth Rate (10 year)
3.5% for Regional NSW

2.6 nights

Average Length of Stay

Spend per visitor per trip
\$484 Central Coast
\$792 North Coast NSW
\$649 The Hunter NSW
\$720 Regional NSW



International Visitors

41 thousand 1%
\$35 million 2%

-1.3%

Average Annual Growth Rate (10 year)
0.4% for Regional NSW

16.2 nights

Average Length of Stay

Spend per visitor per trip
\$848 Central Coast
\$910 North Coast NSW
\$1,368 The Hunter NSW
\$1,580 Regional NSW



Central Coast Hinterland

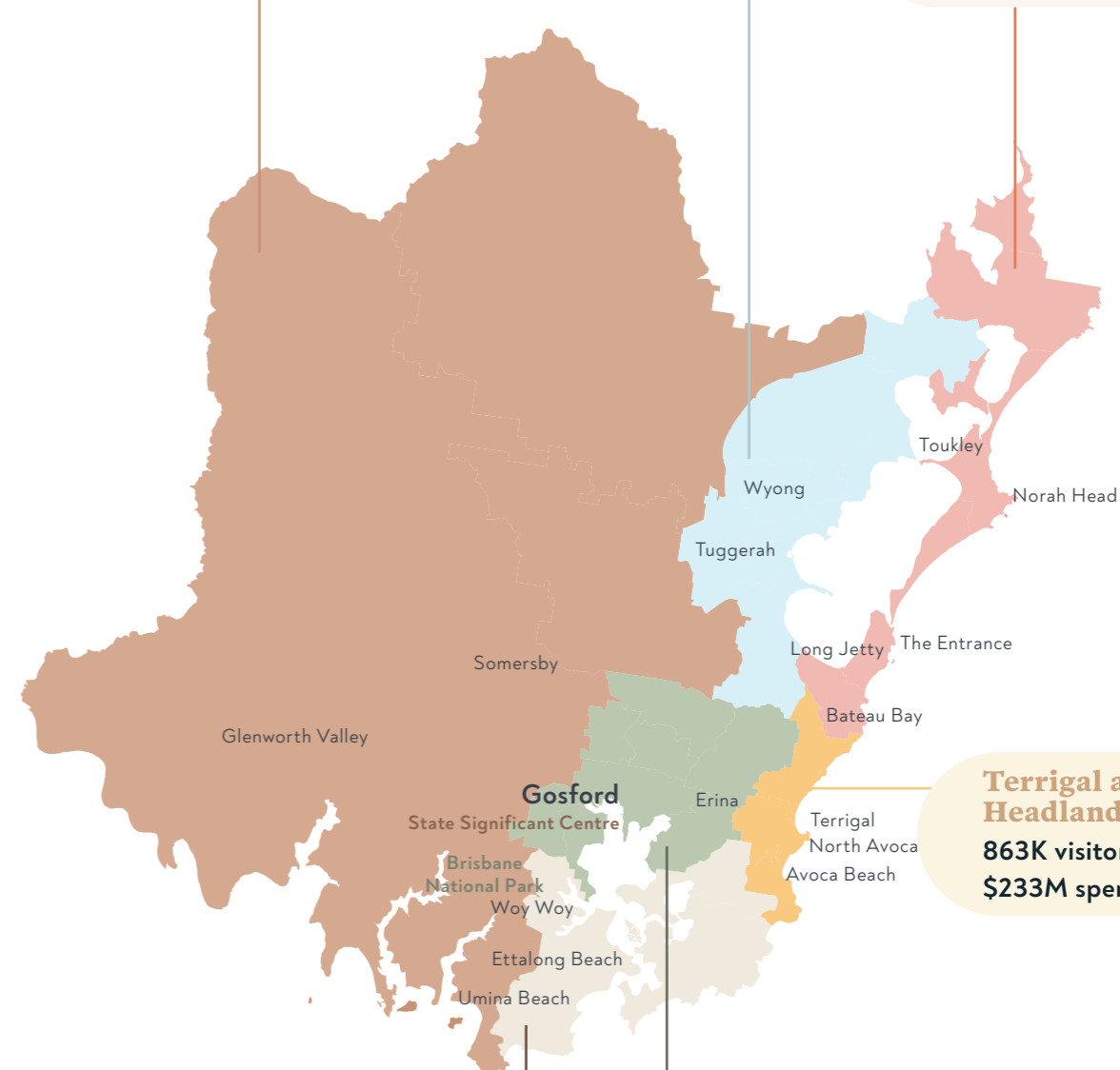
496K visitors 9%
\$96M spend 7%

Wyong and Tuggerah

878K visitors 16%
\$162M spend 12%

The Entrance and Northern Lakes

1.2M visitors 21%
\$268M spend 21%



Terrigal and the Headlands

863K visitors 15%
\$233M spend 18%

Gosford and Surrounds

1.3M visitors 23%
\$234M spend 18%

The Peninsula

931K visitors 17%
\$309M spend 24%

Figure 4: Subregional Visitation




Source: Tourism Research Australia (TRA), National (NVS) and International Visitor Survey (IVS), Year-ending (YE) December 2015 to 2024.

2.2 Subregional Visitation

An analysis of visitor patterns across the subregions of the Central Coast provides valuable insights into how visitation is dispersed throughout the region. Gosford and surrounds and The Entrance and Northern Lakes are the most visited subregions, attracting 1.3 million and 1.2 million visitors, respectively. Together, these subregions make up almost half of the visitation to the Central Coast, however, generate comparatively lower proportions of overall visitor expenditure. This is likely due to the strong proportion of day trip visitors to the region who are typically spending less than overnight visitors.

Contrastingly, the Peninsula subregion generated the highest overall visitor expenditure, despite receiving comparatively low visitation. It is the only subregion to follow this pattern, suggesting visitors to the Peninsula spend more per visit. This is likely attributed to the high proportion of overnight stays, which is driven by the variety of visitor accommodation options available and the presences of products and experiences that encourage and enable longer stays.

Table 4: Subregional Visitation by Visitor Type

	 Domestic Day Trip Visitors	 Domestic Overnight Visitors	 International Visitors
Central Coast Hinterland	77%	22%	1%
Gosford and Surrounds	80%	19%	1%
The Entrance and Northern Lakes	67%	32%	1%
The Peninsula	41%	58%	1%
Terrigal and the Headlands	57%	42%	1%
Wyong and Tuggerah	80%	19%	1%

Source: TRA, NVS & IVS, YE December 2024.

The Central Coast Hinterland attracted the smallest share of visitors (9%) and generated the lowest visitor expenditure (7%). This reflects the limited visitor offerings and accommodation options compared to the more urban and coastal destinations on the Central Coast.

International visitation is low across all subregions in the Central Coast, indicating several barriers for overseas visitors, including accessibility and limited appeal to the international market.

Overall, the subregional data highlights that high visitation does not necessarily translate into high economic return. The economic value of overnight visitors is demonstrated in the Peninsula, where fewer visitors are contributing largely to the visitor expenditure. Subregions dominated by day trip visitors may benefit from strategies aimed at increasing the length of stay and spend per visitor. Additionally, encouraging visitor dispersal across the region will help alleviate pressure on popular destinations during peak seasons.

2.3 Source Markets

The Central Coast is primarily an intrastate visitor destination, with 100% domestic day trip visitors originating from NSW. Majority of these visitors are from Sydney (71%), with a smaller proportion from Regional NSW (29%).

Among day trip visitors from Regional NSW, most travel from the Hunter Region (51%), followed by a significant share from within the Central Coast itself (42%), indicating strong intra-regional travel.

Similarly, majority of domestic overnight visitors are from NSW (92%). Sydney is the dominant source market, representing 67% of overnight visitors from NSW. Within Regional NSW, the Hunter Region (26%), North Coast (16%) and the South Coast (15%) contribute the largest shares of visitation.

Figure 5: Interstate Visitor Origin, Central Coast

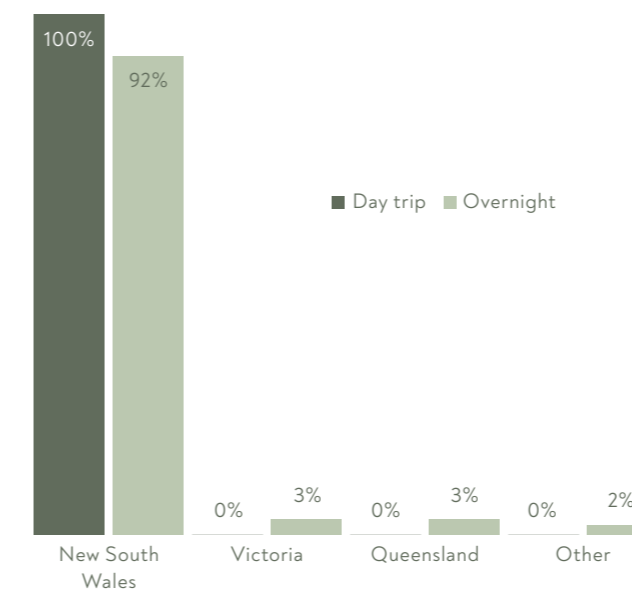
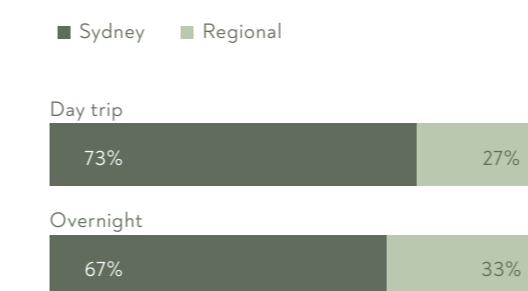


Figure 6: NSW Visitor Origin, Central Coast



Source: TRA, NVS & IVS, YE December 2024.

Interstate overnight visitors make up just 8% of visitation to the Central Coast. This presents an opportunity to grow the interstate market by developing and promoting attractions and enhancing the perception of the region.

International visitation to the Central Coast is in its infancy. Currently, the key international markets for the region include New Zealand (22%), USA (17%), Hong Kong (11%) and England (10%).

Figure 7: Regional NSW Visitor Origin, Central Coast

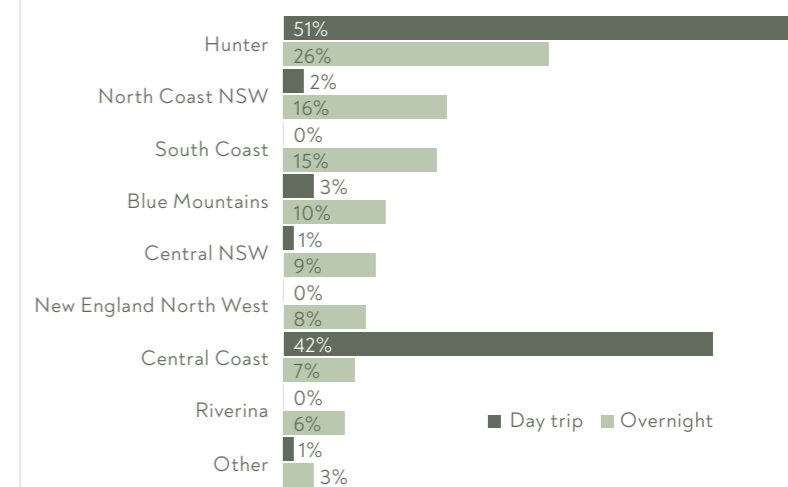
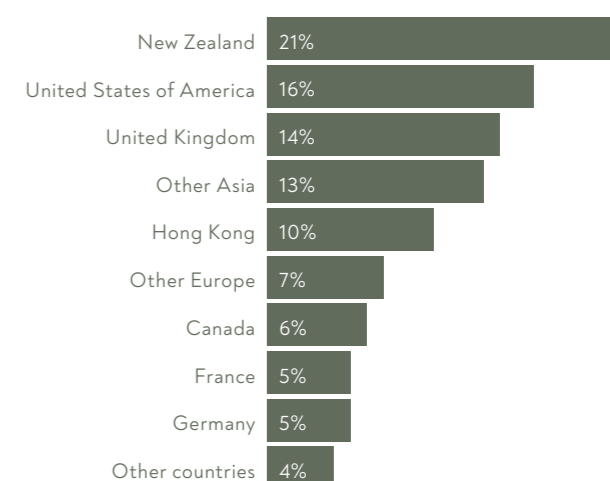


Figure 8: International Visitor Origin, Central Coast





2.4 Visitor Profile

Table 6 summarises the profile of visitors to the Central Coast, including day trip, overnight and international market segments. This information provides an overview of each visitor market segment, highlighting the key differences between each.

Domestic Day Trip Visitor Profile

The domestic day trip visitor market to the Central Coast is primarily visiting friends and relatives' visitors (41%), as well as holiday and leisure visitors (38%). Visitors are largely engaging in passive activities, such as dining out (44%), visiting their friends and relatives' (38%) and visiting the beach (33%). Day trip visitors are travelling mostly during the warmer months in summer (27%) and spring (30%).




Domestic Overnight Visitor Profile

The domestic overnight visitor market to the Central Coast predominately comprises of holiday and leisure visitors (50%) and visiting friends and relatives' visitors (39%). These visitors are typically staying at their friend or relatives' property (51%) or a self-contained house or apartment (12%). Visitors are spending their time dining out (59%) and undertaking walks. These visitors are predominately travelling in the warmer months.

International Visitor Profile

The international visitor market to the Central Coast is primarily older visitors who are visiting their friends and relatives' (56%). Visitors are typically staying at their friends or relatives' property (64%) and spending their time dining out (91%), going to the beach (81%) and general sightseeing (76%).

Table 6: Central Coast Visitor Profile, 2024

				
		Domestic Day Trip Visitors	Domestic Overnight Visitors	International Visitors
Purpose of Visit	Holiday/leisure	38%	50%	31%
	VFR	41%	39%	56%
	Business	12%	8%	8%
	Other	8%	4%	6%
Age Groups	15 to 24 years old	20%	14%	7%
	25 to 34 years old	13%	20%	16%
	35 to 49 years old	27%	18%	18%
	50 to 64 years old	23%	25%	29%
	65 years old +	17%	22%	30%
Seasonality	Summer	27%	32%	n.a.
	Autumn	22%	20%	n.a.
	Winter	22%	21%	n.a.
	Spring	30%	27%	n.a.
Activities	Dining out	44%	59%	91%
	VFR	38%	46%	n.a.
	Go to the beach	33%	53%	81%
	Go shopping	16%	16%	70%
	General sightseeing	9%	21%	76%
Travel Party	Solo Traveller	n.a.	30%	60%
	Adult couple	n.a.	27%	20%
	Family group	n.a.	16%	12%
	Friends & relatives	n.a.	25%	6%
Accommodation	Friend or relatives' property	-	51%	64%
	Hotel/motel (below 4 star)	-	10%	10%
	Luxury hotel (4 or 5 star)	-	4%	5%
	Self-contained house or apartment	-	12%	4%
	Serviced apartment	-	2%	6%

Source: TRA, NVS and IVS, YE December 2024.

n.a. = no data collected.

