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## North Coast News & Views No. 157

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*On behalf of the Board and team at DNC we would like to wish you all a happy new year and we hope that the festive season has been prosperous for you. We embark on the new year with increased confidence and a desire to grow and evolve the North Coast visitor economy. Our industry is now definitely on an upwards trajectory showing strong growth in visitation, economic impact and aviation capacity which presents great opportunities for our stakeholders to finally be able to focus more on growth, market diversification and other opportunities.*

*Over the coming year we look forward to officially launching our updated North Coast - Destination Management Plan, continuing existing programs and sourcing and launching a range of new initiatives to support North Coast visitor economy stakeholders. As always the team at DNC are here for you, so please do not hesitate to reach out to us if we can be of assistance to you or your organisation.*

*Team Destination North Coast*

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### Destination NSW Releases 2021-22 Annual Report

Destination NSW has released its [annual report for 2021-22](#), which highlights the NSW Government's major events and tourism agency's focus on reinvigorating the NSW visitor economy through marketing activity, stakeholder education and a vibrant events calendar.

The 2021-22 financial year began with NSW in lockdown and travel restrictions in place. However, the visitor economy saw signs of recovery, with almost 560,000 international visitors coming to NSW and slight increases in total visitor expenditure, which reached \$25.7 billion. The resumption of domestic cruising in NSW at the end of May 2022 was another positive step on the road to recovery.

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## Second Round Fast Charger Grants Open

Drivers are set to receive a huge boost in charging infrastructure across the state with hundreds of new bays to be built in the latest round of electric vehicle fast charging grants.

Treasurer and Energy Minister Matt Kean said the NSW Government is investing a further \$80 million to co-fund up to 180 ultra-fast charging stations in round two of the grants, with all stations to be built over the coming 24 months.

The second round of the grants will see the addition of larger stations with a minimum of 8 ultra-fast charging bays, to be built in areas of high demand.

The fast chargers will be placed no more than 5km apart in metropolitan areas and no more than 100km apart on major roads and highways across NSW.

The NSW Government has a target to add approximately 250 fast and ultra-fast charging stations in total across NSW. **Round Two closes 10 March 2023.** Find [more information here](#) and read [media release](#).

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## New Strategy To Bring Big Business To Regional NSW

The Regional NSW Investment Attraction Strategy 2022-2027 has been released, outlining the strengths and investment opportunities that the largest and most diverse regional economy in Australia offers. It provides the roadmap to deliver \$1 billion in private sector investment and 15,000 high-value jobs for regional NSW in the next five years.

It is underpinned by the \$145 million Regional Investment Activation Program that includes \$110 million in grant funding, currently open, to support businesses and investors looking to expand or set up in regional NSW.

[Download the Strategy here.](#)

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Department of Regional NSW

### Regional NSW Investment Attraction Strategy 2022-2027



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## Funding For Aboriginal Business Growth

The NSW Government will invest \$10 million to help Aboriginal businesses diversify and grow. The funding will support actions to expand the Aboriginal business sector, including networking and mentoring, leadership and recognition. In October 2021 and May 2022, Aboriginal Affairs NSW hosted Aboriginal Business

Roundtables to hear directly from Aboriginal businesses about what challenges they face to enter, grow and thrive in the NSW business sector.

The [NSW Roadmap for Aboriginal Business Growth](#) was the outcome of the Roundtables and a consultation period for stakeholders to provide feedback on the draft Roadmap is now open. The [Roadmap feedback survey](#) will remain open until **20 January 2023**.

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## Australian Tourism Awards Finalists

The Australian Tourism Industry Council has announced the finalists for the 2022 Qantas Australian Tourism Awards. The awards recognise excellence across 25 categories including Major Tourist Attractions, Festivals and Events and Adventure Tourism. Destination NSW is supporting Sydney as the host city for the 2022 Qantas Australian Tourism Awards on 17 March 2023. Tickets to the ceremony, which will be held at Dolton House on Darling Island are now on sale. [Find more information here](#).

