



North Coast News & Views Issue 184

Great Southern Nights Adds More Star Power

[Great Southern Nights](#) has added even more artists to its huge line up for the 2024 series, which will take place over 17 nights across seven key entertainment precincts in NSW. It aims to reignite the state's live music scene with more than 300 live gigs across Sydney, Wollongong, Newcastle, Wagga Wagga, Tamworth and the [Northern Rivers](#).

Great Southern Nights is a Destination NSW initiative delivered in partnership with the Australian Recording Industry Association (ARIA). It will take place across NSW from 8-24 March 2024.



DNC Industry Networking - Casino

The Destination North Coast Board traditionally rotates around the region for our bi-monthly Board meetings and we have the pleasure in hosting our February meeting to be in Casino.

After the Board meeting, we invite members of the Tourism Industry to a casual get-together and an opportunity to meet and network with the Board, the DNC team and industry peers.

- **What:** Afternoon Industry Networking
- **When:** Wednesday, 14 February 2024
- **Time:** 5.00pm-6.30pm
- **Where:** [Casino RSM Club](#), (The Den) 162 Canterbury St, Casino

[RSVP is required by Friday 9 February 2024](#) and for catering purposes, please include any dietary restrictions.

We look forward to connecting with industry in region and meeting in Casino.

Lunar New Year - Year of the Dragon

The Lunar New Year celebrations for 2024 kick off on the 10th of February marking the arrival of the auspicious Year of the Dragon. Known for exuding ambition, energy, charisma, passion, and enthusiasm, the dragon is a natural leader - a trait reminiscent of the vibrant spirit found along the North Coast of NSW. This month-long celebration holds a special place for China, our top international market, South Korea, currently the third largest international market for NSW, and Vietnam, a market with immense potential. Sydney and Brisbane have large expat communities or people with Chinese, Vietnamese and South Korean heritage so the Lunar New Year presents a great opportunity to target new markets for the North Coast who no doubt would love to combine lunar celebrations with a trip to our stunning region.



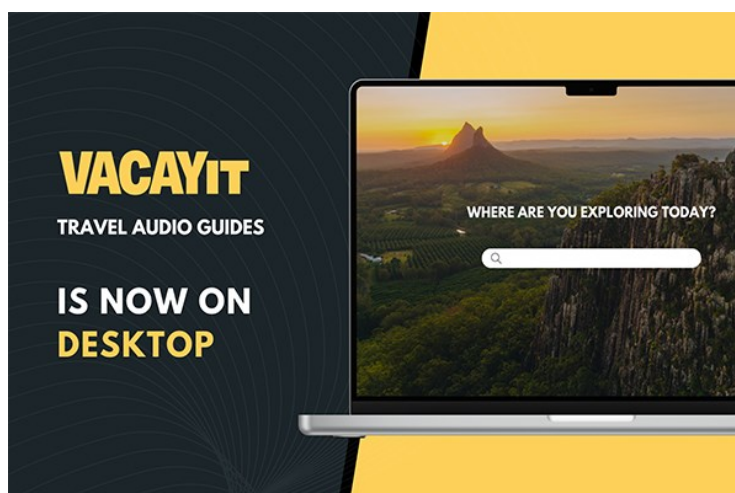
Funding Leaves Nothing In The Road Of Local Street Events

Councils across the state are being encouraged to hold more community events, with assistance from the NSW Government's Open Streets program. At a time when cost of living pressures are being felt across the state, this program will offer much needed assistance for local communities to come together. Under [Open Streets](#), councils can apply for up to \$150,000 to facilitate the closure of streets to vehicles to host creative and cultural events that are free to access and safe to enjoy. Depending on the community and the location, this could include markets, live performances, outdoor dining, artistic installations or street parties. Open Streets is part of the NSW Government's \$15 million [Vibrant Streets](#) package and complements the Vibrancy reforms that passed Parliament in December. The reforms introduced a streamlined process that involves no Development Application.