2.5 Target Markets

The following have been identified as the target markets for the Central Coast. Some of these are existing markets, whilst others have been identified as future targets in terms of their potential to drive visitation and yield.

Table 7: Central Coast Target Markets

Target Market	Target Market Overview	Visitation share	When do they travel?	What do they travel for?
DOMESTIC MARKETS				
Visiting Friends & Relatives (VFR) Market	With the region's rapidly growing population, the VFR market is expected to strengthen further.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 41% of all domestic visitors 51% of overnight visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During weekends and public holidays, as well as around school holidays and holiday seasons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To visit and spend time with family and friends. Passive experiences, including dining out, retail shopping and general sightseeing with their local friends and family.
Over 55	This market is strategically important, as many are retired or semi-retired and have flexibility to travel mid-week and year-round, supporting off-peak visitation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 37% of visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often travel midweek, taking advantage of flexible schedules. Increased travel during off-peak periods, including winter months when heading north. Often take extended stays during shoulder seasons, avoiding peak summer periods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enjoy the region's natural-assets, including the coast and hinterland. Slowed-paced recreational activities, such as scenic drives, walking, golf, fishing and birdwatching.
Family Market	There is an opportunity to grow this market by improving the availability and affordability of family-friendly accommodation and attractions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 16% of visitors to the Central Coast are travelling with their family. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily travelling during school holidays and long weekends, especially around summer holidays. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeking family friendly activities, including swimming, parks and playgrounds. Visiting local attractions suited to children, including wildlife parks and galleries. Attending child-friendly events and festivals.
Young Sydneysiders	The region's proximity to Sydney makes it an appealing short break destination for this younger demographic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Around 26% of visitors are aged between 15 and 29. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Travel on weekends and during school/university holidays. During summer and holiday breaks seeking short getaways. Some midweek travel for special occasions, taking advantage of the region's proximity to Sydney. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeking escapes from Sydney's urban environment, attracted by beaches and outdoor activities. Engaging in social activities such as dining out, bars, and attending music or cultural events. Participating in recreational activities, such as surfing, hiking, and water sports.

Target Market	Target Market Overview	Visitation share	When do they travel?	What do they travel for?
Western Sydney	With high growth expected in this region, the Western Sydney market will continue to be an opportunity for the Central Coast.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 26% of day trip visitors 34% of overnight visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During weekends and public holidays, as well as around school holidays and holiday seasons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beaches and summer holidays. Passive nature-based experiences.
Business Events	The region is well-positioned for growth in the business events market, supported by its proximity to Sydney and other major population centres, offering strong potential to drive off-peak and mid-week visitation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 11% of visitors to the Central Coast are travelling for business. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily travel mid-week and year-round travel. Less frequent travel during school holidays and peak summer periods when holiday visitors dominate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attending conferences, industry events, workshops and corporate meetings hosted in the region. Participating in networking, training, and professional development opportunities. Exploring the potential to extend trips for personal holidays.
INTERNATIONAL MARKETS				
Visiting Friends & Relatives Market	With the region's rapidly growing population, the international VFR market is expected to strengthen further.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 56% of international visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Travel throughout the year. Have the flexibility to travel mid-week. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visiting friends and relatives who reside on the Central Coast or surrounding areas. Take recommendations from their friend or relative on where to go and what to do.
Tour Bus Market	Visitors travelling as part of an organised tour, usually originating from Sydney. There is an opportunity to capture this market by creating international visitor itineraries and developing international ready products and experiences.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Travel throughout the year. Have the flexibility to travel mid-week. Visitation may increase with major events and tourism campaigns in Sydney. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often travelling as part of a broader travel itineraries that includes Sydney. Australia's coasts, including beaches, native wildlife and scenic nature. Visiting Pelican Time at The Entrance.
Free and Independent Traveller (FIT) Market	There is an opportunity to capture this market by promoting the region as a complementary destination to Sydney, offering nature, relaxation and authentic experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make up less than 1% of total visitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Travel throughout the year. Have the flexibility to travel mid-week. Visitation may increase with major events and tourism campaigns in Sydney. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeking authentic and unique local experiences. Seeking to participate and learn about different lifestyles and cultures. Often travelling as part of a broader travel itineraries that includes Sydney.

2.6 Product and Experience Strengths

The Central Coast captures the essence of the classic Australian getaway yet delivers far more than just a typical beachside escape. The region's greatest strength lies in its natural landscapes, from its breathtaking coastlines and pristine beaches to the expansive national and state parks, the region is defined by its nature.

Visitors connect with nature through attractions like the Australian Reptile Park, whale watching tours, treetop adventures and water-based experiences.

Secondary strengths lie in the food and drink offering, including restaurants, cafes, breweries and distilleries, alongside a strong arts and culture offering. Furthermore, the Central Coast hosts a vibrant calendar of events and festivals that showcase the local produce and creativity.

Emerging strengths include First Nations tourism, offering the opportunities to share the world's oldest living culture with domestic and international visitors. Although there is currently limited product, the region's 3,000 recognised sites provides strong foundations for growth, particularly with support for business development and cultural storytelling.

The wellness sector is an emerging national trend, and the Central Coast is well-placed to capitalise on this sector with its natural assets already offering visitors with the opportunity to relax and unwind.

Agritourism is growing on the Central Coast, especially in the Central Coast Hinterland, where established businesses are beginning to engage visitors through produce trails and soft adventure activities. While the coastline remains the hub for visitor experiences, the Central Coast Hinterland is developing its own distinctive identity.

Secondary Product Strengths

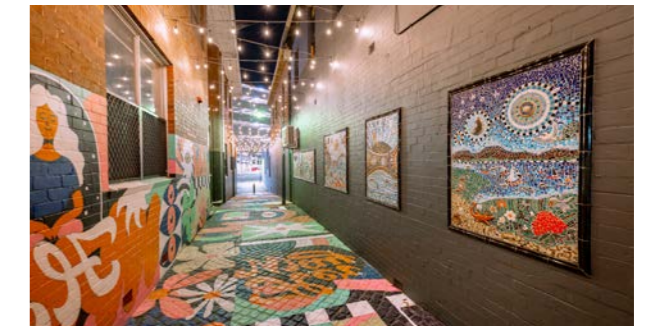
Events and Festivals



Food and Drink



Arts and Culture



Primary Product Strengths

Beaches, Coasts and Waterways



Nature, Wildlife and Outdoor Recreation

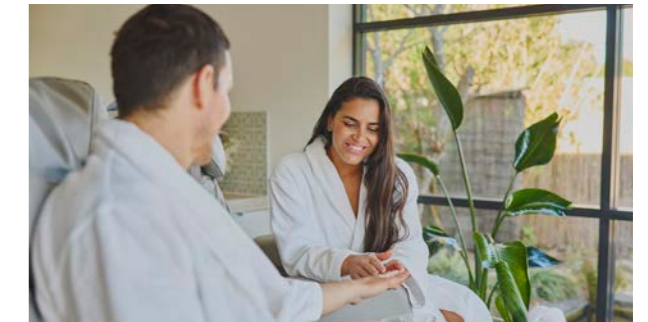


Emerging Product Strengths

First Nations



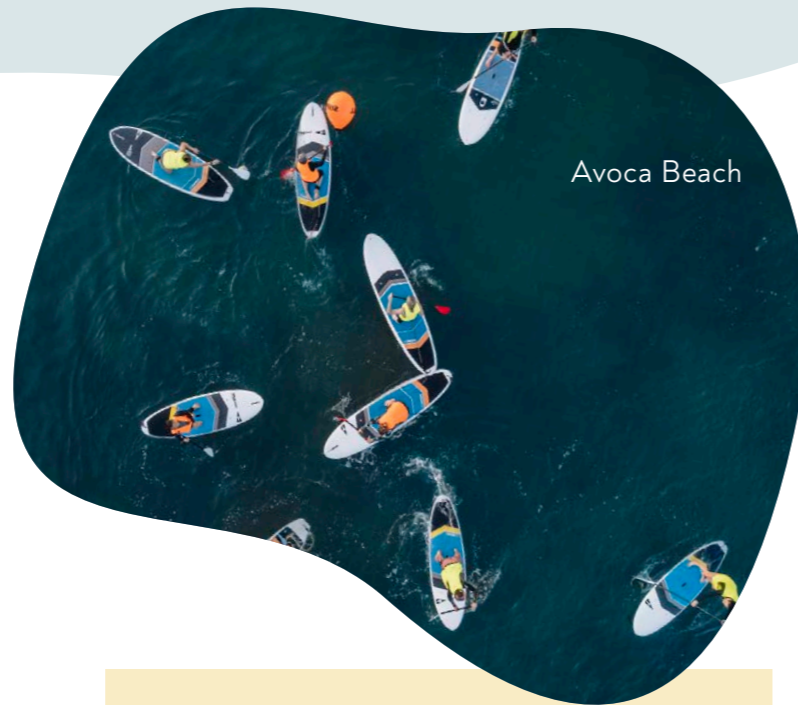
Wellness



Agritourism



2.7 Primary Product Strengths



Beaches, Coasts and Waterways

Beaches, rivers, lakes, bays and estuaries play a defining role in shaping the Central Coast visitor experience, particularly along the scenic coastline. Popular water-based activities include swimming, snorkeling, surfing, kayaking, canoeing, fishing, diving and guided boat tours.

Surfing is a significant year-round drawcard for the Central Coast, with several popular surfing locations along the expansive coastline. The Norah Head National Surfing Reserve, stretching from Hargraves Beach to Pelican Point, is nationally recognised location for its outstanding surf, as well as the rich and decorated surf culture.

The ability to access waterways varies across the Central Coast. There is strong potential to enhance waterway infrastructure at popular visitor destinations to improve accessibility to the water and foreshore areas. This may include wharves, jetties, boat ramps, marinas and ocean baths.

There is considerable opportunity to further activate the region's lakes and river systems, not only during the peak periods, but throughout the cooler seasons with innovative on-water activations.

Challenges

- Continuous accessibility for vehicles and pedestrians along the entire coastline.
- Limited hero product on the waterfront.
- Connectivity barriers between waterfront and retail precincts.
- Limited access to equipment hire and boat hire.
- Lack of water infrastructure, such as moorings, marinas and kayak launch.
- General public amenity is lacking, dated and uninspiring.
- Lack of public awareness and engagement with surfing culture.

Opportunities

- Coastal walks connecting various sites, beaches and townships.
- Cruise product.
- Waterfall touring route.
- Moorings and marinas for commercial operators.



Nature, Wildlife and Outdoor Recreation

Nature-based tourism is a major drawcard for visitors to the Central Coast, offering a rich diversity of landscapes and outdoor experiences. The region is home to a variety of natural assets, including national and state parks, scenic walking and hiking trails, waterfalls and recreational amenities, such as tree top walks and golf courses.

Prominent parks in the area include Bouddi, Brisbane Water, Popran and Wyrabalong National Parks, along with Munmorah State Conservation Area and several other forests and reserves. These natural spaces are core to the Central Coast's ecotourism experience and are complemented by lookouts, established walking tracks, and other visitor-friendly facilities.

The Bouddi Coastal Walk stands out as a flagship 8-kilometre trail through Bouddi National Park, one of the top ten most visited national parks in NSW. The Central Coast also boasts breathtaking viewpoints, such as the Skillion and Mount Ettalong Lookout, offering sweeping coastal vistas.

There is strong potential to expand the network of coastal walks by developing trails that connect key visitor destinations and attractions, such as the Norah Head Lighthouse.

Challenges

- Limited eco-friendly accommodation in nature.
- Informal mountain bike usage in national parks, including Bouddi National Park.
- Accessible experiences are limited, such as whale watching tours.
- Wayfinding and access to more remote experiences.

Opportunities

- Coastal walks connecting various sites, beaches and townships.
- Cruise product.
- Waterfall touring route.
- Moorings and marinas for commercial operators.

2.8 Secondary Product Strengths

Events and Festivals

The Central Coast's events and festivals calendar features a variety of small to mid-sized events, with many currently concentrated in the southern part of the region. Events such as ChromeFest, the Lakes Festival, and the Harvest Festival draw strong community and visitor interest.

To create a more sustainable and impactful events calendar, there is a need to better distribute events, both geographically across the region and throughout the year, including weekday and off-peak periods.

There is strong potential to expand and enhance events that align closely with the Central Coast's unique identity which celebrate the area's natural beauty, local produce, creative talent and community spirit. Strengthening these place-based events offers a valuable opportunity to grow visitation while building the Central Coast's brand as a vibrant and exciting destination.

There is an opportunity for Central Coast to capitalise on international and national sporting events, by leveraging the full potential of polytec Stadium. The multifunctional facility, with a capacity of approximately 20,000 people, is home to the A-League soccer team Central Coast Mariners and regularly hosts NRL matches. polytec Stadium is well positioned to attract a broader calendar of high-profile events, including international and national sporting events and music performances, to drive visitation and visitor expenditure in the region.

The Central Coast Events Strategy, identifies the following strategic priorities:

- Build a diverse and innovative events portfolio that supports a growing region;
- Strengthen the region's economy;
- Support event sustainability and inclusive event delivery;
- Streamline events process for external event providers; and
- Reposition the Central Coast as a destination of choice for event operators.



The Entrance

Challenges

- Lack of hero tourism events that attract significant interstate audience.
- Lack of large-scale indoor event facility.
- Underutilised facilities, such as the polytec Stadium.

Opportunities

- Support a year-round mix of events that reflect local stories, cultures and creativity.
- Showcase events that celebrate culture, local heritage and contemporary expression.
- Develop a balanced portfolio with a spread of events over the year, including the shoulder and winter seasons to reduce the gap between peak and off-peak visitation.
- Strengthen Council's role as a facilitator by offering practical tools, guidance and advice throughout the event journey.
- Attract and develop the following event typologies:
 - Nature-based;
 - Health and wellbeing;
 - Cultural;
 - Sporting;
 - Food and drink;
 - Signature; and
 - Business.

Food and Drink

The food and drink offering is a secondary strength of the Central Coast. Recent investments in contemporary dining venues, including acclaimed and chef-hatted restaurants, are strengthening the Central Coast's reputation as a rising foodie hotspot.

Despite these strengths, the region's food and drink scene faces several challenges, including a relatively uniform range of cuisines and experiences, especially along the coast, as well as inconsistencies in service standards and food quality.

Challenges

- Opening hours and seasonality are limited across the region.
- Lack of skilled hospitality staff and general staffing shortages.
- Local socio-economic status limits support for food and drink businesses in off-peak periods.

Opportunities

- Collaboration among like operators to create informal foodie trails, offer referrals and establish the habit of repeat visitation.
- Experience development linking the regions product strengths with food and drink i.e. gourmet picnic collection for hikers, localised room service and mini bars.
- Leverage Terrigal Pavilion as an impetus for further food and drink development.



Arts and Culture

Central Coast Council's Cultural Plan 2020–2025 serves as the region's roadmap for advancing arts and culture as a key strength of the Central Coast, structured around four key themes:

1. Building a visible creative identity;
2. Growing our creative sector;
3. Embracing our cultural life; and
4. Enlivening cultural space and places.

This strategic framework outlines a range of initiatives to foster cultural development across the region.

