

8.8. Visitor Economy/Tourism – Response to Notice of Motion

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ATTACHMENTS:

1. Visitor Economy Strategy [8.8.1 - 3 pages]

PURPOSE:

This report responds to the Notice of Motion, considered by Council at its meeting of 27 June 2022, that a report be provided on the feasibility of developing a tourism promotion for the North Sydney local government area (LGA) based on similar programs undertaken by other NSW councils, and the development of a co-operative campaign with neighbouring councils, supported by Federal and State tourism marketing bodies.

The Action Plan within Council's adopted *Visitor Economy Strategy (2019)* includes several marketing and visitor services initiatives to which the suggestions within the Notice of Motion align.

This report also provides a status update regarding implementation of the Action Plan (Attachment 1).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Tourism and the visitor economy were priorities identified in the previous Community Strategic Plan (2018). In turn, following a [two-stage stakeholder engagement process](#), Council adopted its [North Sydney Visitor Economy Strategy](#) on 28 October 2019.

The Strategy carefully considers the balance between conservation and sustainability, as well as residential amenity, with the desire to strengthen the local economy and providing employment opportunities. As part of this approach, the Strategy aims to leverage the North Sydney LGA's existing strengths and focuses on the markets with the greatest propensity for potential growth, including visiting friends and relatives (VFR), business travellers and 55 years plus, by increasing their length of stay and spend within North Sydney LGA.

The Strategy is supported by a prioritised Action Plan. Implementation has been slower than intended due to a multitude of factors including staff vacancy, lack of dedicated budget, COVID impacts, delays with related Council projects and the decision was also made to wait for the new Council as this provides options for an affordable and easy to maintain sub site.

In considering the Notice of Motion, research on tourism programs of other councils is underway and conversation with Destination NSW has commenced. Internal discussions are also in progress regarding prioritisation of the marketing and visitor services initiatives within

the *Visitor Economy Strategy*. Funding is available in the 2022/23 financial year and is earmarked towards creation of a dedicated brand destination identity, marketing blueprint with campaign and dedicated tourism website (as a sub site to the new Council website, to be launched in November 2022). It is proposed that the feasibility of a co-operative campaign with neighbouring councils be explored during the preparation of the North Sydney LGA brand destination identity and marketing blueprint.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

\$100,000 has been allocated in the adopted *2022/23 Operational Plan & Budget* for implementation of the *Visitor Economy Strategy*. This is the first time since the Strategy's adoption that a dedicated budget has been allocated.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. THAT** the Visitor Economy Strategy progress update be noted.
- 2. THAT** a further report be provided to Council regarding the next steps in implementing the Visitor Economy Strategy.

LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

3. Our Innovative City

3.1 Our commercial centres are prosperous and vibrant

BACKGROUND

Council at its meeting of 27 June 2022 considered a Notice of Motion and resolved in part:

1. THAT Council note the following report on the development of a tourism promotion program for North Sydney based on similar programs being undertaken by other Councils and involving the development of a co-operative campaign with neighbouring Councils, supported by Federal and State tourism marketing bodies.

2. THAT a report be provided to the August Council Meeting regarding the feasibility of such a scheme.

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

Community engagement is not required.

DETAIL

Tourism and the visitor economy were priorities identified in the previous Community Strategic Plan (2018). In turn, dedicated resourcing was allocated to preparing a strategy via a [two-stage stakeholder engagement progress](#). Destination Marketing Store was engaged to prepare the Strategy for Council. The [preliminary engagement findings](#) were reported to Council on 26 August 2019 and the final [North Sydney Visitor Economy Strategy](#) was adopted on 28 October 2019.

Preparation of the Strategy and Action Plan occurred between May and August 2019 and was informed by a review of Council's existing plans and strategies such as the North Sydney CBD Public Domain Strategy and external plans including the North District Plan; a situation analysis, including review of visitor research for North Sydney LGA and insights from relevant global and domestic trends in travel and tourism; insights from an online product and experience audit; and stakeholder engagement.

