



North Coast News & Views No. 176

NSW 2023-24 State Budget Shapes The Future Of The Visitor Economy

The NSW Government's 2023-24 State Budget was handed down this week and includes \$1.2 billion for arts, culture, music, and the night-time and experience economy.

Destination NSW will continue to work with stakeholders across government and the private sector to retain and secure major events, with a particular focus on the arts, culture and creative industries.

The NSW Government is also investing in complementary programs, including \$31.2 million for contemporary music to develop a Music Scene Plan, establish Sound NSW and a venue support plan.

There was also good news in the State Budget for regional NSW, including continuing support for the seven Destination Networks and new investments to strengthen the economy, social development, wellbeing and community amenity in our regions.

Investment in consumer marketing will be adjusted in line with the NSW Government's election commitment to reduce advertising spend across all agencies. While this means Destination NSW will scale back some paid consumer marketing activity, the agency will lean heavily into the strength of its powerhouse owned and earned channels to tell Sydney and NSW's brand story.

Further, while the Regional Business Event Development Fund has been paused, Destination NSW will explore fresh opportunities to bring more business events to regional NSW.

Learn more about the [2023-24 State Budget here](#).

DNC Visit Groundbreaking Port Macquarie Attraction

As part of a recent trip to Port Macquarie for a Board meeting DNC Chair, John O'Neill and GM, Michael Thurston visited [Guulabaa](#) a multi-dimensional new attraction. The DNC team were hosted by representatives from Koala Conservation Australia, the Hello Koalas Sculpture Trail, Forestry Corporation and WildNets.

Guulabaa means 'Place of Koala' in local Gathang language, and this visitor experience nestled within Cowarra State Forests delivers just that. Visitors are welcomed to the site by The Big Koala, a 2.5 metre mural koala, part of the award-winning Hello Koalas Sculpture Trail. Accompanying these existing attractions is WildNets Adventures that offers a variety of experiences in the treetops through its series of giant bouncy netted rooms, tree houses, inflatable horses, suspension bridges, ball pits, slides, pods, giant inflatables and many other exciting features for all ages and abilities.

In addition to the existing attractions a truly groundbreaking attraction is rapidly being developed. Koala Conservation Australia is developing the world's first wild Koala breeding facility in partnership with Taronga Conservation Society and the Australian Museum. 'The Hub' central visitor area will house a café and art gallery run by Bunyah Local Aboriginal Land Council. The combination of the world first Koala breeding facility combined with the cluster of outstanding and complimentary activities will result in Guulabaa becoming a hero attraction and driver of visitation for Port Macquarie and the wider region.



Great Southern Nights Returns To Venues Across NSW

The beats of Australia's best live music will radiate across Sydney and NSW when Great Southern Nights makes its return from 8 to 24 March 2024.

The NSW Government is partnering with the Australian Recording Industry Association (ARIA) to bring back the much-loved concert series, ensuring it proceeds over the next four years, starting with 300 live music gigs in 2024.

From established household names to emerging talent and grass roots acts, Great Southern Nights 2024 will spotlight a diverse array of artists across 17 nights while inviting visitors to explore weekends away in Greater Sydney and NSW.

The new format will support jobs across the hospitality and entertainment sectors and supercharge the state's night-time and visitor economies.

[Read media release.](#)



Plans For Great Koala National Park

The NSW Government has announced the process to establish the Great Koala National Park on the NSW Mid North Coast, as well as a halt to timber harvesting operations in the 106 koala hubs within the area being assessed for the park. Minister for the Environment Penny Sharpe said: "The creation of the Great Koala National Park is essential to saving koalas from extinction in NSW."

[Read media release.](#)

Accommodation Australia And Ecotourism Australia Join Forces For Sustainable Tourism

Accommodation Australia (AA) and Ecotourism Australia have joined forces to forge a pathway toward sustainable tourism for the accommodation sector. AA will encourage its thousands of member hotels, motels and caravan parks to begin their sustainability journey with Ecotourism Australia's pre-certification benchmarking tool the [Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard](#).

[Find more information here.](#)

Bushfire Tips For Businesses

Firefighters are currently battling numerous bushfires across the state. Destination NSW has created NSW First Quick Tips Guides that provide practical advice to help visitor economy businesses prepare, respond and recover from the impacts of bushfires and other natural disasters. View [Quick tips for preparing for bushfires and natural disasters](#) here. View [How to respond during a bushfire or natural disaster](#) here. View [Quick tips for recovery after bushfires or natural disasters](#) here.