See the [full list of finalists here](#) and North Coast finalists below;

- Bluesfest Byron Bay - Major Festivals & Events
  - Wajaana Yaam Gumbaynggirr Adventure Tours - Aboriginal & Torres Strait Island Tourism Experience
  - Balloon Aloft - Adventure Tourism
  - Potager - Tourism Restaurants & Catering Services
  - North Star Holiday Resort - Caravan & Holiday Parks
  - Hello Koalas Sculpture Trail - Tourist Attractions
  - Tweed Eco Cruises - Tour & Transport Operators
  - MidCoast Council, Destination Barrington Coast - Tourism Marketing & Campaigns
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## New Chair For DNSW

Destination NSW has welcomed [Sally Loane](#) as its new Chair. Ms Loane, who has been a Board Director since 2018, has extensive experience as a non-executive director and business leader in financial services, media and corporate affairs.

Ms Loane is also a Director of Chubb Insurance Australia, Venues NSW and Pankind, the Australian Pancreatic Cancer Research Foundation. From 2014-2021 she was the Chief Executive Officer of the Financial Services Council, the peak industry organisation developing policy for superannuation funds, fund managers, life insurance and advice licensees.

Read [more here](#).

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## Reflections Delivers \$83.2 Million To NSW

After welcoming two million guests in 2022 and contributing more than \$83 million in economic value to regional NSW communities, Reflections Holiday Parks has published its first report card since launching its 2030 Strategic Plan in May this year. Highlights include \$16.9 million in park developments and upgrades, with a further \$34.8 million planned for 2023, to grow regional NSW tourism; and contributing \$3.5 million to help Crown land managers such as councils and community groups in the upkeep of community reserves.

Read [media release](#).

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## Tourism Industry Insights

### Latest Tourism Recovery Results

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has released its latest Tourism Satellite Account, which shows tourism gross domestic product (GDP) rose 26.4 per cent to \$35.1 billion in chain volume terms in 2021-22.

Domestic tourism consumption rose by \$5.3 billion to \$85 billion in 2021-22 while international tourism rose by \$5.6 billion to \$6.4 billion in chain volume terms.

The growth in domestic tourism activity has seen the gross value added (GVA) for both the accommodation and the cafes, restaurants and takeaway food outlets industries rebound in 2021-22, with increases of 17.1 per cent and 7.8 per cent respectively. Find [more information here](#).

#### **NVS September 2022 Snapshot**

Domestic tourism continued to recover in September. Overall, Australian residents took 9.7 million overnight trips and spent \$9.7 billion in September 2022. Find [more information here](#).

#### **Tourism Forecasts For Australia 2022 To 2027**

The first domestic and international Tourism Forecasts since the start of the pandemic are now published.

International visitor spend is forecast to exceed pre-pandemic levels in 2024 followed by visitor arrivals in 2025. By 2027, there are forecast to be 11.0 million visitor arrivals with spend of \$48.8 billion.

Domestic tourism is recovering more quickly. Day trip and overnight trip spend are forecast to surpass pre-pandemic levels this year and visitor nights to follow next year. By 2027, Australians are forecast to take 465.8 million domestic visitor nights and have \$137.9 billion in domestic overnight trip spend. [Find more information here](#).

#### **Global Airline Industry Insights**

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has indicated that the global airline industry is expecting a return to profitability in 2023 as airlines continue to cut the losses incurred due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. IATA has also indicated that passenger demand is expected to reach 85.5 per cent of 2019 levels over the course of 2023. Much of this expectation takes into account the challenges of rising costs, labor shortages, operational disruptions and growing economic uncertainty, and the uncertainties of China's Zero COVID policies, all of which are reported to be constraining both domestic and international markets. [Find more detail in IATA's latest report](#).

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## **Around The Region**

#### **Rail Trail Expressions Of Interest For Partner Program Opening Soon**

Work on the Tweed section of the Northern Rivers Rail Trail is in the final months of construction, with the exciting new attraction set to open to the public in March next year.