Stage 1 stakeholder engagement included an opt-in survey (119 respondents), general submissions (four), one-to-one and small group meetings/interviews (various), two workshops with local businesses/tourism operators (20 participants), two workshops open to the community/Precinct Committees (23 participants), a workshop with the internal Project Control Group (10 participants), and a Councillor Briefing. Local businesses/tourism operators were informed via direct letter of the opportunity provide feedback on the Stage 2 public

exhibition period. There were 403 web page reviews with 127 document downloads, social media promotions reached 9,791 people, and 52 submissions were received during Stage 2.

The Strategy carefully considers the balance between conservation and sustainability, as well as residential amenity, with the desire to strengthen the local economy and providing employment opportunities. As part of this approach, the Strategy aims to leverage the North Sydney LGA's existing strengths and focuses on the markets with the greatest propensity for potential growth. The priority target markets identified for the North Sydney LGA are:

- a) Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) - including for both domestic and international markets, noting that the most effective way to engage with the VFR market is through local residents. This provides an opportunity to enhance civic pride and awareness of the things to do across the North Sydney LGA;
- b) Business travelers - which is currently a strength of North Sydney LGA. However, encouraging them to stay longer by extending their stay for leisure is an important opportunity and will contribute to the vibrancy of North Sydney LGA. Likewise, there is an opportunity to demonstrate a point of difference to the Sydney CBD to attract boutique or smaller-scale business events and conferences; and
- c) Higher-yield market segments - specifically: 55+, who typically have a stronger interest in heritage and history, art and creativity; and Contemporary women travelers, who desire a safer destination with opportunities for health and well-being, art and creativity.

The Strategy is supported by a prioritised Action Plan. Attachment 1 provides a progress update against the Action Plan (as at July 2022). Implementation has been slower than intended due to a multitude of factors including staff vacancy, lack of dedicated budget, COVID impacts, and delays with related Council projects including the new Council website.

In considering the Notice of Motion, research on tourism programs of other councils is underway and conversation with Destination NSW has commenced. Internal discussions are also in progress regarding prioritisation of the marketing and visitor services initiatives within the *Visitor Economy Strategy*. Funding is available in the 2022/23 financial year and is earmarked towards creation of:

- a) a dedicated brand destination identity
- b) a marketing blueprint including the 'Be a Tourist in your Own Backyard' campaign (or similar); and
- c) a dedicated tourism website, as a sub site to the new Council website (to be launched November 2022).

It is proposed that the feasibility of a co-operative campaign with neighbouring councils be explored during the preparation of the North Sydney LGA brand destination identity and marketing blueprint.

It is recommended that a further report be provided to Council regarding the next steps in implementing the *Visitor Economy Strategy*.

ATTACHMENT 1. ACTION PLAN - STATUS UPDATE (JULY 2022)

- On track
- Delayed/pending
- Off track/not progressing

Theme	Action	Status	
ATTRACTING THE RIGHT MARKETS TO NORTH SYDNEY	1. Destination Identity	1.1 Create a destination identity for the North Sydney LGA, developed as a place brand, that leverages and brings to life the destination positioning statement.	
		1.2 Create separate place identities for the 'hub and spokes', including North Sydney CBD/Ward St Precinct, and St Leonards and Crows Nest.	
	2. Develop and Curate Destination Content	2.1 Audit and evaluate (with a visitor-centric story lens) current destination content, including Destination NSW content on Visit NSW website.	
		2.2 Create new relevant story focused' content, particularly around the key heritage assets, and share with relevant audience distribution channels.	
		2.3 Develop a visitor-centric image library for use across multiple channels.	
	3. Visitor Services Review	3.1 Develop and implement a Visitor Services Strategy, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a visitor-centric website; • partnerships with local business to showcase a variety of experiences and itineraries; • partnerships with commercial tour providers to showcase the best of North Sydney; • a 'What's On' Calendar with content from Council's <i>Events Strategy</i>, for distribution to tour operators and stakeholders and for digital distribution • a 'tool' that allows residents to easily promote the destination to their friends and relatives; and • an 'ultimate concierge' concept to ensure front-of-house staff have the most up-to-date 	
		3.2 Review the ATDW listing for the destination and contact operators and tourism businesses to either list their product within the ATDW database or update their listing regularly.	
	4. Marketing Blueprint	4.1 Develop and implement a marketing strategy (Marketing Blueprint) including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promotion with relevant third party marketing organisations. 	
		4.2 Develop and implement a 'Be A Tourist In Your Own Backyard' strategy and campaign to grow awareness of the destination's attractions and experiences amongst residents and businesses.	