[Read media release.](#)

Vacayit Introduces Accessible Travel Hub On New Website

[Vacayit](#), a leader in accessible travel solutions, has announced the launch of its website, a valuable addition to its suite of accessibility-focused products. Going beyond audio guides the platform positions itself as a central hub for comprehensive accessible travel information. In line with Vacayit's commitment to inclusivity, the website caters to individuals seeking detailed accessibility information for their travel plans, offering expanded access to destination-specific audio guides. Key features include integration with the latest Vacayit Audio Player, ensuring a fully accessible experience with screen reader compatibility, intuitive hotkey control, and automated transcription. The website aims to be a go-to resource, collecting up-to-date accessibility information from tourism operators and Destination Tourism Organisations, providing users with a reliable platform for planning accessible trips.



Creative Communities: Putting Culture At The Heart Of NSW

The NSW government has unveiled details of [Creative Communities](#), the new arts, culture and creative industries policy. Creative Communities is a 10-year vision, the state's first creative industries policy, supporting the traditional arts sector and cultural institutions, but encompassing industries informed by the state's unique and diverse cultural strengths, including: First Nations cultures, Galleries, libraries, archives and museums, Performing arts including theatre, dance, circus, comedy, cabaret, Music including classical and contemporary composition, performance, and recording, Screen and digital games, Visual arts and crafts, Literature, writing and publishing, Broadcasting and digital media, Design, architecture and fashion, Built and physical heritage, Creative and arts education, Creativity in the food and beverage sector, and Creative innovation in the technology sector.

Nominations Open 2024 NSW Top Tourism Town Awards

The NSW Tourism Industry Council invites towns from across the state to showcase their tourism excellence at the prestigious Top Tourism Town Awards 2024.

The Top Tourism Town Awards recognise and applaud the tourism excellence of cities, towns, and villages throughout NSW. These Awards celebrate their dedication in promoting tourism and attracting visitors to their destinations, and their contribution to the economic and social prosperity of their communities.

Local Chambers of Commerce, Tourism Associations, Councils, Visitor Information Centres, or motivated groups of local operators are encouraged to collaborate and present their town as an outstanding visitor destination.

There are three categories within the NSW Top Tourism Town program:

- **Top Tourism Town** - suited to established tourism towns where a range of attractions, accommodation and visitor experiences already exist, particularly those with a population over 5,000 people.
- **Small Tourism Town** - suited to towns which are in the process of establishing a tourism strategy and developing visitor experiences, particularly those with a population below 5,000 people.
- **Tiny Tourism Town** - for emerging towns in the process of establishing a visitor strategy and developing their tourist offerings, with a population less than 1,500 people.

Winners will be announced in partnership with Local Government NSW at the **LGNSW Destination & Visitor Economy Conference** in May 2024.

[Find more information and to submit a nomination.](#)

NSW Visitor Arrivals: November 2023

Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows there were 255,670 short-term visitor arrivals to NSW in November 2023, an increase of 74,630 compared with November 2022, 14.2% lower than November 2019. The three leading source countries for NSW were New Zealand (34,690 trips), United States (33,810) and South Korea (23,430). Total arrivals to Australia in November 2023 were 1,562,520, an annual increase of 372,600. New Zealand was the largest source country, accounting for 18% (116,350 trips) of visitor arrivals, followed by United States (61,660) and United Kingdom (57,860). There were 34,550 international student arrivals to Australia, up 1480 from November 2022. [Find more information here.](#)

Discretionary Spending On Travel Increases

Australians are continuing to prioritise spending on travel and entertainment despite rising living costs, according to the latest CommBank iQ Cost of Living Insights Report. [Find more information here.](#)

Tourism Workforce Report - A Status Update On The Workforce In Australia's Visitor Economy

The COVID-19 pandemic severely affected Australia's visitor economy workforce. Lengthy travel restrictions contributed to dramatic job losses in the visitor economy. Workforce shortages have been a challenge for the visitor economy. This is particularly true in the period after the COVID-19 pandemic. The short-term absence of permanent and temporary migrant workers contributed to the deficiency of workers.