Vote For The Best Pub In NSW

Pub-goers across NSW have been asked to vote for their favourite local in this year's AHA NSW Awards for Excellence. Voting ends at 11.59pm on 29 September 2023. The state's most beloved watering hole will be crowned at the gala awards event on 31 October 2023 at Royal Randwick Racecourse.

[Find more information here.](#)

Industry Insights

Industry Training/Development & Communications Survey

Destination North Coast (DNC) is committed to providing our tourism industry operators and key visitor economy stakeholders, with training and development opportunities, relevant communication, insights and resources.

We are seeking your feedback on what you need in your business, to ensure what we deliver is relevant, timely and designed to help your business or organisation prosper.

Please take the time to fill in this short [Industry Training/Development & Communications Survey](#) (allow 5-10 minutes), as your feedback will help us build out our communication and development program.

The survey will close 13 October 2023.

Tourism Satellite Accounts: Quarterly Tourism Labour Statistics

The results for the June quarter have been released. There were 713,000 tourism jobs. This was: 20,100 (-2.7%) less jobs than March quarter 2023; 125,300 (21.3%) more jobs than June quarter 2022; 44,500 (-5.9%) less jobs than December quarter 2019, prior to COVID-19 pandemic; and 1 in 22 (4.6%) filled jobs in the economy. [Find more information here.](#)

Caravanning July Sentiment Report

The Caravan Industry Association of Australia (CIAA) has shared its [Caravan Industry Consumer Sentiment Report for July 2023](#), which shows many Australians are opting for cost-effective, value-for-money holiday alternatives instead of abandoning their travel plans entirely. Additionally, 29 per cent even intend to increase their holidays this year, underscoring a desire to "spoil themselves" amid the economic strain, while 90 per cent of respondents view caravan and camping as offering superior value for money compared to other holiday types.

Destination NSW Creates Youth Content

The Destination NSW Content and Creative Services team in partnership with Study NSW has created new video and photography assets that showcase the student and working holiday lifestyles of NSW. Shot through a youth lens, the assets focus on activities and experiences around NSW's top university regions - Sydney, Western Sydney, Wollongong, Newcastle and the North Coast. The content is available to use for campaigns, media and PR, to supply partners and for digital channels. It can be ordered through the [Content Library](#).

Aussies Prioritise Concerts And Travel

The monthly [CommBank Household Spending Insights Index](#), based on payments data from approximately seven million customers - comprising roughly 30 per cent of all Australian consumer transactions - shows recreation spending rose 1.9 per cent in August and to 8.4 per cent on an annual basis due to the FIFA Women's World Cup and big-name concerts, with ticketing agency spending up 70 per cent in the month. Recreation spending was also driven by online travel bookings, commercial airlines, cruise lines and accommodation.

Around The Region

Port Macquarie Koala Hospital Celebrates 50 Years

This weekend, 30 September, Koala Conservation Australia aka the Port Macquarie Koala Hospital, will celebrate its 50th anniversary. This is a huge milestone for an organisation that began treating wild koalas in a one room facility in 1973 and now treats up to 250 wild koalas a year, is a popular tourist attraction and will soon begin breeding koalas for release to the wild. [Find more information here.](#)

Ballina Shire Council Festival And Event Sponsorship

Ballina's 2024/25 Festival and Event Sponsorship Program is now open. The program offers event organisers the opportunity to apply for sponsorship from a pool of approximately \$120,000 of funding. There are a number of eligibility criteria, such as: the applicant needs to hold adequate public liability insurance; the total cost of the festival/event must be more than \$20,000; and the festival/event must be held in the Ballina Shire. [Applications close on Friday 27 October 2023.](#)

Tweed Rail Trail Connect Program

Tweed Shire Council is inviting businesses and commercial operators to share in the success of the popular [Northern Rivers Rail Trail](#) (Tweed section) and sign up to its new Connect Program. The Connect Program will enable business partners to highlight their guest experience offerings, focusing on the ways users can taste, stay, move, explore and enjoy along the Rail Trail. The Connect Program caters for three business needs - commercial operations, marketing and signage - and is a way for adjacent landowners, businesses and tourism operators to access potential visitors to the Rail Trail. [Find more information here.](#)



The 10 Best NSW Beach Towns For Your Next Weekend Getaway

Delicious magazine have just released their [10 best NSW beach towns for your next weekend getaway](#) list and it's great to see Crescent Head, South West Rocks, Yamba, Byron Bay and Cabarita making the cut.