As part of the preparation for rail trail operations, Tweed Shire Council will call for expressions of interest for the Rail Trail Partner Program in mid-January 2023. Adjoining landowners and local businesses who want to be part of the region's newest must-do experience - for both visitors and residents - should start to consider the commercial opportunities the rail trail will bring.

Opening in March 2023, the Tweed section of the Northern Rivers Rail Trail will provide a 24km shared recreation and nature trail where people can walk, ride and explore at their own pace.

Council will call for Expressions of Interest from adjoining landowners and local businesses to offer these experiences:

- Taste (food and beverage)
- Stay (accommodation)
- Move (travel and transport options)
- Explore (education and recreation)
- Enjoy (entertainment and events)

[Find more information here](#).



## EXPERIENCE & PRODUCT CATEGORIES



### Coffs Coast Nominated In Global Green Awards

In November 2022 the Coffs Coast was selected by global organisation Green Destinations' as having one of the Top 100 Green Destination stories in the world. The Coffs Coast story entry, Two Path Strong, celebrates Aboriginal tourism on the Coffs Coast and the rich culture that has supported the establishment of the first bilingual school of an Aboriginal language in NSW, The Gumbaynggirr Giingana Freedom School (GGFS).

This story of sharing Gumbaynggirr culture and knowledge of Country across the Coffs Coast has now been nominated to receive a **Global Green Destinations Story Award, in the Culture and Tradition category**. The awards will be judged by sustainable tourism experts from around the world and winners be announced at ITB Berlin on the 7<sup>th</sup> March 2023 at the Green Destinations Story Awards ceremony.

Read [media release](#) and [vote for Coffs Coast Destination to win the People's Choice Award](#). Voting is open now and ends on 24 January 2023.



### New Bus Network For Lismore - Transport NSW 16 Regional Cities Service Improvement Program

A new bus network will be introduced to Lismore on **16 January 2023** which will see more buses more often, new services on Sundays and Public Holidays, to connect community and visitors more reliably where they need to go.

[Find more information](#) and [answers to frequently asked questions](#) and please feel free to share this information with your network.

Join Transport NSW for the launch event at the Lismore Transit Centre, 10.30am-1.30pm (BBQ lunch included).

### Top 50 Restaurants As Voted By OpenTable Diners

Two North Coast restaurants made OpenTables's [Top 50 restaurants in Australia for 2022](#) list which is no mean feat and is determined by analysis of over 380,000 customer reviews.

Congratulations to Forster restaurant [Spice Monkey](#) and Port Macquarie's [Whalebone Wharf](#) seafood restaurant.

### **Ballina Secures \$1.05M To Improve Accessibility At Sharpes Beach**

Ballina Shire Council has secured \$1.05M from the NSW Government Regional Tourism Activation Fund to improve accessibility at Sharpes Beach with the upgrade to provide essential infrastructure and embellishments that will improve the overall visitor experience and accessibility of both the very popular Sharpes Beach and the connecting high impact tourism assets.

Sharpes Beach is directly accessed from Tourist Drive 30 and the very popular Coastal Recreation Path, the carpark also provides access to the Aboriginal Cultural Ways walk which explores Ballina's rich heritage and living Aboriginal Culture. The project upgrades will attract inclusive tourism, improve current tourism assets through the supply of important facilities and boost community and recreational use of Sharpes Beach. The scope of this project includes accessible toilet facilities, a viewing deck and shower, the construction of a carpark, provision of storage facilities for Surf Life Saving and beautification of the area. [Find more information here.](#)

### **South West Rocks Named In Australia's Best Beaches**

Australia's best beaches for 2022 have been named, with Horseshoe Bay, South West Rocks claiming second place. [See the full list here.](#)

### **Pre-Booked Parking Available At Ballina Airport**

Ballina Byron Gateway Airport has introduced a new parking option for travellers. The new pre-booked parking area is just steps away from the check-in terminal and allows passengers the option to reserve and pay for their parking spot online before they arrive.