In recent years, the number and diversity of artists, performers and cultural practitioners has expanded significantly, driving increased demand for both exhibition and performance venues, and dedicated creative workspaces.

While the coastal areas are home to a growing number of galleries and theatres, the opening of The Art House in Wyong has been a major step forward in the ability to host large-scale arts and cultural events. However, the region continues to lack key infrastructure, such as museums and dedicated “maker spaces”, that support the creation and development of new work.

Challenges

- Low representation of arts and culture and the need to strengthen capacity in this sector.

Opportunities

- Arts and music events in key destinations such as The Entrance, Gosford and Terrigal.
- Investment in Gosford Regional Gallery to create a major arts destination in Central Coast.
- Street art in Gosford to activate the town and create vibrancy
- Maker spaces to encourage arts and cultural development
- Public art and sculpture trails connecting the region.

2.9 Emerging Product Strengths

First Nations

- The Central Coast boasts a rich and continuous Indigenous cultural heritage. The traditional owners for the Central Coast area are the Darkinjung people and the boundaries of Darkinjung land extend from the Hawkesbury River in the south, Lake Macquarie in the north, the McDonald River and Wollombi up to Mt Yengo in the west and the Pacific Ocean in the East.
- The Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) works with both First Nations and non-First Nations organisations, carrying out legislation to protect Aboriginal Culture and Heritage.
- The Central Coast is also home to 3000 registered First Nations cultural sites. While some indigenous tourism experiences currently exist, there is a clear opportunity for the strategic, and culturally respectful, development of new products and experiences that celebrate and share the region's deep Indigenous heritage.
- There is proven appetite for First Nations experiences according to Tourism Research Australia research. In 2023/24, experiencing an Aboriginal art/craft or cultural display was the most popular First Nations activity for international travellers and visiting an Aboriginal site or community was the most popular First Nations activity for domestic travellers.



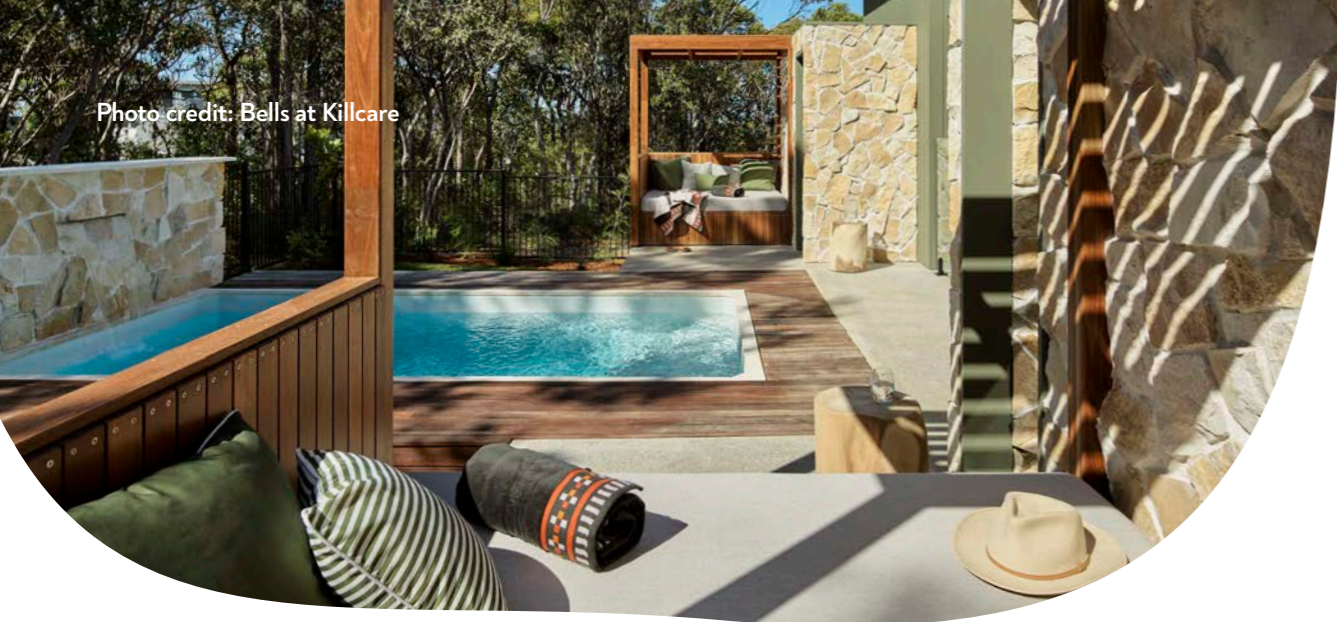
Challenges

- Developing product that is consistently available.
- Managing seasonality and demand.

Opportunities

- Packaged and commissionable product that is accessible to international audiences.
- Enhancement of Five Lands Walk to a permanent offering.
- Opportunities for cultural interpretation and tours in Bouddi and Brisbane Water National Parks.
- Water-based tour opportunities with cultural heritage interpretation.





Wellness

A natural progression to build on the product strengths of water, nature and outdoor recreation is wellness. According to research, Australians are spending more than \$5,239 per capita on wellness ranking the population number 6 in the world on the scale of spend.

The Central Coast is slowly emerging as a destination for health and wellness, offering experiences that align closely with a holistic view of personal wellbeing.

Key product areas include:

Physical Wellness: The Central Coast encourages an active, healthy lifestyle through its outdoor activities on offer, including bushwalking, surfing, swimming, hiking, cycling and other recreational activities, many of which have low barriers to entry and require minimal equipment or participation fee.

Emotional & Spiritual Wellness: Nature, tranquility and the slower pace of life on the Central Coast creates a sense of calm and escape. This forms a major reason why visitors travel to the Central Coast, to rest, recharge and reset.

Environmental Wellness: The region's commitment to sustainability and ecotourism highlights an opportunity to raise a broader awareness of people's relationship with nature. Maintaining a clean, healthy environment should be incorporated into every visit.

Social Wellness: As a common place where people gather to connect with family and friends, the Central Coast is rich in social experiences. Visiting friends and relatives remains one of the region's top visitor audiences.

With its proximity to Sydney, the Central Coast is ideally positioned as an easy, restorative getaway. Developing and packaging products and experiences that support this type of visitation will be paramount to the growth of this sector.

Challenges

- Establishing a reputation for wellness experiences.
- Lack of hero wellness product such as a large-scale day spa or wilderness retreat.

Opportunities

- The development of retreat and wellness accommodation and facilities.
- Partnerships with key agencies, such as NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services.
- Private investment in wellness products.
- Wellness experiences incorporated into activations of key precincts such as foreshore yoga and meditation.

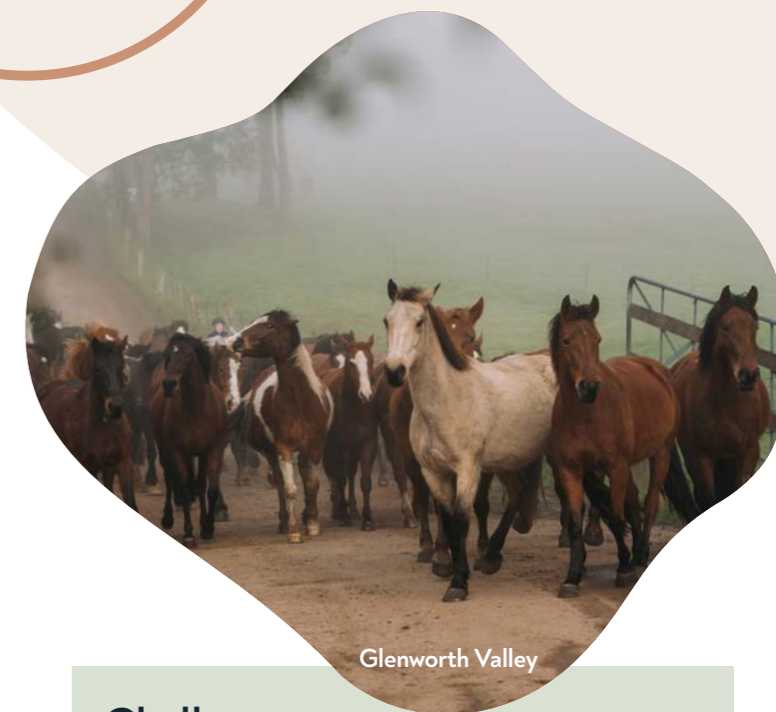
Agritourism

The Central Coast is seeing growth in farmgate and agritourism product. This is likely influenced by the changing consumer behaviours with the desire to understand where food is coming from and to consume more sustainable food products.

Many current operators on the Central Coast are small-scale and in the early stages of establishment. During this stage, a collaborative approach to product development offers the greatest benefit. Initiatives such as the Central Coast Makers Trail, which showcases high-quality local produce, have the potential to add scale, enhance visibility and create a more cohesive visitor experience.

The Central Coast Hinterland presents a significant opportunity for growth in unique and immersive food experiences. However, the area currently lacks visitor-ready, high-quality dining options that appeal to target markets. Leveraging the region's developing farmgate offerings and investing in infrastructure that reflects the area's scenic appeal will be key to establishing the Central Coast Hinterland as a premium visitor destination.

A key challenge for operators, particularly farmers, looking to expand the current business for tourism purposes is the restrictive regulations and extensive planning required. In 2022, the NSW State Government introduced reforms to make it easier for farmers to use their land for agritourism purposes to complement existing agricultural businesses. This includes farm experiences, cellar doors, cafés, retreats, roadside stalls, fruit picking, small scale events, such as weddings, and other activities.



Glenworth Valley

Challenges

- Low awareness of farmgate products and on-farm experiences.
- Accessibility of farm experiences.
- Limited supporting product, such as accommodation and quality dining.
- Existing and potential investors face difficulties when navigating the development application process in Central Coast.
- Duration for development approval and issue of a development permit.

Opportunities

- Continued development of trails that connect agritourism product.
- Elevation of the oyster and pearl farming given it is so unique to the region and a desirable product for both the domestic and international audience.
- Farm gate tourism development.
- Nature and farm accommodation opportunities.
- Food-related experiences.

Chapter 3

Destination Enablers



This section provides an overview of the infrastructure that supports and promotes the Central Coast visitor economy, including a brand and marketing, digital and physical visitor information services, accommodation and transport. This section also provides an overview of the subregions that make up the Central Coast and the visitor destinations that are key to the visitor economy.

3.1 Brand and Marketing

The 'Love Central Coast' brand is strongly and consistently utilised across digital and print platforms as a destination brand for the region. This brand was professionally developed in 2020 with a vision, purpose and strategic objectives. Four target audiences were identified in this process:

- Local community living in region;
- Potential visitors including VFR;
- Creative, innovative and dynamic businesses; and
- Potential residents.

Whilst the brand is a destination brand currently used for predominantly tourism promotion, there is an opportunity to expand the brand to encompass place and be reflected in amenity and placemaking activities. A place brand is more than just a destination brand and includes characteristics such as the region's culture, heritage, infrastructure, business environment, lifestyle and feeling. It aims to portray the composition of the 'place' that equally appeals to potential investors, businesses, visitors, and residents.

By introducing the brand into broader activities across the Central Coast, it will elevate the destination brand and increase awareness and ownership both locally and beyond the LGA borders. Work will be undertaken in 2025 to refresh the brand strategy and conduct a review with consideration to incorporating a place brand component.

Challenges

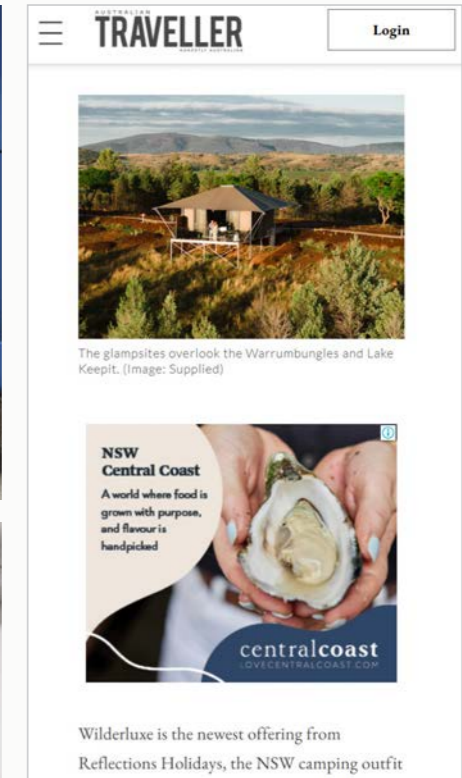
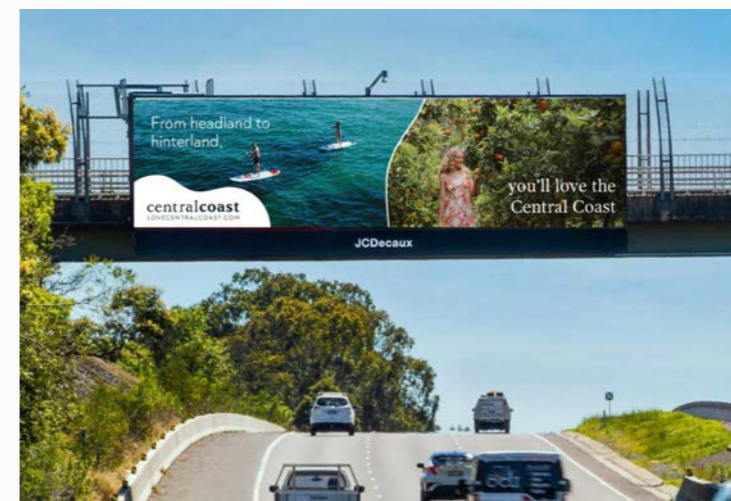
- Budget limitations to fully extend the brand into place.
- Ensuring that the promotion of region reflects the actual experience had in the destination.
- Gaining market awareness for the individual townships within the destination using a regional brand.

Case Studies and Opportunities

Encourage broader the use of the 'Love Central Coast' destination brand by creating local ambassadors, including individual businesses, community groups, schools, sporting clubs and associations. An example of the influence that can be achieved through this type of activity is the 'I Amsterdam' campaign, aimed to consolidate and promote the identity of Amsterdam highlighting the visitor appeal and the strong economy, cultural richness and business diversity. The installation of 'instagrammable' letter signage in key locations saw the city become globally visible through shared images on social media. The same tag line, with strong recall and awareness, has been used across multiple disciplines, including business investment and new resident attraction.

A refresh of the Destination Brand Strategy is anticipated ensuring that target markets still align, sense checking the awareness, recognition and cut through of the existing brand, and creating any additional assets including updating imagery as needed. This refresh will expand the destination brand to be utilised as a place brand alongside a strategy to deliver the brand across both audiences of visitors and community.

To expand the reach and ownership of the brand among tourism businesses, continue the roll out of destination brand industry tools, such as widgets for websites, and refresh the industry tool kit to reflect any changes or improvements to the destination brand based on the refresh.