[This report gives a snapshot of the visitor economy workforce in 2023.](#) It draws on publicly available data sources to provide current insights on:

- the size and composition of the visitor economy workforce
- job vacancies in tourism-related occupations
- recruitment in the sector
- the availability of international labour.

Around The Region

Australian Good Food Guide Chef Hats Awards 2024

The Australian Good Food Guide Chef Hats are awarded for food, focusing on six key attributes: ingredients, taste, presentation, technique, value and consistency. North Coast restaurants featured heavily in the list. Huge congratulations to these restaurant-

Pipit Restaurant, Paper Daisy, Tweed River House, Bistro Livi, Fins Restaurant, Potager - A Kitchen Garden, No.35 Cabarita, Mavis' Kitchen, Tavern, Raes Dining Room, Karkalla, The Hut Byron Bay, Beach Byron Bay, Harvest, Forest Byron Bay, Bar Heather, Frida's Field, Baraka, Karrikin, The Stunned Mullet and Bill's Fishhouse & Bar.

Digital Essentials Workshop

This workshop is designed for Macleay Valley businesses including sole traders and small to medium businesses. Learn how digital tools such as ecommerce platforms, social media and digital analytics can save you time and money, and to help grow your business.

- **When:** 15 February 2024, 5.30-7.00pm
- **Where:** Kempsey Macleay RSL, Kempsey

[Places are limited so make sure to register.](#)



Master Plans For Dorrigo, Bellingen And Urunga

Bellingen Shire Council, in conjunction with an external consulting team, are developing Master Plans for the CBD precincts of Dorrigo, Bellingen and Urunga. Master Plans document the longer-term vision and strategy that guides growth and change in an area while informing and influencing things like amenity, functionality, movement and mobility, public spaces, land use, sustainability and heritage. It can also guide planning controls for future development. There are several ways to participate and provide feedback and ideas - the first of which is a short survey, open until **18 February 2024**. There will also be a series of online and face to face workshops in and about each town.

[Find more information here, complete the survey and register for one or more of the workshop sessions.](#)

World Class Escape Rooms Have Arrived At The Big Banana Fun Park

The team at the award-winning [Big Banana Fun Park](#) have been busy behind the scenes, preparing for some new and exciting attractions for the Coffs Coast. Four custom-built World Class Escape Rooms are now open in the existing Laser Tag building. Escape Rooms are a worldwide craze providing an immersive experience, where players work together to solve a series of interactive puzzles, clues and scenarios to achieve the final goal.

Choose from escaping an eery high security facility in Prison Break, navigate the mysterious tombs in Temple of Doom, embark on a magical journey through the School of Wizards, or use your survival skills to escape an abandoned Hostel! Players will be pushed to challenge themselves to think outside the box, express innovative ideas and work together as a team to solve the puzzles and ultimately "escape"! [Read media release.](#)



Inclusive Golf Champs Bound For Coffs in 2024

The NSW Inclusive Golf Championship is bound for the Coffs Coast, with Golf NSW and the City of Coffs Harbour agreeing to host the Championship in the City for the next three years.

The tournament, for players with a physical, sensory or intellectual impairment (based on the International Golf Federation (IGF) definitions), will tee off this year on 2 April at Coffs Harbour Golf Club. [Read media release.](#)

Tourism Stars Honoured!

Legends of the Australian travel and tourism industry were recognised for their service to the sector in the 2024 Australia Day Honours List this past weekend.

Among those recognised is Janette Hyde OAM, President of the Greater Port Macquarie Tourism Association!

Congratulations Janette for this recognition of your outstanding and ongoing work to advance travel and tourism and support the visitor economy and wider community of Port Macquarie-Hastings and the North Coast NSW.