Ballina Beach Nature Resort Open Day

[Ballina Beach Nature Resort](#) are set to launch their new upgrades, with 19 new 'glamping' units, each with air conditioning, kitchenette and fully operational bathrooms. They have also installed a fully operational water treatment plant onsite. Join them for their Open Day on **11 October 2023**. [Find more information here.](#)

Tweed Regional Gallery & Margaret Olley Art Centre - Travelers' Choice award winner

The Tweed Regional Gallery & Margaret Olley Art Centre (TRG MOAC) has been announced as a Travelers' Choice award winner by global travel review website, Tripadvisor.

It marks the third time the Gallery has been recognised with this award, also receiving the Traveler's Choice Award in 2015 and 2016. It has also previously ranked the fourth best museum in Australia and number nine in the Top 25 Museums - South Pacific.

The coveted award celebrates attractions that have consistently received great traveller reviews on Tripadvisor over the past 12 months and ranks the Gallery in the top 10% of attractions worldwide.

Digital Tourism Kiosks - Lismore

Visit Lismore has installed two digital information kiosks to promote its signature events and What's On across the region. The kiosks have been located at the Lismore Pop-Up Library in Molesworth Street and at Goonellabah Sports and Aquatic Centre.

Industry Development And Other Opportunities

Check Out The Small Business Month Event Calendar

Looking for new ways to evolve your business so it operates more efficiently and profitably? Learn from the experts at NSW Small Business Month this coming October. [Find a list of all events here](#), including the Destination North Coast [Back to Basics series](#) of workshops.

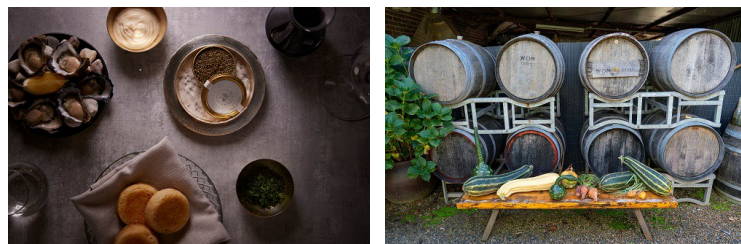
In conjunction with Small Business Month, Tweed Shire Council are also conducting the inaugural [Tweed October Business Month](#), and the program provides opportunities throughout October for businesses to network, develop or brush up on skills and celebrate success.

Webinar series: World class agritourism and culinary experiences

Join Destination NSW and a panel of industry experts over two free webinars to explore opportunities to develop world-class culinary and agritourism experiences.

- **Creating World Class Agritourism Experiences**, Wednesday 18 October 2023, 10.30 - 11.30am. Find out how to create world class agritourism experiences that exceed expectations and are practical for your farming business. [Register now.](#)
- **Elevate Your Culinary Experience**, Wednesday 25 October 2023, 10.30 - 11.30am. Discover how you can enrich the visitor experience by delivering world-class tour, attraction or accommodation experiences that showcase the culinary offering of your destination. [Register now.](#)

The webinars are part of the [NSW First Program](#), delivered by Destination NSW to assist businesses to develop, promote and sell world-class visitor experiences.



Hiring Outside The Box

On 11 October 2023, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations will be hosting the webinar [Mature Age Workforce: Investing in Experience](#). Hear from industry experts and employers about how age diversity can bring experience and improve productivity in your business.

Develop Your Disability Action And Inclusion Plan

A strategic blueprint for making your organisation more inclusive of people with disability, GetAboutAble has created a suite of free resources to support small and medium businesses in developing an effective Disability Action and inclusion Plan (DAIP). [Find more information here.](#)

Australian Street Art Awards Nominations Close Early November

Eligible art includes outdoor art that is sanctioned (legal) art and publicly visible from or in a street.

laneway, park or other public or publicly accessible space. Temporary and mobile art, including chalk walks and movable sculptures, can be entered in the Festival and Event or Trail categories. All other entries must be of a permanent nature. [Find more information here.](#)

Funding And Other Opportunities

Access to Government Grant Information

All government grants information is available for free from official sources - be wary of scam websites that charge fees for grant-related services. Check out these [tips for accessing grant information safely](#).