3.2 Physical Visitor Services

The Central Coast Visitor Centre (CCVC) is located at The Entrance and has recently been refurbished as an accessible, accredited hub for visitors. With proximity to the waterfront, parks, playgrounds, public toilets, parking and nearby retail and hospitality businesses, a visit to the CCVC can be incorporated with broader activities. The CCVC also has a strong retail element and has recently commenced stocking produce from the region.

The CCVC is open daily and distributes visitor information both digitally and physically in the form of maps, official visitors guides and individual business flyers. Based on the data collected by the CCVC, the leading enquiry is for things to do, directions and maps and the official visitor guide, followed by enquiries about Pelican Time, one of the regions leading experiences. In the 2023/24 financial year, total visitation to the CCVC was 29,949 visitors. Of these visitors 37% were from Sydney and surrounds, 14% intrastate, 13% interstate and 8.5% international. Over a quarter of visitors to the CCVC were Central Coast residents (27.5%).

An additional physical visitor servicing point, the Ettalong Diggers Visitor Information Centre, is located within the Ettalong Diggers RSL Club in Ettalong Beach. The accredited centre is staffed 6 days per week, with brochure stands servicing visitors after hours when the Club is open.

Challenges

- The CCVC is located deep into the destination as opposed to at a gateway location, which may limit coincidental and drive by visitation and dispersal.
- No dedicated RV/caravan parking at the CCVC, making it difficult for these travellers to access the centre, particularly in peak periods.
- Ongoing Council investment and resources are required to maintain and operate the CCVC.

Case Studies and Opportunities

Today's visitors seek out information from multiple sources and visitor services need to diversify to meet these needs. Many destinations are adjusting their visitor servicing to meet the visitor where they are and have a more flexible approach from the standard bricks and mortar visitor services. At Moira Shire, location on the VIC-NSW border, an accredited, fully custom designed van is utilised to take visitor services to the people. During the peak visitor season, the van travels to key visitor destinations across the Shire. Outside of this, the van attends events and festivals, as well as travelling outside the region to inspire potential visitors. The van is staffed by Council staff and volunteers.

Static visitor information points can be introduced to assist visitor dispersal especially in high traffic locations, such as caravan parks. The Barrington Coast region have implemented information points in cafes, museums and galleries, that can be identified by a dedicated brand and provide visitors with practical information.

The Central Coast is a vast region with a diverse product offering and ensuring industry is educated about the product offering can encourage increased length of stay and yield as research indicates that word of mouth is highly influential. Programs such as the Tassie Tourism Ambassador Program, created by Tourism Industry Council Tasmania, is a free online training course to create local ambassadors and advocates. There are four self-paced modules to be completed online. The aim of the program is 'to provide (industry) the skills and confidence to offer visitors a genuinely heartfelt welcome'. Participants watch short videos and then undertake a quiz to be rewarded with Tassie Tourism Ambassador status. This program is easy to access and provides tourism businesses and their staff with an understanding of the tourism industry and products and experiences available in the region.



Central Coast Visitor Centre, The Entrance

3.3 Digital Visitor Services

Council operates the Love Central Coast destination website and social media across three platforms, including Instagram, Facebook and YouTube.

The Love Central Coast website is visually appealing and consistently branded offering visitors an aesthetically appealing view of the Central Coast as a destination. The website ranks third in an organic Google Search for Central Coast, below Visit NSW and Wikipedia.

The Central Coast Instagram account has approximately 47,600 followers and is curated with daily posts of inspiring images of the Central Coast. User generated content (UGC) is featured and gives a realistic angle to a visit to the Central Coast allowing prospective visitors to see themselves in the destination.

Content is also posted daily on the Love Central Coast Facebook page, which has approximately 7,000 followers. Much of the content on the page is shared from other platforms, including media articles, events, the Love Central Coast website and other social media channels.

Love Central Coast has a dedicated YouTube Channel with 299 subscribers and a collection of 70 videos. New videos are added every few months to the channel.

Challenges

- Accessibility and availability of hero experiences is limited but appear strongly in the digital presence.
- Maintaining the content on the website to ensure links are working to the correct information; images are not missing and out of date information is removed.
- Striking the appropriate authenticity to find the balance between the use of aspirational imagery and the reality of the actual experience.

Case Studies and Opportunities

Industry benchmarks indicate that consumers are spending between 1 to 4 minutes on average, on a website making it critical to have intuitive practical and relevant information readily available. Victoria's High Country website is a good example of a destination website that speaks to the visitor experiences on offer and provides practical information using simple language that a visitor identifies with.

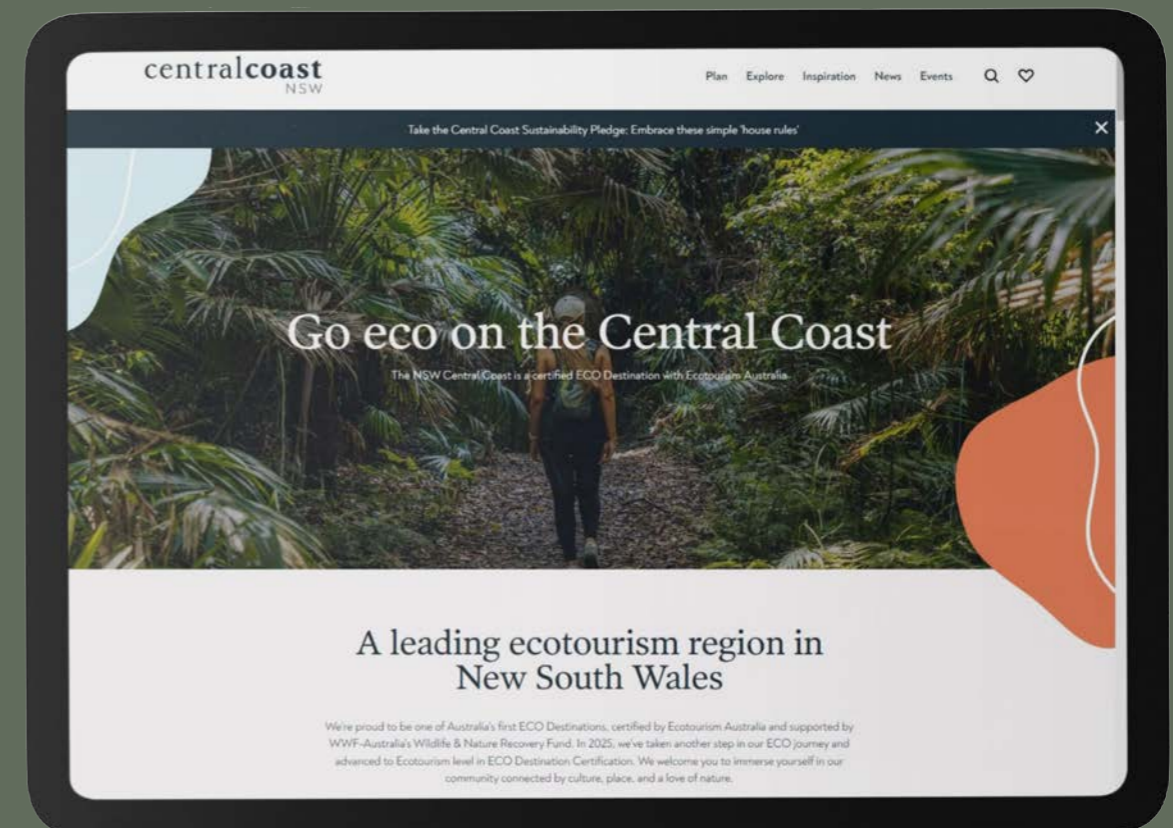
With the arrival of AI tools such as chat bots - providing accurate, efficient and convenient information in the digital space can be extremely targeted and easy for the visitor to access. Tourism and Events Queensland introduced an AI Travel Planning Chatbot on Queensland.com, named 'Bunji'. The chat bot will:

Enhance the user experience, offering personalised recommendations, tips and advice;

Drive additional leads to industry by recommending operators; and

Provide data insights from the conversation logs, allowing improvements in content and to help guide marketing strategies.

Middle of everywhere campaign uses visitor servicing staff to engage with the audience on a human level through social media. As experts on the region they use the brand and other influencers to raise awareness and encourage visitation.



3.4 Accommodation

To increase visitor yield and length of stay strong performing visitor accommodation stock is crucial.

Visitation is concentrated in the well-known centres of Gosford, Terrigal, The Entrance and the south coast of the Central Coast LGA, which is closest to visitor markets in Sydney. The Central Coast Hinterland is lesser known as a visitor destination and lacks accommodation, product, experience and infrastructure.

In 2023, approximately 690,000 overnight visitors stayed in paid accommodation across Central Coast. Benchmarking with comparable coastal visitor destinations indicates there is scope for Central Coast to significantly grow its share of overnight visitors.

The most common accommodation type stayed in was friends of relatives' properties, reflecting the high proportion of visiting friends and relatives travel to the region. Only 38% of overnight visitors stayed in paid accommodation, of which the most popular types are holiday houses or units and standard hotels or motels.

To support the recent Central Coast Visitor Accommodation Futures Study and Development Action Plan an audit was undertaken for accommodation supply which identified 76 commercial accommodation establishments and 2,696 rooms. Majority of the commercial accommodation supply are hotels and resorts, motels and serviced apartments. There are more than 3,494 private properties being utilised for visitors' accommodation these are holidays homes, apartments, unique accommodation such as tiny homes and B&Bs.

Challenges

- Heavy reliance on Airbnb/short stay accommodation to boost commercial accommodation stock.
- Lack of accommodation to support major events which may result in events not being attracted to the region or escape visitation as visitors return to Sydney post event.
- Lack of luxury offering that attracts high yield visitors.
- Limited number of quality hotel chains that are globally recognised and appeal to a particular type of traveller.
- Existing and potential investors face difficulties when navigating the development application process in Central Coast.
- Although the Local Environment Plan appears to be adequate provision to support investment in accommodation within areas zoned for commercial and residential areas, rural areas are less accommodating of commercial tourism development which has potentially limited investment in the Hinterland.
- The largest impediment for existing and potential investors is the duration for assessment and issue of a development permit.

Case Studies and Opportunities

There is a gap in experiential accommodation that celebrate the strengths of the region and aligns with the ECO Certification. The opportunity exist to attract and support private invest into some game changing products that gain global attention. In Slovenia, garden Village Lake Bled offers different types of accommodation on site including, tree houses, a variety of glamping tents and luxury apartments. A circular approach is taken to the operation of the resort growing their own fruit, vegetables and herbs and even fish. There are EV charging station and bicycle and scooter rental on site. A wellbeing component is on site with massage, sauna and yoga available to guests.

Dated accommodation can be uplifted with some minor improvements and cosmetic fit out works to become appealing to the modern visitor. Take Sunnymead Hotel in Aireys Inlet on Victoria's iconic Great Ocean Road. The 1980's style motel received a facelift with paint and furnishings. The addition of a day spa on site and a small restaurant elevated the offering which is centrally located in the small township. Spaces can be booked for private functions and packages are developed to speak to desired audiences, such as women's retreats and couples' weekends. The accommodation has become as much the destination as the nearby beaches and scenic drives.



Photo Credit: Bells at Killcare

3.5 Transport and Access

The Central Coast is primarily accessed by private vehicle, with the Pacific Highway serving as a major arterial route connecting Sydney and Newcastle. The Australian and NSW Governments are investing \$420 million to upgrade the Pacific Highway through the Wyong Town Centre, which involves duplicating the highway, upgrades to the road bridge, as well as additional shared pathways for people walking and cycling through the area.

Commercial air travel is typically routed through either Sydney or Newcastle airports, followed by car hire or private transfers to the Central Coast. The Central Coast Airport, located in Warnervale, is a local airport owned and operated by Council and predominantly used for general aviation, emergency services and educational purposes.

Access to the Central Coast via air travel is set to increase with the opening of the Western Sydney Airport, due to be complete in 2026, as well as upgrades to the Newcastle Airport, which will see an increase in domestic flights, as well as newly introduced international travel routes.

The region is also accessible via train, with services connecting key centres, including Woy Woy, Gosford, and Wyong, and supported by bus links to surrounding townships. Local mobility is further supplemented by taxi services and rideshare platforms like Uber.

Ferry services, operated by Palm Beach Ferries, provide a scenic water transport option between Ettalong and Palm Beach on the northern edge of Sydney's metropolitan zone. For visitors coming from Sydney, a variety of privately operated day tours are also available, with curated access to the region's offerings.

Central Coast is heavily reliant on private vehicle and many of the visitor attractions are only accessible in this manner.

Challenges

- Lack of public transport to remote areas and the Hinterland, such as Glenworth Valley.
- Lack of water-based transport, i.e. ferries, water taxis and charter boats, a significant lack of infrastructure to support the development of water-based transportation and a number of barriers to increasing water-based tourism businesses.
- Heavy reliance on private cars for visitors to access the region.

Case Studies and Opportunities

Water infrastructure is severely lacking including boat moorings, marinas, jetty's, canoe launches and fishing platforms. Making the spectacular waterways accessible would enhance and likely increase the water-based experiences on offer. Implementing masterplans such as the Gosford Waterfront Masterplan and advocating for other agencies to consider access will give visitors the opportunity to access the water more readily.

To increase the local connectivity and transport options there may be the opportunity to encourage the unemployed or underemployed to take up rideshare driving as an employment/income stream. This could be an opportunity for retirees or students which is evidence is other destinations such as the Gold Coast.

