

Nambucca Shire Strategic Tourism Plan (NSSTP) 2018-2023

Discussion Paper – DRAFT Jan 2018

Introduction

The Nambucca Shire instigated the development of a new Nambucca Shire Strategic Tourism Plan (NSSTP) 2018-2023 in late 2017. Recent major changes in the local tourism landscape include the Pacific Highway bypass and commercial lease of the Nambucca Visitor Information Centre. Regionally, the creation of the Destination North Coast Network and its associated Destination Management Plan 2018 to 2021 provides a new supporting framework for tourism in Nambucca Shire. Hence, the development of a new, agreed, evidence-based approach that prioritises and guides Council's strategic involvement in tourism and events through an achievable action plan developed in cooperation with industry is timely.

This draft document provides a summary from the background research undertaken to date. It highlights key aspects for stakeholder discussions and workshops planned for early March. These discussions will assist in determining strategic priorities and possible actions.

Access

Located on the Mid North Coast of NSW, between the popular destinations of Port Macquarie and Coffs Harbour, the Nambucca Valley is approximately halfway between Sydney (486km) and Brisbane (436km), just over a 5-hour drive from each.

It has easy air access, via Coffs Harbour Airport, as Nambucca Heads and Macksville are located 50 kilometres south (around 40min away). The area can also be accessed from Sydney by train and Brisbane (train and coach). Long haul buses also stop in Nambucca Heads.

Economy

The population of the Nambucca Shire is 20,000 with Nambucca Heads being the largest town, followed by Macksville, then Bowraville and Valla Beach.

RemPlan data for Shire (Dec 2016) shows:

- Gross revenue generated by businesses and organisations - \$1,440m
 - 'accommodation and food' the seventh largest contributor, accounted for \$77.5m (5.4%) of the total. This probably understated the visitor spend with 'rental, hiring and real estate services' and 'retail trade' also being significant contributors to the local economy.
 - agricultural activities are also dominant in the Valley: production includes cattle, dairy, fruit, flowers, macadamia nuts and vegetables.

Attractions and Experiences

Nambucca is a popular holiday destination particularly for beachgoers, river users and nature lovers. Nambucca's main visitor attractions are its varied natural features and environment, largely undeveloped and unspoilt, including its National Parks, the largely pristine coastal landscape, river system and interesting hinterland.

Important experiences include:

- Nambucca Heads – breathtaking views of pristine beaches and coastal scenery, foreshore boardwalks and rainforest walks
- The heritage town of Bowraville with 2 high-quality museums
- Scotts Head – renowned surf-beaches with surf schools, good boating & fishing
- Stunning hinterland with attractions, e.g. The Pub With No Beer, Buffalo Farm

Nambucca also boasts one of Australia’s most pleasant year-round climates (average daily temperature ranging from 26C to 18C).

There is also a year-round event calendar with some iconic events (e.g. Scotts Head Festival and Valla Rod Run) and many smaller activities (e.g. dance and art classes).

CURRENT VISITOR DATA FOR NAMBUCCA SHIRE

Visitation data summary (see Attachments 1&2)

- Total visitors 228,000
 - domestic visitors 137,000
 - international visitors 5,000
 - domestic visitor day trips 87,000
- Total nights 544,000
 - domestic visitor nights 509,000
 - international visitor nights 35,000

Comments

- Relatively low visitation levels compared to other North Coast destinations highlighting potential for growth (see Attachment 1)
- Detailed tourism research is limited due to small sample sizes and numbers making some data unreliable and not published. However, TRA’s data shows:
 - domestic overnight visitors dominate in both actual numbers and spend
 - the key motivator is ‘visiting friends and family’ and consequently ‘family home’ is the most commonly recorded type of accommodation
 - ‘commercial caravan and camping’ was the next most dominant accommodation type
 - only 10.4% of domestic visitor nights are in ‘hotel or similar’ type commercial accommodation (53,000 room nights per year).

Size of tourism industry

Tourism Research Australia’s Local Government Area profiles for Nambucca show a total of 195 businesses operating in the area (2016).

TOURISM BUSINESSES [^]	TOTAL
Non-employing	74
1 to 4 employees	59

5 to 19 employees	51
20 or more employees	8
Total	195

The following listings are indicative only, in terms of showing actual accommodation stock, as businesses list in different distribution channels. However, it does indicate what is readily visible to potential visitors.

- Visitor Information Centre website listings (scanned 20 Dec 2017)
 - Hotel and motel 15
 - B&B 8
 - Apartments and houses 21
 - Boutique accommodation 10
 - Caravan park 10
 - House boat 1
- Trip Advisor website listings (scanned 5 Jan 2018)
 - Hotels 5
 - B&B/ inns 4
 - Holiday rentals 31 (7 in Nambucca Heads and rest within 15km radius)
 - Other accommodation 7
- Airbnb website listings (scanned 16 Jan 2018 for April availability)
 - 78 listings for rental for area (note this doesn't quite equate to the Shire boundaries but included Urunga to Grassy Head and inland to Buckrabendinni).

OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED IN BACKGROUND MATERIAL

There appears to be good opportunity to grow the visitor economy of Nambucca Shire, providing more growth for existing businesses, stimulating new investment and business growth and creating local jobs.

A series of areas have been identified in past documents. These may or may not still be valid, and are listed here to stimulate upcoming discussion around current priorities and feasible actions in stakeholder meetings and workshops. This list is not exhaustive of all past comments and issues have been summarised.