Theme	Action	Status
	4.3 Undertake marketing research and evaluation, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • research into target markets; and • a media and social sentiment analysis report. 	
CREATING VIBRANT COMMUNITIES & WORLD-CLASS VISITOR EXPERIENCES	5. Connected Communities - North Sydney Connected Trail Development <p>5.1 Develop a <i>North Sydney Connected Concept Plan</i> building on the work in the <i>Public Domain Strategy</i>, which maps existing movement of people across the LGA, linked into the walking tracks, cycling routes, experiences, accommodation options and villages or centres - east-west and north-south connections and linking to key heritage sites.</p>	
	<p>5.2 Conduct a signage and soft infrastructure audit to identify and prioritise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • directional and interpretative signage gaps and opportunities that can help guide people through the destination and connect people to the destination experiences; • soft infrastructure requirements such as tables, benches, BBQ facilities, water stations bins and toilets that can help deliver a positive visitor experience. 	
	5.3 Implement the Council's <i>Events Strategy</i> to deliver a stronger sense of identity for North Sydney and establish links with the trails.	
	5.4 Develop a <i>Public Art Masterplan</i> across the LGA, with a focus on increasing public art in the public domain (Council owned land) and in the private sector in new developments (through Council's Development Control Plan).	
	6. Connected Communities - Bondi to Manly Walk <p>6.1 Support the establishment of a way marked walking track from Bondi Beach to Manly Beach.</p>	
	7. Living Heritage - <p>7.1 Support a world-class vision for the Sydney Harbour High Line (SHHL) project and concept to create a truly remarkable signature experience.</p>	
	8. Living Heritage - Waverton Peninsula <p>8.1 Implement the last remaining objective of the <i>Waverton Peninsula Masterplan</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adaptive reuse of the existing maritime heritage assets on the BP site (Dolphin Wharf) and Coal Loader site (former Coal Loader Jetty) to provide improved water-based access to the Peninsula. <p>8.2 Prepare a <i>Berry's Bay Masterplan</i> based on the principles of the <i>Waverton Peninsula Masterplan</i> to include consideration of, among other things:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • acquisition of the Quarantine Depot, and transfer of the former Woodleys site and former BP working waterfront site to Council care, control and management; • explore enhanced land and water-based linkages between the Peninsula and other sites, e.g. the SHHL and Milsons Point Wharf; 	

Theme	Action	Status
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore provision of improved public transport and car-free days to support the events program and accessible tourism; • explore potential community uses, e.g. a showcase for Aboriginal cultural heritage; • demonstrate commitment to sustainability and the protection of nature within urban areas 	
9. Living Heritage - North Sydney Olympic Pool complex redevelopment	9.1 Continue to implement the approved process for the redevelopment of the North Sydney Olympic Pool (NSOP) complex.	
10. Living Heritage - Sub Base Platypus	10.1 Support the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust's (Harbour Trust) vision of a vibrant public domain with buildings and facilities adapted for a range of cultural, recreational, community and commercial uses at Sub Base Platypus.	
	10.2 Work with the Harbour Trust to coordinate planning and infrastructure outcomes	
11. Dynamic Centres - North Sydney CBD, including the Ward St Precinct	11.1 Develop a clear place identity for the Ward St Precinct in-line with the destination brand and place identities.	
	11.2 Develop a hub and spoke model of connectivity between the North Sydney CBD and the rest of the LGA based on the North Sydney Connected Concept Plan, building on the work in the <i>Public Domain Strategy</i> .	
	11.3 Develop an arts/cultural based program that will facilitate greater engagement between businesses and local artists	
12. Dynamic Centres - Innovation Hub for a Smart and Dynamic St Leonards and Crows Nest	12.1 Develop a clear identity for St Leonards and Crows Nest in-line with the destination brand and place identities.	
	12.2 Commence activating this identity and positioning through delivering and actively promoting a program of industry-related events, conferences, workshops and masterclasses, including for the creative industries.	
	12.3 Review and further consider Council's role in and capacity for providing incentives through its policy and development approvals framework to support and attract new entrants or start-ups in these industries.	