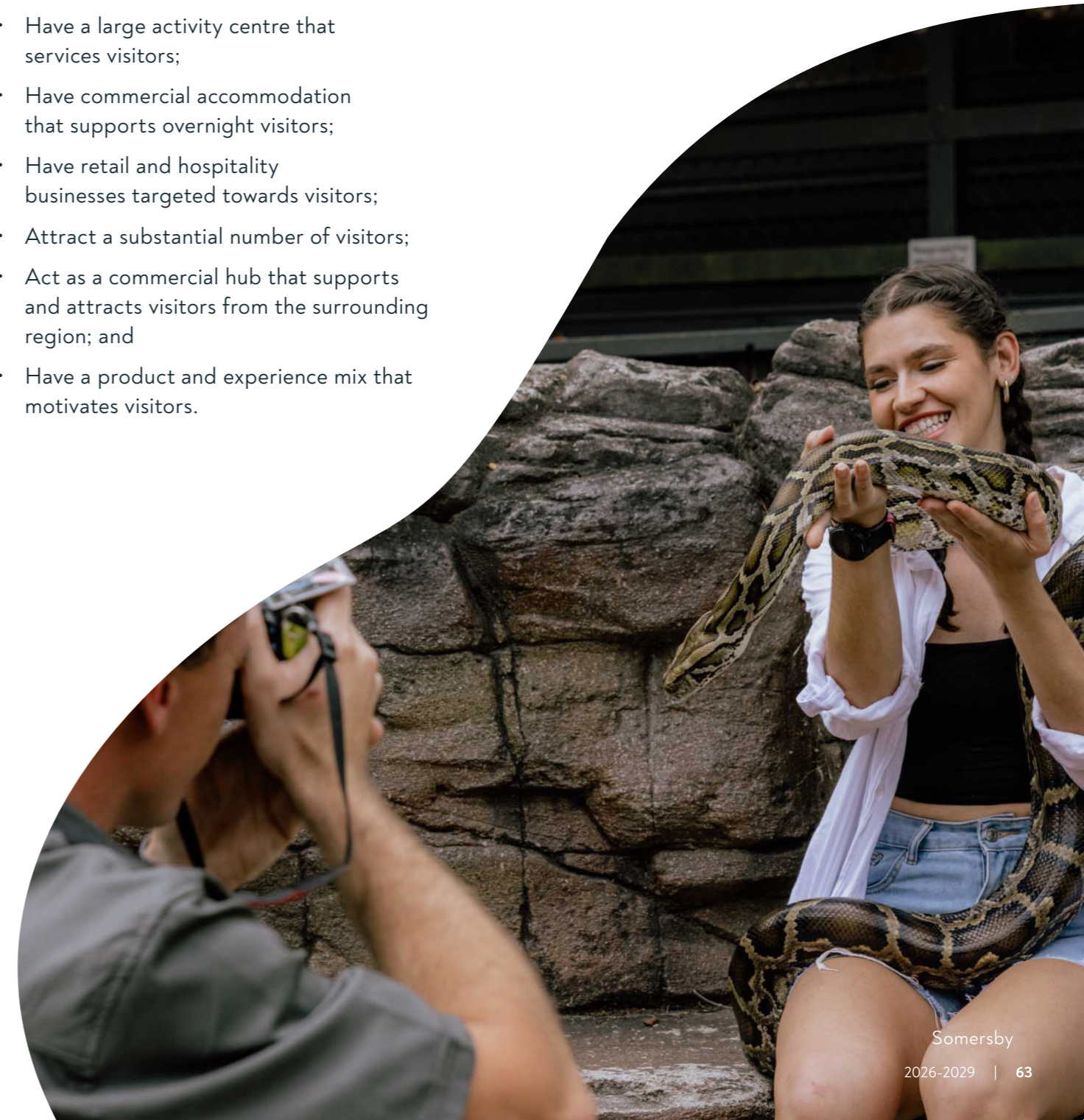
The Australian Government is planning for a future high speed rail network to connect Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne and regional communities across the east coast of Australia. The first phase will connect Newcastle to Sydney in about one hour on a new dedicated high-speed railway. It is expected to take 30 minutes to get to Newcastle or to Sydney from the Central Coast. Council should continue to advocate to all levels of government to bring this new transport infrastructure to life.

3.6 Visitor Destinations

An analysis of townships across the Central Coast has been undertaken for the purpose of destination management planning. Within the Central Coasts subregions, 38 townships have a connection to the visitor economy. Based on the following assessment criteria, these townships have been categorised into primary, secondary and tertiary visitor destinations.

- Support a large resident and worker population;
- Have a large activity centre that services visitors;
- Have commercial accommodation that supports overnight visitors;
- Have retail and hospitality businesses targeted towards visitors;
- Attract a substantial number of visitors;
- Act as a commercial hub that supports and attracts visitors from the surrounding region; and
- Have a product and experience mix that motivates visitors.

It is important to categorise these visitor destinations to understand the scale of their contribution to the Central Coast visitor economy and to prioritise future investment where it is needed most. Figure 9 below identifies townships based on their classification into primary, secondary and tertiary visitor destinations.



3.7 Subregional Analysis



Figure 9: Central Coast Visitor Destinations

Gosford and Surrounds

Primary Destination/s: Gosford
Secondary Destination/s: Erina

About the Subregion

This subregion includes the main centre of Gosford and the Erina Corridor, making it the most populated area in the Central Coast.

Gosford attracts a substantial number of visitors, drawn to the centre for a range of reasons, including entertainment, shopping, events and business.

There are numerous key assets within the Gosford subregion that are significant for the visitor economy, including the polytec Stadium, Gosford Regional Gallery, The Entertainment Grounds, Gosford Golf Club and Drifters Wharf.

Gosford's CBD has been identified as a key priority by the NSW Government for revitalisation. Council is working closely with the NSW Government on delivering key projects that will help Gosford achieve its potential.

Challenges

- Gosford is land locked by public reserves and Brisbane Water, meaning that development can only occur on brownfield sites.
- Amenity within Gosford's CBD is poor and need of improvement.
- Poor perceptions of safety within Gosford.

Opportunities

- Streetscape improvement and wayfinding.
- Reimagining the Gosford Regional Gallery into a significant, contemporary regional destination.
- Gosford waterfront revitalisation in alignment with the Gosford Waterfront Masterplan.
- Develop Gosford as a Centre for Street Art.
- Enhancing the night-time economy in line with Central Coast NTE Strategy.
- Investigate opportunity for a Brisbane Water Ferry Service linking Gosford to towns and villages by the water.
- Investment in Hotels to accommodation overnight visitor growth projections.
- Enhancing the events calendar for polytec Stadium
- New performance and exhibition centre 3000-5000 capacity venue.
- Sculptural lookout in Waterview Park with interpretation.



Terrigal



The Entrance

Terrigal and the Headlands

Primary Destination/s: Terrigal

Secondary Destination/s:

Copacabana, Avoca Beach, North Avoca

About the Subregion

Terrigal and the Headlands attracts visitors for its array of iconic beaches, water-based activities, boutique retail, cafés, markets and hotels. Furthermore, the upscale restaurants and bars located in the subregion contribute to the vibrant Night-Time Economy.

Terrigal is a primary visitor destination within the subregion. The scenic coastal setting combined with the compact and vibrant town centre, makes it a compelling visitor destination. It's well-regarded for its dining and night-time entertainment offering, as well as the newly established boardwalk.

Neighbouring townships of Avoca Beach, Copacabana and North Avoca Beach are popular holiday and leisure destinations with beautiful beaches and coastlines.

Challenges

- Lack of development sites limiting the opportunity for investment.
- Town centre road network creates congestion, especially within Terrigal.
- Lack of products and experiences for visitors year-round.

Opportunities

- Permanent Five Lands Walk
- Opportunity for destination food and drink experiences.
- Strengthen walking and cycling trails including Terrigal Lagoon loop walk/cycling trail.
- Boutique Hotel investment.
- Reinvestment in existing visitor accommodation.
- Marine Discovery Centre revitalisation,

The Entrance and Northern Lakes

Primary Destination/s: The Entrance

Secondary Destination/s:

Long Jetty, Norah Head, Budgewoi, Toukley

About the Subregion

The Entrance and Northern Lakes subregion includes the popular coastal towns of The Entrance, Toukley, Norah Head and Budgewoi. It has strengths in coasts and waterways, with the Norah Head National Surf Reserve and the extensive Tuggerah Lake.

The Entrance is a major visitor hub for the north of Central Coast, particularly during the summer months. This seasonal focus is reflected in the product and experience offering at The Entrance, leading to low visitation during the off-peak season. The fluctuations in visitation significantly impact the viability local businesses.

Exploring ways to improve the amenity and motivate visitors during off-peak periods will be critical to strengthening the sustainability of The Entrance as a year-round visitor destination.

Challenges

- Highly seasonal destination, with products and experiences targeted towards summer visitors.
- Low yielding product and experiences available.
- Poor quality of foreshore and related amenity in areas.
- Lack of investment in public assets.

Opportunities

- Revitalise The Grant McBride Baths.
- The Entrance Waterfront Masterplan, including Pelican Time Experience.
- The Entrance Surf Life Saving Club enhancement.
- Destination Playground to create a leading family attraction.
- Illumination of The Entrance Bridge.
- Events calendar in The Entrance, including music, arts and cultural events.
- Surf events calendar at Norah Head.



The Peninsula

Secondary Destination/s:

Woy Woy, Ettalong Beach, Umina Beach

About the Subregion

Known for its laid-back coastal charm, this subregion offers a blend of natural beauty, local culture and convenient access to Sydney. The subregion is appealing as a destination for weekend getaways and short breaks.

Woy Woy serves as a key gateway to the Central Coast, with its scenic waterfront. Umina Beach and Ettalong Beach are favoured for their pristine beaches, calm waters and family-friendly atmosphere, ideal for swimming and picnicking.

The subregion also boasts a vibrant local food scene, with weekly markets, fresh seafood and waterfront dining.

The Bouddi National Park Coastal Walk is also a major driver of visitation.

Challenges

- Accessibility to the peninsula subregion is difficult due to the geography of the peninsula and road network.
- Small villages with limited development potential given the environmental constraints.

Opportunities

- Commercial boat tours, ferries, wildlife tours commencing in and from Brisbane Water (Woy Woy).
- Investment in wellness tourism – accommodation, yoga, forest bathing etc.
- Ecotourism development – accommodation, tours, First Nations tours.



Wyong and Tuggerah

Secondary Destination/s:

Wyong, Tuggerah, Gorokan

About the Subregion

Significant employment land areas are located within the subregion, including Tuggerah Business Park, Tuggerah Straight and North Wyong.

Wyong is a major residential township on the Central Coast, home to adventure-based product and the Art House Performing Arts Centre.

Tuggerah attracts visitors for retail purposes, due to the Westfield Shopping Centre and Homemakers Centre.

Challenges

- Amenity of the region, not conducive to holiday leisure tourism, region is more focused to delivering services and employment.

Opportunities

- Central Coast Highway investment in Wyong, delivering improved amenity and access.
- Sports events development, investigate opportunities for attraction of sports events and recreation to drive the subregion as a sports and recreation centre.
- Arts and cultural tourism opportunities in Wyong.



Central Coast Hinterland

About the Subregion

The Central Coast Hinterland offers fresh produce, walking trails, farm gate experiences and access to national and state parks.

Major drawcards include the scenic and historic Tourist Drive 33 route, through the Central Coast's western bushland and the UNESCO World Heritage listed Old Great North Road.

The Central Coast Hinterland has many hidden gems, artisan estates and embracing the lesser-known, lush bushland and some of the Coast's unique Australian wildlife attractions.

This region also hosts the Harvest Festival, a major event for the Central Coast.

Challenges

- Lack of product development.
- Limited villages to create a setting for hinterland businesses.
- Poor connection to coastal areas of Central Coast.
- Lack of product.

Opportunities

- Strengthen existing villages to attract tourism investment.
- Agritourism development.
- Eco accommodation and wellness accommodation investment.
- Nature-based and cycle tourism, including gravel cycling in Wyong.

Chapter 4

Insights



This section provides a high-level overview of key visitation insights at both the state level, as identified by DNSW, and the local level, informed through consultation with key industry stakeholders. It also outlines strategic considerations for the Central Coast tourism sector, reflecting current conditions, issues and opportunities.



4.1 Industry Trends

At a State level, the visitor economy is guided by the NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2035, which is in its momentum phase.

Numerous major infrastructure projects will be completed during this period, including the new Western Sydney Airport in 2026. This will provide a major stimulus to grow and expand the visitor economy in NSW. Visitor expenditure is expected to grow strongly during this time to reach over \$50 billion by 2026.

Trends identified in the strategy speak to growing demand for eco-friendly destinations and experiences, accessibility, digital technology and the growing middle class, particularly in international markets.

Key trends in NSW visitation in 2024 include:

In 2024, 101.1 million people visited NSW and stayed 215.3 million nights. Visitors generated a total of \$53.2 billion in visitor expenditure, achieving the desired target for 2026 well in advance.

NSW welcomed 97.3 million domestic visitors, who spent \$41.2 billion in the state. Domestic overnight visitors stayed a total of 114.6 million nights.

NSW also welcomed 3.8 million international visitors. These visitors stayed a total of 100.8 million nights and spent \$12 billion in the state.

Average length of stay is 3.1 nights for domestic and 26.5 nights (total trip) for international visitors.

Holiday and leisure visitors are leading the purpose of visit for domestic visitation, followed by VFR and business travel.

The most common travel party type for both domestic and international visitors is those travelling alone, followed by adult couples.

This data demonstrates that the Central Coast aligns well with the average length of stay for the domestic market with a focus on the short stay opportunity from the significant Sydney market. Product development should consider the holiday and VFR markets that are travelling solo or as a couple.

4.2 Stakeholder Insights

The development of the DMP has been underpinned by in-depth stakeholder engagement, which enabled a comprehensive understanding of the local conditions, challenges and opportunities for the Central Coast visitor economy.

The stakeholder engagement program was conducted in May-July 2025 and involved a combination of face-to-face and virtual meetings, as well as a business survey. Specifically, the engagement program included:

- An **Industry Workshop** attended by over 30 representatives from accommodation, hospitality and visitor-related businesses;
- A **business survey** distributed to over 14,000 businesses by Council to broaden the understanding of challenges and opportunities across the region. The survey received responses from community members and local operators;
- **One-on-one meetings** with key government agencies and other tourism-related organisations identified by Council, including Transport for NSW, DSSN, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services, Ecotourism Australia, the Regional Economy Taskforce

(Darkinjung LALC, Bara Barang and 24-hour Economy) and Central Coast Council strategic planners;

- A **Council Workshop** attended by staff members from key units related to the visitor economy, including Environmental Management, Strategic Planning, Community and Culture, Commercial Property and Business, Customer Marketing and Economic Development, Open Space and Recreation, and Leisure Beach Safety and Community Facilities; and
- A **Marketing and Visitor Economy Workshop** attended by staff members from the Marketing and Visitor Economy team, including CCVC staff.

Table 8 on the following page provides a summary of the key findings from this stakeholder engagement process.

The findings from the engagement process were provided back to industry stakeholders engaged to close the loop in the engagement process.

Table 8: Local Insights & Findings

Aspirations

- Deliver exceptional experiences that captivate visitors.
- Improve transport options to ensure a seamless movement within and to the region.
- Bookable packages to grow dispersal and length of stay in the region.
- Leverage technology to enhance visitor information and interaction.
- Clear and effective wayfinding to improve visitor navigation.
- Leverage further benefit from the large visiting friends and relative's market.
- Increase yield and length of stay to boost the local economy.
- Establish a strong destination identity.
- A shared vision across industry to ensure cohesive approach to tourism.
- Collaboration among all visitor economy stakeholders.
- Business attraction to support new and exciting attractions.
- Ensure accessible and inclusive tourism experiences for all visitors.

Target Markets

- Multi-generational visitors who travel with groups of families, looking for different activities to suit different generations.
- VFR market to leverage the large population base in Central Coast.
- International visitors who are travelling into Sydney.
- Grey nomads who are often travelling for extended periods of time.
- Those from within a 2 to 3-hour radius of the Central Coast for a day trip.
- Sporting groups who are travelling for multi-day sporting events and often travelling with family.
- Business events market to support mid-week visitation and the off season.
- Attract and service the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) market.
- Urban explorers looking to explore and have unique experiences.
- Extending the length of stay of event visitors who are travelling for a specific event.