It will cost a flat rate of \$30 for a 24-hour period and [must be booked online](#) before you arrive. Read [media release.](#)

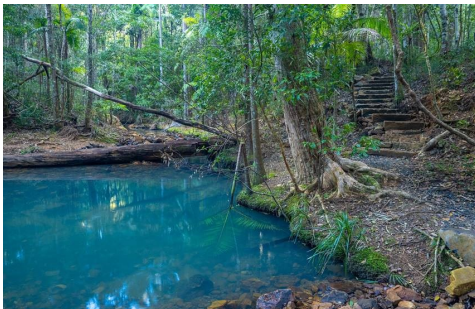
### **Macleay Coast Destination Project Draft Master Plan Exhibition Extended**

National Parks and Wildlife Service has extended the exhibition of the draft master plan until **3 February 2023**. You can find a copy of the plan and a link to the submission survey on the [draft master plan webpage](#).

### **New Unicorn Falls Walking Track Opens**

A new 2.1 km walking track to the enchanting Unicorn Falls in Mount Jerusalem National Park has recently been completed by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS).

The \$600,000 upgrade also includes a new carpark on Manns Road, which is expected to reduce traffic on South Chowan Road, which currently gets congested during busy periods.



Plans for the new walking track and carpark, outlined in the Unicorn Falls master plan, were developed through a process of public consultation. The original draft plan was exhibited for public comment in mid-2020. Following feedback from the community, the masterplan was revised to improve outcomes for visitors and the park's natural and cultural values.

Read [media release.](#)

### **Tweed's First Mountain Bike Track**

Tweed Shire Council, in partnership with Tweed Valley Mountain Bike Riders, has engaged outdoor trail design and construction specialists Trailworx to build more than 8.5 km of mountain bike trails on Council-owned operational land adjacent to the Uki Wastewater Treatment Plant on Smiths Creek Road.

Work on the track is expected to take about 6 months to complete, with the park projected to be opened to the public in mid-2023, weather permitting. Read [media release.](#)

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## **Industry Development And Other Opportunities**

### **NSW Government Invests In NSW's Future Event Management Workforce**

The NSW Government is supporting the future of NSW's event industry by providing scholarships for aspiring event managers in partnership with Meetings and Events Australia (MEA).

The scholarship program will support seven up-and-coming event professionals to upskill by undertaking the Diploma of Event Management.

Applications for the SIT50316 Diploma of Event Management scholarship, delivered by Meetings and Events Australia (RTO ID: 91329) are now open and will close on **22 January 2023** with scholarships will be awarded to one successful candidate per Destination Network who meets the eligibility and assessment criteria.

[Find more information here](#) and read [media release](#).

### **Premium Accelerator Regional Event Management Training Program**

Specifically for Councils and tourism organisations, the Premium Accelerator Program focuses on boosting the event management knowledge and skills of a selected cohort of existing and emerging events within a regional destination.

Part assessment, part one-on-one intensive training, this 12-week hybrid program aims to ensure that events in a region are equipped with the capability to complement and support the overarching tourism and community objectives within their area.

The Premium Accelerator Program is a unique opportunity for Councils and tourism organisations to

- identify events that offer the most potential
- support the ones that need targeted help to achieve their potential, and
- foster growth in emerging events that could boost tourism opportunities within a region.

Entry via [Expression of Interest](#).

### **Business Connect Webinars**

Business Connect are running webinars for the regions this month and all are free. With so many topics available, there is sure to be a webinar to help you and your business! To see webinars being held, visit the [Business Connect website](#).

### **ATIG Free Webinar Series**

The Australian Tourism Industry Group (ATIG) was founded by The Business Hub as part of the Australian Small Business Advisory Services (ASBAS) Digital Solutions program. ATIG's focus is to help tourism operators of all sizes from all corners of Australia develop their digital business skills to improve resilience and expand in an ever-changing business world.

Running monthly tourism-focused webinars, ATIG is tackling topics such as Booking Platforms, Reviews, and Website Building.