Festivals Australia - Round 17

Festivals Australia funds high-quality arts projects that invite community participation and audience engagement. Projects can include but are not limited to a parade, performance, workshop, installation or exhibition. The aim is to give community members living in regional or remote Australia the chance to participate in or attend an arts experience at a festival, or a significant one-off community celebration.

Closes: 4 October 2023.

Aboriginal Cultural Grants To Help Close The Gap

Applications are open for \$1 million in grants for Aboriginal community organisations to apply to stage events and activities that celebrate and promote traditional and contemporary expressions of Aboriginal culture. Grants from \$500 to \$20,000 are on offer. Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty David Harris said: "From digital installations showcasing Aboriginal history, to camps connecting young people to culture, to events honouring the achievements of community members - the opportunities are endless." The Program will be delivered in two rounds of \$500,000. Round 1 **closes 9 October 2023.**

Leg Up Grants

Leg Up Grants are quick response skill development grants for workers in volunteer managed museums and Aboriginal cultural spaces throughout NSW. These grants fund various skill development projects including hosting or attending workshops, conferences or seminars in NSW, in addition to networking activities. **Closes 29 October 2023 or when funds are exhausted.**

North Coast Product & Experience Development

M|Arts - Murwillumbah

Art and creative space M|Arts has announced a new Pop-Up Bar collaborating with Husk Distillers. A full bar menu including favourites with Husk signature cocktail range as well as beer and wine.

Osteria Morelli - Lennox Head

Osteria Morelli is a new restaurant which aims to showcase all the beautiful produce of the Northern Rivers, using Italian techniques and principles.

La Baracca Espresso Bar & Trattoria - Lismore

Brand new premises and new look food, wine and coffee bar.

Roda's Kitchen - Woodburn

Located inside Numbat Hemp, Roda's Kitchen is the new kid on the block in blossoming Woodburn. Offering an Asian-fusion style menu, there is something to suit everyone's tastes.

Little River Tap House - Evans Head

New establishment coming soon to previous River Fire Restaurant area downstairs at Club Evans RSL. Featuring products from independent microbrewers and distillers producing small batch brews and spirits from across Australia. Plus a curated list of luxurious natural wines from local and international vineyards.

New Agritourism Experience - Cheeze Van At Nimbin Valley Dairy

Visit the farm to enjoy a coffee, take in the views, eat some cheese and experience a real working farm. Farm gate offering coffee, cheese platters and tastings, cheese toasties. Plus self-guided farm tours.

Village People - Lismore

Woodlark Street has a new cafe, with the Village People Cafe opening. The owners of the popular Goonellabah cafe called Village People, have now opened a second shop in the Lismore CBD in the Summerland Arcade. The new cafe offers a grab-and go service, providing a range of food options and coffee.

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 DNSW's website](#).

Eat Street Yamba

Come and taste the best LOCAL food around the Clarence Valley as Yamba Rotary showcase our local food vendors and restaurants. Join us from 4pm to 8pm for a family fun afternoon with great food and drink. Coldstream Steet Yamba will come alive with music, kids fun and food stalls. Relax on our chairs and tables and enjoy a beer or wine from the Rotary Club bar. No BYO. A gold coin donation to Mental Health would be appreciated at the gate. **1 October 2023.**

Nimbin Roots Festival

Nimbin Roots Festival is a two-day celebration of Australian Roots music and sustainable living in the magical township of Nimbin. **14-15 October 2023.**

By The C - Coffs Harbour

By the C is a beachside festival featuring legends of the music world with pop-up bars and food stalls. Held at Park Beach Reserve in Coffs Harbour it's all about the festival experience. Relaxing in the sun and doing it all against a beautiful backdrop by the sea. **21 October 2023.**

Beach to Brother - Port Macquarie Hastings

The Beach to Brother Trail Running Festival is a must do event on the Australian Running Calendar. Events on offer provide opportunities for experienced and non experienced runners/walkers alike to enjoy the beautiful, natural and scenic coastline of the Port Macquarie Hastings region. Courses take participants through a variety of coastal trails, beaches, headlands, and townships before tackling the famous finish line at North Brother Mountain (Dooragan National Park). **22 October 2023.**