Product and Experience Gaps

- Lack of marina and wharf facilities, hindering the ability of visitors to access the water.
- Lack of water-based tours and activities.
- Inadequate visitor signage and wayfinding throughout the region.
- Poor consistency of quality food and beverage establishments throughout the region.
- Lack of indoor events facilities to support exhibitions, business events and conferences.
- Lack of high-end, luxury products and experiences.
- Need to develop additional products and experiences in the Central Coast Hinterland, including agritourism.
- First Nations led and developed product and experiences.
- Experiential accommodation, including wellness retreats and eco cabins.
- Developing engaging curated itineraries that can attract and retain visitors.
- Strategic events program to grow off-peak visitation.
- Effective wayfinding signage and clear trail maps are needed to enhance visitor experience.
- The CCVC doesn't serve visitors as they enter the region.

Industry Challenges

- Accessing and retaining skilled workers.
- Limitations imposed by zoned land can restrict development and operational flexibility.
- Navigating Council planning restrictions and regulations can be complex and time-consuming.
- The cost of doing business presents a substantial hurdle for many businesses, including insurance.
- Managing seasonality effectively is critical for businesses reliant on tourism or weather-dependent activities.
- Securing adequate grants/funding is a consistent challenge, especially when competing with larger metropolitan areas for metropolitan comparative funding.



Hawkesbury River

4.3 DMP Considerations



The following considerations outline the key challenges and opportunities for the Central Coast visitor economy. They distil insights from all research and analysis undertaken for the DMP. These considerations have directly informed the strategic framework and recommendations for the region's visitor economy.

Terrigal

Comparative Advantages and Key Opportunities

Love Central Coast Brand and Marketing

The development of Central Coasts identity and associated marketing and collateral provides a significant platform to build on. Love Central Coast and the transition to an Ecotourism certified destination provides a framework for improvement of perception and development of product that is contemporary and aligned to new consumer expectations.

Proximity to Sydney and Newcastle

Central Coast has a population of over 6 million residents within 45 minutes. It is well positioned for growth given its accessibility from these core markets. It will be critical that product, experience and infrastructure meets future needs. The high level of daytrip visitation is directly linked to its accessibility to large source markets.

Outstanding Natural Assets

Central Coast is home to amazing natural assets including beaches and waterways. It also has two of the top 10 visited National Parks in NSW including Brisbane Water National Park and Bouddi National Park. There is opportunity to further leverage from these assets through improved visitor services to disperse visitors and strengthen connection of these assets with towns and villages of the Central Coast.

Access to International Markets

Three international airports will be accessible to Central Coast within 1.5 hours by 2026. This includes Sydney Airport, Western Sydney Airport and Newcastle Airport. Access to international airports presents opportunity to grow important international visitation to Central Coast.

ECO Certified Destination

Central Coast is an Ecotourism certified region. The status, proximity to Sydney and incredible natural assets provide a platform for growth in international and interstate markets.

Extensive and diverse tourism offerings, including international ready products

Central Coast has a diverse supply of product suited to a range of markets. In addition to this a number of operators are internationally ready and can support further growth in international tourism. There is opportunity for the region to leverage off strong internationally ready product to create dispersal and yield.

Gosford State Significant Centre

Gosford is designated as a State Significant Centre, which means it will support substantial investment and growth. It has numerous visitor economy assets including polytec Stadium.

Culturally Significant Assets

The Central Coast boasts a rich and continuous Indigenous cultural heritage, with over 3,000 registered cultural heritage sites of significance. The Darkinjung are working with Council to deliver on First Nations tourism opportunities.

Engaged Tourism Industry

Central Coast Council has established a strong relationship with its tourism industry and has a high level of industry engagement. This provides opportunity to strengthen product and service across the region to meet visitor need.

Challenges

Connectivity between the coast, hinterland and key visitor destinations

Improving connectivity between the coast, hinterland and surrounding visitor destinations is essential for enhancing visitor dispersal and access across the Central Coast. Poor connectivity is the result of the physical, geological constraints.

Township presentation and amenity in key centres

Township presentation and public amenity in key town centres, such as Gosford and The Entrance, are currently poor, impacting visitor experience and the region's overall appeal.

Significant infrastructure spending needs in the Central Coast

Overall, the Central Coast lacks critical infrastructure that is found in other competitor destinations such as quality township streetscape amenity, foreshore and open space amenities, footpaths and cycleways.

Seasonality of visitors

Visitation to the Central Coast is highly seasonal, with a significant proportion of visitors travelling in the summer and spring months. This presents a challenge for the financial sustainability of businesses and reduces the confidence in year-round investment.

Proportion of overnight visitors

Low levels of overnight visitation result in lower visitor yield, creating a less sustainable visitor economy where more visitors (day trippers) are generating comparatively less economic benefit.

24-hour Economy

Central Coast, particularly Gosford, is becoming increasingly urbanised with a suite of public and private investments coming online. However, the region lacks a sufficient range of night-time economy products for a region of its size and population.

On-water commercial activation

The waterways within the Central Coast present a significant tourism opportunity. At present, the lake system is used extensively for private boating with very few commercial operators providing experiences for visitors.

Sense of place and destination definition

A lack of clear definition between destinations, including inadequate township gateways, wayfinding and directional signage across the Central Coast, leads to a confusing visitor journey.

ECO tourism destination certification

The ECO tourism certification is used heavily in the marketing of the Central Coast, however, is not reflected in some areas of the visitor experience.

Boutique and luxury accommodation

There is a gap in boutique and luxury accommodation offerings across the Central Coast. This limits the region's ability to attract high-yield visitors.

Perceptions of the Central Coast

The Central Coast has at times carried a reputation that did not fully reflect its unique strengths or vibrant community. While this perception has previously challenged the region's ability to attract visitors and investors, there are encouraging signs it is steadily shifting.

Destination businesses

Destination businesses are those that attract visitors specifically for their unique appeal, products, services or experience. Currently, Central Coast has very few destination businesses that act as a key drawcard for visitors.

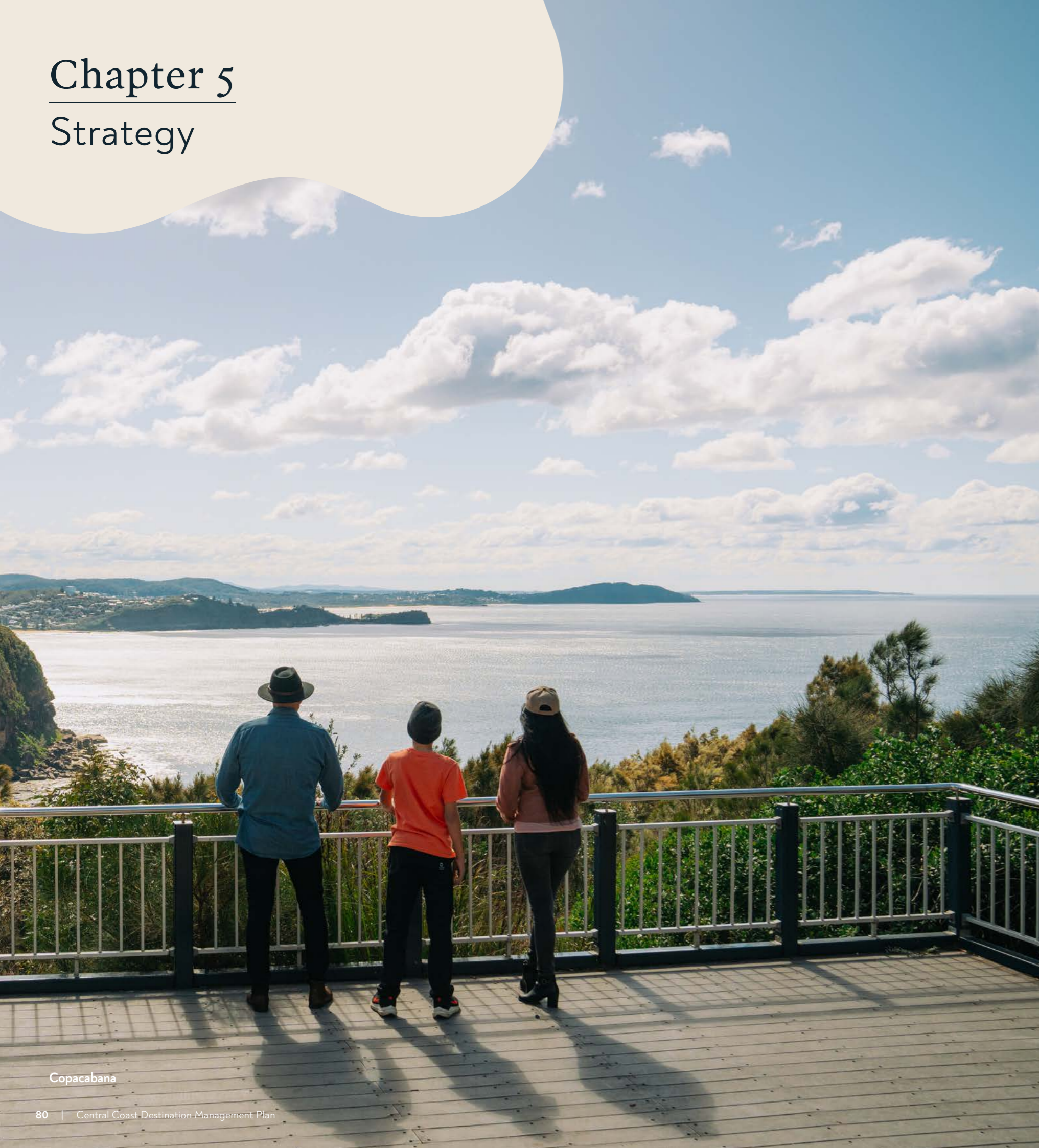
Visitor economy workforce shortages

The visitor economy workforce on the Central Coast is facing a number of challenges, including poor public transport connectivity, lack of affordable housing, seasonal demand of work force, poor pay and work conditions, lack of training and the negative perception of tourism as a career.



Chapter 5

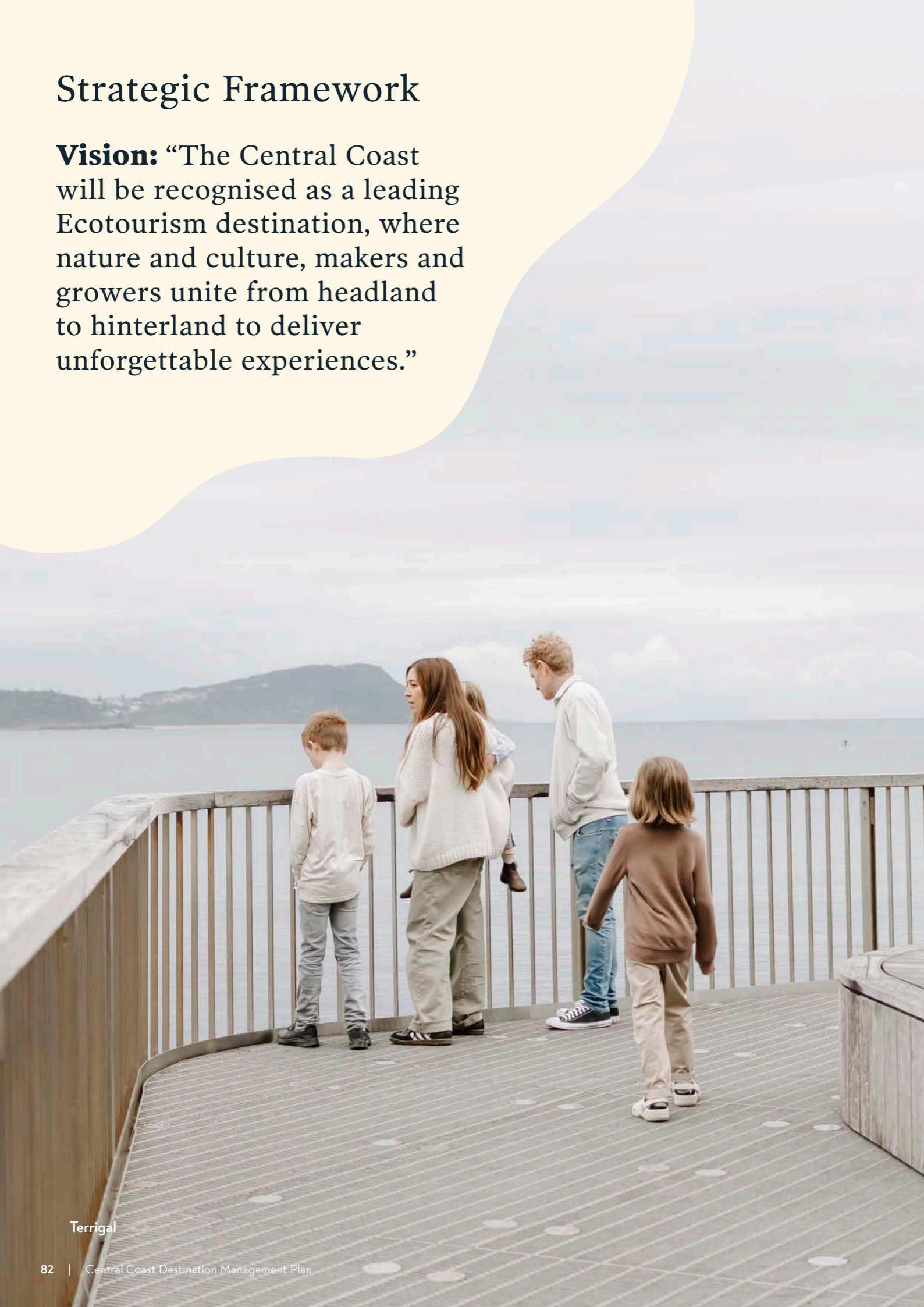
Strategy



The following section outlines the strategic framework to guide development of the Central Coast visitor economy. This includes a vision for the visitor economy, objectives, principles and five key themes to guide public and private sector investment.

Strategic Framework

Vision: “The Central Coast will be recognised as a leading Ecotourism destination, where nature and culture, makers and growers unite from headland to hinterland to deliver unforgettable experiences.”



Guiding Principles

To support the Central Coast in achieving its vision and objectives, the following principles will apply to all product and experience development initiatives.

- 1 Brand Delivery**
Foster alignment between brand messaging and the visitor experience by ensuring that marketing initiatives accurately reflect the quality, character and authenticity of tourism offerings on the ground.
- 2 Ecotourism Credentials**
Embed Ecotourism principles into all products and experiences ensuring sustainable tourism management is at the core of the visitor experience and offer.
- 3 Visitor Centric**
Embed a tourism-first mindset across all initiatives on the Central Coast by consistently applying a visitor lens to planning, development and decision-making. Prioritise the needs, expectations and experiences of visitors to ensure the region remains an attractive, welcoming and sustainable destination.
- 4 First Nations**
Recognise and integrate the local First Nations story throughout the visitor experience, encouraging collaboration and understanding across all cultures.
- 5 Tourism Advocacy**
Develop a Council-wide, community and industry understanding of the value of the visitor economy to ensure a tourism lens is applied to all Council projects, delivering positive outcomes for both the community and visitors.

Themes and Objectives

The following themes and objectives set the strategic direction for the Destination Management Plan, shaping how the Central Coast can grow as a leading visitor destination. They provide a framework to strengthen identity and place, enhance connectivity, expand product and infrastructure, elevate signature events, and support industry development.