[Booking Platforms: Choosing the Right One for You](#) **20 February 2023 10:00 am.**

[Build a Website in a Weekend](#) **20 March 2023 10:00 am.**

[Managing Tourism Reviews & Ratings](#) **17 April 2023 10:00 am.**

### **NSW National Parks Photo Competition**

The photo competition is an opportunity for nature lovers and photographers to showcase the incredible beauty and diversity of NPWS parks and reserves and help tell the story of NSW's important natural places and cultural heritage. [Find more information here](#). **Closes 31 January 2023.**

### **Free Disaster Preparation And Recovery Checklists**

The [Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman](#) has published a useful [nine-point checklist](#) to help small businesses with disaster preparation.

The start of a New Year is a good time to make sure your disaster plans and checklists are in order and that your team are also across them.

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## Funding And Other Opportunities

### Grants and Resources Funding Portal

Across NSW, there are more than 1,300 programs related to grants, rebates, subsidies and transfers, spanning over 45 agencies with an associated annual spend of more than \$18 billion.

Use the filtering selections to search the [Grants and Funding hub](#) to find grants that are relevant to you.



### Regional Job Creation Fund - Round 3 Opening Friday 13 January

The \$100 million [Regional Job Creation Fund Round Three](#) will provide grants for regional businesses to expand their operations, and attract interstate and international businesses to relocate to regional NSW.

Eligible businesses can apply for grants of between \$100,000 and \$10 million for projects such as replacing plant equipment, upgrading technology and ensuring businesses that might otherwise have to relocate can remain based in regional areas.

Watch this space - Expressions of Interest for Round Three of the Regional Job Creation Fund open on Friday 13 January and close 5pm Monday 6 March.

### Create NSW Funding Opportunities

[Annual Program funding](#) is provided on an annual basis to support arts and cultural organisations (including Local Government Authorities and service organisations) to deliver multiple arts and cultural activities. It aims to:

- increase access by and engagement of diverse audiences and artists
- improve the quality and excellence of arts and culture in NSW
- ensure the best practice and sustainability of arts and cultural organisations.

[Individual Project funding](#) supports innovation, vibrancy and creativity within the NSW arts and cultural sector. It aims to deliver a dynamic and diverse range of arts and cultural experiences to communities across NSW, contribute to the development of a vibrant and accessible arts and cultural sector, and support the employment and development of professional NSW-based artists and arts/cultural workers.

[Creative Koori Projects](#) funding is open to Aboriginal artists, arts and cultural workers, groups, and organisations. It aims to support a strong, resilient, and creative Aboriginal arts and cultural sector for NSW. This will be done by embracing the principles of Aboriginal self-determination and putting Aboriginal artists, arts and cultural workers, organisations, and communities at the centre of funded activity.

**All programs close 13 February 2023.**

### [Wine Tourism and Cellar Door Grant](#)

The objective of the Wine Tourism and Cellar Door Grant is to support wine or cider producers who encourage wine tourism.

Wine producers who have met the eligibility criteria in the preceding financial year may apply for a grant payment of 29 per cent of the notional wholesale selling price of their eligible rebatable domestic cellar door sales, up to \$100,000 - GST exclusive.

Total funding under the grant program is capped at \$10 million each financial year. **Closes 31 January 2023.**

### [Supply Chain Support Program](#)

This program is part of the \$150 million Primary Industry Support Package that is co-funded by the Australian and NSW governments under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) and has been designed to support the recovery of first receivers that process primary produce in identified Primary Industries impacted by the February/March 2022 Severe Weather & Flooding.

Up to \$2 million per application will be made available per project for directly impacted applicants and \$250,000 for indirectly impacted applicants. Approved applicants will be able to use the grant to replace



impacted assets, diversify their business operations or subsidise freight costs to transport produce out of normal supply areas. **Closes 20 January 2023.**

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## North Coast Product Development

### [Reflections Brings Tiny Homes And Glamping Glamour To The NSW North Coast](#)

New roofed accommodation is now available at Reflections Holiday Parks on the NSW North Coast which is bringing resort-like comforts to travellers at an accessible price.

- A tiny home village at Byron Bay, right next to Clarkes Beach
- A glamping precinct at Lennox Head, next to Lake Ainsworth and Lennox Head beach

Reflections is Australia's only social enterprise holiday group, reinvesting profit into Crown Land throughout New South Wales for social and environmental good.