[See Australia Day 2024 Honours List.](#)



Industry Development And Other Opportunities

Tourism Australia Industry Webinar

Tourism Australia will be hosting their first industry webinar for the year coming up **on Friday, 9 February 2024 at 11am**. Included will be an update from Tourism Australia plus industry guests. [Register here.](#)

New Guidance For Engaging With AI

The Australian Cyber Security Centre has published new guidance on engaging with artificial intelligence (AI). It includes important advice to help businesses interact with AI securely. [Find more information here.](#)

Promote Your Sustainability Claims

Promoting your business's environmental credentials can help you to stand out from your competitors and showcase your values. But if you're making claims about your products, services and operations, make sure you have evidence to avoid risking claims of greenwashing or greenhushing. [Find more here.](#)

Unique Identities

"[Unique Identities](#)" is a statewide professional development project for Aboriginal Artists and Arts Workers from regional NSW that builds capacity and resilience of participants and inspires them to immerse themselves in the exploration of their own unique cultural identity.



Quick Win Webinars

[Tourism Tribe](#) are running **free 30-min Quick Win Webinars** on important digital concepts that small tourism businesses MUST absolutely know, including:

- [Must Have Canva Skills](#) Thursday 15 February 2024 - 12 noon
- [Automation Skills](#) Thursday 7 March 2024 - 12 noon

Funding And Other Opportunities

Arts and Cultural Funding Program

Create NSW funding opportunities for professional artists, arts and cultural workers and organisations across a wide range of artforms and disciplines. **Closes 19 February 2024.**

2024 NAIDOC Local Grants

The 2024 NAIDOC Local Grants provide a contribution to the cost of activities and events being held during National NAIDOC Week 2024 (7 - 14 July) that celebrate First Nations' histories, cultures, achievements and continuing contributions to our country and Australian society. **Closes 22 February 2024.**

Rebuilding Regional Communities Round 20

The Strengthening Rural Communities (SRC) Rebuilding Regional Communities (RRC) stream gives small remote, rural and regional communities across Australia the opportunity to access funds for a broad range of initiatives that directly and clearly benefit local communities. **Closes 26 February 2024.**

North Coast Product Development

Northern Rivers Vodka

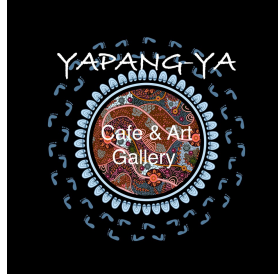
Super-clean and crisp, this small batch vodka has been artfully distilled by the seashore at Cabarita Beach by [Cabarita Spirits](#). Crafted from 100% Australian ingredients, five-times distilled and softened with pure rainwater. Tasting notes: barely perceptible sweetness, wheat cracker and a citrus finish. Vegan, preservative free, gluten free and GMO free.

Selah Valley

Designed to optimise relaxation, Selah's 3 luxury abodes (1 or 2 bedrooms) are set just a short distance from Tyalgum and about 30 minutes' drive from Murwillumbah. 430 acres of rainforest and rolling hills at Selah invite guests to simply relax and enjoy.

Yapang-ya Cafe and Art Gallery

Yapang-ya Cafe and Art Gallery is a collaboration between husband-and-wife team, Jason and Roxanne Ridgeway. The Gallery/Cafe is a celebration of the couple's love for art, culture and food, and showcases artwork by Dunghutti artist Jason Ridgeway and a delicious menu featuring native bush tucker.



Cones & Cream - Nimbin

Italian Delizia Gelato, 16 regular flavours along with a mix of ice-creams and sorbets. The sorbets and cones are vegan with unique flavours featured each week.

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](#).

Beach Volleyball Tour

3-4 February 2024
Town Beach, Port Macquarie

Red Hot Summer

24 February 2024
Port Macquarie

National Blacksmiths Survey Exhibition

Ends 25 February 2024
Port Macquarie

Junior Oztag NSW State Championships

23-25 February 2024
Coffs Harbour

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Thank you for taking the time to read this update. Don't forget between our e-newsletters, you'll find us on the socials - head over to follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and [Instagram](#). We also encourage you to share our updates with your networks, simply forward this email and they can [register here](#).

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