Theme	Objectives
Theme 1. Identity, Awareness & Place	Continue to build and strengthen the Love Central Coast brand and ensure that experience of place aligns to visitor expectations and continues positively to shift public perception of the Central Coast.
Theme 2. Regional Connectivity	Strengthen connectivity of tourism product and destinations to create a seamless tourism region and a clear visitor journey with a strong sense of place.
Theme 3. Tourism Product & Infrastructure	Increase the choice, quality and quantity of tourism products and tourism infrastructure to provide compelling, class-leading experiences, with reference to needs and opportunities across Central Coast subregions.
Theme 4. Signature Events	Invest, attract and develop hero tourism events that can contribute to increased visitation and raise positive awareness of the Central Coast as a leading, year-round destination.
Theme 5. Industry Development	Encourage industry excellence and support tourism business growth and development to meet visitor needs.

Performance Targets

The following performance targets have been identified for the Central Coast to track the performance of the visitor economy over the life of this Plan.

1. Increase the proportion of overnight visitation to Central Coast to grow the value of the visitor economy.
2. Increase the number of international visitors to the Central Coast.
3. Improve diversity of the products, experiences and accommodation offering across the Central Coast through public and private sector investment.
4. Continue to improve positive perception and awareness of Central Coast in key target markets.



High-impact Tourism Opportunities

These projects are aspirational, potential game-changer initiatives for the Central Coast, representing ambitious long-term opportunities with significant impact. They align strongly with the Plan's objectives and address critical issues while unlocking distinctive regional opportunities. As such, they are a strategic wish list rather than confirmed commitments and may or may not be reflected in the formal action plan. In particular, these projects focus on the two destinations that attract the highest visitation (Gosford and The Entrance), yet require improvements to amenity, visitor experience and extending visitor yield.



Gosford Waterfront Revitalisation

The Gosford Waterfront Masterplan aims to revitalise the Gosford waterfront into a vibrant, mixed-use precinct that connects the city centre with the Brisbane Water foreshore. The outcome for the visitor economy will be a new and compelling destination in Gosford which will strengthen Gosford's connection to the water and lead to enhanced dining, entertainment and experience of the water.



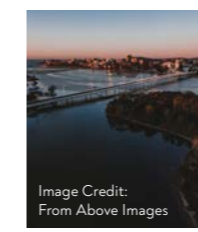
Central Coast Arts & Culture

Supporting the growth of arts and culture to strengthen cultural activity and participation. This includes fostering creative expression and expanding access to diverse arts experiences. The outcome for the visitor economy will be strengthening of year-round visitation to the Central Coast, growing higher yield markets and increased length of stay.



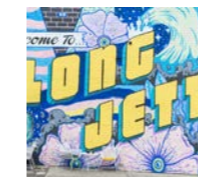
Reimagined Pelican Time Experience at The Entrance

The Entrance is renowned for its Pelican Time experience. There are opportunities to explore ways to create a leading wildlife year-round attraction. An enhanced experience will strengthen Central Coast's ecotourism credentials and strengthen the region's appeal in international markets, driving economic benefit for The Entrance.



Enhancing The Entrance

Uncover opportunities to improve the appeal of The Entrance as a key visitor destination for the Central Coast. This includes enhancing public amenity, improving the quality and functionality of public spaces, and strengthening the overall visitor experience to support year-round visitation and encourage longer stays and overnight accommodation in The Entrance.



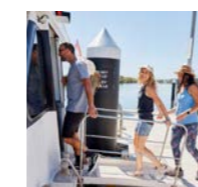
Establish gateways to strengthen sense of place and arrival

Continue to investigate optimal gateway locations and design concepts that align with the Place Brand Strategy, enhancing the visitors' sense of arrival and showcasing the region's unique identity.



Improve inter-regional public transport

Support more frequent, accessible and flexible inter-regional public transport services that improve connectivity between communities, including expanded service coverage and alternative transport models.



Brisbane Water Water-Based Connectivity

A long-term aspirational vision for water-based transport that enhances connectivity between Gosford, Woy Woy and surrounding Brisbane Water towns.



5.1 Theme 1

Identity, Awareness & Place

Continue to build and strengthen the Love Central Coast brand and ensure that experience of place aligns to visitor expectations and continues positively to shift public perception of the Central Coast.

The Central Coast boasts one of Australia’s largest day trip visitor markets, attracting 3.8 million visitors in 2024. To continue to shift perceptions and grow the region’s reputation as a desirable holiday destination, there is a need to utilise Central Coasts Hero products, ecotourism credentials and internationally ready product to promote the region.

This theme focuses on strengthening the region’s brand identity, ensuring Central Coast is recognised as a premium and compelling year-round visitor destination.

Table 9: Theme 1 Action Plan

Focus Area	Strategy	#	Actions	Stakeholder/s	Council’s Role	Priority
Identity & Awareness	Continue to improve the awareness and positive perception of Central Coast.	1.1.1	Develop the next Destination Marketing Strategy 2027-2030	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy	Deliver	High
		1.1.2	Deliver a Place Brand Strategy aligned to the visitor economy brand.	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy	Deliver	High
		1.1.3	Focus destination marketing to grow year-round visitation and dispersal across Central Coast. This should include consideration of Public Relations, hosting familiarisation events and developing seasonal marketing campaigns.	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy	Deliver	High
		1.1.4	Development of annual destination marketing campaign to priority markets involving industry.	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy	Deliver	High
Identity & Awareness	Develop international markets.	1.2.1	Develop itineraries targeted to international markets.	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy	Deliver	High
		1.2.2	Continue to promote export-ready experiences and products to international markets through tradeshows such as attendance at Australian Tourism Exchange.	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy Industry	Deliver	High
Identity & Awareness	Strengthen identity of Central Coast subregions.	1.3.1	Strengthen the concept of the Central Coast’s subregions through messaging, promotion and Love Central Coast website content.	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy	Deliver	High
Market Research	Develop an understanding of the way Central Coast is perceived in key markets.	1.4.1	Undertake primary market research into key target markets to identify perceptions of the Central Coast and track these perceptions over time to support future identity and place branding activities	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy	Deliver	High
Place	Increase activation and improve the visitor experience at key Town Centres	1.5.1	Provide a range of coordinated placemaking activities to key Town Centres including The Entrance, Wyong, Gosford, Terrigal, Woy Woy and Toukley.	Central Coast Council Events & Placemaking	Deliver	Ongoing

Focus Area	Strategy	#	Actions	Stakeholder/s	Council's Role	Priority
Visitor Servicing	Review visitor servicing to ensure access to visitor information across the Central Coast.	1.6.1	Investigate opportunities to expand and diversify visitor information materials and distribution channels throughout the region.	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy	Deliver	medium
		1.6.2	Improve digital visitor servicing through technical enhancements on the Love Central Coast website.	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy	Deliver	medium
ECO Certification	Continue to use ECO Certification to strengthen the Central Coast brand.	1.7.1	Development of ecotourism marketing campaigns showcasing ECO Certified Operators to encourage new operators to become ECO certified.	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy Industry Ecotourism Australia	Deliver	High
		1.7.2	Investigate regenerative tourism opportunities that visitors and community can engage with.	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy Industry	Deliver	High



5.2 Theme 2 Regional Connectivity

Strengthen connectivity of tourism product and destinations to create a seamless tourism region and a clear visitor journey with a strong sense of place.

The Central Coast has a large and growing visitor economy. The region's proximity to both Sydney and Newcastle will ensure that the Central Coast continues to be choice location for day trip and overnight visitor markets. To support continued growth, there is a need to strengthen intra-regional connectivity, including improvements to signage, trails, public transport and road infrastructure.

Building stronger connections between coast and hinterland and between key destinations and product will add greatly to visitor yield and dispersal.

This theme will focus on building the foundations of a strong and sustainable visitor economy through the development of and investment in key supporting infrastructure to support a thriving Central Coast.

Table 10: Theme 2 Regional Connectivity

Focus Area	Strategy	#	Actions	Stakeholder/s	Council's Role	Priority
Connectivity	Improve wayfinding across Central Coast.	2.1.1	Invest in wayfinding in primary destinations	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy Town Planning Team	Deliver	Ongoing
		2.1.2	Continue to investigate gateway interventions for the Central Coast.	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy	Deliver and Facilitate	High
Connectivity	Improve shared path connections.	2.2.1	Delivery of regional shared pathway missing links, key loops and routes to be considered: • Tuggerah Lakes Link • Avoca Link • Mannering Park Link	Central Coast Council Infrastructure Services Transport for NSW	Deliver and Advocate	Medium
Supporting Infrastructure	Invest in road transport to improve accessibility and amenity.	2.3.1	Support the delivery of state road projects, including: • Pacific Highway upgrade through Wyong Town Centre; • Central Coast Highway upgrade; and • Terrigal Drive upgrade.	Transport for NSW Central Coast Council Infrastructure Services Strategic Planning	Influence and Advocate	High
Supporting Infrastructure	Become a destination of choice for EV travellers.	2.4.1	Develop an itinerary based around locations of EV charging stations.	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy	Deliver	High



5.3 Theme 3 Tourism Product & Infrastructure

Invest in tourism product and infrastructure to provide compelling, class-leading experiences.

The Central Coast has an extensive and diverse tourism offering, which includes international-ready products and experiences. However, there is a need for further investment in product development that provides compelling experience that will motivate year-round visitation.

Supporting investment and product enhancement should be a core role of Central Coast to create a strong and compelling visitor destination. This theme will focus on responding to the unique challenges, strengths and opportunities for the Central Coast.

Table 11: Theme 3 Tourism Product & Infrastructure

Focus Area	Strategy	#	Actions	Stakeholder/s	Council's Role	Priority
Township Amenity	Deliver projects that improve township amenity aligned to current Central Coast masterplans and precinct plans.	3.1.1	Support key visitor economy actions identified and aligned to the DMPs timeframe, in town centre and precinct strategies and plans.	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy Events & Placemaking Strategic Planning	Deliver and Facilitate	High
		3.2.1	Collaborate with the creative sector to grow and showcase diverse arts and cultural experiences across the region, strengthening place identity and enhancing visitor and community experience.	Central Coast Council Community & Culture Strategic Planning Marketing & Visitor Economy Events & Placemaking	Facilitate and Advocate	Medium
Arts & Culture	Support investment in arts and culture related products and experiences on the Central Coast.	3.2.2	Investigate the opportunity to enhance The Entrance Bridge and the surrounding area to create a year-round experience and encourage overnight visitation. This may include lighting of The Entrance Bridge and projections over the water visible from key vantage points across the area.	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy Community & Culture Events & Placemaking	Facilitate and Influence	High
		3.2.3	Partner with First Nations communities to enhance storytelling and visitor engagement with local traditions, histories, and creative expressions across the Central Coast.	Central Coast Council Community & Culture Strategic Planning Marketing & Visitor Economy Events & Placemaking	Facilitate	High
		3.2.4	Promote and raise awareness of the region's heritage tourism through itineraries and messaging on the Love Central Coast website.	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy Strategic Planning Projects	Deliver and Facilitate	Medium

Focus Area	Strategy	#	Actions	Stakeholder/s	Council's Role	Priority
Night-time Economy	Promote enhancement of the Central Coast Night-time Economy (NTE).	3.3.1	Deliver or support priority actions identified for Gosford in the Central Coast Night-Time Economy Discussion Paper	Central Coast Council Economic Development Strategic Planning Marketing & Visitor Economy Events & Placemaking	Deliver and Facilitate	High
Visitor Accommodation	Support investment and enhancement of visitor accommodation	3.4.1	Deliver strategic directions identified in Central Coast's Visitor Accommodation Futures Strategy. • Facilitate investment in new and ageing accommodation product aligned to the needs of Central Coast.	Central Coast Council Economic Development Marketing & Visitor Economy	Facilitate	High
Ecotourism & Nature Based	Support enhancement and delivery of iconic walking experiences on the Central Coast.	3.5.1	Support NSW National Parks & Wildlife Services with opportunities for coastal walking experiences including multi day walks, trail infrastructure improvements, wayfinding and cultural heritage interpretation.	NSW National Parks & Wildlife Services Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy	Influence and Advocate	Medium
		3.5.2	Support the development of the Caves Beach to Budgewoi Coastal Trail Master Plan.	NSW National Parks & Wildlife Services Central Coast Council Infrastructure Services Environmental Management Marketing & Visitor Economy	Influence and Advocate	Medium
Ecotourism & Nature Based	Support cycling experiences and products.	3.6.1	Promote a range of cycling itineraries across the Central Coast to support and cater to different forms of cycling, including leisure, mountain biking, gravel cycling and bike tours.	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy NSW National Parks & Wildlife Services	Deliver	High

Focus Area	Strategy	#	Actions	Stakeholder/s	Council's Role	Priority
Ecotourism & Nature Based	Support cycling experiences and products.	3.6.2	Support cycling tourism through undertaking a Mountain Biking Plan.	Central Coast Council Environmental Management NSW National Parks & Wildlife Services Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy	Deliver and Influence	Medium
Ecotourism & Nature Based	Promote and enhance ecotourism products and experiences across the Central Coast.	3.7.1	Reimagine the Pelican Time Experience and investigate improvements to the program	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy Marine Wildlife Rescue Central Coast NSW National Parks & Wildlife Services	Deliver and Influence	High
Wellness	Enhance wellness tourism within Central Coast.	3.8.1	Promote opportunities for investment in wellness tourism.	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy Strategic Planning	Facilitate	Medium
Agritourism	Develop agritourism products and experiences.	3.9.1	Identify and promote opportunities for agritourism development in Central Coast through DNSW programs and product development.	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy Economic Development Strategic Planning	Facilitate	High
		3.9.2	Leverage off existing events and activities by developing itineraries and marketing of agritourism experiences.	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy Economic Development Strategic Planning	Deliver and Facilitate	High
Accessibility	Support accessible and inclusive tourism.	3.10.1	Promote accessible and inclusive experiences and destinations.	Central Coast Council Community Programs Marketing & Visitor Economy	Deliver and Facilitate	Ongoing



Long Jetty Markets



5.4 Theme 4 Signature Events

Invest in events facilities and attract and develop signature events to drive year-round visitation.

Central Coast's proximity to Sydney, existing accommodation base and rich nature-based assets make it an ideal destination for hosting events and festivals. By delivering signature events and festivals aligned with the region's strengths, as well as leveraging its natural assets to build a distinctive events brand, Central Coast can support a robust and sustainable year-round visitor economy.

This theme focuses on supporting a year-round calendar of events that drives overnight visitation, local spend and enhances the overall perception of the Central Coast.