### [National Park Heritage Cottage Trials Hydrogen Power](#)

A heritage cottage in the Myall Lakes National Park is the first in Australia to switch to a green hydrogen stand-alone power system. In an 18-month trial by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and Essential Energy, Cutlers Cottage's system to power visitor accommodation is the first ever installed by an electricity distributor. The trial at Cutlers Cottage could potentially provide a future renewable energy solution for remote visitor facilities in national parks across the State. Cutlers Cottage is located at the water's edge of Two Mile Lake north of Hawks Nest in the Myall Lakes National Park.

### [Kiff & Culture Launches New Tour](#)

Kiff & Culture launched a new tour 'Tweed Valley Food & Culture' just in time for the Summer holiday period. Featuring local staples such as Tropical Fruit World, M-Arts Precinct, Kat Harvey Cheese and Husk Distillery, the tour offers guests a snapshot of some of the best producers in the region.

### [Lupo's Pizza - Diamond Beach](#)

Traditional Roman-style pizza and pasta in Diamond Beach, by the same people who brought delicious Mediterranean share plates at Forster's Isola Riva waterside restaurant.

### [Batter & Dough Patisserie](#)

Sourdough bakery and pastry specialities located in Gloucester baking small batch artisan breads, custom designed buttercream cakes, classic pastries, mouth-watering desserts, savoury pies and coffee! After losing her tourism job in the 2020 Covid lockdowns the owner reinvented herself producing sour dough bread from home. This new micro business was so successful that she's just opened a main street shop, Gloucester's first patisserie called Batter & Dough.

### [Big Banana Water Park](#)

The team at The Big Banana Fun Park are preparing to open the long-awaited expansion of their Water Park!

The expansion is another phase of The Big Banana 15-year Master Plan and includes a Duelling Raft Ride off a massive 16m platform and a children's Wading Pool, which features a number of new slides and play equipment including a Mini Donut Slide, Mini Drop Slide, 2 Racer Slides, Frog & Pelican Slides, Tipping Buckets, Mushroom Showers and Water Play Cannons.



### [Yamba Golf Club](#)

Yamba Golf now has a Golf Simulator which is the first of its kind in the North Coast. [Find more information here.](#)

### [Port Macquarie's Big Oyster](#)

The iconic 'Big Oyster' has changed hands and the new iteration (also known as 'The Shuck Shack') now has an adjacent pontoon where visitors can BYOG and indulge in fresh seafood platters overlooking the river.

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## North Coast Events

To aid your planning and to support local events, please note these upcoming events on the North Coast or find [all events on our website](#).

### [BBL Sydney Sixers v Adelaide Strikers](#)

To be held once again at the [C.alex Coffs International Stadium](#), Coffs Harbour is anticipating a big crowd, massive hits, and an electric atmosphere! **17 January 2023.**

### [Choose Your Gnome Adventure](#)

There are 20 colourful gnomes to be found in Grafton's CBD, all with stories to tell. Many are based on real people, others inspired by their surroundings. All you need to do is find them. Find a map at the website, or pick one up at the Grafton Regional Gallery or the Sir Earle Page Library in Grafton.

This is part of the Rediscover Grafton project, delivered by the Clarence Valley Council. Rediscover Grafton is fully funded by the NSW Government's Streets as Shared Spaces program. **Until 31 March 2023.**

### [Port Macquarie Eats Festival](#)

To celebrate the reawakening of the region, Port Macquarie invites everyone to come along and celebrate the town's rich culture, wonderful foods, crafts and entertainment this Australia Day long weekend.

Come to the Eats Food Festival at Port Macquarie racecourse! Bring a blanket and enjoy food and tourism from their region. **28 January 2023.**



### [Summer Salt - Coffs Harbour](#)

A new music festival in a vibrant setting at Park Beach Reserve that will bring much loved Aussie artists together with exciting international acts for a stellar line-up featuring Julia & Angus Stone, Ben Harper, City and Colour, The Reubens, Middle Kids and Alex the Astronaut. **11 February 2023.**

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