Broad issues include:

- Limited strategic tourism planning to date
- Smaller scale and low numbers of tourism operators means there is little industry marketing or capacity for cooperative destination development and marketing initiatives
 - Low numbers of businesses on internet, creating poor destination representation and not able to excite potential visitors and build length of stay.

Identified areas to grow include:

- Experiences/ attractions – things to do for domestic markets, particularly:
 - Commercial experiences, rather than just free nature-based leisure
 - River-based attractions and experiences
 - Hinterland links (agri-tourism to drive the wider visitor economy)
 - Family friendly activities during the rain/low season
- Export ready product to attract international visitors travelling on the Legendary Pacific Coast (i.e. give them a reason to stop)
- Indigenous tourism – e.g. use of bush tucker in local food outlets, storytelling, tours, employment of local Aboriginal young people in tourism operations
- New investment to address market gaps such as:
 - Increasing overnight accommodation capacity to cater for events and conferences
 - New and contemporary accommodation facilities such as eco-resorts and glamping
 - Quality hospitality operations
 - Local/regional food tourism opportunities
 - Nature based tourism opportunities
- Targeted development of events – use a strategic approach to get desired results (e.g. resurrecting the River Festival).

In addition, consideration should be given to:

- Identifying and prioritising target markets
- A focussed approach to build the low season
- Cost effective digital marketing solutions
- Attracting day trippers from other nearby holiday destinations and those travelling on the Highway
- Improved public transport for visitors
- Improved research and statistics to support good decision-making
- Fostering interest and cooperation of local SMEs in tourism
- Labour force planning to attract and retain skilled tourism staff
- Working cooperatively with neighbouring destination regions (Coffs Coast, Kempsey and Port Macquarie LGAs, and Armidale - inland)
- Encouraging motorists off the new Highway into Nambucca's townships through a series of strategies including improved directional and wayfinding signage
- Capacity for tourism to contribute to wider community and environmental goals/ outcomes.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

A number of planned/ underway capital works upgrades by Council will assist in increasing the attractiveness of public spaces (shelter and playground upgrades), paths and trails, and ease of

travel through bridge and road improvements. Recreational improvements such as Gordon Park revitalisation and boat ramp upgrades are also underway. There is still a perceived lack of enabling tourism infrastructure around roads, cycle ways, parking, signage. Further opportunities may exist through infrastructure funding (such as the \$1.6billion from the NSW Government - Poles & Wires revenue) to improve areas such as cultural/ sporting facilities in the area.

In response to the new Pacific Highway bypass, The Nambucca Valley Business Advisory Committee have outlined a plan aimed to attract both locals and tourists into its CBDs. The urban renewal approach aims to create friendly and welcoming areas, to be a first choice for the consumer, to encourage and retain shoppers in the CBD, to create a vibrant community of businesses offering a wide range of choice for the consumer and to stand out from the rest of regional Australia in terms of the type of façade presented. The marketing approach is largely digital via social media with strong use of imagery.

‘While the competition from larger urban shopping districts, online shopping and less through traffic is challenging, the desire is to create a destination place for our residents, weekend road trippers and tourists both domestically and internationally, helping transform each of our towns and villages into vibrant, self-determined yet connected communities, each with their own strengths, each with their own character.’

For example, the opening of the new Macksville Bridge may create opportunities to stimulate new retail and hospitality investment.

Attachment 1

Comparison between Nambucca Shire and other North Coast LGAs. Source: DNSW Local Government Areas Profiles (4 Year Average) as at June 2017

LGA	Domestic '000			International '000	
	Visitors	Visitor Nights	Day Trips	Visitors	Visitor Nights
Ballina	318	1120	309	14	125
Bellingen	92	357	118	5	34
Byron	704	2582	838	182	1303
Clarence Valley	481	1840	450	15	86
Coffs Harbour	759	2485	742	74	557
Kempsey	293	1162	235	9	54
Mid Coast	1013	3414	933	21	165
Nambucca	137	509	87	5	35
Port Macquarie Hastings	728	2381	681	56	295

Richmond Valley	122	487	167	3	28
Tweed	553	1976	1106	20	255

ATTACHMENT 2

Tourism Research Australia's Local Government Area profiles - Nambucca 2016:

	INTERNATIONAL	DOMESTIC OVERNIGHT	DOMESTIC DAY	TOTAL
Visitors ('000)	5	137	87	228
Nights ('000)	35	509	-	544
Average stay (nights)	8	4	-	4
Spend (\$m)	1	58	8	67
Average spend per trip (\$)	291	423	94	295
Average spend per night (\$)	38	113	-	109
Average spend (commercial accommodation) per night (\$)	88	152	-	150

TOURISM STATISTICS FOR NAMBUCCA (A)

Reason (visitors '000)

Holiday	3	50	np	np
Visiting friends or relatives	np	55	np	np
Business	np	np	np	np
Other	np	np	np	np

Travel party type (visitors '000)

Unaccompanied	2	35	-	37
Couple	np	49	-	np
Family group	np	29	-	np
Friends /relatives travelling together	np	np	-	np

Accommodation (nights '000)

Hotel or similar	np	53	-	np
Home of friend or relative	np	186	-	np
Commercial camping/caravan park	np	166	-	np
Backpacker	np	np	-	np
Other	np	np	-	np