Table 12: Theme 4 Signature Events

Focus Area	Strategy	#	Actions	Stakeholder/s	Council's Role	Priority
Event Attraction	Reposition the Central Coast as a Destination of Choice for Event Operators	4.1.1	Promote the Central Coast as a prime destination for regional, state, and national events by building strategic partnerships and showcasing its unique places, people, and experiences to attract media coverage and encourage repeat visitation.	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy Events & Placemaking	Deliver	High
Event Development	Elevate existing events to become signature events.	4.2.1	Amplify the profile of existing annual events through strategic marketing support, positioning them to grow into signature events that drive visitation and regional economic benefit.	Central Coast Council Events & Placemaking Marketing & Visitor Economy	Deliver	High
Event Attraction	Streamline events process for external event providers.	4.3.1	Support event organisers through marketing that highlights available venues, streamlined processes, and resources, making the Central Coast an attractive and accessible location for events.	Central Coast Council Events & Placemaking	Deliver	High
Business Events	Continue to support growth of the business events sector.	4.4.1	Maintain the Central Coast Business Event Planner on lovecentralcoast.com	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy	Deliver	High
		4.4.2	Work with Business Events NSW to assist promoting Central Coast as a business events destination.	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy Events & Placemaking Business Events NSW	Facilitate	High
		4.4.3	Attend Business events (conferences, webinars and tradeshows) such as AIME to support attracting the MICE market.	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy	Deliver	High



5.5 Theme 5 Industry Development

Encourage industry excellence and support tourism business growth and development to meet visitor needs.

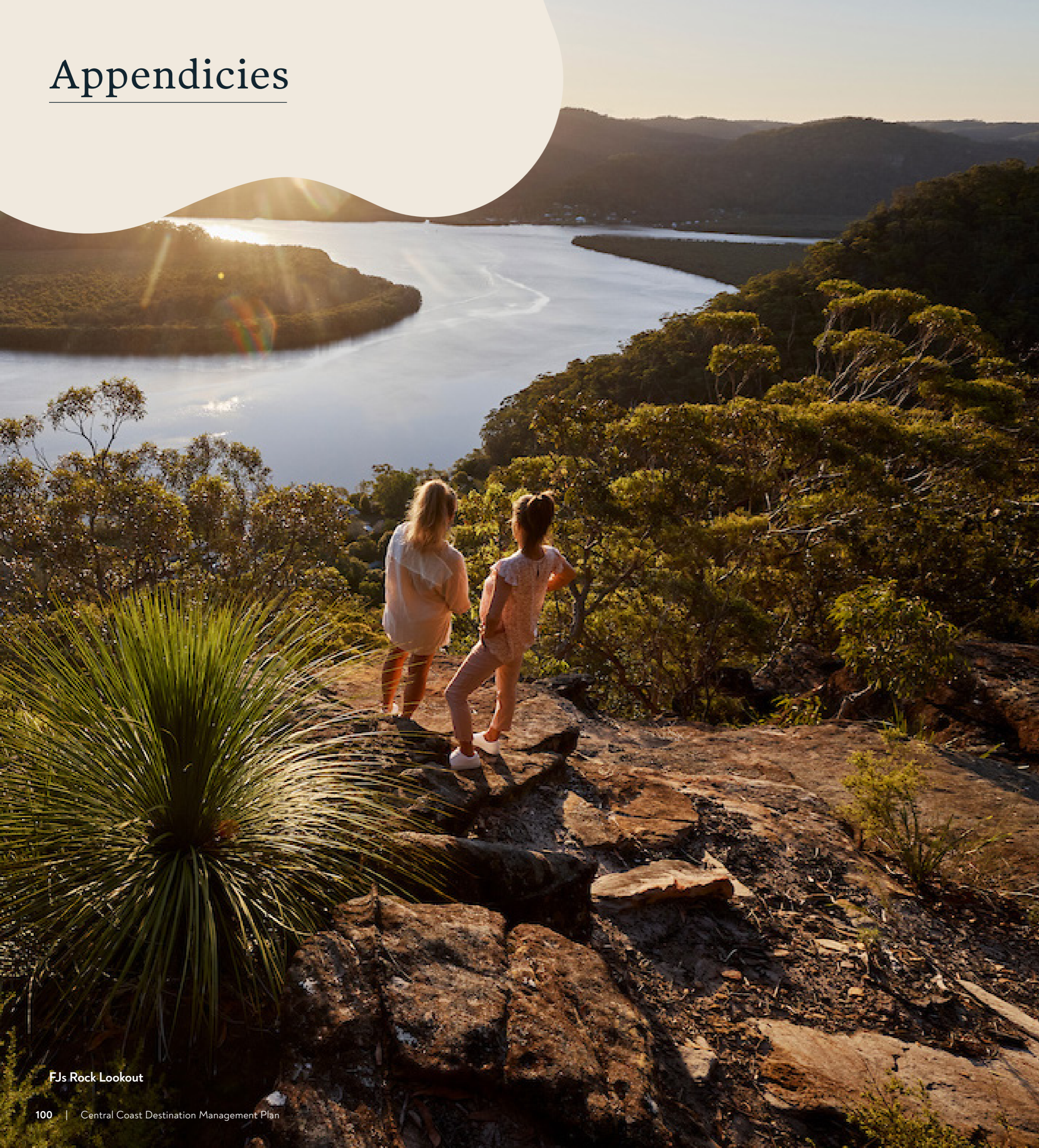
Central Coast has a large tourism industry which supports visitation including accommodation, food, beverage and retail, tours, activities and attraction businesses. These operators are dispersed across various visitor destinations. It is important that the industry is supported to meet visitor expectations and create a seamless visitor experience.

Central Coast will empower and support industry development through engagement, collaboration, training and enhanced connection to create a resilient and visitor-ready industry across the Central Coast.

Table 13: Theme 5 Action Plan

Focus Area	Strategy	#	Actions	Stakeholder/s	Council's Role	Priority
Planning	Improve business engagement.	5.1.1	Destination Central Coast to support tourism operators through improved business engagement.	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy	Deliver	High
Networking	Support networking opportunities for industry.	5.2.1	Develop quarterly networking opportunities and continue to work with key Tourism organisations and government bodies.	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy	Deliver	Ongoing
Upskilling	Provide upskilling opportunities for industry.	5.3.1	Develop two upskilling programs annually.	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy	Deliver	Ongoing
ECO Certification	Promote sustainable tourism practices on the Central Coast.	5.4.1	Undertake workshops and support webinars to encourage operators' participation in Ecotourism Certification pathways.	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy Ecotourism Australia	Deliver	High
Workforce	Improve capacity and access to a skilled tourism industry workforce.	5.5.1	Investigate ways to improve pathways into the tourism sector addressing the skills needs of local industry.	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy	Deliver and Facilitate	High
Connectivity	Strengthen linkages between the region's products.	5.6.1	Provide educational and networking opportunities for operators to collaborate and create product linkages.	Central Coast Council Marketing & Visitor Economy	Deliver	High

Appendices



FJs Rock Lookout

Appendix A: Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

Appendix B: Detailed Strategic Review

Appendix A: Glossary of Terms & Acronyms

Acronym	Expanded	Term	Definition
AAGR	Annual Average Growth Rate	Domestic Daytrip Visitor	TRA define domestic day trips (visitors) as those that must have a round trip distance of at least 50 kilometres from the respondent's usual place of residence and a minimum duration of four hours.
ALOS	Average Length of Stay		
ARTN	Australian Regional Tourism Network		
CBD	Central Business District	Domestic Overnight Visitor	TRA define domestic overnight trips (visitors) as trips involving a stay away from home for at least one night, at a place at least 40 kilometres from home. Only those trips where the respondent is away from home for less than 12 months are in scope.
CCVC	Central Coast Visitor Centre		
DMP	Destination Management Plan		
DN	Destination Network	International Visitor	TRA define international visitors as short-term travellers aged 15 years and over who have been visiting Australia for a period of less than 12 months.
DNSW	Destination New South Wales		
DSSN	Destination Sydney Surrounds North		
IVS	International Visitor Survey		
LALC	Local Aboriginal Land Council		
LGA	Local Government Area		
NTE	Night-time Economy		
NVS	National Visitor Survey		
SA	Statistical Area		
TA	Tourism Australia		
TRA	Tourism Research Australia		
UGC	User Generated Content		
VFR	Visiting Friends & Relatives		

Appendix B: Detailed Strategic Review

A range of documents across all levels of Government have been reviewed to inform the strategic direction of this DMP. The table below provides an overview of key strategic documents reviewed and considerations for the DMP.

Strategy/Plan	Purpose/Description	Considerations for DMP
National		
Thrive 2030	Thrive 2030 is an Australian Government strategy that sets the long-term plan for growing Australia's visitor economy. The Strategy identifies 7 priorities that stakeholders will work on that align with the Strategy's vision elements of collaborate, modernise and diversify. The long-term target of the Strategy is to generate \$230 billion in visitor expenditure by 2030.	The vision of the Thrive 2030 aligns with the aspirations of the Central Coast to deliver quality experiences for visitors and provides jobs, growth and infrastructure that benefits communities. Whilst all the priorities within the Strategy have a connection to the Central Coast visitor economy, those that most strongly align with the immediate actions are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver success through comprehensive collaboration; • Enhance visitor Infrastructure; • Build markets and attract visitors; and • Grow unique and high-quality products, including First Nations experiences.
State		
NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2035	The NSW Visitor Economy Strategy outlines five strategic pillars, each with key areas of focus, set to achieve the NSW Government's vision to ensure the state becomes the premier visitor destination in the Asia Pacific.	Align local priorities with state targets for visitor growth, sustainability, and infrastructure to ensure funding and policy consistency.
Regional		
DRAFT Central Coast Regional Transport Plan 2041	Provides a future framework for integrated transport, improving connectivity, safety, and sustainability across the Central Coast.	Ensure tourism access and visitor movement are supported by future transport upgrades and active travel initiatives.
Destination Sydney Surrounds North Destination Management Plan 2022-2030	Vision: To establish the DSSN region as Australia's premier regional tourism and events destination, where the DSSN visitor economy contributes positively to NSW's regional visitor expenditure ambition of \$25 billion per annum by 2030.	Key experiences identified for Central Coast: Coastal, beaches and waterways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecotourism and sustainable experiences; • Wildlife experiences; • Adventure, nature-based, national parks; • Maker, creator, arts and cultural experiences; and • First Nations experiences.
Local		
Central Coast Destination Management Plan 2022-2025	Provides the strategic framework to grow the Central Coast visitor economy through product, place, and partnership priorities.	Review achievements and gaps to inform the new 2026–2029 DMP and maintain alignment with community and industry needs
Central Coast Eco and Rural Tourism Study 2020	Identifies opportunities for eco and rural tourism development to strengthen the region's nature-based and agricultural visitor offerings.	Incorporate findings to expand authentic, sustainable visitor experiences aligned with ECO Destination Certification.
Central Coast Destination Marketing Strategy 2023-2026	Outlines marketing directions for promoting the Central Coast as a competitive visitor destination with a strong brand identity.	Ensure destination management and marketing activities are integrated for consistent messaging and measurable outcomes.

Strategy/Plan	Purpose/Description	Considerations for DMP
Central Coast RV Tourism Feasibility Study 2020	Examines the demand, opportunities, and infrastructure requirements for RV and caravan tourism on the Central Coast.	Inform actions that address RV market needs, including rest areas, facilities, and integration with drive tourism routes.
Central Coast Tourism Opportunity Plan 2019-2024	Identifies priority tourism projects and investments to grow the Central Coast visitor economy.	Reassess priorities and completed projects to shape the next wave of tourism infrastructure and experiences.
Central Coast Bike Plan 2019-2029	Provides a strategic approach to cycling infrastructure, safety, and connectivity across the region.	Leverage active transport to promote cycling tourism and integrate trail development into visitor experiences.
Central Coast Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan 2019-2029	Focuses on improving walkability, accessibility, and connectivity for pedestrians in key precincts.	Support visitor-friendly urban design and accessibility improvements to enhance town centre and foreshore experiences.
Gosford Waterfront Masterplan	A long-term plan to revitalise the Gosford waterfront with mixed-use development, public spaces, and cultural facilities	Align tourism strategies with future waterfront activation to attract visitors and support the night-time economy.
Gosford CBD Revitalisation	A program of initiatives to transform Gosford CBD into a vibrant hub for business, culture, and community.	Integrate tourism into city-shaping projects to position Gosford as a visitor gateway and events destination.
Central Coast Regional Plan 2041	<p>The vision for Central Coast is 'One Central Coast, connected to Country, where people live near their work in sustainable 15-minute neighbourhoods or the region's vibrant capital'.</p> <p>The Plan outlines the desire for Central Coast communities to be:</p> <p>Physically connected by infrastructure;</p> <p>Socially connected through relationships and a shared sense of unity; and</p> <p>Always connected to Country.</p>	<p>The Plan promotes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater diversification of employment; • New pathways to promote economic self-determination; • More meaningfully recognise and respect Traditional Custodians; • A focus on 15-minute mixed use neighbourhoods; • A preference for infill development rather than greenfield development; and • Better access to and networks of walking, cycling and public transport.
Local cont.		
Central Coast Night-Time Economy (NTE) Discussion Paper and Action Plan 2023	The Discussion Paper identifies Gosford and Terrigal as priority precincts for NTE development due to their established business bases and opportunities to leverage major incoming investment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract NTE industry to Gosford and Terrigal. • Consider strengthening of arts, entertainment and events to grow night-time vibrancy. • Consider improvements to amenity and placemaking to remove barriers and provide greater levels of safety.

Strategy/Plan	Purpose/Description	Considerations for DMP
Central Coast Region Key Enabling Projects 2024	This document identifies priority infrastructure and investment projects that will benefit residents, businesses and visitors to the Central Coast.	<p>Several projects identified in this document are important to the Central Coast visitor economy, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Coast Airport; • Gosford Waterfront Revitalisation; • Warnervale Sporting Precinct; • Northern Regional Leisure & Aquatic Centre; • Adcock Park Stage 2 Regional Precinct; • Gosford Olympic Pool; • The Entrance Esplanade Boardwalk; • Tuggerah Regional Sporting Precinct (Stage 2); • High Speed Rail; • Pacific Highway Wyong Town Centre; • Gosford Station Masterplan; • Etna Street Bridge Upgrade; • Shared Pathway Priority Connections; and • Shared Pathway Missing Links.
Community Strategic Plan 2025-2035	<p>The community vision is 'Together we will strengthen and support our community, protect our environment, and create an inclusive, prosperous and accessible place to live, work and thrive, for today and for future generations'.</p> <p>Three goals for the economy are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A prosperous place of opportunity for education, employment, and industry. 2. Tourism that highlights our region and generates income and opportunities. 3. Town centres are activated, and local businesses are supported and flourishing. 	<p>The Plan highlights the importance of the following elements, which will be considered in the DMP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to education and training pathways with strong links to industry. • Attract commercial and industrial investment in growth areas and key centres. • Tourism that highlights our region and generates income and opportunities. • Promote and grow tourism that celebrates the unique beauty of the Central Coast. • Town centres are activated, and local businesses are supported and flourishing. • Revitalise and invest in town centres and place activation for residents, businesses and visitors.
Central Coast Visitor Accommodation Futures Study 2025	<p>Two strategic directions are identified in the Study, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Facilitate investment in new ageing accommodation product aligned to the needs of Central Coast. 2. De-Risk investment in accommodation in Central Coast. 	<p>Investment in visitor accommodation in the Central Coast will need to consider the following opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internationally branded luxury/upscale hotels; • Health and wellness spa/retreats; • Eco-tourist resorts; • Tourist parks; • Self-contained apartments; and • Resort.



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